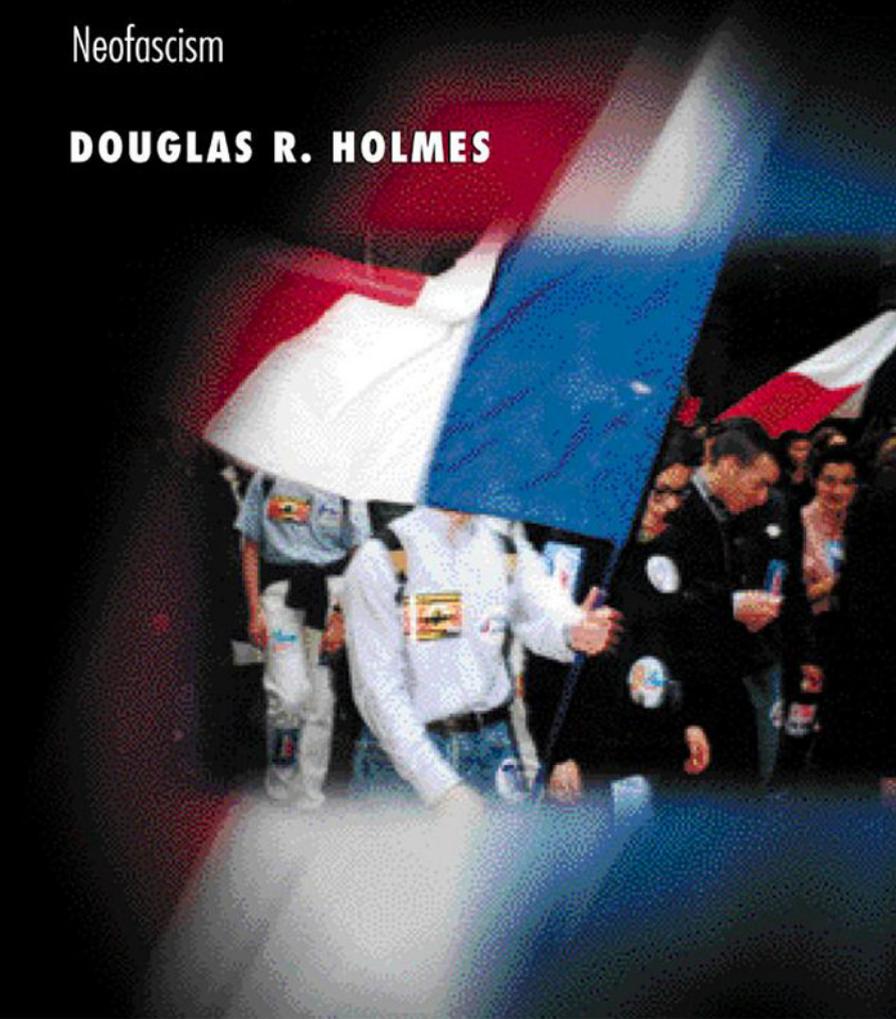# INTEGRAL EUROPE

Fast-Capitalism,
Multiculturalism,
Neofascism

DOUGLAS R. HOLMES

INTEGRAL EUROPE

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INTEGRAL EUROPE

FAST-CAPITALISM,
MULTICULTURALISM,
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For Pam and Eli

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CONTENTS

THIS TEXT EXAMINES how a group of committed partisans sought during the last decade of the twentieth century to recast European society as a moral framework, analytical construct, and empirical fact. The study focuses on their alternative depiction of society, a view of collectivity with deep roots in European romantic tradition and, more broadly, in what Isaiah Berlin calls the "Counter-Enlightenment." In fundamental ways this type of societal framework—which I describe as integralist in nature—is opposed to modernist conceptions of society as embodied, most notably, in the contemporary project of advanced European integration. Integralism is premised on a distinctive orientation to collective experience with unusual intellectual resonances: Johann Herder's populism, expressionism, and pluralism; Emile Durkheim's mechanical solidarity; and Georges Sorel's synthesis of nationalism and socialism. I demonstrate in this text how these elements can be cast as a volatile theory of society.

