'TOMORROW BELONGS TO US'

The British Far Right since 1967

Edited by Nigel Copsey and Matthew Worley
With so much attention being monopolized by Jihadism, ‘Tomorrow Belongs to Us’ is a timely and sobering reminder that in the last fifty years Britain’s extreme right subculture, far from withering away, has continued to adapt to domestic and international events, and still retains a disturbing capacity for fomenting local ethnic hatreds, poisoning democracy, and inspiring political murders, despite its impotence as a party-political force.

Roger Griffin, author of Fascism: An Introduction to Comparative Fascist Studies (2018)

This edited volume brings the historian’s concern with a richly temporal and contextual understanding of events and processes to the study of a range of key issues in contemporary studies of the far and populist radical right. Its cross-disciplinary approach does much more than fill in the gaps in our knowledge. It provides new insight into the shifting ideologies and mobilisational successes and failures of political movements on the far right of the political spectrum but also, and innovatively, into their subcultural, symbolic, gendered and emotional worlds.

Hilary Pilkington, Professor of Sociology, University of Manchester, UK
‘TOMORROW BELONGS TO US’

This book traces the varied development of the far right in Britain from the formation of the National Front in 1967 to the present day. Experts draw on a range of disciplinary and methodological perspectives to provide a rich and detailed account of the evolution of the various strands of the contemporary far right over the course of the last fifty years. The book examines a broad range of subjects, including Holocaust denial, neo-Nazi groupuscularity, transnational activities, ideology, cultural engagement, homosexuality, gender and activist mobilisation. It also includes a detailed literature review. This book is essential reading for students of fascism, racism and contemporary British cultural and political history.

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The British Far Right since 1967  
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CONTENTS

List of contributors ix

Introduction 1
Nigel Copsey and Matthew Worley

1 ‘The men who rewrite History’: Holocaust denial and the British far right from 1967 9
Mark Hobbs

2 The National Socialist Group: a case study in the groupuscular right 27
Daniel Jones and Paul Jackson

3 The National Front: the search for a ‘nationalist’ economic policy 48
John E. Richardson

4 Exporting fascism across the Commonwealth: the case of the National Front of Australia 69
Evan Smith

5 The dog that didn’t bark? Assessing the development of ‘cumulative extremism’ between fascists and anti-fascists in the 1970s 90
Alex Carter
6 White Youth: the far right, punk and British youth culture, 1977–87  
Matthew Worley and Nigel Copsey  
113

Ana Raposo and Roger Sabin  
132

8 The ‘obnoxious mobilised minority’: homophobia and homohysteria in the British National Party, 1982–1999  
George J. Severs  
150

9 Closing the gender gap: women and the far right in contemporary Britain  
Hannah Bows  
169

10 ‘There’s a vital lesson here. Let’s make sure we learn it’: transnational mobilisation and the impact of Greece’s Golden Dawn upon extreme right-wing activism in Britain  
Graham Macklin  
185

11 Love will tear us apart: emotions, patriotism and the English Defence League  
C. M. Quinn  
208

12 Britain’s far right since 1967: a bibliographic survey  
Craig Fowlie  
224

Index  
268
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INTRODUCTION

Nigel Copsey and Matthew Worley

Let us begin with some words regarding the title of this volume, ‘Tomorrow Belongs to Us’. During the 1970s the anthem ‘Il domani appartiene a noi’ (‘Tomorrow belongs to us’) was sung by the youth wing of the neo-fascist Movimento Sociale Italiano. It was, or so it was said, a traditional ballad popular with Italian Alpine soldiers during the First World War. The reality, however, was that it was derivative of ‘Tomorrow Belongs to Me’, the song which featured in Cabaret, the 1972 musical drama film. Sung in a beer garden by a young, blonde-haired, blue-eyed Nazi, the supreme irony is that ‘Tomorrow Belongs to Me’ was written by two American Jews: the composer John Kander and the lyricist Fred Ebb. The recipient of numerous Oscars, Cabaret was a much-acclaimed anti-Nazi film.

So why, in view of its ‘cosmopolitan’ provenance, did this song strike such an emotional chord with Britain’s far right? British National Party (BNP) activist Joe Owens recalls watching a videotape of the film’s scene in 1984, and ‘With this we all stood to our feet right arm raised and sung along with the song. It was a great feeling of camaraderie and brought back to all those present, what Adolf Hitler and National Socialism meant to us’ (Owens 2007: 78). That same year, Ian Stuart Donaldson, lead singer for the white nationalist band Skrewdriver, plagiarised the lyrics and reworked them into an abrasive rock anthem for the white power movement. Skrewdriver’s rendition of ‘Tomorrow Belongs to Me’ was the eighth track on the band’s 1984 album, Hail the New Dawn (see Forbes and Stampton 2015).¹

The battle cry ‘Tomorrow Belongs to Us!’ would feature on BNP posters of that era too. And what this specific slogan symbolised for Britain’s white racial nationalists was the ‘special quality of steel’ that National Front and BNP leader John Tyndall waxed lyrically about, a single-minded faith in their destiny, a credo capable of sustaining white racial nationalists in their ‘long march through the cold night – which must precede the glorious dawn’ (Tyndall 1998: 536). Tyndall (who died in 2005) would not live long enough to see the sun rise on the glorious day of white
revolution (and neither, for that matter, would Ian Stuart). Unhappily for Britain’s fascists, they would suffer an endless succession of freezing nights with temperatures raised only momentarily by the occasional false dawn.

The chronological starting point for our volume is 1967. Fifty years have now passed since the National Front (NF) was officially launched on 7 February 1967 (although the 50th anniversary of the release of the Beatles’ *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* was properly accorded more cultural significance). Nonetheless, historian Richard Thurlow (1998: 245) was right to refer to the formation of the NF in this year as ‘the most significant event on the radical right and the fascist fringe of British politics since internment’. For the first time since Mosley’s British Union of Fascists, most of Britain’s far right had come together in one distinct entity, unified under one single banner. The Front’s subsequent electoral growth – it captured nearly a quarter of a million of votes in local elections in 1977, beating the Liberals in the Greater London Council elections in 33 seats – led many to view the NF as Britain’s fourth political party, poised even to displace the Liberals as Britain’s third political party.

A merger of a number of different far-right groups which included A.K. Chesterton’s League of Empire Loyalists; John Bean’s British National Party; Robin Beauclair and the majority of the Racial Preservation Society; and from June 1967 onwards, individual members of John Tyndall’s Greater Britain Movement (Tyndall would become involved with the NF from late 1967), the National Front was a household name in 1970s Britain. Within the urban landscape, in the form of a menacing ‘typographical ligature’, the letters ‘NF’ would be spray-painted on many an inner-city wall. For years, the Front owned the far-right brand. It would be the twenty-first century before Nick Griffin’s ‘rebranded’ BNP would take ownership of it.

A.K. Chesterton, Oswald Mosley’s former political secretary, was the NF’s first leader. However, the figure most synonymous with the NF is not Chesterton (he died in mid-August 1973 and had spent most of his final years wintering in South Africa) but John Tyndall. In 1972, John Tyndall took over the NF’s leadership, and despite a brief period when he was deposed, it was Tyndall that led the NF throughout its 1970s heyday – a period in which the NF developed sufficient strength to contest over 300 seats in the 1979 general election. As it turned out, although the 1970s promised much for the fascist right, it all came to nothing. ‘So perishes the myth of Britain’s fastest growing party’ the anti-fascist magazine *Searchlight* declared following the NF’s catastrophic 1979 general election (*Searchlight*, no. 48, 1979). Tyndall would have to wait until the early 1990s before next tasting anything approaching electoral ‘success’ (a solitary local council by-election victory for his BNP, a splinter party from the NF). Nearly two decades later, and the most recent false dawn for Britain’s far right came in the 2010 general election when the BNP, this time under the leadership of Nick Griffin, stood a record 338 parliamentary candidates and captured half a million votes. Contrast this with five years later. In the 2015 general election, the BNP could only muster eight parliamentary candidates (330 fewer than 2010).
On an international stage dominated by the election of Donald Trump, the rise of radical-right, neo-nationalist or nativist populism has become increasingly difficult to ignore. In France, Marine Le Pen captured a record 34 per cent of the vote for the French far right in the second round of the 2017 presidential elections. Domestically, UKIP stole the BNP’s voters, captured 12.6 per cent of the vote in the 2015 general election and claimed victory in the 2016 Brexit referendum (in a vitriolic campaign that saw the murder of Labour MP Jo Cox by a neo-Nazi sympathiser). But with its job apparently done, UKIP saw its vote collapse in the 2017 general election (UKIP’s share of the vote contracted to less than 4 per cent). As for the traditional far right, the BNP’s demise was further confirmed when new party leader Adam Walker could only garner a derisory 2.3 per cent of the vote in the parliamentary constituency of Bishop Auckland, in north-east England. Britain’s far right (even if we include UKIP) has once again become an electoral irrelevancy. So why is this topic worthy of our attention now?

