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The National Front and environmental politics, 1967–90

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Abstract

The green entanglements of the inter-war British far right are well-documented. Martin Pugh has drawn attention to the predominantly rural, agricultural support base of the British Union of Fascists. We know that the aspiration to go 'back to the land' was deeply enmeshed with a politics of racial hygiene, which equated the urban with miscegenation and the rural with purity. However, in the post-war world, British far-right ecologism has typically been interpreted as a curious anomaly driven by cynical realpolitik. This article contends environmental themes as an intellectual staple of British fascism—running from the interwar far right, through the NF, and into the latter's largest successor organization, the Flag Group. The Front's preoccupation with the environment, and its racism, were mutually reinforcing, central pillars of its politics. Its environmentalism was alternately revolutionary and conservative, nostalgic and future oriented.

In 1985, an organization calling itself the 'Kent Heritage Group' made headlines after local National Front (hereafter 'NF') members were recognized at a jumble sale purporting to raise funds for heritage and conservation efforts.[1] A subsequent investigation revealed that the group was led by the former NF parliamentary candidate for Gravesham, Paul Johnson. Articles in *National Front News* invited rural Front members to initiate or join local campaigns on country bus services, unemployment rates amongst farmers, the closures of local shops, and the potential impact of American cruise missiles.[2] The paper cited the Front's West Suffolk branch, which had organized a 'No to Cruise, No to CND' demonstration outside the Lakenheath US airbase, as a successful example of the latter.

Contemporary political commentary interpreted the 'greening' of Britain's most powerful far-right party as a curious anomaly driven by cynical realpolitik.[3] In contrast, this article contends establishes environmental themes as an intellectual staple of British fascism—running from the interwar far right, through the NF, and into the latter's largest successor

[1] 'Kent Fascists Hopping Mad', *Searchlight* 124 (1965), 7.

[2] 'Crisis Over Rural Jobs'; 'Save our Country Bus Services'; 'Support your Corner Shop'; 'West Suffolk National Front', all *National Front News* 60 (1984), 2.

[3] 'The Greening of the Brownshirts', *Searchlight* 165 (1989), 1; J. Radkau, *The Age of Ecology: A Global History*, trans. P. Camiller (Cambridge: Polity, 2014), 79; D. Wall, 'The Green Shirt Effect', *Searchlight* 168 (1989), 4. See also I. Coates, 'A Cuckoo in the Nest: The National Front and Green Ideology'. In: J. Holder, ed., *Perspectives on the Environment: Interdisciplinary Research in Action* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1993), 13–14.

organisation, the Flag Group.[4] The Front's preoccupation with the environment, and its racism, were mutually reinforcing, central pillars of its politics. Its environmentalism was alternately revolutionary and conservative, nostalgic and future-oriented. The first three sections of this article examine the Front's preoccupation with overpopulation, rural revivalism, and the impact of the latter upon the national(ist) imaginary. The fourth section turns its attention to the urban and to aspirations to community. The fifth and final section turns to the afterlives of ecological thought in the Flag Group.

Environmental themes in the interwar fascist tradition

The green entanglements of the interwar British far right are well documented. The movement was populated by individuals for whom an aspiration to go 'back to the land' was enmeshed with a politics of racial hygiene, which equated the urban with miscegenation and the rural with purity.[5] Gerard Wallop, Viscount Lymington, was an organicist and agriculturalist for whom racism, the doctrine of overpopulation, and settler colonialism sat on the same ideological continuum. Writing in 1932, Wallop suggested that a policy of mass emigration to the White Dominions would relieve pressure on rural Britain and guarantee the future of the empire by promoting colonial self-sufficiency.[6] His close associate, the British rural revivalist and organicist Henry Rolf Gardiner, valued ecologically attentive farming in part for its eugenic capacities—landscape husbandry would develop crops of suitable nutritional value to maintain racial pride and domination.[7] The path of Germany's National Socialist government, Gardiner suggested, was exemplary; Britain would do well to abandon its misguided cleavage to 'commerce and usury' (coded as Jewish) in favour of the Nazi 'values of earth and bread'.[8]

In 1941, Wallop, Gardiner, and H.J. Massingham co-founded the Kinship in Husbandry—an organization dedicated to the cause of rural revival. It is credited with significant informal influence on contemporary agricultural and/or ecological organizations, amongst which the organicist Soil Association (hereafter 'SA') is perhaps most significant.[9] It is perhaps no surprise then, that Jorian Jenks—organicist and former agricultural adviser to the British Union of Fascists (hereafter 'BUF')—was warmly welcomed within the SA upon his release from wartime internment in 1945.

In his influential study of post-war British fascism, Graham Macklin argued that, by the time Jenks and his allies had ascended to leadership positions within the environmental movement, their politics were relics of a bygone era—an 'impenetrable ideological bunker seemingly impervious to the march of time'.[10] The SA in fact proved a fertile ground for

[4] The animal rights movement, which is connected to but by no means coterminous with the green movement, has largely been excluded from analysis. Links between the British far right and animal rights campaigns have been documented extensively elsewhere. Similarly, organized resistance to the far right amongst environmentalists is beyond the scope of this essay. See J. Gottlieb, *Feminine Fascism: Women in Britain's Fascist Movement* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), 78, 279, 299; H. Kean, *Animal Rights: Political and Social Change in Britain Since 1800* (London: Reaktion, 1998); B. Klug, 'Ritual Murmur: The Undercurrent of Protest against Religious Slaughter of Animals in Britain in the 1980s', *Patterns of Prejudice* 23 (1989), 16–28; R. Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain: A History, 1918–1945* (Oxford, 1987), 148, 181.

[5] R. Moore-Colyer, 'Back to Basics: Rolf Gardiner, H. J. Massingham and "A Kinship in Husbandry"', *Rural History* 12 (2001), 85–108. The origins of emigration as a solution to 'overcrowding' are traceable to nineteenth-century approaches to the urban; see R. Williams, *The Country and the City* (reissued edn, London: Penguin, 2016), 404.

[6] G. Wallop, *Horn, Hoof and Corn: The Future of British Agriculture* (London: Faber & Faber, 1932), quoted in D. Stone, *Responses to Nazism in Britain, 1933-1939: Before War and Holocaust* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 155.

[7] M. Pfister and P. Wright, 'Writing the Obituaries', *Soundings* 8 (1998), 14–48, 42.

[8] R. Griffiths, *Fellow Travellers of the Right: British Enthusiasts for Nazi Germany, 1933-1939* (London: Constable, 1980), 146.

[9] R. Moore-Colyer, 'Rolf Gardiner, English Patriot and the Council for the Church and Countryside', *Agricultural History Review* 49 (2001), 187–209, 201.

[10] G. D. Macklin, *Very Deeply Dyed in Black: Sir Oswald Mosley and the Resurrection of British Fascism after 1945* (London: Tauris, 2017), 64; M. Reed, 'Fight the Future! How the Contemporary Campaigns of the UK Organic Movement have Arisen from their Composting of the Past', *Sociologica Ruralis* 41 (2001), 67, 136.

ideological development and renewal. Jenks's rise to a position of ideological leadership was almost immediate. He edited the SA's journal, *Mother Earth*, from 1945 until his death in 1963. In this capacity, he propounded a philosophy in equal parts ruralist, nativist, and racist, 'embracing land reform, the paramountcy of agriculture, the subordination of mechanicism to organicism, the localization of economies and the cultivation of a consciousness of the ties of blood and soil'.[11]

As Richard Moore-Colyer has argued, the strength of Jenks's convictions, and his 'proselytizing zeal', helped to popularize a journal which was otherwise dry and scientific in its focus. The authority Jenks derived from his position enabled him to enter into correspondence with Richard Walther Darré, the forefather of Nazi 'blood and soil' ideology—the mystical notion of a spiritual connection between racial community and ancestral land. Jenks worked with Darré to establish a German branch of the SA.[12] When Jenks died, editorship was taken over by a liberal-left partnership of Robert Waller and Michael Allaby. The latter reported his shock when, in the first days after Jenks's passing, the office received 'considerable mail from various far-right groups'.[13] Elements of the post-war far right had evidently coalesced around the organicist movement.

