

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Nuova Destra in Italy: an investigation between history and historiography

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to analyse the Italian Nuova Destra. The first part examines the birth of the Nuova Destra within the current of the Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI), referring particularly to Pino Rauti, a founder and leader. Following the experience of the magazine *La Voce della Fogna* and the Hobbit Camps, the first publishing initiatives of the Nuova Destra – *Diorama letterario* and *Elementi*, influenced by Alain de Benoist and the French *Nouvelle Droite* – were established. The second part analyses the path of the Nuova Destra as an autonomous cultural current. After Marco Tarchi's expulsion from the MSI in 1981, the Nuova Destra launched an aggressive publishing strategy that failed to make the necessary organisational leap and came to an end around 1994. Nevertheless, the Nuova Destra has created a recognisable current, culturally eclectic and capable of ranging over different fields of knowledge with 'metapolitics' and 'right-wing Gramscism'.

Keywords: nuova destra; new right; neofascism; hobbit camps; gramsci

Introduction

The Right, as René Rémond wrote in a study first published in France in the 1950s, is a current that is able to take on new forms based on the relationship between its political-ideological heritage and the demands of the present. Depending on historical contexts, Rémond argues, on the Right 'issues gain or lose importance', 'the centre of gravity shifts' and, in this way, 'new groups come to take their places beside the old' (Rémond 1969, 30). From this perspective, the Italian Nuova Destra constitutes a significant case study of the plurality of political cultures present in the Right (Breschi 2018). The Nuova Destra did, in fact, develop out of a group of young people belonging to the Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI) influenced by Alain de Benoist's *Groupement de recherches et d'études pour la civilisation européenne* (GRECE), the nucleus of the *Nouvelle Droite* in France, founded in 1968 (Bar-On 2007; Shields 2007; Bar-On 2013; Camus 2019). The analysis of the Nuova Destra also sheds light on the relevance of the transnational circulation of ideas and organisational practices even within the Right (Mammone 2015; Picco 2016; Albanese and Del Hierro 2016; Del Hierro 2022).

The first part of this article examines the emergence of the Nuova Destra in the context of the political and cultural transformations of the 1960s. In the early 1970s, Pino Rauti became the point of reference for a minority but influential current of the MSI. In the complex historical phase experienced by the Italian Republic in those years, the anxieties of

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the young neofascists took two different directions. The search for ‘revolutionary purity’ resulted in right-wing terrorism (Panvini 2014; Panvini 2021). The choice to rethink their own identity on the basis of new foundations through confrontation with modernity, on the other hand, led to the experience of the magazine *La* (henceforth *Vdf*), the Hobbit Camps (Campi Hobbit) and, subsequently, the Nuova Destra (Tarchi 1995, 61).

The second part starts from the expulsion from the MSI of Marco Tarchi, a leading figure of the Nuova Destra, in 1981¹. The article then traces its ideological and organisational developments as an autonomous cultural current during the 1980s until 1994. The profound transformations of the Italian political system brought about by the end of the Cold War, the Tangentopoli scandals and the electoral victory of Silvio Berlusconi’s Polo della libertà (Gundle and Parker 1996) led the protagonists of the Nuova Destra themselves to decree its end (Tarchi 2010, 459). From this perspective, the Nuova Destra becomes a historically accomplished phenomenon that, as such, can be studied using a historiographical methodology (Capra Casadio 2013b, 712).

The influence of the Nouvelle Droite in Italy: the *Voce della Fogna* and the 1977 Hobbit Camp

It is difficult to draw an overall profile of the Nouvelle Droite in the 1970s. In attempting to identify some of the cornerstones of its political thought, mention should first be made of metapolitics, an expression by which the Nouvelle Droite understood that area of values which, although not strictly part of politics, has a decisive influence on consensus in society (Capra Casadio 2014). The metapolitical strategy of the Nouvelle Droite therefore aimed to initiate a cultural counter-movement, capable of defeating the cultural hegemony that the Left had gained after 1945. For de Benoist and the GRECE it was therefore necessary to rebuild the Right on an intellectual level, in order to raise it from its state of cultural inferiority, caused by both external elements – the Right’s identification with Nazism and the Left’s cultural activism, and internal elements – the Right’s cultural indolence and its nostalgia for the past. It was a project to create a renewed and aggressive Right, capable of promoting an alternative hegemonic project and seducing the elites (Taguieff 1994). De Benoist and the GRECE were driven by the conviction that cultural debate was more important than a purely political debate in winning consensus. Politics, in fact, was a secondary sector of the broader cultural field. In shifting its focus from politics to culture, the Nouvelle Droite encountered Gramsci’s theory of hegemony (Nacci 2010). It thus coined the phrase ‘right-wing Gramscism’, later the subject of a specific *Colloque* (GRECE 1982). With this perspective, GRECE set out to initiate a culture war.

