

## ***Interregnum or Endgame? Radical Right Thought in the ‘Post-fascist’ Era***

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### **Abstract**

*The article focuses on the two most significant forms taken by ideological mutations of the fascist species of radical right in the hostile climate of post-war Europe: internationalization (Eurofascism, Universal Nazism, Third Positionism), and metapoliticization (Revisionism, the New Right, cyber-fascism). It concludes by suggesting that the ‘democratic fascism’ of some political parties is emblematic of the extreme marginalization of revolutionary nationalism, and that the most potent species of radical right ideology now consists in ethnocratic perversions of liberalism, which help perpetuate Europe’s less than democratic impact on the global community.*

A charred corpse lying unrecognizable in an underground bunker in Berlin, a body hanging all too recognizably upside down from the gantry of a petrol station in Milan: if single images can be worth pages of historical analysis then the fates of Hitler and Mussolini in April 1945 certainly point to a dramatic watershed in the history of the radical right. The *Duce*’s prophecies that his regime inaugurated

a ‘century of the Right, a Fascist century’, the *Führer*’s claims to have founded a thousand year Reich had proved catastrophic misreadings of unfolding political realities. The increasingly geriatric personal dictatorships of Franco and Salazar soon seemed grotesque anachronisms. In 1994 the oldest and most successful neo-fascist movement, the Movimento Sociale Italiano, became a ‘right-wing party’, declaring at its first congress held in Fiuggi that the collapse of actually existing socialism five years earlier had meant the end of an era characterized by the struggle between anti-fascism and fascism, and that parliamentary democracy now remained ‘the only solution without negative side effects to the problem of competition between political forces for the conquest of consensus’.<sup>1</sup> In the run up to the congress in December 1993 the MSI’s leader, Gianfranco Fini, had asserted that ‘Fascism was now irreversibly consigned to history and its judgement...Like all Italians we are not neo-Fascists, but post-Fascists’.<sup>2</sup> Symbolically at least, Fiuggi was the Bad Godesberg of the European radical right. Liberal democracy had triumphed.

With its Faustian urge to probe beneath the surface of human phenomena to find ‘what holds together the world at its inmost level’,<sup>3</sup> political science clearly cannot be content with such punchy story-lines and cinematographic *dénouements*. However, once it is asked to recount how things ‘actually have been’ for the radical right since 1945 a number of factors come into play which make it hazardous to offer any sort of script at all, even if only in the form of a rough treatment. For one thing, even if the scope of the question is restricted to Europe, the failure of the radical right to achieve hegemony has a different story in every country.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the conceptual problems involved compound those raised by the sheer quantity of empirical material. Apart from the increasingly contested nature of the fundamental term ‘the right’,<sup>5</sup> the concept ‘radical right’ can be defined and delimited in several conflicting ways,<sup>6</sup> and in each case subsumes a number of distinct forms of organization and ideological rationale.

Moreover, the specific connotations of the term in different languages (when it is possible to translate it literally) and its significance, both historical and contemporary, vary significantly from country to country and from one part of the world to another (e.g. in German ‘radical right’ is regarded as still within the bounds of legitimate political debate while ‘extreme right’ is not). In some Anglo-Saxon usages it embraces thousands of individual groups, movements, and parties the world over, ranging from the vast and well-established to the ephemeral and minute.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the subliminal political values, not to mention the historical assumptions and shadowy teleological imaginings, of the social scientist who attempts to sketch the ‘big picture’ cannot fail to influence the way it is composed, which empirical features are highlighted, and what inferences for the future are drawn from it.

Fortunately, three factors operate to bring the remit of this article just within the bounds of the manageable. Firstly, it is written for the issue of a periodical primarily concerned with general patterns of development discernible over the last part of the 20th century within some of the major modern political ideologies, rather than with specific political formations and the events they helped shape. Secondly, the right-left dichotomy is a product of the French Revolution, and the term ‘radical right’ acquires its most precise connotations in the context of ideologically elaborated rejections of parliamentary liberalism of the type which first arose in late nineteenth-century Europe. Considerations of traditionalist forces operating outside Europeanized societies in a non-parliamentary context, such as Islamic fundamentalism, or of ideologically vacuous dictatorships, whether military or personal, thus need not detain us. Thirdly, one of the most significant events in the recent history of the radical right arguably concerns not the object of research but the lens through which it is seen. After several decades in which even the most rudimentary agreement over the definition of fascism was lacking, a significant pocket of consensus has emerged

about its basic definitional contours. This conjuncture of factors enables an area of empirical data which poses irreducible definitional and taxonomic problems to be cut down to size, at least for heuristic purposes, by considering within a relatively uncontentious conceptual framework those aspects of the post-war radical right which can be seen as outlets or conduits for the same ideological energies which fed inter-war fascism. Having cleared some of the terrain it will then be possible to suggest in a more speculative spirit that the most significant development that has taken place since the war in the radical right has occurred outside the parameters of fascism: the spread of ‘ethnocratic liberalism’. The anti-liberal currents of ideology it feeds may prove even more insidious than modernized forms of the inter-war fascist right in their liberticide effects because they are so easily absorbed into the bloodstream of liberalism itself.