In the first place, as Nigel Copsey pointed out in 2015:

the far right is part of Britain’s national story. It will continue to be part of that national story even when voters abandon it, as they have recently done in their droves – almost 764,000 voters in the 2014 European elections when compared to 2009. Of course election results count, but there is a much bigger picture, and yet it is one which we struggle to see […] there is much more to be said about Britain’s far right ‘fringe’ than its interminable inability to make a serious challenge for representation in Westminster.

(Copsey 2015: 12)

This far right, as we reveal in this volume, has a multi-dimensional character. And make no mistake, we fail to see its many sides if we do not look outside the ballot box.

If we are still tempted to dismiss the far-right fringe altogether as ‘cranks’, unworthy of serious study, then Daniel Trilling’s words are surely worth heeding:

Societies that promise equality, freedom and democracy, yet preside over massive inequalities of wealth, are breeding grounds for racism and other vicious resentments. And wherever these resentments exist, the far right will try to exploit them. The fascism of the 20s and 30s succeeded because it played on wider fears, winning the support of those who would never have thought of themselves as extremists […] We do not need to wait for a successor to the BNP to emerge before addressing these much deeper problems.

(The Guardian, 12 September 2012)

How many NF voters in the 1970s, or indeed BNP voters in the 2000s, would have defined themselves as ‘extremists’? How many of those who took to the streets in support of the English Defence League (EDL) would have considered themselves ‘right-wing extremists’? Consider for a moment that EDL news conference
in October 2009 in the disused factory in Luton when a group of EDL supporters wearing balaclavas unfurled a swastika flag, doused it in petrol, and set it alight.\textsuperscript{4}

This volume was never conceived with the ballot box in mind. Its focus is not on the many (usually inglorious) electoral interventions of Britain’s far right since 1967; these have been covered sufficiently elsewhere in the literature (see, for example, on the NF, Taylor 1982; Husbands 1983; and on the BNP, Copsey 2008; Goodwin 2011). Rather, the editors of this volume solicited contributions that enhance our understanding of Britain’s contemporary far right as a broader political and cultural phenomenon. We have tried, in this volume, to set out new ways of seeing our subject, of approaching it from a variety of different disciplinary perspectives. The aim has been to fill some long-standing gaps in existing knowledge, and take analyses of the far right in directions that have been hitherto ignored or as yet under-explored.

The chapters presented in this volume examine the last fifty years of the British far right from the perspectives of holocaust denial and conspiracy; groupuscularity; political economy; transnational mobilisation; youth culture and visual identities; through to attitudes towards homosexuality, gender and women; emotions and patriotism, and processes of ‘cumulative extremism’. Instead of drawing from the narrowly based statistical analysis that typifies much of the field of hard political science, these contributions take their methodological cues from elsewhere, namely from history, as well as from cultural studies and social movement/behavioural studies.

The volume begins with a contribution from Mark Hobbs on Holocaust denial. Chapter 1 explores how the presentation of Holocaust denial has changed in various far-right parties and movements since 1967. Hobbs argues that Holocaust denial, and the belief in a clandestine Jewish conspiracy, remained an integral part of the epistemology which underpinned the policy and rhetoric of Britain’s far right since 1967. This chapter explores the paradox of such thinking: the claim that the genocide of European Jewry did not take place was based on the same redemptive anti-Semitism and tropes of conspiracy which contributed to the Holocaust during the Second World War.

Then in Chapter 2, Daniel Jones and Paul Jackson take us back to the late 1960s and explore the history of a short-lived British neo-Nazi groupuscule, the National Socialist Group (NSG). Letters, membership data, internal briefings, publications and other material produced by the group during its lifetime are used to develop a picture of the clandestine organisation’s inner dynamics, and ultimate failings. The chapter also explores how the NSG’s leading activists sought to carve out a unique position for the organisation in the changing arena of the far right in the late 1960s. The chapter concludes that, although in itself tiny and largely inconsequential, the NSG needs to be located in a much longer history of neo-Nazi groups promoting revolution and violence in Britain.

John E. Richardson, in Chapter 3, then turns our attention back to the National Front, the leading player on Britain’s far right during the 1970s and 1980s. Surprisingly little attention has been paid to the Front’s thoughts on political
Richardson discusses some important historic precursors that lay the groundwork for understanding fascist political economies in general. Following this he examines two political economies advocated by the NF: the party drew implicitly on the example of Nazi Germany, and argued for autarky during the 1970s; then during the 1980s, the party advocated distributism as a native rather than imported economic ideology. Richardson argues that, even at its most radical, the NF could not transcend a capitalist political economy. For Richardson, attempts to develop ‘third way’ solutions simply recalibrated and rehabilitated capitalism in the service of ‘the nation’.

Chapter 4, Evan Smith’s chapter, is the first of two chapters in this volume devoted to transnationalism. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the National Front sought to expand its influence across the Anglophone world, and established the Commonwealth National Front (CNF). The object of the CNF was to establish solidarity between white supremacist organisations worldwide and foster a transnational fascist movement to ‘protect’ white ‘civilisation’. The National Front of Australia (NFA) was one of the few local NFs that was actually formed. Despite ambitions to replicate the populism of the British NF, the NFA was hindered by the notoriety of its sister organisation, by a hostile media, and by an anti-fascist movement mobilised quickly after the NFA’s formation. As Smith’s chapter reveals, with the NFA seemingly defunct by the early 1980s (and similar NFs in South Africa and New Zealand also collapsing), the attempt to build the CNF can be viewed as part of a wider history of a failed venture to export British-styled fascism across the white Dominions of the British Empire/Commonwealth.

Since the term was first coined by Roger Eatwell in 2006, ‘cumulative extremism’ has become the focus of an increasing amount of work conducted by scholars, policymakers and journalists. This concept refers to the ways in which one form of extremism can incite another into a process of ‘tit-for-tat’ radicalisation. While our understanding of the concept has undoubtedly increased, it has been widely acknowledged that more work is necessary to develop this concept into a robust tool for understanding the interactive dynamics between groups which can cause the escalation, non-escalation or de-escalation of movement–countermovement contests. To that end, Chapter 5, Alex Carter’s chapter, conducts a sustained analysis of the interactions that occurred between fascists and anti-fascists in 1970s Britain, paying close attention to the specific factors which led to the development of more or less radical protest repertoires amongst these opposing groups.

The co-editors of this volume then examine another relationship: the one between far-right organisations and British youth culture in the period between 1977 and 1987. Chapter 6 concentrates on the cultural spaces opened up by punk and the attempts made by both the NF and British Movement to claim them as conduits for racist and/or ultranationalist politics. Mapping shifting cultural and political influences across the far right, it assesses the extent to which extremist organisations proved able to adopt or utilise youth cultural practice as a means of recruitment and communication. The visual codes associated with neo-fascist rock would enter a new phase in the 1980s. With skinhead culture becoming more
influential, previously favoured punk tropes were merged with hyper-masculine and violent images, encompassing openly Nazi associations, to produce a newly aggressive subcultural language – a language that would have a profound international impact. Chapter 7, the chapter by Ana Raposo and Roger Sabin, examines this visual culture. It traces the changing politics behind it, paying special attention to the aesthetic of record sleeves, magazines and other graphics.