The rejection of Judeo-Christianity – understood as the kind of mentality that characterised liberal, democratic, capitalist and Marxist currents – characterised the discourse of the Nouvelle Droite during the 1970s (Germinario 2002). From the point of view of the GRECE, Judeo-Christianity had introduced egalitarianism into Europe, which, after taking on a secular guise with the Enlightenment, had become the dominant ideology in the West. Especially since the mid-1970s (François 2012, 165), the enemy of the Nouvelle Droite was no longer the Soviet Union, but rather the West and in particular the USA as a direct expression of egalitarianism (de Benoist and Locchi, 1979). In the early 1980s, Nouvelle Droite thus introduced the theme of ‘ethno-differentialism’, that is, the defence of the specificities of peoples, against liberalism, the ‘silent killer’ of cultural differences (Faye 1981).

The Nouvelle Droite’s rethinking of the cultural identity of the Right and its engagement in the intellectual debate, facing new issues and experimenting with new organisational strategies, was taken up in the 1970s by some young neofascists around Pino Rauti who, during those years, tried to oust Giorgio Almirante from the leadership of the MSI. The two figures embodied very different political and ideological options.

Returning in 1969 to the leadership of the MSI, Almirante inaugurated during the following year the Destra Nazionale current, with the intention of transforming the party into a beacon for a broader anti-communist front. Armando Plebe, a former Marxist philosopher, was chosen as a cultural reference point, but he failed to propose an original and unified ideological synthesis (Plebe 1971). The Destra Nazionale's electoral results in 1972 were encouraging and in 1973 MSI celebrated its merger with the monarchists (Chiarini 1995, 129). The positive trajectory was interrupted between 1973 and 1974. The killing of a policeman by a young neofascist during a demonstration in Milan (12 April 1973), the Brescia massacre (28 May 1974, see Chiarini and Corsini 1983), and the Italicus train tragedy (4 August 1974) undermined the MSI's representation as a party of law and order and reaffirmed the relevance of antifascism (Ferraresi 1996; Cento Bull 2008; Dondi 2015). The defeat suffered in the referendum on divorce (12–13 May 1974), during which Almirante had aligned his party with the Democrazia Cristiana, further isolated the MSI. The Historic Compromise, the 1976 electoral decline and the split of Democrazia Nazionale (Parlato 2017) demolished the MSI's ambitions.

In opposition to Almirante, Pino Rauti, who had rejoined the MSI in 1969, called for a change in right-wing mentality and a new focus on civil society (see his speech in the newspaper *Il Conciliatore* in 1972, reproduced in de Turrís 2003, 340). For Rauti, the MSI also had to exploit the growing social protest against the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and its policy of Historic Compromise (Ignazi 1989, 181). He organised a network of publications around the Centro Librario Europa in Rome that disseminated writings not only by Julius Evola, the main cultural reference point for many young neofascists of the time, but also by Drieu La Rochelle, Ernst Jünger, Ezra Pound, Robert Brasillach, Oswald Spengler, Joseph de Maistre, Knut Hamsun and the Romanian Iron Guards leader Codreanu. With the motion 'Linea futura', voted for by 22 per cent of the delegates at the 1977 MSI congress, he proposed shifting the MSI's focus to young people and social issues. He also emphasised the party's 'desperate need for culture' (*Secolo d'Italia* 1977). This was a rather unprecedented focus in a party like the MSI, where culture was usually considered an 'optional' (Tarchi 2024, 102).

The *Voce della Fogna* emerged within the Rauti current and was a reaction to both the difficulties of the MSI and the transformations of youth culture in the context of the post-'68 socio-political upheavals (Falciola 2018, 131–132). It was promoted by the Florentine Fronte della Gioventù (FdG) centering around Tarchi and constituted a fundamental step in the formation of the human and cultural environment from which the Nuova Destra would spring.² The influence of GRECE was crucial for the activists who animated the *Vdf*. The latter had become aware of the existence of GRECE thanks to Pino Romualdi's newspaper *L'Italiano*, with which Tarchi and Stenio Solinas collaborated. *L'Italiano* published a series of articles on the right wing in France (Rallo 1970a, 1970b, 1970c, 1970d; later collected in Rallo 1971) given the interest aroused by the publication of *Fascismi sconosciuti* by Maurice Bardèche (1969; see Martini 2023; Sorgonà 2024). Bardèche had played an important role in inspiring a new generation of neofascists, including de Benoist himself (Mammone 2011, 310). In addition, *L'Italiano* provided a list of the French 'national-European press' in which *Nouvelle École* appeared (*L'Italiano* 1971). In 1973 a former Ordre Nouveau leader, Jack Marchal (Novak 2011, 164–167), advised the group that shortly afterwards founded the *Vdf* to get in touch with GRECE. In the summer of 1974, Tarchi, Mario Sanesi and Susanna Tre Re, members of the Florence FdG, met Alain de Benoist and other GRECE members in Paris. In the following years, the relationship was further consolidated through close correspondence and participation in the annual *Colloques* and *Université d'été* organised by GRECE (Tarchi 2010, 445).