There is now a growing consensus that fascism is best seen as a revolutionary form of populist nationalism which emerged in the inter-war period at a time when a systemic crisis seemed to many within the Europeanized world to be affecting not only national life, but civilization as a whole.<sup>8</sup> A necessary precondition for the rise of fascism was a cultural climate saturated with apocalyptic forebodings and hopes for imminent or eventual renewal captured in such works as Spengler’s *Decline of the West* and H.G. Wells’ *The Shape of Things to Come*. It articulated, fomented, and channelled inchoate but extraordinarily widespread longings for a new type of political system, a new elite, a new type of human being, a new relationship between the individual and society, for a more planned economy, for a revolutionary change in the values of modern life, for a new experience of time itself.<sup>9</sup> The mobilizing myth which can be treated ideal-typically as the definitional core of fascism (the ‘fascist minimum’) is that through the intervention of a heroic elite the whole national community is capable of resurrecting itself Phoenix-like from the ashes of the decadent old order (‘palingenetic ultra-nationalism’). It is this myth which

informs the obsessive preoccupation with national/ethnic decadence and regeneration in a post-liberal new order which is now widely acknowledged to be the hall-mark of all fascism.<sup>10</sup>

After 1945 not only was ultra-nationalism widely identified with war, destruction, genocide, and calculated inhumanity on a horrendous scale, but liberal democracy underwent no serious systemic crises, and was if anything strengthened and legitimated for the bulk of its citizens (in the myth of the 'Free World') by the emergence of the Soviet Empire, which also had the effect of comprehensively denying political space to liberal and right-wing agitation on its own territory. Within a few years of the Axis defeat it had become clear to all of fascism's more astute activists that the age of mass armed parties led by charismatic leaders was dead, and that in order to survive at all as an ideology in the absence of a pervasive palingenetic climate it had to be extensively overhauled. The basic problem was to adapt a revolutionary form of populist nationalism posited on the imminent collapse of Western liberalism and the palpable risk of a Communist take-over, to a Western world now divided between a dynamically expanding capitalist and an apparently impregnable Communist state system, neither of whose populations were susceptible to mass mobilization by the rhetoric of extreme nationalism, racism, and war. It would be misleading to suggest that all fascists recognized the extent to which their vision had been discredited by events, and have accepted the need for drastic change in their ideology and tactics in the light of the new international situation. The psychotropic power of palingenetic myth to transform despair into hope encouraged many who had believed in a fascist cause at the height of the war to enter a sustained state of denial. For decades pockets of purely nostalgic and mimetic fascism could be found in Europe, like muddy puddles in the bed of a dried-up lake. But the dramatic loss of the historical climate which produced fascism forced its more flexible activists, decimated by events and acutely marginalized within their

political cultures,<sup>11</sup> to develop two basic strategies for keeping the dream of national rebirth alive, even if in a state of hibernation, in the bleak winter of liberal and (until 1989) communist hegemony in Europe. They can be summarized ideal-typically as ‘internationalization’ and ‘metapoliticization’.

### *The internationalization of fascism*

Even before the end of the Second World War some Nazis were making plans for the core values of the Third Reich to be perpetuated after its increasingly inexorable defeat. One of the more bizarre schemes may well have involved the setting up of a secret international order through the agency of the Sicherheitsdienst des Reichsführers-SS.<sup>12</sup> Though this particular project came to naught, it was an early symptom of the Europeanization of fascism which has become such a striking feature of the post-1945 fascist radical right. There had been several fascist schemes for a federal Europe before the war,<sup>13</sup> especially emanating from Italy,<sup>14</sup> and the realities of a Nazi conquest made the ‘New European Order’ a subject of considerable speculation and forward planning in some ministries of the Third Reich when victory seemed a foregone conclusion<sup>15</sup> ‘one Nazi initiative, Young Europe, was revived after the war as Jeune Europe. Nazi fellow travellers, such as Drieu la Rochelle in France and Szálasi, leader of the Hungarian Arrow Cross, also promoted visions of a Nazi dominated pan-fascist Europe. Once Germany had lost the war, a tempting explanation for the defeat without abandoning fascist principles was to accuse Mussolini and Hitler of being too narrowly nationalistic to realize the true historical purpose of fascism, namely to save European civilization as a whole from destruction at the hands of Bolshevism and Americanization.

Symptoms of the Euro-fascism which emerged in the aftermath of 1945 were the launching of periodicals dedicated to the cause such as *The European*, *Europa Nazione*, and *Nation Europa*, the publication of major texts by Oswald

Mosley,<sup>16</sup> Julius Evola,<sup>17</sup> Maurice Bardèche,<sup>18</sup> and Francis Yockey<sup>19</sup> calling for a European Federation or Empire of fascist nations, and the creation of pan-European fascist organizations such as The Nouvel Ordre Européen, The European Social Movement, and Faisceaux Nationaux et Européens.<sup>20</sup> However, any notion that the radical right had found in Eurofascism an effective strategy for a coordinated assault on the citadels of power is instantly dispelled when it is realized how many incompatible schemes emerged from it: pagan and Catholic, Nietzschean and occultist, pro-Nazi (and anti-Semitic), pro-Fascist, pro-British, pro-French, and pro-Hungarian. Some saw the new Europe as equally threatened by Russia and America, and hence saw Africa as a colonial hinterland supplying an autarkic Europe with raw materials (the idea of ‘Eurafrica’ was first formulated in the Salò Republic in the last years of the war). Others linked its destiny with the USA as part of an anti-communist alliance, or with Russia to form a continental bloc against decadent materialism and individualism (‘national bolshevism’).