There are many ways I could have studied the general phenomenon of integralism ethnographically. I initially encountered it in rural districts of Italy, manifest as intimate forms of social practice and as shared idioms of cultural expression, as a style of life. I chose, however, to reorient the research by focusing on politicians who were articulating radical agendas that drew directly on integralist ideals and who sought to exploit the distinctive contemporary struggles they encompassed for individuals and groups. I found these political figures capable of endowing these changes with not just a distinctive narration but also a critical language, a language that drew on what they understood as "inner truths" for its legitimacy and power.

In pursuing this research I have navigated a broad range of scholarship outside of anthropology from the political science of European integration to the history of European fascism. The reader will note that I employ this other scholarship in a double fashion—on the one hand, to further directly my own argumentation and, on the other, to establish an alternative or complementary anthropological perspective on these same issues. My purpose is to contribute to the delineation of a distinctive purview for an anthropology of Europe. I am by no means alone in this project. This preoccupation has been at the center of Michael Herzfeld's work as well as the work of John Borneman.

Although my research is, I believe, fundamentally consistent with the tradition of anthropological work in Europe, it also involves a series of experiments. The most obvious of these is the movement of the

analysis across a series of different sites. The major circuit traced in this text is from northern Italy to Strasbourg and Brussels, the two venues of the European Parliament, and finally to the East End of London. I have avoided making broad methodological claims for this kind of multisited maneuver, because I think the reader will see why these moves were necessary given the specific issues I was pursuing and the circumstances that presented themselves during the course of the research.

One final point. I have been tempted to apply the notion of integralism to other very pressing political problems in Europe, problems that were unfolding at some distance from the sites I explored ethnographically. I have resisted this temptation because I did not want to extend the project into areas where I had limited or no expertise. Thus the ghastly formations of integralism that emerged in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo in the 1990s have not been included in the analysis. That said, I believe the general framework presented in this book can be applied productively to the fundamental nature of these searing mutations of *European* integralism.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are three other very close friends who helped at different points in the study. In many ways this project began with long conversations with Paolo Rondo Brovetto in Italy, when we wondered what a single European currency would mean to the political economy and politics of Europe. The way Paolo initially framed these issues based on his own work in public administration has continued to define the way I think about these questions. I met Nancy Rose Hunt in Brussels when she was finishing her research in the African colonial archives. She let me hear the voices and stories of her amazing informants and showed me how they could be woven into a compelling ethnographic text. I first heard about anthropology from Peter Wilson when I was an undergraduate. Through a wonderful coincidence we became reaquainted during my annual sojourns to Otago. In our regular Friday afternoon meetings Peter would remind me of the value of the anthropological archive and convey his enduring sense of excitement about the fundamental aims of anthropology.

My family was steadfast in its support of me during this project. My parents, my brother George Holmes, and my daughter Sarah Prouty have patiently seen this project through its various permutations, providing moral support throughout. My extended family in New Zealand has embraced me and my preoccupation with the manuscript with great warmth and understanding.

Day in and day out Barbara Butler brought a coherence to my work at the University of Houston. I am grateful for her constancy and care. This was all the more pivotal during the illness and subsequent death of our much loved colleague Mary Hodge. Christine Kovic and Mike McMullen have done much to generate a new intellectual project for our program and, in so doing, created not only a lively academic program but also a rich collegial environment. My students in Houston have been a responsive audience for my rehearsal of the ideas I pursue in the manuscript.

The final revisions for this manuscript were completed after my appointment to the Department of Anthropology at the University of Otago. I am grateful to Ian Frazer and the other members of the department for their welcome and their support in my completion of this project.

unusual perspectives on transformations of European society and for whom these transformations have unusual significance. I was very fortunate to be able to talk to these people as they were struggling to come to terms with the conflicting meanings and consequences of advanced European integration.