In Chapter 8, George J. Severs examines the BNP’s opposition to gay men during the 1980s and 1990s. Drawing on the sociological concept of ‘homohysteria’, it examines written material from BNP publications during those decades, looking specifically at the AIDS crisis, the party’s belief in a ‘queer conspiracy’, and the role which homosexuality played in the decline of the NF and the birth of the BNP. The first study dedicated to British fascism’s anti-gay prejudice, this chapter argues that the existing scholarship fails to understand the degree and nature of anti-gay sentiment in the BNP, concluding that the party was ‘homohysteria’ from its inception.

Across Europe, a plethora of studies has examined membership of far-right groups and has drawn theoretical links between socio-economic status and activism. However, some significant areas remain under-researched and there is a notable gap in relation to women’s involvement in far-right political and activist groups. The chapter by Hannah Bows, Chapter 9, provides an overview of the small pool of existing empirical and theoretical literature in relation to women and the contemporary far right in Britain and Europe, highlighting the gaps in knowledge and suggesting future directions for research.

Like Evan Smith, in Chapter 10 Graham Macklin also engages with our subject from a transnational perspective and explores the impact that Golden Dawn’s meteoric rise in Greece has had upon Britain’s far right. Macklin examines the waves of mobilisation by sympathetic extreme right-wing groupuscules in response to the ‘persecution’ of Golden Dawn during the crackdown upon its leadership by the Greek government and the murder of two of its activists. This chapter offers a detailed examination of the interactive diffusion of ideas and strategies that took place between the BNP and its Greek counterpart. It underscores the shift towards (and subsequent retreat from) a form of ideological militancy in the BNP’s rhetoric which was quite clearly influenced by Golden Dawn.

Since the emergence of the English Defence League (EDL) in 2009, the EDL has been consistently situated by British media, opponents and academics as a far-right, nationalist, proto-fascist organisation motivated by hatred and racism. Drawing on rich ethnographic data from interviews with EDL activists from across England, the penultimate chapter in our volume, Chapter 11, challenges much of this representation and situates the EDL as an English patriot and loyalist social movement. Its author, C. M. Quinn, explores the intricacies of activist motivations and the pivotal role of patriotism in motivating and transforming individuals into activists.

We end this volume with a bibliographic essay penned by Craig Fowlie. Chapter 12 surveys the primary and secondary literature on the far right in Britain since 1967. It examines the social science and historical scholarship on Britain’s main extreme-right and radical-right parties and social movements including the
National Front, the British National Party, UKIP and the English Defence League. Autobiographies and memoirs by far-right and anti-fascist activists, as well as investigations by journalists, are also reviewed and contextualised. The chapter explores extreme-right subcultures such as Holocaust denial, white power music, the ‘metapolitical’ New Right, digital activism and terrorism as well as various forms of transnational organising and the ‘cultural’ turn in fascism studies.

Many a right-wing extremist heralded the mergers on Britain’s far right that took place during the winter of 1966/7, and which resulted in the launch of the National Front, as a ‘new beginning’. For sure, this was an important milestone when a new coalition for a revitalised far right emerged, one that seemed capable of occupying legitimate political space to the right of the Conservatives and yet distanced from historical British fascism. At various moments, this appeared tantalisingly close – when NF candidate Martin Webster netted 16.2 per cent of the vote in a parliamentary by-election in West Bromwich in 1973; or when the BNP’s Nick Griffin and Andrew Brons were elected to the European Parliament in 2009. But from our vantage point some five decades on, it is all too clear that tomorrow never did belong to them. Of course we do not know what fate will hold in store for Britain’s far right over the course of the next fifty years. Even in our society’s darkest moments, let us hope that the refrain ‘Tomorrow belongs to us’ will forever remain a Tantalus torment, a tomorrow that will always remain stubbornly out of their reach.

Notes

1 Ian Stuart Donaldson recorded a number of versions of this song as did Saga, a Swedish white supremacist. For an interesting discussion of this song’s ‘recontextualisation’, that is, the way in which the original meaning was subverted and undermined, see Richardson 2017: 68.

2 The name of this new organisation, the ‘National Front’, had been used by Chesterton before. It had been the name given to a short-lived group which had been formed by Chesterton and Collin Brooks towards the end of 1944 (at that time Brooks and Chesterton were Editor and Deputy Editor respectively of the political magazine Truth). In the early 1950s, Andrew Fountaine also established a ‘National Front Movement’.

3 According to one recent poster on the Stormfront website,

Regarding The ‘N.F.’ Symbol I remember that writing the letters N then F separately were reportedly quite cumbersome & time consuming, the upward line of The ‘F’ being the problem, along with the 2 apostrophes (sic). Mischievous scribblers & scrawlers of the time somehow developed through a kind of unspoken mass consciousness the simultaneous ‘idea’ of amalgamating the F into The N in one lightening move, by drawing an N then adding a quick couple of F horizontal lines! Into a sort of Loch Ness Monster Looking Symbol. Don’t ask me how this came about, there was never any directive, it just came naturally for those in a hurry! It didn’t detract from conveying its meaning & was well understood. A genius on par with A Corporate Logo!
See www.stormfront.org/forum/t1205164/, post by ‘Thomas Harwick’ (03-26-2017, 12:45 PM). The reality was that this logo had already appeared on official Front literature from the late 1960s.


5 From Greek mythology: Tantalus stood in a pool of water underneath a fruit tree. When he tried to reach for the fruit, the branches would raise out of his reach; when he tried to drink the water from the pool, the water level would recede.

References


When an intelligent man expresses a view which seems to us obviously absurd, we should not attempt to prove that it is somehow true, but we should try to understand how it ever came to seem to be true. This exercise of historical and psychological imagination [...] enlarges the scope of our thinking.

(Russell 2008: 39)

Introduction

Bertrand Russell’s words may seem like an unusual place to begin a chapter on British far-right Holocaust denial, yet his discussion of how to approach different systems of historic and political thought are of great use to the academic study of Holocaust or genocide denial. All too often there has been an assumption that those who write and publish Holocaust denial are mad or stupid. While their beliefs about the history of the Holocaust have no foundation in historical fact or reality and are the product of closed minds locked into viewing the world through the lens of anti-Semitic conspiracy, these views are based on falsehood, manipulation and the exclusion of facts. Yet, we cannot ignore the reality that those who deny the Holocaust do often possess academic qualifications, and propagate a far-right, fascist or neo-Nazi way of thinking, abhorrent to the liberal imagination. To cast these individuals and their followers as mad or stupid is to ignore the serious danger that these ideologies pose and the violence that they produce. If we fail to understand why Holocaust denial and anti-Semitic conspiracy thinking underpins these movements then an important part of the history of the development of the British far right since 1945 is missing from the explanation of why these ideologies continue to exist.

The way in which denial and far-right policies were presented to the public reveals a great deal about the political direction of the various movements and
parties on the far right but also the changing political and social character of Britain since 1945. This chapter will explore how Holocaust denial was both part of a political campaign to rehabilitate Nazism and how denial provided the epistemological platform for a ‘history’ that allowed far-right thinkers and followers to make sense of the world in which they lived and fought for power. It will argue, however, that these two positions were mutually exclusive.

The presence of Holocaust denial in the British far right was far from being a rehabilitative tool: it was a barrier to the political legitimacy of such movements in the minds of the public. Yet it was a trope that could not be jettisoned because it contained the key to the legitimacy of far-right political philosophy and ideology: it explained the failure of the movement to achieve power because a conspiracy led by Jews was working against it. Indeed the presence of the Holocaust in British collective memory and national commemoration was viewed as ‘evidence’ by the far right of the success of a clandestine Jewish world conspiracy. In short, the growing presence of the Holocaust in national narratives about the past confirmed their view that not only was a Jewish conspiracy at work but also that it was succeeding in its goals.