The acute taxonomic difficulties posed by the post-war fascist radical right are brought out clearly when we consider that the Nazi variant of Eurofascism is simultaneously an example of another form that its internationalization has taken. Once stripped of its specifically German connotations of a ‘Third Reich’, Nazism became the ideology of the white supremacist struggle to save civilization from its alleged enemies (Jews, communists, the racially inferior, liberals etc.), whether on a strictly European (Nouvel Ordre Européen, Circulo Español de Amigos de Europe) or a planetary (World Union of National Socialists, League for Pan-Nordic Friendship) scale.<sup>21</sup> In both cases, as with Eurofascism in general, the national or ethnic dimension of the struggle for regeneration was not abandoned, but subsumed within a wider context, so that Swedish or American Nazis can feel that the struggle for the rebirth of their nation or homeland is but one theatre in an international race war. By the 1970s a new generation of Universal Nazis was

thinking globally and acting locally, made up principally of marginalized 'working class' white racists targeted through propaganda directed at the educationally challenged, a racist variety of heavy metal 'punk' rock and ballads, and, in Europe at least, through networks of organized football hooliganism with a racist agenda. Extensive international links exist between them, not only in the form of ritual 'congresses' (e.g. the annual jamboree in the Belgian town of Dijksmuide, the Hitler or Hess birthday celebrations), but especially at the level of the distribution of propaganda, literature, and merchandizing. The White Noise CD business is a multi-national industry in itself whose profits are channelled into financing political activities.<sup>22</sup>

Universal Nazism has retained the original's fanatical belief in the genius of Adolf Hitler and in the innate right of Aryan peoples to take any measures necessary to protect and strengthen the national community, which in practice means fighting the threat posed by Jews, Communists, Blacks, and other alleged enemies of racial health, but the show-down between cultural health and degeneracy generated new variants of Nazism as it adapts to its new habitat. Thus US Nazis present the federal state as ZOG, (Zionist Occupation Government) and the United Nations as an agency of enforced racial mixing in a culturally homogenized, genocidal New World Order. Specific groups blend in elements taken from the Ku Klux Klan, evangelist Christianity,<sup>23</sup> or Nordic mythology<sup>24</sup> in a spirit reminiscent of the 'German Faith Movement' which appeared under Hitler, though the fusion of the political with 'new religions' has its roots deep in the charter myths which inform the national identity of traditionally minded white Americans.

An even more original form of international fascism ideologically is Third Positionism, which, influenced by some currents of Italian neo-fascism, seeks a third way between capitalism and communism, and associates itself with Third World struggles against the global market and a USA-Israel dominated

‘international community’ (notably Gaddafi’s Libya, the PLO, and Hussein’s Iraq), ‘Zionist’ capitalism, and the cultural hegemony of the USA. The English Third Positionist group the National Revolutionary Faction, for example, promotes its own alternative economics (‘distributionism’), and calls for the component parts of Britain (including Cornwall and the Isle of Mann), to achieve semi-autonomy within a united (but decidedly not in the EU sense of united) Europe. This combination of regionalist separatism (ethno-pluralism) with supranational federalism reflects a marked tendency in some areas of the modern European radical right to abandon the nation-state as the basic unit of homogeneous cultural energy and promote the idea of discrete ethnic groups or *ethnies* (a principle already familiar from the Nazi equation of nation with *Volk*). This produces the concept of the ‘Europe of a hundred flags’ to which the NRF subscribes.

Though it presents itself as a vanguard movement of ‘political soldiers’ the NRF is typical of Third Positionism for the considerable energy it expends on refining its ideological alternative to classic fascism and encouraging a healthy diet of reading among its followers. The books on sale via its magazine *The English Alternative* (formerly *The Crusader*) range in subject matter from Nazism, especially its anti-Semitism and racial politics, the Iron Guard and the Falange, to ecology and the ideas of English visionaries such as Hilaire Belloc and William Morris. Especially significant is its promotion of the socialistic, pro-Russian, and Europeanist brand of fascism evolved by Otto Strasser and (in attenuated form) by his brother Gregor before he became a Nazi leader. Indeed, Third Positionism is sometimes called Strasserism to distinguish it from neo-Nazism, which it rejects as excessively compromised by capitalism, demagogy, and narrow chauvinism. The ENM is informally linked to Third Positionist groups all over the world, all with their own unique syntheses of ideas.<sup>25</sup>

### *The metapoliticization of fascism*

An even more important ideological development within the fascist radical right than its rejection of the nation as the sole or principal focus for revolutionary energies also results from the defeat of the Axis powers in 1945. An outstanding feature of Fascism and Nazism which fascist organizers elsewhere attempted to emulate was that they were able to take over the state as a new type of force in modern politics which combined four components: an electoral party, a paramilitary army, a mass social movement, and an effervescent ideological discourse. The ideological discourse, which under the two regimes became the orthodoxy and hence the basis for the social re-engineering of values and behaviour, was provided by a profusion of texts by intellectuals, artists, and articulate activists (notably the leaders themselves) who felt an elective affinity with a movement which promised to put an end to the decadence in national life and inaugurate a process of renewal. Far from being fully cohesive bodies of doctrine, the ideologies of both movements were alliances (in the Fascist case a very loose one) of heterogeneous political, intellectual and cultural currents and ideas which converged on the image of the reborn nation.

A post-war political climate inclement towards all 'extremisms' precluded fascism from attracting anywhere in the world a mass following of sufficient size, momentum, and gravitational pull to bind these four components together under a charismatic leader in a way which had been only possible in the exceptional circumstances of the 1920s and 1930s. As a result overtly anti-systemic cadre movements of revolutionary paramilitaries and radical ideologues split off from ostensibly democratic political parties pursuing a fascist agenda, and it became possible for the ideological production of fascist discourse to operate relatively autonomously without any formal links with organized politics. The situation which emerged was reminiscent of the French or German radical right in the pre-1914 period where party politics, popular passions, extra-parliamentary activism,

and ideological agitation were still not coordinated into cohesive unified populist movements. As a result of the fragmentation a panorama of the modern fascist right in Europe presents a spectacle of a small number of political parties with fascist associations existing alongside a much larger number of organizations made up of militant activists dedicated solely to ideas, some of them with minute memberships (the 'groupuscular right'<sup>26</sup>). The radical right planets of Europe's inter-war political system have broken up into countless asteroids.