I benefited from participation in the Late Editions project organized by George Marcus. The LE annual meetings were always stimulating and they provided a forum in which I first presented and received critical commentary on issues that I developed in this text. Excerpts from "Exclusionary Welfarism," Late Edition 6 (1999), and "Society Lost, Society Found," Late Edition 8 (in press) appear in chapters 8 and 10. I am grateful for permission from the University of Chicago Press to reproduce these excerpts here.

The book is dedicated to my wife, Pamela Smart, and my son, Eli. Pam provided truly unflagging support in the preparation of this text. She applied her remarkable intellectual acuity to enrich the text and give it vibrancy. Her skillful reading of each draft provided the questions and queries that helped me, on one hand, to refine detailed arguments and, on the other, to frame the overarching structure of the text. Her love and generous spirit sustained me at every turn of this project, even when, as was often the case, we were separated by the Pacific. The text is also dedicated to Eli, who arrived only a few months ago, but who has enriched our lives from the first moment.

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INTEGRAL EUROPE

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Chapter One

INNER LANDSCAPES

D URING THE LATE 1980s, in what was a prelude to this in-
quiry, I studied a social milieu in the Friuli region of northeast
Italy whose inhabitants had pursued a beguiling engagement
with the symbolic and the material imperatives of modernity. Friuli is
the terrain of Carlo Ginzburg's famous studies of sixteenth century
agrarian cults and inquisitorial prosecutions as well as the battlefields of
Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*. Over numerous generations
these people, Friulani, had negotiated the intrigues of industrial wage
work, traditional peasant farming, the bureaucratic apparatus of the
nation-state, the material allures of consumerism, and the symbolic
power of Roman Catholicism; many, particularly males, had engaged in
long migrations traversing central Europe, Australia, and America in
search of employment. To defy the alienation and anomie of industrial
society, these Friulani pursued arduous strategies by which they perpetu-
ated relatively autonomous domains of economic practice and cultural
meaning. A commitment to a distinctive regional language, religious
rites, folk beliefs, rustic tastes, and, above all, to the routines and inti-
macies of family life, allowed them to establish bastions of solidarity
within which their ethnic identity was actively reaffirmed (Holmes
1989). Their commitment to traditional cultural forms was neither nos-
talgic nor residual; rather it formed the basis of a vigorous engagement
with the modern world and it is this general response—this style of
life—that I now refer to as "integralist" in form.

I observed ethnographically during twenty-two months of fieldwork
how Friulani exercised a cultural awareness that allowed them to negoti-
ate, if not overcome, the alienation of everyday existence while continu-
ing to maintain manifold bases of solidarity. Though far from seamless,
it was a consciousness and practice that offered them a dynamic frame-
work within which domains of material existence, social life, and sym-
bolic meaning were rendered coherent. Their integralist style of life was
sustained by what was understood, at least by them, to be an inner cul-
tural logic, and this logic was enacted as what John Borneman has ele-
gantly termed a "praxis of belonging" (1992:339n). Integralism as I ini-
tially encountered it had four registers: as a framework of meaning, as a
practice of everyday life, as an idiom of solidarity, and, above all, as a
consciousness of belonging linked to a specific cultural milieu. I also

recognized that within these integralist practices were intriguing, though usually quiescent, struggles that under certain conditions could assume a volatile political character. Those who conjured this type of political insurgency drew on *adherents'* fidelity to specific cultural traditions and sought to recast these traditions within a distinctive historical critique and an exclusionary political economy. What seemed to catalyze this transformation was a broadly experienced rupture in the sense of belonging on the part of members of various communities and collectivities. I also discerned that integralist sensibilities had affinities with those predispositions found at the center of what Isaiah Berlin calls the "Counter-Enlightenment," the European intellectual tradition that imbues romanticism, fascism, and national socialism. Berlin's conception of the Counter-Enlightenment came to provide both the basic intellectual structure for my rendering of integralism and a theoretical armature for the study as a whole.[1]