Overpopulation

There is no record of which organizations contacted *Mother Earth* during the 1963 editorial change, following Jorian Jenks's death. However, it is reasonable to suppose that the British National Party (hereafter 'BNP') might have been involved. Under the leadership of John Bean, the newly formed neo-Nazi group espoused a 'blood and soil' ideology. In terms reminiscent of Jenks and Darré, the BNP identified the spiritual connection between a people and their ancestral land as the foundation of nationhood, thus excluding immigrants and racial 'Others'.[14] The BNP counterposed their philosophy to that of the Jewish-coded capitalist, who was understood to 'look upon the soil as simply a source of immediate financial profit'.[15] In so doing, they claimed that 'blood and soil' ideology was a pathway to positive environmental stewardship, aligning themselves with the organicist movement.

Richard Thurlow characterizes the 1960s as the point at which the far-right movements of the immediate post-war years were reformed and revitalized by a 'new generation' of leaders.[16] This younger generation, which included Bean, John Tyndall, Martin Webster, and Colin Jordan, were largely products of A.K. Chesterton's League of Empire Loyalists (LEL)—a far-right organization defined by its conservative imperialism. They generated new groups with a more explicitly racist bent (including the BNP and the Racial Preservation Society, or RPS) in the hope of capitalising upon the violent hostility which greeted postwar immigration from the so-called New Commonwealth. Likewise, the BNP defined itself in opposition to the explicit German influences of the existing movement and sought to develop a national(ist) politics which was uniquely British. It is perhaps for these reasons that the language of the rural, as a spiritual repository of the British race, took on such importance.

In 1967, the fragmented constellation of British far-right organizations bridged their differences 'in an attempt to form a national mass party'.[17] The new coalition—soon to be called the National Front—was the product of a formal merger between the LEL and the

[11] R. Moore-Colyer, 'Towards "Mother Earth": Jorian Jenks, Organicism, the Right and the British Union of Fascists', *Journal of Contemporary History* 39 (2004), 364.
[12] Macklin, *Deeply Dyed*, 65.
[13] P. Conford, 'The Politics of the Organic Movement—An Overview', *The Lobster* 65 (2008/9) [https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/online/issue56/lob56-25.htm, accessed 4 August 2021].
[14] Richardson, *British Fascism*, 170–71.
[15] C. Jordan, 'Recognition of the Soil as our Greatest Material Asset', *COMBAT* 15, quoted in *Ibid*, 171.
[16] R. Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain: A History, 1918-1998* (London, 1998), 230–32.
[17] Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain, 1918-1998*, 245–49.

BNP, and the informal migration of a substantial number of RPS members. John Tyndall's Greater Britain Movement (GMB) was admitted one year later, disregarding initial concerns over its unrepentant Nazism. The coalition inherited the personnel and infrastructure of its parent organizations, including the journal *Spearhead*—formerly the organ of the GMB.

Bean used *Spearhead* to propose a raft of environmental policies. In 'Pollution—A Nationalist View', he blamed post-war environmental degradation on the import of American-style industrial farming techniques, including 'the over-use of fertilisers and insecticides and […] the removal of hedges'.[18] While British agriculture should be encouraged to produce 'the very maximum of which our home soil is capable', this must not come at the cost of biodiversity loss and the 'creation of dust-bowl conditions'.[19] Organic farming represented an obvious alternative.

Such articles reflect the continued impact of the intellectual world of the interwar far right. However, far-right ecologism was far from a static ideology. The NF emerged contemporaneously with a general 'upsurge of environmental concern' and with a reconstitution of the nature and meaning of environmental politics.[20] The 'Ecological Revolution' entailed the linking of ecological problems to the 'larger failure of modern society' and the necessity of systematic change to the development of sustainable forms of life. The Front's politics were not developed in isolation from these trends.

The quasi-Malthusian concept of overpopulation entered the political mainstream through the phenomenal success of Paul Ehrlich's 1968 treatise *The Population Bomb*. As Ehrlich himself admitted, the book was chiefly an emotional, rather than intellectual, endeavour.[21] Its opening pages detailed the author's travels in India. In an unambiguously racist passage, Ehrlich described his fear and disgust at encountering an undifferentiated mass of brown bodies in a Delhi slum. These experiences were then used as a springboard to explain Ehrlich's central thesis: that population control was necessary to prevent overcrowding and the over-use of limited resources. Though Ehrlich hoped that 'voluntary methods' would bring about the desired changes, he accepted the need for coercion should all else fail.

Ehrlich's work built on a novel awareness of the earth as a fragile, closed system which was vulnerable to extinction (as expressed, for example, in Barbara Ward's 1966 *Spaceship Earth*).[22] It signalled a new orientation in environmental politics, in which ideas of scarcity were paramount. Although criticism of economic and demographic growth coexisted within the environmental movement, the doctrine of overpopulation acted to displace blame from the former to the latter.[23] It also led to the targeting of the assumed agents of population increase—typically downwardly racialized and/or immigrant communities—and to a careless disregard for their lives.

In Britain, the cause of population reduction was eagerly taken up by the Conservation Society (hereafter 'CS'), founded just one year before the NF. The CS enthroned population expansion as the 'fundamental factor' undermining the earth's capacity to provide a liveable environment. Acting as a pressure group, the CS hoped to harness the power of the British state to achieve the goal of zero demographic growth. In practice, this entailed a punitive utilitarianism, which was prepared to sacrifice vulnerable groups for the (assumed) greater good; immigration controls were to be maintained, and 'blanket increases in family allowances' opposed on the grounds of their alleged 'pronatalism'. Such calls were

[18] J. Bean, 'Pollution—A Nationalist View', *Spearhead* 30 (1970), 10.
[19] 'A Case for Farmers', *Spearhead* 30 (1970), 2.
[20] M. Veldman, *Fantasy, the Bomb, and the Greening of Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 205, 208; Radkau, *Age of Ecology*, 79.
[21] P. Ehrlich, *The Population Bomb*, (rev. edn, Massachusetts: Rivercity Press, 1975), xii, 1–2.
[22] Veldman, *Greening of Britain*, 219–20, 238.
[23] B. Johnson, 'Eco-fascists or Nuclear Ostriches?', *Ecologist* 6 (July 1976), 200–02.

reiterated in the influential environmental manifesto *A Blueprint for Survival*, which enshrined small communities as the hallmark of sustainable life.[24] *Blueprint* offered a contradiction: it hoped that the ideal community would be produced consensually, through the expansion of participatory democracy, but called for measures which could only be enforced through state-backed violence—including an 'end to immigration'.