The combination of this situation with the universalization of Nazism is that a whole new sector of international cultural production has grown up since the war dedicated to keeping alive Nazism as an ideology, either through books glorifying the Nazi period (memoirs, biographies), or, more subtly, through academic journals, monographs, conference papers, and 'scientific' reports which are 'revisionist' in that they offer historical accounts of Nazism denying, relativizing or minimizing the atrocities and human catastrophes which directly resulted from its attempt to create a racial empire in the heart of Europe. The most notorious product of Revisionism is Holocaust Denial, which exists in various degrees of pornographic crudity and specious sophistication in its manipulation of historical realities.<sup>27</sup> Its success in re-editing history and making the facts about the Nazis' racial state at least contestable in the minds of post-war generations is crucial to a long term strategy of elements within the international radical right for normalizing and rehabilitating Nazism to a point where its ideas no longer create repulsion among the general public, and where some anti-Nazi energy is actually deflected towards Jews themselves (who are accused by some 'vulgar' revisionists of 'inventing' the 'lie' of the Holocaust in order to be given a homeland at the expense of the Palestinians).

Some of the more sophisticated examples of revisionism<sup>28</sup> provide fascinating and disturbing case studies in the persuasive psychological power which form can exercise over content. By deliberately emulating a discourse and

format of academic production (conferences and public lectures, journal articles and books incorporating footnotes, a strictly analytical linguistic register, the appeal to documentary evidence, the invocation of academic qualifications, etc) which originally evolved as part of a liberal humanistic quest for truth, revisionists set out simultaneously to pervert the historical record and overcome psychological barriers which any humanist should have towards fascism. Revisionist and Holocaust denial literature is demonstrably part of the staple diet of ‘Nazi-oid’ fascists the world over and its most prolific producers nearly always have links to known Nazi activists. However, much of its insidious power derives from the fact that it exists as a free floating discourse in its own right, and is not part of the ideological stance of any particular movement, party, or ‘school’ of fascism. In this sense revisionism is ‘metapolitical’.

The pro-Nazi subtext of revisionism is at least apparent. By far the most sophisticated disguise assumed by the fascist radical right since the war is the (European) New Right. First elaborated as a response to calls for a more ‘modern’ fascist discourse which became increasingly frequent within the French radical right in the 1960s,<sup>29</sup> the Nouvelle Droite has been responsible for an extraordinary output of high quality ideological material associated with the ‘think-tank’ GRECE and the periodicals *Nouvelle École* and *Éléments*, most of which only the trained eye (peering through the lens of the ‘new consensus’) can detect as bearing the traces of a fascist legacy. The New Right’s ‘metapolitical’ critique of liberal democracy has been taken up in several other countries, notably Italy (where it has been fused with a fascination with fantasy literature, especially Tolkien, and with esoteric elements derived from the total alternative ‘Traditionalist’ philosophy of history bequeathed by Julius Evola), Germany (where the influence of the Conservative Revolution is particularly strong), and Russia (where it has given rise to a new version of Eurasianism). There is even an English branch of the New Right which adds some Celtic and Anglo-Saxon perspectives to a view of the

modern world as indebted to Evola as it is to GRECE.<sup>30</sup> The European New Right embraces a large number of academics and freelance autodidacts, journalists, writers, and intellectuals, some of whom are associated with particular magazines, study groups, or parties, while others are essentially loners. Some are overtly fascist, as when one of their number calls for a regenerating explosion of mythic energy of the sort precipitated by Hitler,<sup>31</sup> while others have evolved in such idiosyncratic directions away from any discernible revolutionary position that their fascist expectations of rebirth seem to have melted into a diffuse cultural pessimism about the present world order.<sup>32</sup>

While it is impossible to generalize about its ideological contents, the recurrent features of New Right thought are: a 'right-wing Gramscianism' which recognizes that cultural hegemony must precede political hegemony; the extensive use of intellectuals associated with the 'Conservative Revolution', notably Nietzsche, Ernst Jünger, Martin Heidegger, and Carl Schmitt, as articulators of principles central to non-Nazi variants of German fascism which emerged under Weimar; the idea of Europe as a unique cultural homeland which can still be revitalized by renewing contact with its pre-Christian mythic roots; an extreme eclecticism stemming from the belief that the dichotomy of left and right can be transcended in a new alliance of intellectual energies opposed to the dominant system of liberal egalitarianism, capitalist materialism, and American consumerist individualism (summed up in the concept of a creeping 'McDonaldization' of the world, which also links in with an idiosyncratic concern with ecology); the celebration of ethnic diversity and difference ('differentialism') to be defended against cultural imperialism and 'totalitarian' one-worldism ('mondialisme'), mass migration, and the liberal endorsement of a multi-racial society (presented as 'genocidal').

The hallmark of the New Right is its belief that the present world system is not only decadent, but that it will eventually give way to a new type of

civilization based on healthy mythic forces (though the new millennium nowadays often seems indefinitely postponed). Contemporary history is thus an ‘interregnum’ for the spiritually awakened (a concept derived from the Conservative Revolution). New Rightists of an Evolian bent use the alternative image of the ‘Kali Yuga’ or Black Age which in the Hindu cyclic philosophy of history precedes the opening of a new golden age. Since the Axis powers did not take advantage of the unique opportunity offered by the inter-war crisis to install a European empire based on Traditional values, those with an intuitive sense these values have no option but to withdraw into ‘apoliteia’ (which does not preclude political activism and even terrorism) until the modern world finally collapses.