As I observed how integralist struggles were played out in people's daily lives in the rural districts of Friuli, I became increasingly interested in the potential of these dynamics to take wider political form. My encounters with the leaders of a small regionalist political movement, the Movimento Friuli, demonstrated that this was indeed happening and, notably, against the backdrop of European integration. These pivotal encounters began my gradual refocusing of the project to a full analysis of integral politics. My specific intention has been to link integralist aspirations—expressed in efforts to circumvent the alienating force of modernity by means of culturally based solidarities—to a broader political economy. More generally, I became convinced that the kind of struggles I had observed ethnographically in Friuli were emblematic of emerging political engagements taking shape across Europe. These new questions led me to relocate the study first to the bureaucratic and political precincts of the European Parliament, where I believed integralist aspirations were gaining halting expression in response to the project of European integration, and then to the urban wards of the East End of London, where I believed integralist politics were assuming a particularly fierce and incendiary articulation (Holmes 1999). At the core of this phase of the project are 140 interviews that I conducted with a broad spectrum of political leaders, technocrats, community organizers, and street fighters. My interlocutors ranged from a former prime minister of Belgium to neo-Nazis in inner London.[2] The first two parts of the text, "Europe" and "East End," reflect my research over twenty-four months in these remarkable locales. The third, "Atavism," concludes the text with an assessment of how integralism can emerge within dissonant theories of society and as revisionist narrations of history.

Fast-Capitalism and Society

This text is concerned with how integralist sensibilities have been translated into a broad-based politics by a cadre of committed partisans, most conspicuously by Jean-Marie Le Pen and his associates. These political leaders have shrewdly discerned ruptures in the experience of belonging that threaten various registers of European identity. They diagnosed a distinctive condition of alienation based preeminently on cultural rather than socioeconomic forms of estrangement. Two interwoven phenomena have played a crucial role in politicizing integralist fears and aspirations: first, the unfolding of advanced European political and economic integration that is manifest in the project to create a multiracial and multicultural European Union; and, second, the onslaught of what I term "fast-capitalism," a corrosive "productive" regime that transforms the conceptual and the relational power of "society" by subverting fundamental moral claims, social distinctions, and material dispensations.

I have drawn on the theoretical work of two distinguished anthropologists, Paul Rabinow and Marilyn Strathern, in pursuing these issues. In a sense their contributions are reciprocal: Rabinow (1989) provides a compelling framework for critically evaluating the science, political economy, and metaphysics of solidarity at the heart of the European Union, whereas Strathern (1992) has been the first to theorize the very specific ways that fast-capitalism (though she does not use the term) radically "flattens" those preexisting frameworks of social meaning upon which our understanding of industrial democracies rest. The work of these two anthropologists opened what are the most important theoretical issues of this study. They allowed me to see the innovation at the heart of the integralist insurgency. Specifically, those political actors who embraced an integralist agenda recognized the changed nature and shifting discursive status of "society" in late-twentieth-century Europe. They labored zealously to impose on European politics a radical delineation of society in which "cultural" idioms as opposed to abstract interests serve as instruments for expressing meaning and for deriving power (Strathern 1992:171). Whether or not their political project succeeds electorally, the impact of integralist ideas is already acute and consequential insofar as they have succeeded in recasting society as a realm of political engagement.

The specific design of the research grew out of conversations with a third distinguished anthropologist, George Marcus, and his conceptualization of what has come to be called "multisited ethnography" (1999). Most important for this text, what Marcus has captured by interleaving

the "thick" and "thin" of ethnography is not so much a new "methodology" as an analytical approach that addresses the underlying conceptual problems posed by Rabinow and Strathern. What he has achieved and what is reflected at virtually every turn of this text is a means by which to engage ethnography with emerging resonances of society, with the contours of a nascent social.

What follows is a brief overview of the concepts that have guided the inquiry as well as a profile of the overall thematic structure of the text.

INTEGRALISM: POPULISM, EXPRESSIONISM, AND PLURALISM

Isaiah Berlin (1976) in his classic essay on "Herder and the Enlightenment" sets out "three cardinal ideas," drawn from the work of Johann Gottfried Herder, which, I will argue, underpin integralist politics and give it form and content. Populism, expressionism, and pluralism both provide the basic conceptual structure of integralism and locate its roots in European intellectual history.