The racism and authoritarianism which underpinned responses to the 'problem' of overpopulation acted as a recommendation to the far right. *Spearhead* took Ehrlich's ideas to their logical conclusion, refracting them through an explicitly Social Darwinist lens and integrating them within an older, eugenicist framework. The journal commended the campaign against overpopulation as a 'good cause' and, like Ehrlich, placed responsibility for global resource scarcity on the 'teeming millions' of Africa and Asia.[25] The UK was understood to have absorbed the 'surplus' of the population boom through its immigration system, bringing the country to the brink of environmental collapse.[26] As such, the journal claimed that 'the preservation of our environment' (note the exclusionary nature of the collective pronoun 'our') could only be guaranteed by the repatriation of 'coloured immigrants, their dependants and their descendants'.

Bean argued that the problem of overpopulation originated in an arrogant defiance of the laws of nature—especially that of natural selection.[27] By 1972, this had become the official editorial line. In an article on famine in India, it was argued that any offer of aid 'would [...] stimulate that nation's suicidal birth-rate', thus intensifying the strain on global resources.[28] In order to restore natural balance, *Spearhead* asserted, the weak, the Bean's and the vulnerable must be left to die. This was not a fringe position. Four years later, Britain's premier environmental journal, the *Ecologist*, ran an article argued for the end of foreign aid programmes seeking to alleviate starvation.[29] For its author, the 'unpalatable truth'—expressed in visceral terms—was that many millions of human beings 'should never have been born and ought to die as quickly as possible'. These arguments were clearly part of the mainstream of environmental thought, although they were never uncontested (the piece received substantial pushback in subsequent editions).[30]

By this logic, mainstream approaches to population control exacerbated the problem: the use of contraception was itself an 'artificial' defiance of natural law.[31] As Bean proclaimed:

> [In Britain today] the people of the "peaks", those carrying the genes of talent, are for a variety of reasons, mainly economic, restricting the sizes of their families and have been doing so for three generations, whilst the people of the "valleys", with genes of less potential talent, and whose numbers in earlier ages would have been controlled by nature's laws, are coming to represent an increasingly larger [sic.] percentage of the population.[32]

In other words, the prosperous, White proponents of contraception were engaged in an unnatural and unpardonable act of racial treachery. Implicit within such statements is an endorsement of gendered violence.[33] Rather than seeking to suppress the country's birth

[24] E. Goldsmith and others, *A Blueprint for Survival: By the Editors of The Ecologist* (rev. edn, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), 48, 50–53.
[25] 'A Good Cause in the Wrong Hands', *Spearhead* 50 (1972), 8.
[26] I. Foderingham, 'Overseas Students: Time to Call a Halt', *Spearhead* 139 (1980), 20; J. O'Brien, 'Export or Die!', *Spearhead* 50 (1972), 9.
[27] Bean, 'Pollution'.
[28] 'Aid Britons; Not Foreigners', *Spearhead* 49 (1972), 8.
[29] Victor Gordon, 'Aid—the Arch Enemy', *Ecologist* 6 (May 1976), 123.
[30] B. Johnson, 'Eco-fascists?'; 'Letters', *Ecologist* 6 (August/September 1976), 271.
[31] 'A Good Cause', 8.
[32] J. Bean, 'Population and the Balance of Nature', *Spearhead* 29 (1970), 11.
[33] See K. Wilson, 'In the Name of Reproductive Rights: Race, Neoliberalism and the Embodied Violence of Population Policies', *New Formations* 91 (2017), 50–68; and B. Hartmann, *Reproductive Rights and Wrongs: The Global Politics of Population Control*, 3rd edn. (Chicago, 2016).

rate, 'a wise and far-sighted population policy' in Britain would aim at a high birth-rate, accompanied by 'a high rate of emigration to [the White Dominions] so as to ensure the filling up of those parts of the world by mainly British stock'.[34] There are echoes here of Wallop's interwar preoccupation with settler colonialism as a tool of racial revival and national autarky.

As the intermingled influences of Ehrlich and Wallop demonstrate, the NF's preoccupation with overpopulation was itself the product of international intellectual exchange.[35] Meredith Veldman comments that 'eco-activism' was often viewed as an American phenomenon during the 1960s and 1970s, in part due to the outsize role of American writers in moulding the movement.[36] This did not mean that British contributions were insignificant, but rather that they occurred within a transatlantic dialogue.

The March 1980 edition of *Spearhead* republished an article by the American white supremacist journal *Instauration* entitled 'Triage and Lifeboats'.[37] Its authors proposed that 'advanced societies should take whatever steps deemed necessary to preserve themselves as surviving islands of civilizations in a demographic Ice Age'. They claimed the American ecologist Garrett Hardin as an intellectual authority. Hardin's work questioned the effectiveness of any authority above the level of the nation-state, denigrated immigration as 'suicidal', and advocated for the elimination of aid payments to the Global South.[38] The latter two policies were based on Hardin's doctrine of 'lifeboat ethics', which conceptualized nations as lone rafts surrounded by a forbidding ocean. The poorest, most overcrowded 'lifeboats' would be the first to capsize, but even the richest could not take on additional passengers, or expend resources saving them from the waves, without reducing their own chances of survival.

Here and in his earlier work, Hardin drew inspiration from the 'tragedy of the commons'.[39] He cited 'ruin' as the inevitable consequence of a limited system (the commons) in which the individual was nevertheless driven to 'increase his herd without limit'. 'The tragedy of the commons' is a metaphor with distinctly English, pastoral resonances. It is unsurprising that it exerted a grip on the imagination of Front leaders at a time when they were embarking on a policy of rural revival, which was once again the product of the international ideological community.

Rural revivalism

The leadership of the NF was rarely secure. The national chair, John Tyndall, was blamed for poor electoral results in 1979 and ousted the following year. Longstanding National Activities director Martin Webster, who had been instrumental in Tyndall's removal, was himself critically undermined by a new, faction within the party. This group—consisting of Nick Griffin, Derek Holland, and Patrick Harrington—was young, well-educated, and eager to chart a new course for the Front.[40] They repudiated Webster's emphasis on confrontational 'street politics', and expelled him from the party in 1984.[41] In an embittered circular, issued in 1984, Webster accused this group of seeking to 'achieve ends which are

[34] 'A Good Cause', 8.

[35] For details on the American context, see S. A. Berger, '"Oh, What a Tangled Web we Weave": The Triangulation of Environmentalism, Population Growth, and Immigration in the US', *Review of History and Political Science* 4 (2016).

[36] Veldman, *Greening of Britain*, 206.

[37] 'Triage and Lifeboats', *Spearhead* 137 (1980), 13.

[38] J. S. Dryzek, *The Politics of the Earth: Environmental Discourses*, 3rd edn. (Oxford, 2013), 38; G. Hardin, 'Living on a Lifeboat'. In: G. Hardin and J. Baden, eds, *Managing the Commons* (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1977), 262.

[39] G. Hardin, 'The Tragedy of the Commons', *Science* 162 (1968), 1243–48.

[40] N. Copsey, 'Au-revoir to "sacred cows"? Assessing the Impact of the *Nouvelle-Droite* in Britain', *Democracy and Security* 9 (2013), 291.