It is in the copious publications of Europe’s metapolitical New Right that the remarkable vitality and originality of the contemporary fascist radical right as an ideological phenomenon is to be found, as well as the most sophisticated expression of its Europeanization.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps the ultimate form taken by fascism’s metapoliticization, however, is the extensive use it is now making of the Web. Thanks to the Internet, schemes for the salvation of nations, ethnic groups, Europe, the West, or the White race from their present decadence cease to be located in a movement, party, ideologue, or visionary leader, or even in a particular country or ethnic community: the secular Jeremiads and Evangeliums are everywhere and nowhere simultaneously in a suprahistorical electronic reality which has the most tenuous link with the material world. In ‘cyberfascism’ the zenith of metapoliticization coincides with the ultimate degree of internationalization. To follow up the links to kindred organizations provided on each radical right Web-page will take the avid researcher on a virtual journey through literally thousands of sites located throughout the Europeanized world, all presenting different permutations of palingenetic ultra-nationalism. What results is the paradox as fascism diversifies into an ever greater plethora of factions and sects, it is simultaneously undergoing an ever more intense process

of ecumenalization.<sup>34</sup>

*Democratic fascism, ethnocentric liberalism, and the prospects of the radical right*

The sheer quantity of *groupuscules*, organizations, and publications which point to the tenacity of fascism in its various modulations might lead the unwary to assume that fascism is growing in strength and still poses a challenge to democracy. Fortunately in the present case, where variants of major ideologies are concerned there is often weakness in sheer numbers, since they point to an absent centre, the lack of dynamic movement which would turn them into mutually intelligible dialects of the same *lingua franca*. Fascist ecumenicalism does not run deep, and papers over radical differences in ideology which would nip in the bud any sort of fascist international (as they did when attempts to ‘universalize’ fascism formally were made in the much more propitious 1930s). Similarly, its metapolitics mask the fundamental impotence of visions which survive solely because their essential utopianism is never exposed by the acid test of attempted implementation. Creating a European Empire on differentialist lines, for example, ‘leaving aside the preposterously surreal conditions required before such a fantasy could be enacted’ would involve a process of enforced resettlement and ethnic cleansing which would soon leave the ‘hundred flags’ of the new Europe drenched in blood.

The most telling indicator of the structural impotence of the revolutionary radical right today is perhaps the emergence of electoral parties, which, despite euphemizing their fascist agenda for public consumption, have remained firmly marginalized everywhere in the world since 1945. The NSDAP or the PNF used paramilitary force to back up electoral campaigns and negotiations with the state, and made no secret of their contempt for liberalism. The modern parliamentary fascist party (e.g. the British National Party, the Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands) is more like a toothless, emaciated, old nag than a powerful Trojan

horse capable of carrying revolutionaries into the citadel of power. The extent to which 'real fascism' is a dead letter is exemplified by the consequence of Fini's decision to move the MSI towards the centre from the right to take advantage of the Italian state crisis of the early 1990s. The price for becoming a legitimate player in the political game was to renounce the official commitment to a post-liberal new order, which meant taking Genesis out of the Bible just as much as it did for the hard left when Clause 4 was removed from the Labour Party Constitution. In both cases a small rump of intransigents were left (Scargill's Real Labour Party and Rauti's MSI Fiamma Tricolore) to keep the flame of ideological purity burning as a practically invisible point of light in the political spectrum. Despite occasional bouts of media panic about the possibility of massive swings to the right triggered by neo-Nazi violence against asylum seekers or the BNP's winning of a seat in a local election, the structural conditions are simply lacking for any fascist party to 'take off' as a mass force in national politics anywhere in the world as long as the globalization of capitalism continues apace.

Fascists cannot afford to concede this without ceasing to be fascists. Just as communists when confronted by the appearance of fascism in the 1920s had to classify it as another counter-revolutionary form of capitalism in order to 'save' their teleology, so fascists have to believe they are living on the threshold of a new age or in a protracted interregnum (or the 'Kali Yuga'), in order to retain their commitment to the cause intact. They are temperamentally incapable of coming to terms with one of the most psychologically disturbing cosmological implications of liberal modernity: the idea of history as an intrinsically meaningless, neutral medium in which 'at least as long as our species survives' an infinite chains of events will continually unfold generated by the largely random interaction of the lives of billions of human beings, events which disclose patterns and trends but no intrinsic purpose or continuous story. In that sense the withering away of fascism in the West marks the victory, not of the 'Open' over

the ‘Closed Society’, but of open-ended, amorphous, plotless time over aesthetic shapes and mythic dramas projected onto events as a palliative to the ‘Terror of History’ ‘ a term coined by Mircea Eliade, who before becoming a world expert on paligenetic cosmologies, himself succumbed to the need to believe in the myth of politico-cultural rebirth from decadence.’<sup>35</sup>

It would be academically irresponsible, however, to give this brief account what is, in a liberal perspective, a happy ending. As many reading this will have been already waiting impatiently for me to point out, another type of radical right has crept up on European society, one which is potentially of considerable virulence, not in its ability to destroy liberalism from without, but to contaminate it from within. Sometimes called ‘radical right populism’, or simply ‘the radical right’,<sup>36</sup> its paradoxical qualities perhaps emerge more clearly in the term ‘ethnocratic liberalism’.<sup>37</sup> It is a type of party politics which is not technically a form of fascism, or even a disguised form, for it lacks the core paligenetic vision of a ‘new order’ totally replacing the liberal system. Rather it enthusiastically embraces the liberal system, but considers only one ethnic group full members of civil society. As the case of apartheid South Africa illustrates only too clearly, a state based on ethnocratic liberalism is forced by its own logic to create institutions, including a terror apparatus, to impose a a deeply illiberal regime on all those who do not qualify on racial grounds for being treated as human beings. This contaminated, restrictive form of liberalism poses considerable taxonomic problems because, while it aims to retain liberal institutions and procedures and remain economically and diplomatically part of the international liberal democratic community, its axiomatic denial of the universality of human rights predisposes it to behave against ethnic outgroups as violently as a fascist regime.