Denial and the ballot box

The defeat of Nazism by the Allied Powers in 1945 is of the utmost significance when examining Holocaust denial and far-right ideology. The military defeat of Hitler and the Third Reich meant that rather than seeing Nazism as a failed ideology or political system, supporters of Nazism and Fascism began to interpret this historical episode as a conspiracy: a re-run of the ‘stabbed in the back’ myth promulgated by right-wing circles in Weimar Germany. In far-right thinking, the Third Reich had not been toppled by popular uprisings as was the case with the February Revolution in Russia or later in the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989. The Nazi regime and its ideas were rightfully branded as ‘evil’ and terrorist by the Allies but the epistemology that created it and its role as a counterweight to the failures of capitalism and liberal democracy in the minds of the electorate were largely ignored. As Jean-François Lyotard noted, Nazism ‘has not been refuted’ because ‘it has been beaten down like a mad dog, by a police action, and not in conformity with the rules accepted by its adversary’s genres of discourse (argumentation for liberalism, contradiction for Marxism)’ (1989: 106). It is clear that Nazism has been refuted morally and publicly as a result of the genocidal nature of the regime signified by the murder of six million European Jews.

However, for far-right thinkers and politicians, the popular attraction of Nazism to voters in the early 1930s in Germany and of fascism to Italians in Italy and later Spain meant that the ideology still has a resonance and role to play in shaping human culture, society and politics. Holocaust denial provides the answer to political legitimacy by removing the genocidal crimes of the regime. Yet it also has another role: in seeing the military defeat not as the result of the supremacy of Allied power and Hitler’s military bungling, a new false history is created. This
‘history’ employs Jewish conspiracy theory to deny the Holocaust, but also explain why the war was fought and won by the allies: the war was a Jewish war created and brought about by the Jews themselves with the Allied powers playing the role of puppets of Jewish control. Hitler himself created the trajectory of this history and thinking, demonstrated in his political testament:

It is untrue that I or anyone else in Germany wanted the war in 1939. It was desired and instigated exclusively by those international statesmen who were either of Jewish descent or worked for Jewish interests […] Centuries will pass away, but out of the ruins of our towns and monuments the hatred against those finally responsible, whom we have to thank for everything, international Jewry and its helpers, will grow.

Hitler’s words help us to understand the way in which the British far right began to interpret the defeat of Nazism and how, as a history, it could reformulate its own fortunes and understandings in a post-Third Reich world. The pre-war leader of the British Union of Fascists Oswald Mosley proved influential in helping formulate the counter ‘cultural hegemonic’ far-right narratives which would provide the framework for Holocaust denial. Yet despite Mosley’s and his wife Diana’s involvement with the dissemination of denial, their role in shaping the policies of the National Front (NF) towards denial was negligible (Hillman 2001: 13).

Hitler’s words are especially significant in the trajectory of the British far-right Holocaust denial because Arnold Leese, a fanatical Nazi and anti-Semite sowed the post-war seeds of British fascism and National Socialism. Leese’s disciples would dominate the NF and British National Party (BNP) and its ideological philosophy, a fact acknowledged by BNP leader Nick Griffin in 2003 when he sought to move the party away from the ideology of the ‘sub-Mosleyite wackiness of Arnold Leese’s Imperial Fascist League’ (Copsey 2008: 15). The domination of a band of neo-Nazi followers in the British far right would shape policies towards Holocaust denial.

The overt nature was not necessarily always on display to the public and was often hidden with a rhetoric which had to appeal to the public for votes and who were implacably opposed to Nazism. A respectable face needed to be presented or as Nigel Copsey explains, the iron fist needed to be covered with a velvet glove (2008: 15). The first example of this was seen in the speech given by A.K. Chesterton at the inaugural meeting of the NF in 1967:

The man who thinks this is a war that can be won by mouthing slogans about ‘dirty Jews and filthy niggers’ is a maniac whose place should not be in the National Front but in a mental hospital … A nation once noble and very great cannot be rescued from the mire by jackasses who play straight into the enemy’s hands by giving the public that image of us that the enemy most clearly wants to be given.

*(Candour, October, 1967)*
Chesterton’s speech was a call to supporters to find a more acceptable face for post-war British far-right ideology that would move the public to place a cross in the box of fascism at the election booth. While the direct correlation between the neo-Nazi, Leesite ideology and of the various incarnations of British far-right groups since 1967 is overt, it is not to say that this ideology was set in stone and impervious to change. As Paxton has stated, definitions are inherently limiting and we must look not just to what movements said but also what they did (2005: 14). Like all political parties the British far right had to respond to events, public opinion and the internal tensions within the membership. Holocaust denial provides a means by which to measure the differing ways in which policy and ideology were presented to the public. An overt and rabid expression of denial indicated an extremist policy, which proclaimed revolution and paramilitary activity, but a more measured tone relying on a pseudo-scholarly framework indicated a movement more drawn to achieving power by elections and the pursuit of populism.

The history of the Holocaust, and its place in British collective memory, was inevitably tied up with the way in which Holocaust deniers presented their arguments. It is clear that knowledge of the Final Solution and the fate of European Jewry was well known by the British public in various media outlets during the war and after (Holmila 2011: 30–35). The liberation of Belsen by British and Canadian armed forces in April 1945 became the central focus in the popular British imagination of Nazi atrocities. Yet a perennial anti-Semitism remained within Britain after the war and this coloured the view that the public held about the murder of Europe’s Jews by the Nazis (Orwell 2000: chapter 22). Indeed as Louise London opines, the British Government during and in the immediate aftermath played down the particularism of Jewish suffering in favour of stressing universal suffering in order to avoid a public wave of anti-Semitism (London et al. 2002: 511–515). Unlike the British-centric readings of the Second World War in the late 1960s and early 1970s, contemporary society has read the history of the war through the events of the Holocaust. Popular understanding of the Holocaust, fostered through education and national memorial days, has become infused with understandings of the Second World War and Nazism. This increasing development of ‘Holocaust consciousness’ clearly had an impact on the way in which the British far right presented their arguments about denial and will be the subject of discussion in what follows.

With the establishment of the NF in 1967, a competing array of different parties with varying views about the future of far-right policies merged. It was clear, as outlined in Chesterton’s speech above, that anti-Semitism and outright Nazism had no place in the new united front. However, influential members of the far right harboured different views, particularly the future leader of the party from 1972, John Tyndall. Tyndall had been committed to a National Socialist vision for Britain, joining forces with Colin Jordan – a follower of Arnold Leese and beneficiary of Leese’s property and political legacy (Walker 1977: 27–28). Jordan and Tyndall had formed various groups based on National Socialist principles and ideology in the
The men who rewrite history

1950s and into the 1960s. They parted company in 1963 after conflicts over the future course of British National Socialism and romantic rivalry over Françoise Dior (Thurlow 1998: 238). Both Jordan and Tyndall had been excluded from the movement because of their commitment to National Socialism, yet while Jordan refused to water down or popularise his message Tyndall began to orchestrate a charm offensive to get himself and his Greater Britain Movement into the NF. It seems that on the part of Tyndall and Chesterton there was a good deal of negotiation through back channels (Copsey 2008: 15–16). When Tyndall dropped his commitment to National Socialism in his magazine *Spearhead* in 1966 and published a pamphlet entitled *Six Principles of British Nationalism* in 1966 which called for a united far-right front, and was devoid of Jewish conspiracy and calls for National Socialist solutions, Tyndall was admitted to the NF in exchange for the dissolution of the Greater Britain Movement.

While Tyndall remained loyal to Chesterton up to his retirement in 1970 his eyes had always been on the leadership of the movement. Tyndall would acquire the leadership in 1972, and remain leader until 1980, except for a two-year gap in which he was ousted from the position of chairman of the party by ‘moderate populists’ in October 1974 only to return as chairman in 1976 (Thurlow 1998: 251–254). These political machinations and PR exercises reveal a great deal about the tone and course of Holocaust denial in the NF. Tyndall was willing to publicly compromise his beliefs and views in order to secure power and influence while still privately retaining his commitment to National Socialist ideology.