[41] Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain, 1918-1998*, 255.

alien and noxious to *British* Nationalism [emphasis in original]'.[42] This statement may refer to the esteem in which the new leaders held the philosophy of the French *Nouvelle Droite* ('New Right'), the Italian *Terza Posizione* ('Third Position'), and the work of Otto Strasser—an early Nazi whose supposedly 'left-wing' policies were believed to represent a road not taken for German fascism.[43]

The ideals of the *Nouvelle Droite* had been introduced to the British far right by *The Scorpion*, a self-described nationalist journal of 'metapolitics and culture' edited by Michael Walker, the NF organizer for central London.[44] Walker also acted as a vector for the introduction of Italian fascist ideology to the UK. Along with his then-housemate Nick Griffin, Walker sheltered the *Terza Posizione* member Roberto Fiore in the aftermath of the 1980 Bologna massacre—a neo-fascist bomb attack which killed 80—when Italian police inquiries forced the latter to flee to London.[45] The NF's new leadership recognized in these international contacts an opportunity to renew and rejuvenate the cause of nationalism in British politics.

According to Matthew Collins, a former Front member, 'the likes of Griffin and Harrington' felt that the party had sacrificed much of its radical reputation under the leadership of John Tyndall, drawing on a mixture of unreconstructed Nazism and right-wing Conservative Party policy in order to be 'attractive to disenchanted Tories under Heath'.[46] Fiore and his compatriots offered a synthesis of ethno-nationalism and historically 'left-wing' causes—including the environment and anti-capitalist economics—which it was believed would resurrect the Front's reputation as a revolutionary force. Both the *Nouvelle Droite* and the *Terza Posizione* located nationalist revolutionary potential within the individual cadres of a movement. Nationalists were expected to undergo a process of total spiritual renewal, casting off the ties of liberal democratic and capitalist materialism in order to reconnect with their cultural heritage.[47] Out of this philosophy was born the 'Political Soldier' movement, which encouraged Front members to 'stand for order, honour, beauty and love' against the moral and spiritual sickness of the existing political system.[48]

In the nationalist imaginary, the British countryside figured as the wellspring of spiritual renewal. In contrast, the urban was equated with what Jeremy Burchardt has described as the characteristically Victorian analogy of 'physical disease and moral corruption', given fresh racial overtones.[49] Due to the overwhelmingly urban nature of immigration, the NF identified Britain's cities with miscegenation. Eddy Butler, an occasional writer for the *Nationalism Today*, criticized the 'corrupting' effect of urban life on 'our weaker people' (White Britons in interracial relationships).[50] The same author identified the countryside as a repository of good racial hygiene, arguing that a 'healthy yeomanry' formed the backbone of the nation.

These pronouncements were also motivated by Social Darwinist beliefs. In applying the law of natural selection to humanity, the far right categorized *homo sapiens* as just another animal. As an animal, 'and therefore [as] part of nature', Butler claimed, 'the closer [man] gets to the natural environment, the better it is for his spiritual well-being'.[51] This logic provided justification for the NF's calls for a 'Back to the Land' policy. Issue 20 of

[42] T. Bar-On, *Where Have All the Fascists Gone?* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 10; R. Eatwell, 'The Esoteric Ideology of the National Front in the 1980s'. In: Mike Cronin, ed., *The Failure of British Fascism: The Far Right and the Fight for Political Recognition* (Basingstoke, 1996), 107.

[43] P. Ignazi, *Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe*, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 2006), 182.

[44] *The Scorpion*, undated [http://thescorp.multics.org/, accessed 11 August 2021].

[45] Copsey, 'Sacred Cows', 292.

[46] M. Collins, *Hate: My Life in the British Far Right* (London: Biteback, 2011), 45.

[47] Eatwell, 'Esoteric Ideology', 111–12.

[48] D. Stevens, 'Towards the Political Soldier', *Nationalism Today* 24 (1984), 24.

[49] J. Burchardt, *Paradise Lost: Rural Idyll and Social Change in England since 1800* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2002), 48.

[50] E. Butler, 'Our Rural and Urban Future', *Nationalism Today* 22 (1983), 9.

[51] Butler, 'Rural and Urban', 9.

Nationalism Today described 'the deep-rooted belief that man must again return to live in harmony with the forces of nature' as the fourth pillar of Front ideology (sitting alongside 'Social Justice, Racial Purity and National Sovereignty').[52] The paper pledged to emphasize 'environmental issues' in future editions, referencing the nationalist's 'moral duty' to defend Britain's heritage. A regular feature, 'On the Green Front', was introduced in 1984 to interpret environmental news through a nationalist lens.

More practical steps soon followed. As the anti-fascist magazine *Searchlight* reported, the Political Soldiers sought to create 'rural centres' where a new standard of committed nationalist cadre could be trained in the inspirational surroundings of the British countryside.[53] The homes of Rosine de Bounevialle (editor of the independent nationalist journal *Candour*) in Liss Forest and of Front vice chairman Nick Griffin in rural Suffolk and Shropshire were used for this purpose.[54] By the mid-1980s, the Front had also moved their graphics and typesetting equipment to Suffolk, thus placing rural East Anglia at the centre of national propaganda production and distribution.

For the most part, however, the Front's 'Back to the Land' policy remained an aspiration projected into an imagined future. The Political Soldiers recognized that reality of Britain's countryside was very different from the ideal presented in nationalist literature. In an article of which Jenks would have been proud, Derek Holland accused 'Big Business' of 'criminal "farming" techniques—consistent over-cropping, inappropriate mechanization, and the indiscriminate application of poorly researched pesticides'.[55] Holland argued that the resulting impact on soil fertility and food quality amounted to a threat to British national sovereignty. A true rural revival would entail not just a move away from the cities, but major land reform.

In a *Nationalism Today* article entitled 'Blood and Soil', Steve Brady envisioned a future in which a Front government would abolish large estates and foreign investment in the countryside.[56] The land, Brady argued, 'is not property to be hawked about in the marketplace but the sacred inheritance of the Race, to be husbanded with care, loved, cherished, and if need be died for'. Britain would 'again be a nation of crofters and free yeoman farmers'. Such changes were to revive British agriculture, placing it once again at the centre of economic policy. This would enable a return to small rural communities as the nation's primary form of social organization.

Brady's comments merged radical visions of redistribution—founded on the belief that the land belongs to those who till it—with conservative understandings of stewardship by a racial elite. In so doing, he drew on the ideological legacy of the interwar British far right and its fellow travellers.[57] The circles surrounding Jenks and Wallop had campaigned against the replacement of a traditional landed aristocracy with a Jewish-coded 'alien plutocracy' assumed to have little interest in rural stewardship and conservation.[58] In order to prevent the degradation of the land, these writers demanded 'a new elite steeped in the soil and the English tradition'. The result was to be a devolved economy in which White, rural communities were the key contributors.

The national

Brady's understanding of the rural idyll rested on a British, rather than English, vocabulary of images. His article opened with a discussion of the plight of the villagers of Knoydart, a Scottish Highland village then owned by Major Nigel Chamberlain-Macdonald, an

[52] 'On the Green Front', *Nationalism Today* 20 (undated), 2.
[53] 'Front Runners of the Right', *Searchlight* 127 (1986), 4.
[54] 'Channel Four Dispatches the Political Soldiers', *Searchlight* 161 (1988), 4.
[55] D. Holland, 'Land for the People', *Nationalism Today* 9 (1982), 12.
[56] Steve Brady, 'Blood and soil', *Nationalism Today* 14 (1983), 20.
[57] These ideas also have a clear heritage in the 'Distributist' ideology espoused by Hilaire Belloc and G.K. Chesterton. For a pertinent summary, see Veldman, *Greening of Britain*, 31, 34.
[58] Moore-Colyer, 'Towards "Mother Earth"', 358.

absentee landlord who had proposed to sell the land to the Ministry of Defence.[59] Brady argued that the sale would result in the demolition of the village and the dispersal of its community, situating it in the longer history of forced displacement from the region associated with the Highland Clearances. Readers were called upon to defend the right of small crofters to their 'ancestral lands' against the depredations of 'millionaire "lairds"'.