The *Vdf* published 31 issues between December 1974 and spring 1983. In 1977 it reached a peak of subscribers – 1,200 – and a circulation of 4,500 copies (Tarchi 2019, xviii). The *Vdf* was characterised by a provocative and often vulgar style. Its very name referred ironically

to a well-known slogan used by the radical Left – ‘Fascist scum, go back to the sewers!’ (*Fascisti carogne, tornate nelle fogne!*). From the very first issue, the magazine set out to create ‘not out of nothing, the basis for a rebirth’ and to represent ‘a new voice’ against ‘the false myths of this age’: ‘egalitarianism, collectivism, materialism’ (Vdf 1974), three themes that would also characterise the Nuova Destra. The ‘old right’, the Vdf argued, was ‘lost’, locked in a ‘ghetto’ (Vdf 1981b), unable to confront the present because of its nostalgic rhetoric and cultural poverty (Vdf 1981c). For the neofascist press of the time, the Vdf devoted an unprecedented attention to the products of mass culture and youth cultures.³ Indeed, the young right-wingers of the 1970s (Guerrieri 2010; Chiarini 2011) consumed the same products of the mass culture industry (literature, music, comics and cinema) as their left-wing peers and, like them, represented themselves as outsiders and hostile to institutions. In 1977, Stenio Solinas, one of the founders of the Nuova Destra, described neofascist youth in this way: ‘a decidedly revolutionary youth, which is uncomfortable with the combination of order and legality; which hates the system more than communism, which dreams of a complete overhaul’ (see Tarchi 2010, 153).

The first Hobbit Camp in Montesarchio on 11–12 June 1977 represented a further important chapter in the history of the Nuova Destra (Guerrieri 2005). For Marco Revelli, in fact, the first Hobbit camp was

the first occasion on which the Italian extreme right showed that it had perceived the possibility of an unprecedented presence within the social dynamics and above all within the massified area of the youth world, overcoming that ‘syndrome of defeat’ that had long paralysed it in the ‘ghetto of nostalgia’ (Revelli 1984, 120).

The rally was held a few days after the national assembly of the FdG which, despite the majority obtained by Tarchi – supported by Rauti’s current – nominated Gianfranco Fini, supported by Almirante, as the new secretary (Ignazi 1989, 188–198). Breaking with the party’s traditional youth events characterised by political debates, physical exercises and ideological training courses, the first Hobbit Camp focused on the recreational and community dimension, with concerts, open debates, and moments of conviviality. For the Vdf it represented ‘the example of a *community revolution*’ and ‘the disruptive force of *free time*’ (Vdf 1977). It was a ‘liberation’, the birth of a ‘new way of “doing politics”, of *being political*’ that, from the right, was ready to confront contemporaneity (see the reprint of the book *Hobbit/Hobbit* published in 1982, in Tarchi 2010, 90–91). According to the situationist Gianni Simonetti – an exponent of the extra-parliamentary left – it was instead a right-wing strategy of appropriation of left-wing initiatives such as the Parco Lambro festival of the previous year (Bessarione 1979). Certainly, in the Montesarchio rally the ‘ambiguous fascination’ (Lenci 2012, 72) exerted by the 1977 movement manifested itself (Falcicola 2015).

Starting with its very name, the first Hobbit Camp manifested the role played by the ‘atypical’ reference (Livi 2023, 81) to Tolkien’s universe in terms of the renewal of languages and imagery undertaken by the Vdf. Read with interest by Evola’s followers as a manifestation of the rejection of industrial civilisation, progress, and materialism (Del Ponte 1971; De Turrís 1974), the Vdf celebrated *The Lord of the Rings* as ‘the most phantasmagorical book that ever came into our hands’ (Vdf, 1975). Within it, Tarchi recognised ‘a vision of the world and of life’, the opportunity for an evasion without desertion in which actuality and myth outlined ‘a different model of humanity’ (Tarchi 1978, 85). Through Tolkien, the Vdf and the first Hobbit Camp tried to reformulate some of the typical themes of right-wing culture (the primacy of the spirit, the defence of the hierarchically organised community) and to put Rauti’s 1976 call for new ‘myths, strength of ideas [*idee-forza*] and symbols’ into action (cited in Tarchi 2010, 356).