The key to exercising this was his control of propaganda and public rhetoric and the support of Richard Verrall. Verrall was an intellectual figure, with a first class degree from the University of London; he also had a mind full of conspiracy and was appointed an editor of Tyndall’s *Spearhead* magazine in 1976. He was to provide the rational arguments for conspiracy and racism. Under Verrall’s tenure as editor, *Spearhead* began to directly push the question of conspiracy out into the open. An article in *Spearhead* in March 1976, ‘The Jewish Question: Out in the Open or Under the Carpet?’, sought to revisit the propaganda and issues sidelined under Chesterton’s vision of the NF in 1967 (*Spearhead*, No. 96, 1976, p. 7). Verrall’s *Did Six Million Really Die?* published in 1974, began to be referenced in *Spearhead*. The work is a canon of Holocaust denial literature, published under the pseudonym Richard Harwood, who was described as a specialist of the Second World War at the University of London. The use of a pseudonym underscores the NF’s leadership and propaganda strategy with regard to Holocaust denial. By giving the text an author in an academic institution Verrall intended to imbue the book with academic merit. Furthermore, the presence of footnotes, bibliography and scholastic framework was all designed to present the idea that Holocaust denial was a viable form of legitimate historical revisionism. This technique was intended to give scholastic credence to the views that had been prevalent in the extreme right since the mid-to-late 1940s regarding the murder of Jews and further legitimate the presence of a Jewish conspiracy at work in the world.
In essence, the book was emblematic of an attempt by the NF, and other deniers who used the work, to give an academic cloak of respectability to Holocaust denial, sympathy for National Socialist ideologies and forward the thesis of a Jewish conspiracy. Denial and the ‘Jewish question’ was therefore both out in the open (with the veneer of pseudo-academic authority) while the more National Socialist genocidal mentalities remained hidden under the carpet. The ploy was unsuccessful; anti-fascist groups were successful in demonstrating the neo-Nazi credentials of the NF. The Front’s attempt to win power by fielding over 300 candidates in the 1979 general election ended in failure when the party failed to gain one per cent of the votes cast. The presence of Holocaust denial alone was, of course, not the sole factor in the resulting humiliation and defeat. The defeat is largely attributed to the election campaign of the Conservative party. Margaret Thatcher repositioned the party’s stance on immigration policy and as a result drained the NF’s key election platform, a fact the NF leadership acknowledged in its publication National Front News (Durham 1996: 95). However, the popular rejection of the NF also reflected the extent to which British society had become increasingly aware of the Nazi genocide of the Jews. This awareness-raising has been attributed to the success of the Granada World at War episode ‘Genocide’ and the American mini-series Holocaust, first broadcast in 1978 (Pearce 2014: 30–31, 170–173).

Verrall’s Did Six Million Really die? proved to be hugely influential and remains a staple in the catalogue of Holocaust denial literature. The work itself also directly impacted on the trajectory of denial. When published by Ernst Zündel in Canada, Zündel was put on trial in 1985 (and again in 1988). His defence was supported by testimony from Robert Faurisson, Bradley Smith and David Irving, all of whom were well known for their Holocaust denial, admiration and exoneration of Hitler. The trial also resulted in the publication of a further work that captured international significance, the Leuchter Report. Zündel hired Fred Leuchter for his defence case; his brief was to conduct experiments on the remains of the sites of extermination in Poland, focusing on the gassing facilities at Auschwitz-Birkenau and Majdanek camps. The report concluded that the gassing of human beings was not possible at these sites and that this meant that the Holocaust had not happened. The report was flawed in its scientific methodology and the conclusions reached untenable. Nonetheless, this slew of publications from members of the British far-right and international Holocaust deniers played well to the image that the NF leadership wanted to present. Instead of rabid anti-Semitism and crude denunciations of the Holocaust, NF propaganda could allude to ‘scientific’ studies and ‘historical’ texts that supported their claims despite the clearly bogus foundations that underpinned them.

The air of legitimacy the text bestowed was further demonstrated in Tyndall’s 1988 book Eleventh Hour: A Call for British Rebirth. In the book Tyndall outlined how the Jewish conspiracy worked. Like Nick Griffin, Tyndall sought to distance himself, and his views, from the radical foundations of post-war British far-right movements. He attacked the machinations of Arnold Leese, writing ‘the works of
Arnold Leese tends to overstate the Jewish role to a point, at times, of absurdity’ (p. 112). Tyndall wanted to show that the Holocaust was a barrier to the issue of race, which Tyndall was keen to discuss:

There is a growing school of historians today that in fact challenges the accuracy of the allegation that the German Nazis ever had any intended extermination programme, and puts forward the counter-claim that the high death rate in the concentration camps was caused mainly by sickness, famine and a breakdown of food and medical supplies that was general in Germany at the time, and to which Allied bombing largely contributed … Whether this revised view of that phase of history is correct or incorrect should not concern us here. Even if it could be proved beyond any possible doubt that the original and established view of what happened in Germany was factually correct, it would not have the slightest bearing on the validity or invalidity of ‘racism’.

(p. 334)

Tyndall’s words contain many of the key facets that help us understand the way in which the NF and later BNP had approached Holocaust denial under his leadership. The ‘growing school of historians’ was clearly the Holocaust deniers adopting an increasing pseudo-scholastic writing style, appearing in the conspiratorial *Journal of Historical Review* and notable figures like David Irving and Richard Verrall. The notion that these men could be a legitimate school of historians was implicit in his words, and could be seen simply as a throwaway comment. Yet the pedagogical tone of the book, designed to inform his readers of his views and the direction for a British ‘rebirth’, demonstrates the way in which the use of the word ‘historians’ was invoked to give credibility to his views. The findings of Tyndall’s ‘historians’ – that the death rates in concentration camps were due to sickness, famine and poor food and medical provision which was largely the fault of Allied bombing – was a standard argument of Holocaust deniers. Another significant point in Tyndall’s phrasing is that the issue of the Holocaust ‘should not concern us here’. This is a standard way in which far-right figures, who seek power by the ballot box, ignore the issue of the Holocaust once they have questioned its historical legitimacy. This form of denial seeks to remove the Holocaust from contemporary debates about racism and race. The effect is to suggest that racist views or adherents to those views do not contain a potential for genocide, ethnic cleansing or the degradation of human rights. This, therefore, removes the racist and anti-Semitic dimension of the Holocaust, essentially reaching the untenable conclusion that a prime factor in driving the Holocaust was not racism. What Tyndall was offering his readers was a two-pronged approach to the Holocaust, first laying out the basis of the arguments of Holocaust denial; and second, if the reader does not accept the denial of the Holocaust as a legitimate argument, then the historical significance of the Holocaust is dismissed so as not to impact on calls for a racist reorganisation of British culture and politics. Both actions are historical negationism, the first a direct attack on the history of the
Holocaust, the second a call to ignore a genocide brought about by a racist Nazi worldview.

Tyndall furthered his message of a conspiracy working against him in the book, attacking the ‘anti-Nazi industry’. In the book he explained how the Jewish conspiracy worked under the chapter title ‘is there a conspiracy?’ Tyndall likened discussions of the Holocaust and Nazism to self-censorship in the Soviet Union in which historians and authors were afraid to write anything which questioned the genocide of the Holocaust (1988: 92–116). Later in the book Tyndall also explained how Jews controlled the media, and claimed that David Irving had been ‘blackballed’ and put on an international ‘Zionist hit list’ for ‘questioning some of the “holocaust” propaganda surrounding World War II’ (1988: 388). The timing of the book is significant in the historiography of the Holocaust, it was written during the historikerstreit, a time when the nature of the Nazi regime was being hotly debated in Germany and amongst historians of the Holocaust and Nazi Germany. While the ideas of Irving and Tyndall can never be described as a genuine historical debate over the Holocaust it is clear that they were keen to seize upon the debates taking place in Holocaust historiography and public debates on the place of the Holocaust in both German and British public life.