In 1948, Knoydart had been the setting of a protest for smallholders' land rights (known locally as a 'land raid').[60] The dispute garnered media attention, partly owing to the Nazi connections of the landowner Baron Brocket. It was ultimately mythologized as the 'last land raid' in a long, distinctively Scottish political tradition. Brady's decision to write of Knoydart was therefore laden with symbolism. In a consummation of the Front's policy of claiming traditionally 'left-wing' causes as its own, Brady sublimated the anti-fascist dimension of Knoydart's land rights protests, reinterpreting this history in line with the principles of 'blood and soil'.

The article appropriated events associated with a specific vision of Scottish nationhood, acknowledging the specificity of Highland experiences even while incorporating them into a narrative of *British* anti-capitalist and anti-landowner resistance.[61] Contemporaneous pieces in *Bulldog*, the paper of the Young National Front, and *Nationalism Today* used images of dramatic upland landscapes to engender national pride and conservationist, defensive impulses in their readerships.[62] Nevertheless, such depictions were far outnumbered by photos which represented the threat to the soil as a threat to a nostalgically imagined, distinctively southern English countryside. *Nationalism Today* characterized the countryside as a 'green and pleasant land'—a phrase which, as Christine Berberich notes, has become synonymous with English national identity.[63] *National Front News* typically accompanied articles on embattled rural existence with large photos showing an archetypal English pastoralism, featuring rolling hills, chocolate box villages, and ancient woodland.[64]

This Anglocentrism was simply the most recent manifestation of a long-term bias within the nationalist imaginary. Berberich argues that propaganda during both the First and Second World Wars embraced a 'nostalgic celebration of … rural Englishness'.[65] Her thesis has been developed in subsequent analyses of the visual cultures of World War Two, which suggest that the mythology of 'Deep England'—an immutable 'green and pleasant land' symbolizing 'order, stability, and tradition'—was universalized by government propaganda campaigns designed to evince patriotic, defensive instincts in the general public.[66] In drawing on this vocabulary of images, the NF was reproducing its contradictions: identification with the nationalist project was invited only from a select quarter of the UK, producing an exclusionary elision of (southern) English and British nationalist sentiment.

The growth of secessionist movements in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland made these contradictions yet more troubling; by the mid-1980s, a shift in the NF's policy on the

[59] Brady, 'Blood and Soil', 20.

[60] See C. W. J. Withers, 'Place, Memory, Monument: Memorializing the Past in Contemporary Highland Scotland', *Ecumene* 3 (1996), 325–44; A. MacDougall, *Knoydart: The Last Scottish Land Raid* (Billingham, 1993).

[61] For parallels with Scottish nationalist discourse see E. A. Cameron, '"Unfinished business": The Land Question and the Scottish Parliament', *Contemporary British History* 15 (2001), 83–114.

[62] 'Keep Britain Tidy!', *Bulldog* 7 (undated), 3; 'Learning to Respect Mother Nature', *Nationalism Today* 20 (undated), 1.

[63] C. Berberich, 'This Green and Pleasant Land: Cultural Constructions of Englishness'. In: R. Burden and S. Kohl, eds, *Landscape and Englishness* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), 207–08; D. Jones, 'The Dangers of Nuclear Power', *Nationalism Today* 4 (undated), 9.

[64] 'Britain at Fault over Acid Rain', *National Front News* 60 (1984); J. Field, 'A Healthy Race, a Clean Environment', *Nationalism Today* 12 (undated), 20; 'What we're Fighting for', *Nationalism Today* 1 (1980), 20.

[65] Berberich, 'Green and Pleasant Land', 215.

[66] R. M. Lewis, 'The Planning, Design and Reception of British Home Front Propaganda Posters of the Second World War', unpublished PhD thesis (University of Southampton, 2004), 113; M. Donnelly, *Britain in the Second World War* (London: Routledge, 1999).

north of Ireland—from loyalist British unionism to Ulster nationalism—had already sowed division and discontent within the ranks.[67] As a committed unionist and member of the Orange Order, Steve Brady was unable to reconcile himself to the idea of Northern Irish secession—and was suspended for his opposition. These circumstances may explain the occasional deployment of a Scottish symbolic language in Front publications; by articulating a love for the Scottish countryside and its residents, Brady and his allies sought to construct a more inclusive vision of British nationalism in line with their unionist principles. Given the fraught debate concerning the 'four nations' vision of nationalism within the Front, it is no wonder that this discourse was ultimately sidelined in party publications—despite the obvious advantages it offered for widening recruitment.[68]

To understand the NF's orientation towards the national is to understand its relationship to other currents in the environmental movement. The maxim 'think globally, act locally' is often taken to characterize environmental activism during this period.[69] It represents a genuine tradition of aspiration to political and economic decentralisation and a rejection of the alienating, technocratic tendencies of state, science, and industry; long before the publication of E.F. Schumacher's ecologically sensitive economic tract *Small is Beautiful*, activists had already internalized its rallying cry. Some groups brought these principles into dialogue with a respect for the conventional boundaries of the nation. Thus, the CS articulated their anti-growth principles as a defence of 'the nation's quality of life'. As a guest speaker for the organisation, Ehrlich couched his call to action in the language of British national superiority; Britain had a responsibility to act as a positive exemplar for those who looked to it for moral leadership. Friends of the Earth, whose activism helped set the green agenda during the 1970s, was deliberately constituted in Britain as an autonomous organization, independent of its American progenitor.

However, the principle of 'think locally, act globally' is inadequate to describe a very real transnational dimension to environmental activism. The UN's 1972 Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm was born out of a desire to coordinate responses to an international crisis on a transnational level. Barbara Ward went further and called for the abandonment of traditional ideas of national sovereignty in recognition of the global nature of the environmental crisis. Both were anathema to the Front, which insisted on the absolute political primacy of the nation(al).

Spearhead's editors accepted the reality of chemical contamination of the environment but were wary of the rationale governing the sudden conversion of a long-standing problem into an 'indispensable part of political leaders' jargon'.[70] They tended to read such statements of concern in a conspiratorial light. 'The truth', *Spearhead* argued, 'is that an atmosphere of fear is continually necessary to the promoters of internationalism'; the creation of pollution as a global threat served as an excuse for transnational bodies such as the UN to deprive countries of their national sovereignty. A Front government would be prepared to implement environmental controls only on the understanding that these were national solutions to a national problem. As Bernhard Forchtner and Christoffer Kølvraa have noted, it is this reluctance to recognize risks demanding coordinated international intervention which motivates anthropogenic climate change denial on today's radical right.[71]

[67] M. Durham, 'The British Extreme Right and Northern Ireland', *Contemporary British History* 26 (2012), 203; R. Hill and A. Bell, *The Other Face of Terror: Inside Europe's neo-Nazi Network* (London: Grafton, 1988), 185–86; A. Sykes, *The Radical Right in Britain: Social Imperialism to the BNP* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 124.

[68] For analysis of the NF's attempts to penetrate Scottish politics at this time, see G. Bowd, *Fascist Scotland: Caledonia and the Far Right* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2013), 213–15.

[69] Veldman, *Greening of Britain*, 214, 220, 223, 227, 231–38.

[70] 'About Pollution', *Spearhead* 37 (1970), 2.