Studies have identified the *terminus a quo* of the Nuova Destra either in the launch of *Vdf* in 1974, or in the first Hobbit Camp in 1977. The first option, supported by Tarchi and the scholars who have adhered to his interpretation (Raisi 1990; Angella 2000; Capra Casadio 2013a), emphasises the internal maturation of the MSI youth in the process that led to the Nuova Destra. In short, focusing on 1974 makes it possible to avoid identifying the Italian Right with the dramatic phenomena of violence in those years and, on the contrary, to shed light on the plurality of political cultures existing in neofascist youth (Tarchi 2010, 9). Instead, the choice of 1977 as the *terminus a quo* (argued in different ways by Revelli 1984; Tassani 1986; Zucchinali, 1986) foregrounds the role of the general historical context and the influence of youth cultures.

The first publishing initiatives of the Nuova Destra and the break with the MSI

Diorama letterario and *Elementi* were the first initiatives ‘under the label of the Nuova Destra’ (Tarchi 2024, 137) and emerged from the milieu that referred to the *Vdf* and animated the first Hobbit Camp. The two journals accompanied the echo of the debates generated in France by the GRECE in the summer-autumn of 1979, which brought the expression *Nouvelle Droite* into the public domain (Duranton-Crabol 1988, 170). From this time on, Alain de Benoist appeared several times in the Italian right-wing press (Tassani 1986, 26). His theses also found ample space in *Linea*, a fortnightly journal founded in 1979 by Rauti with a circulation of 14,000 copies, to which Solinas – as editor-in-chief – and Tarchi regularly contributed.⁴

Founded in 1976 as a supplement to the *Vdf*, *Diorama letterario* became an independent magazine in 1978. It declared its opposition to the two ‘vices’ of right-wing culture, namely ‘sectarian dogmatism and absolute ideological permissiveness’ (*Diorama letterario* 1978). Its explicit aim was to give rise to an ‘alternative anti-materialist culture’ (1977c). Consequently, the journal insisted on the importance of a solid cultural background for a lasting political commitment (1976). What was needed were ‘men of culture and cultural organisers’ together with ‘suitable structures to foster them’ (1977a) such as an ‘organic publishing house’, ‘following the example of what the Left had done’ (1976). Picking up on de Benoist’s theses on right-wing Gramscism, *Diorama letterario* argued that ‘today culture is the major tool for reconquering political space’ and that ‘the Communist Party’s “Gramscian scheme” has had and still has weight in the form of minds conquered, tools prepared, opinions constructed in homage to the principle of the conquest of civil society’. An ‘equal and opposite counter-strategy’ was therefore necessary (1977e). The magazine reiterated the accusations launched by the *Vdf* against the rest of the Right, which remained in the ‘narrow and closed field of nostalgia or transformism’, far ‘from the due confrontation with reality’ and from the themes that fascinated young people: travel, music, fiction and cinema, i.e. ‘free time’ (1977d). Preferring ‘parades of “well-known names”’ (1977a) – referring polemically to Armando Plebe – the major part of right-wing culture was characterised by the dismissal of any intellectual proposal and by amateurism (1977b).

The first series of *Elementi*, of which three issues came out between 1978 and 1979, appeared after the second Hobbit Camp and in conjunction with the founding in Florence of the publishing house Il Labirinto, headed by Solinas (Raisi 1990, 39). Held in Fonte Romana di Pacentro on 23–25 June 1978, the second Hobbit Camp was generally considered a failure, so much so as to be remembered as the ‘Gollum camp’. The names *Elementi* and Il Labirinto recalled similar initiatives of the Nouvelle Droite, *Éléments* and le Labyrinthe respectively, testifying to the solid relations across the Alps. *Elementi* concluded an agreement with *Éléments* whereby Stenio Solinas and Gennaro Malgieri wrote for the French journal, while de Benoist, Guillaume Faye and Michel Marmin wrote for the Italian one (Mammone 2015, 174–175). The first two volumes published by Il Labirinto were an essay by de Benoist on

Nietzsche (de Benoist 1979) and an interview conducted by de Benoist himself with Konrad Lorenz (Lorenz 1979). The founding nucleus of the Nuova Destra gathered around *Elementi*. The editor-in-chief was Stenio Solinas, the editor-in-chief Maurizio Cabona, the editorial board consisted of Marco Tarchi, Giuseppe Del Ninno, Enrico Nistri, Piero Visani, Gennaro Malgieri and Carlo Terracciano – the defection by the latter two caused the end of the first series of the journal. In addition to them, de Benoist, Faye and Marmin, Claudio Finzi, Giorgio Locchi, Franco Cardini, Sigfrido Bartolini, Enzo Erra and Gianfranco de Turreis also contributed to *Elementi*. In pointing out the three fundamental lessons learnt from the post-'68 decade, *Elementi* emphasised the importance of culture – ‘cultural power is the primary engine, the indispensable weapon for those who have ideas and want to make them successful’, the importance of confrontation with the present, and finally the willingness to face an era of crisis by questioning everything – ‘to confront the ideas of others without prejudice, to polemicise and even descend, if necessary, into the opposite camp’ (1978). In this passage we recognise the topics that would distinguish the Nuova Destra in the following years: the metapolitical choice, the denunciation of the ‘incapacitating myth’ represented by Evola’s legacy, and right-wing Gramscism.