The development of Holocaust ‘consciousness’ in Britain is of particular importance to the trajectory of Holocaust denial in Britain since 1967. In the summer of 1979 eminent historian Yehuda Bauer, speaking in Switzerland at the Claims Conference of Jewish victims of the Holocaust, noted ‘nothing at all has been done in Britain’ in regard to Holocaust commemoration (Pearce 2014: 90–91). It is clear that the Holocaust, and its commemoration, had not yet permeated into British memory and narratives of the Second World War. As Andy Pearce has noted the word, Holocaust, in the 1970s and 1980s was unfamiliar to some of the population in the context of the genocide of the Jews during the Second World War (2014: 30–31, 166–167). However, despite the lack of active commemoration on the part of the Government and non-governmental organisations, the genocide of the Jews and Nazi anti-Semitism was well known and understood as a result of the above-mentioned television programmes and mini-series in the early and mid-1970s. Yet it is clear that as the 1970s drew to a close, the Holocaust was not as ubiquitous in the national psyche and its incorporation into national narratives about the Second World War as it is today. This would change as Britain entered into the new millennium.

Two points should be made in regard to the developing Holocaust ‘consciousness’ in Britain and Holocaust denial. First is the direct and continuous attack on the Jews and the historical reality of the Final Solution by the far right when juxtaposed with the apparent public apathy to the Holocaust in national narratives and the absence of any detailed or nationally orchestrated commemoration. While the crimes of the Nazis were apparent to the public, the far right’s persistence in developing ever more complex and pseudo-academic denials of the Holocaust and Jewish conspiracy theory demonstrated the inherent adherence to the Neo-Nazi past of Tyndall and his acolytes in the NF. It also demonstrates the continuation of a
long history of anti-Semitism and denial of Nazi atrocities against Jews dating back to the Second World War (Hobbs 2016). While a silence on the part of the far right in regard to the Holocaust, or refusal to outline a position on the historical significance of the Holocaust (characteristic of later far-right leaders), would have rightly been construed as denial, it would have seemed more politically prudent to adopt this stance. While parties like the NF were often careful to put distance between the party and the physical publication of denial material, they were only too happy to accept the conclusions made and promote those conclusions to support their own underlying ideological epistemology. Second, the increasing turn to public commemoration of, and education about, the Holocaust would change the way in which far-right parties who sought public endorsement at the ballot box discussed and presented their denials.

The place and presence of Holocaust denial in the NF was soon to become an increasingly subsidiary concern of the leaders and members as the party began to tear itself apart over the future direction of the movement as a product of changes in British society and politics. While the far right had always failed to capture the political space it needed for victory, after the failure of the 1979 election, the NF began to unravel (Durham 1996: 84–98). Tyndall formed the New National Front that became the British National Party two years later. The NF was led by Andrew Brons with Richard Verrall appointed his deputy. The split was riven with complex divisions in far-right politics with old and new parties creating new alliances. The inclusion of members of the British Movement in the NF, orchestrated by Tyndall and Ray Hill (ironically a mole for the anti-fascist movement Searchlight), saw the former members of the Greater British Movement reunite with their roots. The British Movement and its former leader Colin Jordan, and current leader Michael McLaughlin, were advocates of National Socialism.

In this atmosphere a unified public position on denial became more erratic. For example, in 1988 Richard Edmonds, a staunch ally of Tyndall, published the denial pamphlet Holocaust News. Edmonds published and distributed 100,000 copies of Holocaust News from the BNP’s own publishing outlet the ‘Centre for Historical Review’ (Copsey 2008: 44). Despite the obvious connection of the publication to the party in an article reporting on its origins in The Times, Tyndall claimed that although he was not involved in the production of Holocaust News, it had ‘his full support’. This again serves as further evidence of Tyndall’s commitment to the publication, dissemination and approval of denial from parties headed by him, but still maintained a position of public distance from such material when questioned. As Copsey has noted, the party often promoted denial to appeal to the views of hardliners in the party (mirroring Tyndall’s own position vis-à-vis Holocaust denial) but was conscious of the implications of such material when it came to electioneering and the fodder it provided anti-fascist groups (2008: 91–92). The place of conspiracy and denial in the party was also enthusiastically advocated by the new generation of far-right politicians gathering to replace the old guard.

Nick Griffin, who would take the leadership of the BNP from Tyndall in 1999, was an avid advocate of Holocaust denial and anti-Semitic conspiracy
theories, publishing widely under Tyndall’s leadership on the subject. Griffin’s *Who are the Mind Benders?* and an updated edition of Verrall’s *Did Six Million Really Die?*, both written in 1997, as well as his post as editor of *The Rune* from 1995, all established his credentials as a Holocaust denier and anti-Semitic conspiracy theorist. Griffin was also willing to publicly and legally associate himself with Holocaust denial. During his trial for inciting racial hatred in 1998, Griffin stated: ‘I am well aware that the orthodox opinion is that six million Jews were gassed and cremated and turned into lampshades. Orthodox opinion also once held that the world is flat’ (Atkins 2009: 125). By the turn of the century the policy of Holocaust denial and anti-Semitism still remained an integral part of far-right policies, despite the perceived cost to the movement at the ballot box, thus demonstrating the ideological commitment and integral part it played in such views of the world and politics.

However, in 1999 a shift in the presentation of denial became apparent as Nick Griffin became the leader of the BNP, and donned the persona of a ‘moderate’ and ‘moderniser’. Like Chesterton in 1967, he sought to give the BNP a more respectable face. In an article for *The Patriot* in 1999, Griffin stated that the party must present itself to the public with ‘an image of moderate reasonableness’ but stated that he ‘did not intend this movement to lose its way’ but that ‘when it comes to influencing the public, forget about racial differences, genetics, Zionism and historical revisionism and so on – all ordinary people want to know is that we can do for them what other parties can’t or won’t’. These words were tempered with the phrase ‘of course we must teach the truth to the hardcore’. The explicit reference to historical revisionism and Zionism demonstrated that under Griffin only the outward appearance of the party was to be changed: the ideological core of the party and movement was to remain intact. In other words, the ideological basis of the party, or the ‘sub-Mosleyite wackiness of Arnold Leese’s Imperial Fascist League’ as Griffin dubbed it, remained unchanged and hidden behind the new public propaganda image of a BNP as supporting ‘idealistic, unobjectionable, motherhood and apple pie concepts’ (*Patriot*, No. 4, 1999).

The shift in public presentation of Holocaust denial can, in part, be explained by the changes that were taking place in relation to the Holocaust in British collective memory. The increasing Holocaust education, television programming, commemoration and Holocaust films, particularly Steven Spielberg’s *Schindler’s List* released in 1993, had heightened knowledge of the tragedy of the Holocaust in the minds of the public. The narratives of the Holocaust presented in such media and educational programmes, however, tended to be linear, in which the genocide was presented as a smooth and industrial process, in which prejudice and persecution led to the gas chambers of Auschwitz: what historians dubbed the ‘straight path’ thesis and a staple preoccupation of the now well-worn functionalist versus intentionalist debates of early Holocaust scholarship. This is of particular importance when understanding how far-right deniers have attacked the Holocaust. The more sophisticated and pseudo-academic denials of the Holocaust of the 1970s to the present day have tended to remain locked into dismantling this view of the Holocaust, first as a
means by which to engage with the early scholarship of historians and present themselves as ‘the other side of the argument’ and second because it remains the narrative with which the public are most familiar. The main focus of attack has been Auschwitz itself because, as historian Peter Hayes acknowledges, Auschwitz is ‘the capital’ of the Holocaust and is ‘indelibly linked with all of the multiple dimensions’ of the genocide (2003: 331).

The prominent British Holocaust denier and military historian David Irving outlined the attack on Auschwitz as the most important mission for deniers. Speaking at the Institute for Historical Review, and later transcribed in the Journal for Historical Review in 1990, Irving stated: ‘since 1945 there has been the great battle Auschwitz! And we have now, at last, the historical profession – above all, the Revisionist historical profession – have found as our own task, the major task: “Sink the Auschwitz!”’. The equation of the professional historians with the ‘revisionist historical profession’ further serves to underscore the way in which Holocaust deniers seek to align their propaganda and mendacious accounts of the past with legitimate academics and a scholastic framework. David Irving has become the international figure, the media poster child, most associated with Holocaust denial. This was the result of the 2000 Irving v. Lipstadt and Penguin Books libel trial, arrests and imprisonment for denial in European courts. Irving attracted considerable attention and support from the British far right in the 2000 libel trial. Irving’s view of the Holocaust changed over the years with him first acknowledging that Jews had been exterminated but claiming that Hitler knew nothing of the genocide, while in the late 1980s he changed his position to full denial of the Holocaust after the publication of the Leuchter Report.