The fact that ethnocratic liberalism is a hybrid of radical right and centre (which is why the term ‘radical right populism’ is misleading), and is a paradox rather than an oxymoron also makes it more dangerous. It is perfectly attuned to

a post-war world hostile to unadulterated fascism, one where the clerks<sup>38</sup> now enthusiastically help ‘man’ the ideological Maginot Line which has been constructed to stop an openly revolutionary brand of illiberalism ever again achieving credibility. It speaks a language of ‘rights’ ‘rights of ethnic peoples, rights to a culture’ which addresses deep-seated and understandable fears about the erosion of identity and tradition by the globalizing (but only partially homogenizing) forces of high modernity. It is a discourse which has grown in sophistication thanks to the theorists of communitarianism,<sup>39</sup> ethnopluralism, and differentialism, and in legitimacy in the context of justified concerns over cultural imperialism and globalization. The ground for its widespread acceptance as a familiar and genuine (if unwelcome) member of the liberal ideological family rather than the offspring of a highly fecund anti-liberal cuckoo, has been well prepared by liberalism’s long history of contamination by prejudices which have denied entire groups access to the rights it upholds as ‘sacred’: women, the poor, children, the handicapped, the nomad, the allophone, the aboriginal, the ‘primitive’. If the battle cry of liberalism in theory is Rousseau’s ‘All [human beings] are born equal and everywhere they live in chains’ then its slogan in practice has been Orwell’s ‘All men are equal but some are more equal than others’ (a phrase which is often conveniently identified with the authoritarian ‘other’ rather than ‘our’ own brand of totalitarianism).

The Front National, the FPÖ, the Lega Nord, the Vlaamsblok, the Republikaner, the Centrupartei, the Scandinavian Progress parties, and scores of openly xenophobic parties which have emerged in the countries of the former Soviet Empire<sup>40</sup> vary considerably in their programmes and aspirations, and can sincerely claim to have nothing to do with historic fascism in the conventional sense of the word. Yet in a world inoculated against openly revolutionary varieties of palingenetic ultranationalism, their axiomatic rejection of multi-culturalism, their longing for ‘purity’, their nostalgia for a mythical world of racial

homogeneity and clearly demarcated boundaries of cultural differentiation, their celebration of the ties of blood and history over reason and a common humanity, their rejection of *ius soli* for *ius sanguinis*, their solvent-like abuse of history represent a reformist version of the same basic myth, one which poses a more serious threat to liberal democracy than fascism because it is able to disguise itself, rather like a stick insect posing as a twig to catch its prey. It was arguably because Zhirinovsky created a blend of fascism with ethnocentric liberalism that he made such an impact on Russian party politics in 1993, even if events since have shown that it is the militarist/imperialist perversion of liberalism familiar from 19th century Europe which still retains hegemony. It was his exploitation of ethnocentric liberalism, not fascism, which enabled Milosović to carry out ethnic cleansing for years under the gaze of an international community mesmerized by the (procedurally speaking) democratic consensus on which he based his actions. The total number of victims of the calculated atrocities against non-Serbs which resulted far outweighs that of all the outrages committed by post-war fascists put together, suggesting that ethnocentric liberalism has replaced fascism as the form of radical right best adapted to the realities of the modern world.

The Third Reich's citizenship laws distinguished between Germans and non-Germans, but at least the Nazis had never made a secret of their contempt for what one of their number dismissed in 1925 as 'the Jewish-liberal-democratic-Marxist-humanitarian mentality'. He went on: 'as long as there even a single minute tendril which connects our programme with this root then it is doomed to be poisoned and hence to wither away to a miserable death'.<sup>41</sup> Ethnocentric liberals have genetically modified the radical right so that it thrives in the very soil which once would have been poisonous to it. What are their long term prospects for success, in the face of the 'ecological' purists within liberalism constantly seeking to cleanse it of toxic additives? As I write, Tudjman's ethnocentric liberal party has recently been ousted by centre-left forces in Croatia. Fukuyamians might read

this as a sign that history is still on course for achieving the undisputed hegemony of liberal capitalism which will give birth to the bottomless *ennui* of the ‘last man’. A host of less sanguine social scientists such as Anthony Giddens and Zygmunt Bauman would suggest instead a Manichean view which sees contemporary history as a permanent battle ground between forces tending to realize liberalism’s project of a global humanity and those seeking to thwart and corrupt it. We will continue to live in interesting times.

I must side with the Manicheans. The modern world is not an interregnum, but it is an endgame, one being continually played out, like the eternal recurrence of world snooker competitions and European cup football on British TV, superimposing a cyclic pattern on rectilinear history. ‘It is only our concept of time which causes us to use the phrase The Last Judgment: actually it is a court in permanent session.’<sup>42</sup> Now that millennium hysteria has died down, it might become easier to see that the last act being constantly performed in our age has nothing to do with a particular date or a technological glitch, or even a final reckoning between liberalism and the conveniently alien ideological ‘other’ provided by fascism, communism, or fundamentalism. Instead it is between genuinely liberal versions of democracy open to global humanitarian and ecological perspectives on the one hand, and radical right versions on the other which exploit the profound ambiguity of the concept ‘demos’. Nor is it necessary for openly radical right political formations such as the Front National or the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia to triumph for liberalism to be corroded by the ethnocentrism which they represent. Given the evidence of contemporary Europe’s continuing implication in forces which, according to some reliable humanitarian monitoring agencies, are generating mounting structural poverty and ecological depredation in the ‘South’, it is possible to see ‘actually existing’ liberal Europe not just as a socio-economic fortress, but as an ethno-cultural one as well, protected by ramparts being continually reinforced. It is a concentration

of ethnocentric power which, though liberal in its domestic politics, continues to operate prevalently as a radical right wing force in terms of its total impact on the global community.