Between 1980 and 1981 the Nuova Destra became a subject of debate in the media.⁵ Meanwhile, signs of an imminent break with the MSI accumulated. The *Elements* group convinced de Benoist to refuse Almirante’s invitation to speak at the 1979 MSI congress, considering it to be manipulative (Tarchi 2010, 449–450). This congress represented another defeat for Rauti and indicated Almirante’s clear supremacy over the MSI (Ignazi 1989, 206–207). A few months later, between 4 and 6 January 1980, the first convention of the Nuova Destra was held in Cison di Valmarino, entitled ‘Hypotheses and Strategies of a New Right’. Tarchi, Solinas, Cabona, Umberto Croppi, Giuseppe Del Ninno and Giovanni Monastra spoke, amongst others. The convention was a moment of collective reflection to define the profile of a Right ‘new enough to break [the] mould’ (Vdf 1980a). Underlying it was ‘a single, unitary world view, *but not a single ideology*’ – a clarification that manifested the presence within it of different political and cultural sensibilities (Tarchi 1980a, 114).

In his report, Tarchi emphasised the differences between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ right, without, however, assuming a formal break with the MSI. According to his reconstruction, after 1945 the Right had lost the ‘will’ to ‘affect the formation of mentalities and values’. The ‘revolt against the modern world’ predicted by Evola had turned out to be an ‘incapacitating myth’, which distanced itself from confrontation with reality. The ‘new right’, on the other hand, advocated the ‘metapolitical choice’, i.e. ‘confrontation, and to some extent an exchange, with the modern world’. No longer therefore ‘revolt against the modern world’, but ‘rejection of the modern world’, combined with a search for legitimisation (Tarchi 1980a, 109–111). The ‘corollary’ of the primacy of cultural choice (metapolitics) was ‘right-wing Gramscism’, defined as ‘one of the most interesting indications provided to us by the French Nouvelle Droite’, which implied the ‘reinterpretation of Gramsci’s methodology of conditioning and shaping mentalities, tending towards the constitution of a cultural hegemony, a premise for the conquest of stable political power’ (Tarchi 1980a, 119).⁶

Thus, Tarchi acknowledged the influence of the Nouvelle Droite, but specified that it was necessary ‘to grasp from the phenomenon what can be useful to translate into Italian experience’ (Tarchi 1980a, 113). ‘The theses developed by GRECE, and more particularly by Alain de Benoist’, he wrote shortly afterwards, offered ‘further keys to interpreting the development of that “modern world” ... too often schematised and neglected’ (Tarchi 1981, 13). Nevertheless, he reiterated the ‘absolutely autonomous forms’ of the Nuova Destra with respect to GRECE (Tarchi 1980b). Within the core of the Nuova Destra there were in fact different views on the Nouvelle Droite. Giovanni Monastra, for example, harshly criticised GRECE’s empiricism and scientism and added: ‘I really would not like it if, after 20 years of

“traditionalist” scholasticism [the reference is Evola], we had to put up with a decade of “Grecist” scholasticism!” (M[onastra] 1980, 89–90).

A few months later, on 16–20 July 1980, the third Hobbit Camp was held at Castel Camponeschi. The celebratory volume *Hobbit/Hobbit*, published two years later, described it as the expression of an ‘organic community, the ability to create a new spirit’ that had dismissed ‘the somewhat sad rituals and hymns to death, to discover together the joy of participating’ (see the book reprint in Tarchi 2010, 79). For the *Vdf* it was a crucial turning point, at once a community and a celebration (*Vdf* 1980b). For *Linea*, similarly, the young participants in the third Hobbit Camp had perceived ‘themselves and others in a different, renewed and richer way’ (*Linea* 1980). According to Tarchi’s memory, the Nuova Destra’s intention to make itself independent from the MSI was already present at this time (Tarchi 2010, 450). The *Vdf* described the first convention in Cison di Valmarino as a sort of dress rehearsal for the Nuova Destra: ‘discard the rest, once and for all. Incapacitating myths, rejection of the political, nostalgia’ (*Vdf* 1980c). ‘It is necessary to spread, jumping over fences’ it added shortly afterwards (1980e).