Nick Griffin was always dismissive of Irving’s work and claimed that Irving was ‘soft’ and that he, rather than Irving, was the ‘expert’ on Holocaust denial (Trilling 2013: 66). During the 2000 trial, a Searchlight correspondent witnessed that a man was putting a note on the press benches that read: ‘Irving is a paid agent of political Zionism. This trial is staged. Don’t be deceived’ (Evans 2002: 204). While not clear who the individual was or what connection, if any, he had to the BNP, the episode demonstrated the absurdity and unbounded elasticity which such a conspiracy could encompass.

The attitudes of Griffin towards his role in denial are significant and are representative of his attempt to ride two horses. On the one hand, he believed that the Holocaust was a ‘Holo-Hoax’ and was fully committed to the ‘hardcore’ underpinnings of the movement, however, on the other, he was aware that such views would hold no political traction at the ballot box (Trilling 2013: 67). Simplistic populism was easy: a call to reclaim a historic past that never was; blame of immigrants for job losses or dilution of the amorphous concept of British culture; and the promise of quick fix solutions, whatever the human rights cost. However, the BNP could not occupy the political landscape as a populist right-wing movement because of its residual ideological attachment to Holocaust denial and anti-Semitic conspiracy, the most notable example of which was in 2009 on the BBC Question Time programme. While on the show Griffin claimed he did not have a conviction for
Holocaust denial. While it was true in the strictest legal sense that he did not have a conviction for ‘Holocaust denial’ but for ‘publishing or distributing racially inflammatory written material’ for his Holocaust denial in *The Rune*, his use of wordplay, however, was not good enough. He claimed he had changed his views but claimed European Law would not allow him to divulge his new views and thus clearly demonstrated that they had not changed, as the laws to which he alluded are confined to outright denial of the Holocaust. His credentials as a denier were beyond doubt. The programme achieved record viewing figures, the highest in the show’s history, and despite allegations that Griffin had been ‘picked on’, demonstrated the far right and neo-Nazi history of the leader and the movement (*The Guardian*, 23 October 2009).

Here was an example of a continued problem that has beset the far right since 1967 and Chesterton’s opening NF address: how to keep the ideology of the movement pure and true to its neo-Nazi roots while attracting votes from the public. The bluff of a ‘modernising’ movement, which is in step with the changing views of society, while secretly remaining true to an immutable ideological trajectory, was easily confounded when the movements were examined under the glare of public scrutiny. Perhaps more politically dangerous are popular right-wing movements that have no rigid dogma and can claim to have learned the lessons of the past and will ‘never forget’, while still maintaining clandestine backroom allies who promulgate far-right ideologies and Holocaust denial. It is clear that the electoral prospects for a party like the NF, or BNP, were always going to be negligible, and a prospect of such parties forming a government remote when still disseminating and producing Holocaust denial. The fact that such ideas were not jettisoned in hope of improving electoral prospects (even if such ideas were more hidden at times of elections) demonstrates the axiomatic importance of such ideas in holding the movement together. In essence, far-right parties seeking election could not dance to the tune of changed economic, political and social circumstance in Britain without constantly tripping over their jackboots, even when they thought their laces were properly tied.

**Denial, revolution and terrorism**

There were other individuals and groups on the far right which did not court public opinion and advocated revolution and underground paramilitary action. Holocaust denial in these factions did not require a pseudo-academic framework. Denial was unequivocal as was their worship of Hitler and National Socialist ideology. Holocaust denial in these circles remained unchanged from the initial refutation by men like Alexander Ratcliffe and Arnold Leese (Hobbs 2015: 198). This was primarily due to the unfa1tering belief in a Jewish conspiracy, which always stood in for a detailed analysis of the events of the Holocaust. From the late 1950s into the early 1970s these movements tended to crystallise around Colin Jordan. Jordan advocated adherence to the principles of National Socialism and saw this as the means to save Britain from the perceived decline resulting from the loss of empire.
He believed that ‘Hitler was right’ and that the Second World War had resulted in the victory of world Jewry. Jordan’s attitude to the Holocaust should come as no surprise; his staunch defence of a National Socialist reading of the past was at the centre of his worldview. Yet some of his rhetoric is curious when examining his comments on the Holocaust. Convinced the Second World War had been brought about by world Jewry and had resulted in ‘the insane fratricidal inter-Aryan war’ which had brought down Nazi Germany, Jordan believed that the war had indeed been one of a clash of races but that the reality was that Nordic Aryan races had fought against each other when they should have been united in a fight against Jews and Bolshevism. He stated that such a clash between Aryan peoples ‘Never must happen again!’ . The echo of Holocaust remembrance (‘Never Again’ or ‘Never Forget’) in such a statement illustrates another form of attack on the memory and history of the Holocaust, attempting to appropriate key elements of public memorial of the Holocaust and suffuse them with far-right rhetoric and a mendacious rewriting of the past.

The apex of Jordan’s attack on Holocaust memory came in 1993 with the publication of *Merrie England: 2000*, a fictional novel in which Jordan depicts Britain after the millennium. The book is an imagining of a ‘White Genocide’ in Britain policed by the Ministry of Harmony (see Jackson 2015b: 214). Chapter six of the book, ‘the staging of the Holocaust’, depicts Holocaust memory reaching ridiculous (and offensive) levels in which a daily memorial service is held, carrier bags and carpets are emblazoned with the words ‘Remember Auschwitz’ and the death toll of the Holocaust had risen to ten million. While it is clear that Holocaust memorialisation and its significance in British historical memory of the Second World War was increasing, Jordan’s notions demonstrate the extremity of his far-right views and denial (Jordan 1993: 34–39). This was not an attempt at pseudo-scholastic denial aimed at providing a cloak of respectably to his views, it was simple propaganda aimed at the lowest common denominator of racist, far-right traveller. The book was designed to be a warning about the impending ‘white genocide’ in Britain, but the core theme of chapter six reflected the increase in Holocaust memorialisation taking place in Britain, albeit through a rabidly anti-Semitic and distorted lens.

The increasing significance of the Holocaust in public and historical narratives was in part due to its compulsory inclusion on the new national curriculum in England in 1991; and the introduction of the War Crimes Act of the same year (Pearce 2014: 61–65, 181–183). In the book, Jordan explains that it was Jews that had created the society depicted in *Merrie England*; rather than being a covert conspiracy, as Jordan believed was operating in the real world, Jews wore a yellow Star of David to denote their privileged position in society, which gave them priority car parking, access to seats on fully occupied trains and buses, theatres and other public spaces at the expense of non-Jews (Jordan 1993: 37). Jordan furthered his standard trope of Jewish conspiracy in chapter eight of *Merrie England* when he described the Ministry of Harmony in Britain as being a subsidiary of the ‘World Council of Harmony in Tel Aviv’ that he described as ‘Straddling the world in the
mantle of Democracy.’ The image evoked was the standard equation of Jews and world control with democracy as a vehicle by which power is achieved.

On the face of it, *Merrie England* seems to be a plagiarised parody of George Orwell’s 1984 drenched in far-right ideological rhetoric, however on a more practical level the work reflects the way in which Jordan viewed the world in which he lived. The insidious danger contained within the work was not only the attack on Holocaust memory and memorial but also the way in which the work capitalised on a growing feeling of ‘political correctness gone mad’. This idea became embodied in a series of high-profile stories in the British tabloids in the mid-to-late 1980s, most notably in the autumn of 1986 when the tabloids carried the headline falsely claiming the nursery rhyme ‘Baa Baa Black Sheep’ was to be banned in nursery groups by Haringey council. The claim was proved to be false but has since entered into the myriad of urban myths about political correct concepts taken as read (Turner 2013: 417). Jordan was both responding to this news and capitalising on it in the book to gain a grounding and traction with the public and his readers. When the British government banned the publication of *Merrie England* the ban only served to give the piece more legitimacy, a fact noted by Jordan in the dedication about his fight against ZOG (Zionist Occupation Government) (Jordan 1993, dedication). The theme and intent of the book was to frame Jordan’s ideology, his supporters and like-minded individuals, as the victims of a world conspiracy that explained why their ideas had no political resonance in mainstream politics. In trying to suffuse their perceived victimhood into the real victimhood of the survivors and victims of the Holocaust, Jordan expressed his frustration at the preserved crisis that neo-Nazis believed was unfolding in Britain (Jackson 2015b: 97). Jordan’s views and redemptive anti-Semitism were being suffocated by the history and commemoration of the Holocaust created by increased tolerance and liberal values in society, for which he believed world Jewry was responsible.