The effect of propaganda put out by ethnocentric ideologues and parties can only reinforce this tendency, no matter how marginalized they are from actual government, making it even more impossible for politicians to present populations with policies which would involve a substantial transfer of wealth and resources (back) from the North to the South or address the structural reasons for mounting immigratory pressures, for fear of the mass dissent it would arouse. The next few decades should decide whether a healthy liberalism can prevail or whether, in the midst of a deteriorating environment and escalating demographic explosion which the new millennium inherits from the old, its contamination takes a permanent hold. Meanwhile, one of the messages transmitted by the protesters against the WTO in Seattle in the autumn of 1999 for those who habitually treat the radical right as ‘out there’ is that it might also be already in our midst. If the radical right is based on a malfunction of human empathy, on an affective aridity, then it might be legitimate to appropriate lines written in a very different context by T. S. Eliot, someone who managed to make the transition from fellow traveller of radical right cosmologies to a pundit of ‘high’ liberal humanist culture:

The desert is not remote in southern tropics,  
The desert is not only round the corner.  
The desert is squeezed into the tube-train next to you,  
The desert is in the heart of your brother.<sup>43</sup>



## Endnotes

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1. *Pensiamo l'Italia: Il domani c'è già.. Valori, idee e progetti per l'Alleanza Nazionale, Tesi Politiche approvate dal congresso di Fiuggi*, (On Line System, Rome, 1995), p. 11. For more on the AN's ambiguous embrace of democracy see R. Griffin, 'The Post-fascism of the Alleanza nazionale: A case-study in Ideological Morphology', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1996.
  2. Quoted in C. De Cesare, *Il Fascista del Duemila* (Kaos Edizioni, Milan, 1995), p. 106. For a more sceptical view of the sincerity of the MSI conversion to democracy see Piero Ignazi, *Postfascisti?* (Il Mulino, Bologna, 1994).
  3. A phrase from Faust's monologue in the first scene of Goethe's *Urfaust*
  4. See especially the impressive country by country survey in S. U. Larsen and B. Hagtvet (eds.) *Modern Europe after Fascism* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1998).
  5. One of the best surveys of the conceptual complexities posed by the term 'right' is still R. Eatwell (ed.) *The Nature of the Right* (Pinter, London, 1989).
  6. See, for example, the debate over the comparative value of the terms 'fascism' and 'radical right' in D. Prowe, 'Classic' Fascism and the New Radical Right in Western Europe: Comparisons and Contrasts', *Contemporary European History*, vol. 3, no. 3, (Nov. 1994), pp. 289-96, 303-313. For another perspective on the word-field associated with the radical right see Herbert Kitschelt, *The Radical Right in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis* (University of Michigan Press, Michigan, 1995), chapter 1.
  7. C. O' Maoláin, *The Radical Right: A World Directory* (Longman, London, 1987).
  8. For a fuller account see the General Introduction to R. Griffin, *International Fascism. Theories, Causes and the New Consensus* (Arnold, London, 1998). The latest (unwitting) convert to the consensus is A. J. Gregor, as shown in his latest book on generic fascism *Phoenix* (Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, 1999) in which he refers to it as a 'tortured, enraged, and passionate demand for national renewal' (p. 162). For independent corroboration that this 'new consensus' is not a figment of my imagination see Stanley Payne's review article 'Historical Fascism and the Radical Right', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 35, No. 1, (2000), pp. 109-111.
  9. See R. Griffin, 'Party Time: Nazism as a Temporal Revolution', *History Today* Vol. 49 (4), (April 1999).

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10. See particularly R. Griffin, *Fascism* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995).
  11. The only real exception to this generalization is the explosion of radical right groups both extra-systemic (some fascist) and others ostensibly democratic (ethnocratic), which took place in Russia in the 1990s. Though safely marginalized by the system, the sheer variety of them and the rise to international prominence of Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democratic Party underline the dependency on conditions of acute systemic crisis for radically palingenetic and ethnocratic forms of the right to achieve a popular resonance. Even in post-unification Germany and pre-democracy South Africa the radical right, though violent, remained safely marginalized, because in both cases populist palingenetic hopes for the rebirth of the country were projected onto liberal democracy/capitalism and channelled within the parliamentary system.
  12. Kevin Coogan, *Dreamer of the Day* (Autonomedia, New York, 1999), pp. 317-24.
  13. 'Europe for the Europeans: The fascist vision of the new Europe', Humanities Research Centre Occasional Paper, No. 1 (Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, OX3 0BP), 1994. available at <<http://www.brookes.ac.uk/schools/humanities/staff/europ.txt>>
  14. M. A. Ledeen, *Universal Fascism* (Howard Fertig, New York, 1972).
  15. R. E. Herzstein, *When Nazi Dreams Come True* (Abacus, London, 1982).
  16. Oswald Mosley, *The Alternative* (Mosley Publications, Wilts, 1947)
  17. E.g. 'Sui presupposti spirituali e strutturali dell'unità europea' in *Europa Nazione*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Jan. 1951. For a collection of Evola's highly influential essays on the European empire see part one of J. Evola, *Saggi di Dottrina Politica* (I Dioscuri, Genoa, 1989).
  18. Maurice Bardèche, *Qu'est-ce que le fascisme?* (Les Sept Couleurs, Paris, 1961)
  19. Francis Yockey, *Imperium* (Truth Seeker Press, 1962). See Coogan, *Dreamer of the Day*, op.cit. which locates the book in its context of the fascist international and projects for a new Europe.
  20. See Coogan, *Dreamer of the Day* op.cit., chs. 30-36.
  21. See ibid. chs. 45-8. An highly influential expression of the ideology of Universal Nazism is *The Turner Diaries* written (under a pseudonym) by William Pierce, leader of the neo-Nazi National Alliance.
  22. See N. Lowles and Steve Silver (eds.) *White Noise*, (Searchlight, London, 1998).
  23. The most famous example is the 'Christian Identity' movement, which make extensive use of the Internet. The characteristic blend of Christianity with a Universal Nazi ethos can also be sampled at the Website of 'Kingdom Identity Ministries' at <<http://www>.