[71] B. Forchtner and C. Kølvraa, 'The Nature of Nationalism: Populist Radical Right Parties on Countryside and Climate', *Nature and Culture* 10 (2015), 202.

The urban

The city and the countryside are two mutually constitutive entities. As we have seen, the NF constructed its rural idealism in opposition to the supposed corruption of the urban space. Nevertheless, it recognized that total deurbanization was an impossibility if the sanctity of the countryside was to be maintained; movement back to the land was to be strictly limited in order to avoid rural overcrowding.[72] This raised the necessity of an urban policy.

Forchtner and Kølvraa are correct in arguing that the rural in nationalism typically 'represents an original space, an authenticity to be recovered'.[73] The Front's descriptions of the rural were laden with nostalgia and looked back to the vaguely defined golden age of the 'yeoman farmer'. Yet its gaze was not wholly retrospective. The past was adopted as a model for present policy and for a future vision of national reconstruction. Nostalgia itself—and the desire to preserve remnants of a supposedly vanishing world—has been viewed as a fundamentally modern condition born out of the insecurity and alienation produced by ever-accelerating social change.[74] It is then unsurprising that the Front looked towards the urban past with a similar, wistful interest—mourning the loss of community associated with the 'otherwise impoverished days of back-to-back tenements'.[75] The social engineering of urban space to offer the restitution of lost or fragile community ties lay at the heart of the NF's policy for cities. In this, they married revolutionary and conservative impulses.[76]

During the 1980s, deindustrialization and reinvention as a financial district represented an existential threat to the working-class communities of London's docklands.[77] *Nationalism Today* set forward an alternative vision for the area, which combined Thatcher's language of technological futurity with a promise that, under a Front government, 'progress' would not come at the cost of the lives and livelihood of Britain's (White) working class.[78] The journal argued that a shift towards renewable fuels and organic farming techniques could provide new jobs in the docklands, citing the example of sewage processing ('digester') plants which would convert London's waste products into 'energy-saving methane and electricity', and into the animal fodder 'which used to be imported at the same docks'.

The NF were also critical of the supposed arrogance and inhumanity of post-war urban planning. Architects stood accused of having created an alienating built environment, in which cars were prioritized over pedestrians and anonymous tower block 'dormitories' for workers took the place of traditional family homes.[79] As was common in the contemporary environmental movement, the Front located the solution to popular alienation in the devolution of political and economic power.[80] 'Urban villages', comprising allotments and smallholdings, were to give city-dwellers a sense of independence and intimate contact with the creative, productive capacities of the land.[81] Residents would exert direct democratic

[72] Butler, 'Rural and Urban', 9.
[73] Forchtner and Kølvraa, 'Nature of Nationalism', 209.
[74] See P. Wright, *On Living in an Old Country: The National Past in Contemporary Britain* (London: Verso, 1985).
[75] Butler, 'Rural and Urban', 9.
[76] See Roger Griffin's depiction of fascist politics as a 'genuinely revolutionary … and in the last analysis, anti-conservative nationalism', 'The Palingenetic Core of Generic Fascist Ideology', in A. Campi, ed., *Che cos'è il fascismo? Interpretazioni e prospettive di ricercar* (Rome: Ideazione, 2003), 97–122.
[77] See S. Wetherell, 'Freedom Planned: Enterprise Zones and Urban Non-planning in Post-war Britain', *Twentieth Century British History* 27 (2016), 266–89.
[78] N. Griffin, 'New Hope for Britain's Docks', *Nationalism Today* 5 (undated), 10–11.
[79] 'Faulty Towers', *Nationalism Today* 24 (1984), 5; P. Comben, 'The Urban Animal', *Nationalism Today* 19 (undated), 13.
[80] Veldman, *Greening of Britain*, 216, 232.
[81] Brady, 'Blood and Soil', 20; Griffin, 'New Hope', 10–11.

control over their locality, with all proposed changes to existing land use 'being subject to the results of secret referenda of the local people'.

The Front's concept of community was, of course, racially defined. Urban pollution, congestion, and overcrowding were blamed upon 'immigrant' populations.[82] Griffin proposed that the idyllic 'urban village' could only emerge from the ashes of 'slum clearance' programmes in the carefully selected areas of 'Brixton, Southall, and Stamford Hill'—centres of Britain's Black, South Asian, and Jewish communities, respectively. A programme of mass deportation and ethnic cleansing thus supplied the motivation and justification for a programme of urban renewal.

The chief intellectual progenitor of the Front's urban programme is likely to have been Alain de Benoist, the father of the *Nouvelle Droite*. As previously noted, the Front's Political Soldier movement strongly identified with the *Nouvelle Droite*. Walker took a particular interest in de Benoist and personally translated his articles for *The Scorpion*. In terms reminiscent of *Nationalism Today*, Benoist's *Manifesto of the French New Right* counterposed the modern 'megalopolis' to an ideal of 'cities on a human scale'.[83] In the place of the 'cold, geometric expression of economic order', the manifesto called for cities to root themselves in the history and architectural vernacular of the locality.

Yet the Front's vision of reformed urban life also bore strong resemblance to the English tradition of the 'garden city'—a radical approach to the introduction of 'rural elements into the urban landscape' which renders said landscape neither town nor country but 'town country'.[84] The garden city movement recognized the necessity of urban life but hoped to rectify its central flaws ('ugliness, pollution, high housing density and lack of natural vegetation') by restricting a settlement's size, integrating crucial elements of the rural landscape, and limiting production to light industry. The confluence of the principles of the garden city and Alain de Benoist, typically identified with opposing ends of the political spectrum, is symbolic of a preoccupation with community which cuts across conventional political divides in the modern world. As both Veldman and Burchardt have argued, the characteristically modern search for community represents a reaction against the fragmentation of social ties and individual identity engendered by industrialization and state centralization.[85] As in the programme of the NF, this aspiration often found itself in unresolved contradiction with a programme of state-led, top-down social engineering.

Afterlives

The Political Soldier movement was self-consciously elitist. Derek Holland, one of its core ideologists, conceptualized the movement in quasi-religious terms; cadres were to commit themselves to the nationalist cause with single-minded devotion, pursuing 'analysis and study … devoid of personal interest, devoid of sentimentality'.[86] Those who failed to live up to such lofty ideals were deemed to have no place in the party. By 1985, the Political Soldiers had deliberately allowed the Front's membership to run down to 1,000.[87] As *Searchlight* reflected in 1991, 'today you cannot join the NF—the NF chooses you'.[88]

[82] Butler, 'Rural and Urban', 9; Griffin, 'New Hope', 10–11.

[83] A. de Benoist and C. Champetier, *Manifesto of the French New Right in the Year 2000* (unofficial translation) [http://www.4pt.su/en/content/manifesto-french-new-right, accessed 15 August 2021].

[84] Burchardt, *Paradise Lost*, 64–65.

[85] Burchardt, *Paradise Lost*, 48; Veldman, *Greening of Britain*, 9–36.

[86] D. Holland, interview in Ben Lewis (Director), *The Lost Race: History of the National Front* (British Broadcasting Corporation, first aired 24 March 1999) [accessed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z36hh2Q8JLY, last accessed 21 August 2021].

[87] R. Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain: From Oswald Mosley's Blackshirts to the National Front* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998), 260.

[88] G. Gable, 'The Far Right in Contemporary Britain', in L. Cheles, R. Ferguson, and M. Vaughan, eds, *Neo-Fascism in Europe* (London: Longman, 1991), 253.