Berlin defines these three concepts with broad strokes: *populism* is simply "the belief in the value of belonging to a group or a culture" (1976:153). He draws from Herder's distinctive orientation to the vicissitudes of human association, an orientation that envisions patterns of association crosscut by the possibility of loss and estrangement. The stranger, the exile, the alien, and the dispossessed haunt the margins of this populism. "[Herder's] notion of what it is to belong to a family, a sect, a place, a period, a style is the foundation of his populism, and of all the later conscious programmes for self-integration or re-integration among men who felt scattered, exiled or alienated" (1976:196–97).[3] Although Berlin acknowledges that Herderian populism embraces views of collectivity that are not necessarily political and ideas of solidarity that need not be forged through social struggle, he is clear that populism, by taking dispersed human practices and beliefs and by endowing them with a collective significance, creates singular political possibilities.

He also defines *expressionism* in expansive terms implicating all aspects of human creativity. Yet, it is a definition that orients analysis of society toward inner truths and inner ideals:

> [H]uman activity in general, and art in particular, express the entire personality of the individual or the group, and are intelligible only to the degree to which they do so. Still more specifically, expressionism claims that all the works of men are above all voices speaking, are not objects detached from their makers, are part of a living process of communication between persons and not independently existing entities. . . . This is connected with the further notions that

every form of human self-expression is in some sense artistic, and that self-expression is part of the essence of human beings as such; which in turn entail such distinctions as those between integral and divided, or committed and un-committed, lives. (1976:153)

Expressionism thus encompasses virtually the entire compendium of collective practices, the varied fabrications of culture, from rustic cuisine to high religion. Herder posits an inner logic and internally derived integrity to these creative enterprises and thus a unifying dynamic.

Pluralism is for Berlin "the belief not merely in the multiplicity, but in the incommensurability, of the values of different cultures and societies, and in addition, in the incompatibility of equally valid ideals, together with the implied revolutionary corollary that the classical notions of an ideal man and of an ideal society are intrinsically incoherent and meaningless" (1976:153). Significantly, Berlin's rendering of pluralism can yield tolerance of difference among discrete groups with their own enduring traditions and territorial attachments. However, when cast against a "cosmopolitan" agenda based on universal values and "rootless" styles of life, it is a "pluralism" that can provoke fierce intolerance. In its embrace of "incommensurability," it creates a potentially invidious doctrine of difference, which holds that cultural distinctions must be preserved among an enduring plurality of groups and provides, thereby, a discriminatory rationale for practices of inclusion and exclusion.

Berlin also derives from Herder one more concept, already alluded to, that has relevance for this study, the concept of alienation. Herder's portrayal of alienation as the outcome of uprooting, of a deracination, had enormous influence on subsequent scholarship, most notably in the theoretical writings of Marx and Engels. Berlin notes that it "is not simply a lament for the material and moral miseries of exile, but is based on the view that to cut men off from the 'living center'—from the texture to which they naturally belong—or to force them to sit by the rivers of some remote Babylon . . . [is] to degrade, dehumanize, [and] destroy them" (1976:197). This view of alienation emphasizes cultural estrangement over and above socioeconomic oppression. Crucially for this text, estrangement can also be figurative: it can be instilled by the "emptiness of cosmopolitanism" without entailing any physical dislocation (198–99).

These ideas delineated by Berlin are not in themselves political assumptions; as I demonstrate in this text, they are postulates about the essence of human nature and the character of cultural affinity and difference that can potentially imbue fervent political yearnings and foreshadow a distinctive political economy. Berlin further notes: "Each of these three [populism, expressionism, pluralism] . . . is relatively novel; all are

incompatible with the central moral, historical, and aesthetic doctrines of the Enlightenment" (1976:153). In other words, they form the basis of a distinctive intellectual and cultural movement in European history, again, what Berlin refers to as the "Counter-Enlightenment," which assumed its most sophisticated manifestation within the artistic triumphs of romanticism and most malevolent expression in the politics of fascism.[4] Fundamentally, the three postulates formulated by Berlin and the fourth that I added represent an alternative theory of society, an alternative project of human collectivity.