However, it was the MSI leadership that took the initiative. In 1980, the party had proposed the introduction of the death penalty by exploiting the fear of terrorism in those years. Together with Rauti’s current, Tarchi expressed his opposition in an interview with the popular magazine *Panorama* (Fioretti 1981). Towards the end of the year, the *Vdf* published a harsh satire against some MSI leaders (*Vdf* 1980f). Although he was not the author of the article in question, the responsibility fell on Tarchi, who was expelled for this reason without any significant opposition from Rauti. The latter, in fact, merely challenged the manner of the expulsion and invited the party to give Tarchi a chance to explain himself (*Linea* 1981). The expulsion of Tarchi from the MSI was the culmination of the party leadership’s aversion to the intellectual contribution of the Nuova Destra (Guerrieri 2009, 110). For his part, on the contrary, Tarchi attributed his expulsion to ‘a breakdown of nerves in the face of the growing popularity of the new-right project’.⁷

The parabola of the Nuova Destra as an autonomous cultural current

As early as 1979 Franco Cardini, who was closely following the path of the Nuova Destra, had hypothesised its autonomy from the MSI (Tassani 1986, 27). Moreover, the ideas of the Nuova Destra were now incompatible with both the MSI and Rauti. For the Nuova Destra, in fact, Rauti’s aspiration to reorganise the MSI according to new criteria was now inadequate (Tarchi 2024, 141). Several of the GRECE’s ideas were in turn unacceptable to the rest of the Italian Right. The extreme right-wing Catholic journal *Cristianità*, for example, accused de Benoist’s paganism of introducing modern and, as such, revolutionary ideologies to right-wing youth (Introvigne 1977). De Benoist’s nominalism, claimed Catholic traditionalist Piero Vassallo, opened the door to an exaggerated relativism and subjectivism, which would reduce the Right to a sterile ideology (Vassallo, 1978). The same right-wing Gramscism was considered by Marcello Veneziani – a young right-wing intellectual who had initially followed the activities of the Nuova Destra with interest – to be an unacceptable homologation to the Left. For Veneziani, one learned ‘more from a Mussolini than from a Gramsci’. Moreover, he expressed significant perplexity about certain topics ‘discovered’ by the Nuova Destra, such as ecology, ethology and *fantasy*, which risked leading the way ‘into a magical but harmless universe’ (Veneziani 1982).

In the light of Tarchi’s expulsion, the second convention, ‘Constants and evolutions of a cultural heritage’ (held at Cison di Valmarino, 12–14 March 1981) defined the cultural and political coordinates of the Nuova Destra, now considered an autonomous and self-sufficient project with respect to the MSI. In fact, it was considered necessary to emerge ‘from the tunnel of fascism’, thus sanctioning ‘the end of the postwar period’ (Tarchi

1982, 28). It was therefore necessary to be open to confrontation, to overcome the logic of dichotomies in order to arrive at ‘a culture of *et-et* rather than a culture of *aut-aut* (“either-or”)’ (Tarchi 1982, 21) – an aspect on which the Nuova Destra would insist in the following years. As the *Vdf* wrote, what was needed was ‘a *new synthesis* capable of melting away the blinkers of categories – right, left, centre ... the wreckage of a time gone by’ (*Vdf* 1982). Following up on these intentions, a public meeting was held in Florence on 27 November 1982 dedicated to ‘The Left and Nuova Destra: Notes for a Debate’ during which Tarchi and Del Ninno dialogued with the Marxist philosopher Massimo Cacciari and the left-wing Catholic intellectual Giovanni Tassani. This seemed to realise the hoped-for dialogue beyond the right and the left and, at the same time, accredit the Nuova Destra as a legitimate interlocutor (*Vdf* 1983).⁸ Predictably, the initiative received harsh criticism. The Left saw the Nuova Destra as simply another declination of the old radical right (Angella 2000, 134–135). The MSI accused it of denying its fascist roots and of seeking an impossible mediation with the Left (Tarchi 2024, 148).

In the following years, the Nuova Destra acquired a recognisable editorial presence for itself, although it continued to suffer from a certain instability. Indeed, from its very beginnings it was characterised by continuous departures and new entries. The departures were generally in favour of returning to the MSI (Malgeri, Mario Bozzi Sentieri, Del Ninno), towards more radical right-wing circles (Terracciano) and towards the world of information (Cabona, Solinas – see Tassani 1994, 126). The publication of *Diorama letterario* continued, joined by the second series of *Elementi* between November 1982 and December 1983, and the four-monthly *Trasgressioni* from 1986. The main publishing houses were Akropolis – which published de Benoist’s two seminal books *Visto da destra* (1981) and *Le idee a posto* (1983b) – and La Rocca di Erec (another reference to Tolkien’s world), which printed *Diorama letterario* and *Trasgressioni*.

The third conference in 1982, entitled ‘The West: Decay of a Myth’, prepared the publication of the pamphlet *Il nemico principale*, which de Benoist identified with the USA, breaking with the traditional pro-Western majority in the Cold War Right (de Benoist 1983a). A year later, between 21 and 22 October 1983, the fourth convention was held on ‘The Forms of the Political. Ideas of the Nuova Destra’ (1984), which was also attended by Cacciari and the sociologist Sabino Acquaviva. In the subsequent convention, ‘Nuova Destra and Radical Right. From evolution to specificity’ of 23–24 June 1984, the Nuova Destra distanced itself from totalitarian and traditionalist conceptions, recognising itself in the democratic camp (*Diorama letterario* 1984). Between 1985 and 1986, the Nuova Destra attempted to organise its sympathisers – 700–800, with another 3,000–4,000 people interested in its ideas (Tarchi 2010, 472) – into a national metapolitical association (Angella 2000, 159–161). According to Tarchi, the project failed because of the

dissolution of that spontaneous sharing of a state of mind ... that had accompanied the constitution and development of the movement through various phases, coagulating with particular cohesive force on certain occasions, such as the first and third Hobbit Camps, the first four national study conventions, the Florentine round table with Cacciari (Tarchi 2010, 457).