Unlike men like Tyndall and Griffin, Jordan was not restricted by the court of public opinion, he made no concession in his view and did not believe that the public could be persuaded of his views. Jordan explained the conspiracy was too deeply embedded in the minds of ‘sheepish citizenry’ and that only a revolution with the breakdown of ‘the society of the old order’ could see his ideas and ideology come to fruition (Jordan 2011: 95). Essentially, *Merrie England* may have been a far-right farce and comedy designed to have appeal to the racist minority who feared ‘White Genocide’ but took little other affirmative action but to vote for far-right parties in elections. The wider purpose was, however, to attract those who would perform acts of murder and terrorism to ensure that power was achieved and the perceived conspiracy by Jews dismantled with murder, genocide and ethnic cleansing being the chosen weapons. How this revolution would take place was the main theme of Jordan’s next fictional work, *The Uprising* (2004), which tells the story of the British Freedom Force (BFF) which seeks far-right ‘poetic justice’ on a range of Jordan’s enemies and individuals who have committed crimes against racial purity with the BFF finally creating a ‘national reawakening’ of the British peoples’ ‘true’ national consciousness (see Jackson 2015b: 97–104). Jordan’s Holocaust denial
The men who rewrite history

and appropriation of a ‘victim’ status for his views were not designed to convince the public of the need to vote for change or win people over with ‘motherhood and apple pie’ concepts, it was a call to arms. As such Jordan’s Holocaust denial did not need the cloak of pseudo-academic respectability, rather, it was exposed for all to see: raw, intolerant, racist and mocking of both victims and survivors. This was the rhetoric by which he would attract like-minded individuals who would have no qualms with violent revolution and terrorism.

Conclusion

The presence of Holocaust denial in the far right did not begin in 1967 with the formation of the NF. The roots of the denial of the genocide of European Jewry were asserted while the Nazis were still killing the innocent in 1942 and emerged from the conspiracy that international Jewry had clandestine control of the world (Hobbs 2016). The enshrined metanarrative of a Jewish conspiracy in far-right ideology remained, and continues to remain, the epistemological filter through which all information and explanation of the world were filtered. Holocaust denial is one part of the conspiracy. While Holocaust denial provides a means to whitewash the history of the Third Reich and genocide to appeal to the public for votes, this function is only minimal. In fact, as the above chapter has shown, the presence of denial acts as a political repellent to the public, constantly serving to remind voters of the underlying neo-Nazi principles at the core of far-right parties and movements. That denial was never jettisoned from such parties or movements demonstrates its underlying value to far-right thought. As stated at the start of this chapter, those who deny the Holocaust are not mad or stupid, rather they have developed an effective epistemological position which explains their own failures and refusal to understand a changing world: it is not that they are wrong or their political ideology unpopular (Hitler’s success is frequently invoked to prove this), it is that all their actions and all-embracing philosophy are constantly subverted by an effective and ruthless enemy bent on keeping them out of power – International Jewry.

As the opening quote by Russell indicates, to understand this line of thinking we must also look to how this came to seem to be true. As explained above, there can be no denying that an increased historical awareness of the Holocaust has become part of British culture and school education. The increasing memorialisation of the Holocaust, from a far-right perspective, is evidence of the Jewish conspiracy at work. Holocaust denial became increasingly necessary in British far-right movements to demonstrate the way in which ‘alien’ elements had entered national collective memory that benefited liberal values; underpinned democratic ideals of equality and tolerance; and ensured that such an event never happened again and was never forgotten. Increased Holocaust memorialisation, education and remembrance do not create more deniers and the institutions, which support such events, do much to educate the public about the atrocities and genocide committed by the Nazis. However, at times, the narratives that they present tend to crystallise the linear history attacked by deniers and use the Holocaust for pedagogical means
which are often at odds which the true motivations and forces which drove the Holocaust. The increased presence of the Holocaust in British national historical narratives and commemoration served to convince the far right of their belief in an all-encompassing conspiracy, but it also increased an internalised and institutionalised sense of victimhood within the movement, most clearly evidenced in Jordan’s *Merrie England* and Tyndall’s *The Eleventh Hour*, both works absorbed a sense of victimhood and oppression which were being expressed in the commemorative narratives of the Holocaust. This was not just denial but also an attempt to hijack the label of ‘victim’ to foster sympathy because their views and ideologies were being repressed and vilified. It was a curious result of the dominant liberal narratives in Britain. Invoking the narrative of ‘victim’ or a potential ‘white Genocide’ in order to appeal to new supporters’ far-right ideologies and solutions meant that the real victims of genocide and their suffering became marginalised.

Holocaust denial in Britain since 1967 remained an integral part of the apparatus that underpinned the epistemological grand narrative of a Jewish conspiracy that prevented far-right victory and their vision of British ‘national renewal’ and ‘awakening’. Contained within this thinking was the redemptive and genocidal anti-Semitism that contributed to the Holocaust itself. While the core notion of a conspiracy being at work and the claim that the Holocaust had not taken place never changed, the presentation and dissemination of that message evolved in line with shifting social and cultural imperatives in British society; increased academic research on the Holocaust; and amplified institutionalised commemoration and education of the Holocaust. Rather than retire Holocaust denial and conspiracy from far-right ideology in order to achieve power, the pervasive power of a narrative of conspiracy became more important and entrenched. For British far-right movements, Holocaust denial and conspiracy was the way to unify like-minded individuals; its continued presence remained an important totem to signify its radical agenda and opposition to an imagined Jewish conspiracy. This obviously absurd view came to seem to be true because without it the realities of what such an ideological view resulted in during the first half of the twentieth century is all too apparent: failure, defeat, and genocide are not easy to explain or justify; anti-intellectualism, playing the victim, blaming imaginary enemies and denial are an ideologically expedient safeguard. Such trajectories remain impervious to reason and bestow in the believer a sense of purpose and conviction that only they know ‘the truth’. It is this belief that has remained at the core of British far-right ideology and Holocaust denial; it is the perfect maelstrom of hate, intolerance and genocidal intent that is both self-sustaining and resilient to the truth.

Notes

1 The title of this chapter is adapted from Ray Hill’s (and A. Bell’s) chapter of the same name in *The Other Face of Terror* (1988).

2 Along with Richard Harwood (Richard Verrall) McLaughlin contributed to the ‘Historical Fact’ series. McLaughlin wrote issue number three, *For Those Who Cannot*
Speak. The pamphlet sought to claim that Allied war crimes were worse than German war crimes. Issue number one was a republication of Verrall’s 1974 *Did Six Million Really Die?* Issue number two was another Verrall authored publication entitled *Nuremberg and Other War Crimes Trials* which erroneously claimed that the Nuremberg trial was controlled and run by Jews.


4 Here I am referring to movements like the United Kingdom Independence Party in which Nigel Farage could publicly commemorate Holocaust Memorial day while keeping his alliance in the European Parliament with known exponents and sympathisers of denial. See https://twitter.com/nigel_farage/status/560007021316276224 and www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/ukip/11177724/Will-anyone-in-Ukip-condemn-Farages-despicable-new-EU-alliance.html.

5 Concerns about Holocaust commemoration and education have become a trend in the recent historiography of Britain and the representations of the Holocaust and genocide constructed in society. (For discussion see Stone 2013: 212–231; Cesarani 2015: xxv–xxxi.)

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