Thus, integralism, as I develop it in this text, is a protean phenomenon that draws directly on the sensibilities of the Counter-Enlightenment for its intellectual and moral substance. Its general trajectory is toward "an organic approach to life and politics," and, to the extent that integralism relies on enigmatic "inner truths" for its legitimacy, it can defy rational appraisal and frustrate external scrutiny (Mosse 1978:150). Indeed, as one of the most formidable contemporary practitioners of integralist politics avows darkly, "there are other reasons for our fate than Reason" (Le Pen 1997).[5]

The term "integral" itself has an historical pedigree that links it with various movements associated directly with the lineages of the Counter-Enlightenment. Specifically, it has a broad association with various French right-wing intellectual movements. There is the "integral nationalism" of Charles Maurras, "integral experience" of Henri Bergson, the "integral humanism" of Jacques Maritain, and, more recently, the "integral Catholicism" of Monseigneur Marcel Lefebvre. In general, "integralists" are seen as staunchly traditionalist or fundamentalist in their outlook. They themselves tend to view their integralism as a defense of some form of "sacred" patrimony. There are also more generic political designations of integralism, as in "integral nationalism," to refer to formations of ultranationalism that intersected, most notably in Germany, with Nazism (Alter 1994:26–38), and in "integral socialism," an effort to fuse "a primitive idealistic socialism and Marxist realism" (Sternhell 1996:72). Thus, the term is generally used to designate a range of idiosyncratic "fundamentalisms," most often, though by no means exclusively, of a right-wing provenance. Alberto Melucci emphasizes this "fundamentalist" and "totalizing" character of integralist agendas, as he encountered them on the left and the right, within the Italian Communist Party and the Roman Catholic Church respectively, and links this experience of prejudice as expressed in integralist agendas to his own scholarly interest in social movements:

> Under the influence of integralism, people become intolerant. They search for the master key which unlocks every door of reality, and consequently they become incapable of distinguishing among the different levels of reality. They

long for unity. They turn their back on complexity. They become incapable of recognizing differences, and in personal and political terms they become bigoted and judgmental. My original encounter with totalizing attitudes of this kind has stimulated a long-lasting interest in the conditions under which integralism flourishes. And to this day I remain sensitive to its intellectual and political dangers, which my work on collective action attempts to highlight and to counteract. (1989:181)

What I seek to accomplish by recontextualizing integralism explicitly within the tradition of the Counter-Enlightenment is to demonstrate how the concept can encompass far more than mere fundamentalism. This juxtaposition reveals that intregralism has a complex conceptual and moral structure with deep roots and a distinctive genealogy in European intellectual history, a history that Eric Wolf has noted intersects with that of anthropology:

> At the root of this [Counter-Enlightenment] reaction lay the protests of people—self-referentially enclosed in the understanding of localized communities—against the leveling and destruction of their accustomed arrangements. Together these varied conservative responses to change ignited the first flickering of the relativistic paradigm that later unfolded into the key anthropological concept of "culture." (1999:26–27)[6]

I have suggested thus far that integralism can serve as a framework to examine how mundane forms of collective practice can be linked to sublime political yearning, how varied and contradictory political ambitions can be synthesized within an overarching integralist agenda, and how integralism can draw on a specific European intellectual tradition for its form and substance. A fourth element to this preliminary portrayal draws together the first three within an oppositional configuration—opposition to the subversive capacity of what I term "fast-capitalism."

I have taken the idea of fast-capitalism from Ben Agger's nettlesome text *Fast Capitalism: A Critical Theory of Significance* (1989). Though he steadfastly refuses to define fast-capitalism in any extended fashion, Agger frames it as a phenomenon that promotes a wide-ranging "degradation of significance." In the following section I have set out a preliminary depiction of this regime assessing its dissonant impact on society and its potential to inflame an integralist political imaginary.

Invidious Hands

I use the term fast-capitalism to refer not just to the pacing of a technologically advanced and fully globalized economic regime, but rather to designate a phenomenon that can unleash profound change that

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