This phase was followed by a sort of ‘breaking of ranks’ that led to the adoption of a purely editorial strategy attempting to attract media attention by means of certain publications such as de Benoist’s *Oltre l’occidente* (1986).

In addition to this, one has to consider the lack of economic resources, the unfavourable political situation and the role as a pole of attraction that the MSI continued to exercise in the rest of the Right. If in its early stages the Nuova Destra had been able to benefit from the

attention of the mass media, by the mid-1980s this interest had waned. The break with the MSI, moreover, had been induced by Tarchi's expulsion, and not by an internal maturing process. This break was not to be taken for granted, since the party was deeply rooted in the political itinerary of the young neofascists who had grown up in the 1960s and 1970s. In other words, in the right-wing political space the Nuova Destra was discounting the presence in Italy of a hegemonic force – the MSI – which was absent at the time in France. Moreover, criticism of modernity according to Evola's lesson still carried great weight in the Italian Right (Germinario 2005, 10).

During the 1980s, the Nuova Destra tried to initiate a dialogue with other political forces that can only be touched upon here. Attempts to do so included interest in the Italian Green Party (Bulli 2020; Bernardini 2024) and Craxi's 'tricolour socialism' (Accame 1983, 60). More fruitful was the relationship with the Lega Nord, based on a common interest in local identities (Saresella 2023, 353–356). The start of Rauti's short-lived secretariat in the MSI raised new hopes in the Nuova Destra, which launched the third series of *Elementi*. In February 1991 and September 1992, the last two national seminars were organised, respectively 'Greatness and Misery of Nationalism: Europe Facing the Challenges of the Year 2000' and 'Racism and Anti-Racism. The challenges of the multicultural society' (*Diorama letterario* 1992, 1993). After Rauti, Fini took over the leadership of the MSI, later transforming it into Alleanza Nazionale (Ignazi 1994; Tarchi 1997). After Berlusconi's electoral victory in 1994, the Nuova Destra dissolved into a series of individual paths: '1994 therefore marked the end of an experience that had lasted 20 years, and awareness that the cycle was over was immediate in those who had helped to start it' (Tarchi 2010, 459).

Conclusions

Pierre Milza is right in claiming that the Nuova Destra is the movement that most closely approached the model established by GRECE (Milza 2002, 215; Nacci 1985, 299). But there is no coincidence between them. The exponents of the Nuova Destra repeatedly distanced themselves from certain ideas of the Nouvelle Droite, such as paganism and nominalism (Locchi 1978). On the other hand, the split with the MSI in general and Rauti's current in particular turned out to be essential. As early as 1979, Rauti expressed his dissent from some of GRECE's ideas when introducing an interview with de Benoist (Linea 1979). Following Evola's thought, Rauti placed himself outside and against modernity. But the Nuova Destra, following the example of the Nouvelle Droite, on the contrary, aspired to place itself within modernity, although in a very critical position with respect to some of its aspects such as materialism, egalitarianism and individualism. 'To reject modernity *en bloc* would be to show a lack of intelligence, since we can positively recognise in it what the dominant ideologies read negatively,' Guillaume Faye wrote in this regard in the last issue of the *Vdf* (Faye 1983).

The Nuova Destra asserted itself in a historical context marked by the great difficulties of the parties and the Italian political system of the time (Revelli 1984, 154–162). Metapolitics and right-wing Gramscism thus became part of the complex processes of political, cultural and generational crisis in the 1970s and 1980s. The Nuova Destra intended to reformulate the political identity inherited from neofascism and place itself in an alternative political space, different from the one that characterised post-Second World War Italy, marked by the centrality of antifascism in the construction of political legitimacy. Analysis of the Nuova Destra cannot therefore fail to take into account the complex relationship between the general historical context, the inherited cultural heritage and the will to break with the latter by some of its exponents. Was the milieu that gathered around *Vdf* from 1974, that animated the Hobbit Camps between 1977 and 1980, and that partly converged in the Nuova Destra, something that matured within the MSI – in particular in Rauti's current – and was

decisively influenced by GRECE? Or was it the outcome of an emulation of left-wing strategies and tactics (Mudde 2019, 54; Forti 2023) in the post-'68 years? This seems to be one of the historiographical questions, and it refers to the complex relationship between 'voluntary appropriation' and 'involuntary contamination' (Falciola 2018, 131) that characterised the neofascist youth who were deeply influenced by the mass media and youth cultures of the 1960s–1970s, in which leisure and the imaginary became fundamental vehicles of politicisation.