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kingidentity/com>.

24. See Jeffrey Kaplan, *Radical Religion in America* (Syracuse University Press, New York, 1997)
25. For a flavour of Third Positionist ideology and its sophisticated use of the Internet see the NRF's Website at <[www.nationalbolshevik.com/nrf/nrfindex.html](http://www.nationalbolshevik.com/nrf/nrfindex.html)>. Another Third Positionist *groupuscule* is Groupe Union Défense, whose ideology is discussed in R. Griffin, 'GUD Reactions: the patterns of prejudice of a neo-fascist *groupuscule*', *Patterns of Prejudice*, vol. 33, no. 2 (April, 1999). The tendency to extreme eclecticism so typical of fascist ideology is explored in R. Eatwell, 'Towards a New Model of Generic Fascism', *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 4(2), 1992.
26. See R. Griffin, 'GUD Reactions', op.cit.
27. See Roger Eatwell. 'The Holocaust denial: a study in propaganda technique', in L. Cheles, R. Ferguson, M. Vaughan (eds.) *The Far Right in Wesyern and Eastern Europe* (Longman, London, 1995)
28. E.g. Ernst Nolte, *Der europäische Bürgerkrieg* (Proyläen Verlag, Berlin, 1987), David Irving, *Hitler's War* (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1977).
29. See Pierre-André Taguieff, *Sur la Nouvelle Droite*, (Descartes & Cie, Paris, 1994); R. Griffin, 'Between metapolitics and *apoliteia*: the New Right's strategy for conserving the fascist vision in the 'interregnum'', *Contemporary French Studies* (February 2000); R. Griffin, 'Plus ca change.! The Fascist Pedigree of the Nouvelle Droite' in Edward Arnold (ed.) *The Development of the Radical Right in France 1890-1995* (Routledge, London, 2000)..
30. See the Website of *The Scorpion* at <<http://www.stormloader.com/thescorpion>>
31. Horacio Cagni, 'The absence of God and tragic vitalism in fascism', *Trasgressioni* No. 20 (Jan.-August 1995)
32. This would appear to be true of two intellectuals who in the past have worked tirelessly to establish the New Right as the major current of radical right thought in their respective countries: Alain de Benoist (France) and Marco Tarchi (Italy), even if they are still associated with publications which betray the persistence of a belief in the 'interregnum' and its eventual dissolution in a new age.
33. An outstanding example of the richness and diversity of New Right cultural production was provided by Italy in the 1970s and 80s: see especially M. Revelli, 'La nuova destra' in F. Ferraresi (ed.) *La destra radicale* (Feltrinelli, Milan, 1984); and P. Bologna and E. Mana (eds). *Nuova destra e cultura reazionaria negli anni ottanta*, (Notiziario

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dell'Istituto storico della Resistenza in Cuneo, no. 23, 1983).

34. K. Coogan's impressively researched *Dreamer of the Day* (op.cit.) provides a fascinating insight into the internationalization of post-war fascism, its extraordinary ideological diversity and earnestness, and the bizarre fantasy world which some fascists still inhabit while they wait for the 'interregnum' to close.
35. On Eliade's time as an ideologue of the Iron Guard see Coogan, op.cit. pp. 318-26.
36. E.g. Hans-George Betz, *Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe*, (London, Macmillan, 1994); Herbert Kitschelt, *The Radical Right in Western Europe* (Michigan, The University of Michigan Press, 1995).
37. For more on this concept see R. Griffin 'Last Rights?' in S. Ramet (ed.) *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe*, (Penn State Press, Pennsylvania, 1999)
38. An allusion to Julien Benda's classic study of the European intelligentsia's betrayal of the humanist tradition in the 1930s, *La Trahison des Clercs*.
39. For an excellent essay which underlines the anti-liberal thrust of communitarian notions of culture see Z. Bauman's introduction to the reprint of his *Culture as Practice* (Sage, London, 1999), pp. xxxiii-xlv
40. See S. Ramet (ed.) *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe*, (Penn State Press, Pennsylvania, October 1999)
41. See R. Griffin, *Fascism* op.cit., pp. 118-9
42. Franz Kafka, 'Betrachtungen über Sünde, Leid, Hoffnung und den wahren Weg' (no. 40) in *Hochzeitsvorbereitungen auf dem Lande und andere Prosa aus dem Nachlass Betrachtungen*, (Fischer, Frankfurt am Main, 1980), p.33.
43. T. S. Eliot, *Choruses from 'The Rock', Selected Poems*, (Faber and Faber, London, 1961), p. 109.