Of those who remained in the party, the majority were dissatisfied with the leadership. The influence of foreign ideologies and the doctrine of total revolutionary commitment seemed both pretentious and unrealistic to grassroots members.[89] Those who had joined the party for its racist credentials were angered by the new, official discourse of 'racialism', which accepted the validity—and even the equality—of racial and cultural groups provided they lived separately.[90] Divides within the Front were compounded by class differences; while the Political Soldiers were largely upper-middle class, the grassroots remained predominantly working and lower-middle class. Opposition to the Political Soldiers coalesced around the Flag Group (named for its primary mouthpiece, *The Flag*). In 1987, divisions between the two camps resulted in a formal split. The Flag Group cut ties with the Political Soldiers, taking with it the National Front name and brand, and most of the party's membership (for the sake of clarity, this faction will hereafter be referred to as the National Front (Flag Group) or NF (FG)). Left with a tiny core of just 50 activists, the faction led by the Political Soldiers staggered on until 1990, calling itself the Official National Front (hereafter 'ONF').[91]

Drawing on an analysis of the letters pages of Front publications during the 1980s, Ian Coates suggested that green issues were popular amongst ordinary members.[92] Coates attributed this to political convenience: the environment represented something positive to campaign on, in sharp contrast to the oppositional, reactive politics of racism and anti-immigrant sentiment. However, the same source base provides evidence that members' engagement with green issues went deeper. Letters in *Nationalism Today* demonstrated a sustained engagement with renewable energy and the challenges of guaranteeing the safety of nuclear power. On one occasion, the inclusion of an article taking an anti-nuclear position prompted such an influx of criticism to the letters pages that the paper was obliged to respond with a promise to platform alternative views in subsequent editions.[93] Articles accepted for publication included those written by members with a clear personal interest in renewables.[94]

In another telling incident, a member wrote a letter in defence of anglers, following an article in *HOWL* (the magazine of the Hunt Saboteurs Association, hereafter HSA) which condemned the environmental impact of the sport.[95] That some individuals subscribed to the literature of both the NF *and* the HSA is indicative of genuine, self-motivated interest in environmental themes.[96] When the long-term NF member David McCalden died in 1991, the Front's tributes stressed his sometime editorship of *HOWL* (McCalden ultimately lost his position and was expelled from the HSA in 1978, as a consequence of his alignment with the far right).[97]

Given these circumstances, it is unsurprising that, despite its repudiation of much of the legacy of the Political Soldier movement, the secessionist Flag Group continued to espouse environmental politics.[98] The Flag Group contained several innovative thinkers who had been instrumental in the 1983 removal of Martin Webster.[99] Typically, these individuals took their inspiration from Strasser. As such, they were content to retain the Political

[89] Copsey, 'Sacred Cows', 293.
[90] Eatwell, 'Esoteric Ideology', 111–13.
[91] Copsey, 'Sacred Cows', 293.
[92] Coates, 'Cuckoo in the Nest', 15.
[93] 'Nuclear Power', *Nationalism Today* 5 (undated), 16.
[94] J. Capes, 'Nuclear Power', *Nationalism Today* 7 (undated), 16.
[95] M. Burroughs, 'Blood Sport?', *Nationalism Today* 21 (undated), 16.
[96] 'About the HSA: History', *Hunt Saboteurs Association*, 23 October 2020 [https://www.huntsabs.org.uk/about-the-hsa/, accessed 22 August 2021].
[97] J. Hochschartner, *The Animals' Freedom Fighter: A Biography of Ronnie Lee, Founder of the Animal Liberation Front* (North Carolina: McFarland & Co, 2016), 105; 'Obituaries: David McCalden', *Vanguard* 33 (1991), 29.
[98] Eatwell, 'Esoteric Ideology', 113–14.
[99] Gable, 'The Far Right', 252.

Soldiers' tactic of advocating causes conventionally perceived as 'left-wing': including anti-capitalist and environmental struggles. In late 1986, the Flag Group were seeking to strengthen their base amongst the NF's membership, in anticipation of a formal split. To this end, they released a new publication—*Vanguard*—which was to set out the logic behind the faction's secession and articulate a new vision for the Front. From the second edition onwards, *Vanguard's* editors chose to reproduce the *Nationalism Today* staple 'On the Green Front'.[100] This is indicative of the centrality of green issues to Flag Group politics, and perhaps of the feature's popularity amongst subscribers.

The same edition also carried a lengthy, overwhelmingly positive review of Anna Bramwell's controversial monograph *Blood and Soil: Richard Walther Darré and Hitler's 'Green Party'*.[101] The reviewer, Steve Brady, valued Bramwell's work so highly that copies were made available for purchase from *Vanguard's* own bookshop. As his previous work for *Nationalism Today* demonstrates, Brady was already an advocate for 'blood and soil' ideology; Bramwell's text, the first comprehensive English language study of Darré, represented a prime opportunity to popularize these sentiments.

Brady claimed Darré as a direct 'intellectual forebear' of contemporary 'green' nationalists and stressed that there were important lessons to be learnt from his political career.[102] Darré, like Strasser, was described as a victim of the 'the essential unsoundness, cynicism and corruption of much of the rest of the Nazi leadership'. The abrupt removal from power of both men figured in Brady's version of history as a 'betrayal of the [National] Revolution'. Contemporary nationalists were cautioned to learn from Darré's mistakes: idolization of the Nazi Party was to be eschewed in favour of critical support for its internal opponents, and power was to be decentralized within nationalist organizations in order to prevent a repeat of the power struggles which had deprived these critics of their influence. Brady, via Bramwell, drew a distinction between Darré's 'progressive forward-looking ruralism' and the technophobic, pastoral sentimentality 'of many modern Greens'. Darré was lauded for his willingness to accept technological innovation as it pertained to the health of the rural environment and the comfort of its inhabitants. For Brady, as for Griffin before him, the identification of a 'free yeomanry' as the spiritual heart of the nation was part and parcel of a modern, post-industrial policy rather than a statement of nostalgia for a vanished world.[103]

Many of these themes were taken up in later articles within *Vanguard* and came to inform Front policy in the years following the split from the ONF. Pledges to halt immigration had long been at the centre of Front campaigns.[104] The pages of Vanguard reveal that, at the beginning of the 1990s, an enduring belief in overpopulation contributed to paranoia and prejudice surrounding immigration. An almost millenarian article penned in 1991 dehumanized immigrants as 'a swarm driven from its homelands by sheer weight of numbers' and the probability of starvation.[105] In the end, the author argued, immigrants would 'exhaust our lands as they exhausted their own'. Overgrazing of pastures, deforestation, and the resulting impoverishment of the soil would turn 'Europe and North America into the Sahel dustbowls of the 21st and 22nd Centuries [sic.]'. Though extreme in its hysteria, this article was by no means unique. Subsequent editions expressed concern that high immigration levels were driving an overdevelopment of countryside and 'Green Belt' areas, with disastrous consequences both for local communities and local wildlife.[106]

[100] 'On the Green Front', *Vanguard* 2 (1986), 3.
[101] S. Brady, '"Blood and Soil": A Review of Anna Bramwell's Biography of Walther Darré', *Vanguard* 2 (1986), 6–7, 20.
[102] Brady, 'A Review', 6, 7.
[103] Griffin, 'New Hope', 10–11.
[104] Sykes, 'The Radical Right', 105–06.
[105] S. Brady, 'The Coming Swarm', *Vanguard* 33 (1991), 13.
[106] J. Lord, 'Growth in the Community', *Vanguard* 38 (1992), 7.