In the 1980s, the Nuova Destra guaranteed itself a certain space in the public debate with its magazines and publishing houses. It took advantage of the shift to the right in international politics after the rise of Ronald Reagan in the US (on the MSI debate regarding Reagan, see Sorgonà 2019, 123–134). Furthermore, the Nuova Destra was helped by the weakening of political conflict in Italy, which allowed an increased dialogue between the political parties, and which contributed to the progressive 'sghettizzazione' ('de-ghettoisation') of the MSI (also aided by the end of right-wing terrorism, see Ignazi 1989, 223–230), and the gradual willingness to recognise the neofascist party as a 'legitimate' interlocutor. In this context, the Nuova Destra was able to engage in a dialogue with some left-wing intellectuals, to explore new issues that were often exclusively traced back to the Left (ecologism, federalism, etc.), to rethink its vision of the future (Panvini 2022, 193). The entry of metapolitics into the language of the Right and the comparison with the Nouvelle Droite made new political perspectives mature: the several initiatives promoted by the *Vdf* milieu, especially the Hobbit Camps, were 'an important point of reference in which a good part of the ruling class of the MSI and Alleanza Nazionale was formed' (Parlato 2014, 116). The inability to give itself a fully-fledged organisational structure instead indicated the Nuova Destra's persistent difficulty in creating a stable relationship between metapolitical strategy and political-institutional strategy. Nevertheless, a sociologist who had devoted in-depth analyses to the phenomenon of the Nuova Destra, defined it as 'a symptom of the Right that was to come' (Revelli 1996, 47). Although remaining rather isolated as an associative network, in 20 years of activity the Nuova Destra had in fact given rise to a widespread right-wing culture, recognisable from a doctrinaire point of view but at the same time eclectic, multifaceted and capable of ranging over different fields of knowledge.

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Notes

1. As will be seen, Tarchi was a fundamental part of the Nuova Destra, which he later analysed clearly as a scholar and professor at the University of Florence: his research there has been a complex interweaving of history and memory. As a privileged witness of the very events in which he was a protagonist, he remains the historian most referred to in this context.
2. Since the articles came out anonymously or under pseudonyms (although many were written by Tarchi), it is difficult to reconstruct the exact identity of the editorial team, which, by the way, was scattered all over Italy and never met for a collective reflection, as Tarchi recalls in the introduction to the anastatic reprint of the *Vdf* (Tarchi 2019, x) to which the page numbers of the articles quoted later refer.
3. In fact, the *Vdf* gave a lot of space to pop and rock music with the column 'In ascolto', to cultural products with the column 'Quando sento parlare di Kultura ...' and to travel with the column 'On the road'.
4. This is not a reason why *Linea* can be assimilated to the Nuova Destra (as Raisi 1990, 45 proposes).
5. See for example *Nero è bello*, aired on 4 December 1980 on the second channel of Italian public television (Rai 2 1980).
6. Almost as if to mitigate the innovations advocated, Tarchi pointed out that a metapolitical approach was in a sense already recognisable in Evola and Adriano Romualdi, two fundamental cultural references for the neofascist youth of the time (Tarchi 1980a, 120).
7. See his letter to Giano Accame dated 10 February 1981 (Fondazione Ugo Spirito-Renzo De Felice, Fondo Giano Accame, Corrispondenza 1948–2008, f. 645).

8. Tassani was the first left-wing intellectual to seek a dialogue with the Nuova Destra and, at the same time, to propose studies (collected in Tassani 1986) that valorised the autonomy of Nuova Destra from the MSI.

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Italian summary

L'articolo analizza la vicenda della Nuova destra italiana. La prima parte prende in esame la nascita della Nuova destra all'interno di quella corrente del Movimento sociale italiano (MSI) che faceva riferimento a Pino Rauti. A partire dall'esperienza della rivista *La Voce della Fogna* e dei Campi Hobbit, si affermarono le prime iniziative editoriali della Nuova destra – *Diorama letterario* ed *Elementi* – influenzate da Alain de Benoist e dalla *Nouvelle droite*. La seconda parte analizza il percorso della Nuova destra come corrente culturale autonoma. Dopo l'espulsione dal MSI di Marco Tarchi nel 1981, la *Nuova destra* diede vita a un'aggressiva strategia editoriale che fallì il salto di qualità organizzativo per esaurirsi intorno al 1994. In questi anni, la Nuova destra ha comunque dato vita a una riconoscibile corrente, culturalmente eclettica e capace di spaziare nei diversi campi del sapere con la 'metapolitica' e il 'gramscismo di destra'.

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