'Blood and soil' ideology was also used to legitimize an anti-immigrant discourse of 'Britain for the British'. For so-called 'indigenous' communities, the Front argued, 'Britain is not just the place where we were born', but rather the land on which one's ancestors have 'dwelt for thousands of years … sinking roots into and becoming part of the land'.[107] 'Native' Britons were conceptualized as temporary 'stewards', guarding the land out of respect for their ancestors and a responsibility to future generations.[108] By contrast, the roots and responsibilities of racialized communities—whether born in the UK or abroad—were believed to lie elsewhere. Hence, the Front was able to equate immigrants with damaging 'colonisers' and to identify deportation with 'repatriation' to an imagined Motherland.

In a major divergence from Brady's conceptualization of an environmentally conscious NF, this anti-immigrant sentiment caused subsequent editions of *Vanguard* to embrace a technophobic anti-urbanism. A 1987 editorial informed readers that 'the modern city is inherently non-national'.[109] A toxic combination of immigration, industrialization, and capitalism was imagined to have effected a global homogenization of urban areas. In a world in which 'the same shops offering the same goods, the same problems of street crime and drugs, the same shallow Coca-Cola culture' characterized the universal urban, all hope for the future of British nationhood was deemed to lie in rural communities. Just as the Front's previous incarnation had argued, such communities were to be revitalized by the decentralization of political and economic power and the large-scale introduction of organic farming techniques.[110]

As seen in the case of closed borders and deportation, green issues allowed the NF to put a more appealing veneer on brutal policies. However, the party's embrace of environmentalism was by no means purely cynical. The same 1987 editorial quoted above stressed that 'green politics is not an … "optional extra" to the central issue of national survival'; without a land capable of supporting its inhabitants and sustaining their sense of communal pride, nationalism would be rendered extinct.[111] The problems of pollution, soil degradation, harmful pesticides, and acid rain—amongst many others—were genuinely believed to pose a threat to the physical and ideological existence of the British nation.[112]

As such, the NF advised all its members to keep up to date on environmental issues, providing short breakdowns of contemporary campaigns and signposting further resources such as the manifesto of the Soil Association.[113] More importantly, it suggested that members become 'actively involved' in environmental protection campaigns.[114] The Front was very clear that they were not asking nationalists 'infiltrate Friends of the Earth' or related organizations. Rather, members were advised to get involved in campaigns of specific interest to their local communities. This policy combined political and electoral pragmatism with sincere ideological conviction; besides helping to 'preserve the British countryside', the Front acknowledged that such campaigns provided an opportunity to 'sink local roots'. Given the Front's commitment to political decentralization, these objectives might even be read as coterminous.[115]

Similarly, a 1993 review of Front strategy and literature argued that 'in most elections, whether local, county, national or European the Greens are the ones who are, at present,

[107] 'This Land is Ours', *Vanguard* 34 (1991), 2.
[108] The homepage of the NF's current incarnation continues to carry this message; see 'Introduction to the National Front' [https://nationalfront.org/, accessed 24 August 2021].
[109] 'A Green Future—or No Future!', *Vanguard* 8 (1987), 2.
[110] 'On the Green Front', *Vanguard* 2 (1986), 3.
[111] 'A Green Future', 2.
[112] See *Vanguard* 8 (1987), 2–9.
[113] 'A Green Future', 2; 'Organic Manifesto', *Vanguard* 8 (1987), 7.
[114] 'A Green Future', 2.
[115] See D. Jones, 'Where is Britain's Mondragon?', *Vanguard* 30 (1990), 20–21.

immediately above us'.[116] It would therefore be electorally advantageous for the NF to stress the green elements of its policy programme. However, the author was careful to note that 'this would not be a case of stealing their "Green" clothes'. Rather, 'it would simply be telling the people of our environmental policies that we have and have had since before the Ecology Party—which is now the Green Party—was formed'. Such claims were continually reproduced in the pages of *Vanguard* during the early 1990s, suggesting that the NF went so far as to assert a sense of rightful ideological ownership over environmentalism. Indeed, in some cases, the authors of articles on green issues contrasted the sincerity and strength of their own convictions to that of 'Marxist opportunists' seeking to '[hitch] their wagon' to the green movement's 'rising star'.[117]

Conclusion

Of course, no single organization or political tradition has the right to claim exclusive ideological possession of environmental thought. This is precisely what makes an understanding of the entanglements of environmentalism and far-right politics so urgent. As Bernhard Forchtner notes, 'given the common association of environmental issues with the (liberal) left', environmental communication by the far right is often looked upon with surprise.[118] We can observe this in the horrified shock which greeted the mobilization of environmental themes in the manifestoes of the 2019 Christchurch and El Paso mass shooters.[119] The enduring grip of ecological concern on the post-war British far right is instructive: it challenges the dangerous assumption that environmental politics are inextricably tied to an orientation towards social justice. Anyone anxious to preserve a liveable world has a duty to consider the consequences of their approach to environmental collapse, especially for already marginalized groups. Similarly, we should resist efforts to classify environmentalism as politically neutral. The German green Herbert Gruhl famously proposed that environmentalism [AQ]'is neither Left not Right but ahead'.[120] Tellingly, Gruhl himself had eventually 'left the German Greens to form his own far-right Ecological Democratic Party … complete with neo-Nazi sympathisers'. Assertions of neutrality merely seek to naturalize a given political standpoint; the forms taken by environmental concern are inevitably ideologically structured.

From the late 1960s to the early 1990s, and despite frequent and traumatic leadership changes, the National Front expressed a consistent and genuine commitment to some variety of environmental politics. We cannot, therefore, speak of a far-right *co-option* of environmental politics in any meaningful sense. Nevertheless, this was a racial nationalist approach to the environment and the interests of race and nation were paramount. Only environmental themes which could be assimilated into its worldview were acceptable to the Front. Thus, overpopulation and coercive population reduction were easily married to existing eugenicist impulses. The notion of supranational intervention in a global ecological crisis was not. Often, it seemed that the NF thought locally, and acted locally too.

The Front demonstrated points of convergence and divergence from other groups operating within an environmentalist framework. Its discourse on overpopulation was, for example, not functionally distinct from some of the approaches espoused by the *Ecologist* or by

[116] 'Take Five Issues of *Vanguard* …', *Vanguard* 40 (1993), 24.
[117] Jones, 'Britain's Mondragon?', 21.
[118] B. Forchtner, 'Far Right Articulations of the Natural Environment: An Introduction'. In: Bernhard Forchtner, ed., *The Far Right and the Environment: Politics, Discourse and Communication* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020).
[119] J. Achenbach, 'Two Mass Killings a World Apart Share a Common Theme: "Ecofascism"', *The Washington Post*, 18 August 2019 [https://www.washingtonpost.com/science/two-mass-murders-a-world-apart-share-a-common-theme-ecofascism/2019/08/18/0079a676-bec4-11e9-b873-63ace636af08_story.html, accessed 2 September 2021].
[120] Wall, 'Green Shirt', 4.

the Conservation Society. This makes situating the NF wholly outside the mainstream of environmentalist thought problematic. A binary division between liberal and far-right ecologism, or the concept of an 'eco-fascist' fringe, does not stand up to scrutiny. Likewise, the NF's environmental policies existed outside of a 'conservative/revolutionary' dichotomy: a logic of nostalgic preservationism was used to supply justification for radical programmes of social engineering. Such programmes contradicted the very principle of decentralization which sat at the heart of so many of their policies.

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