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Lev Gumilev and the European New Right

Mark Bassin*

Center for Baltic and East European Studies, Södertörn University, Stockholm, Sweden

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The striking affinities that have developed between radical-conservative movements in Western Europe and Russia since the end of the Cold War have been widely noted. This essay considers these affinities through the example of the Soviet historian and geographer Lev Nikolaevich Gumilev (1912–1992). It argues that Gumilev and the European New Right developed perspectives that were highly comparable, founded on similar principles, and articulated through similar images and allusions. Yet despite the powerful resonances in terms of basic concepts and theoretical orientation, there were nonetheless deep differences in terms of the conclusions regarding the practical implications for their respective societies that Gumilev and the Europeans deduced from these principles.

Keywords: Lev Gumilev; New Right; ethnos; ethno-territoriality; race; Eurasianism

Introduction

The striking affinities that have developed between radical-conservative movements in Western Europe and Russia since the end of the Cold War have been widely noted[1] (Laqueur 1993; Allensworth 1998; Shenfield 2001; Parland 2005). Much attention has focused in particular on the example of Aleksandr Dugin, who in the 1990s emerged as one of the most effective and influential progenitors of this movement (Sedgwick 2004, 221–240; Umland 2004, 2006; Ivanov 2007; Shekhovtsov 2009; Shekhovtsov and Umland 2009; Laruelle n.d.). Dugin borrowed openly and extensively from the ideological legacy of the so-called European Conservative Revolution – the theories of Carl Schmitt, Julius Evola, Karl Haushofer, and others – in formulating his own extremist vision for Russia, and he actively developed personal contacts with the leaders of the European New Right, inviting them to Russia and disseminating translations of their ideas and their works. More recently, Dugin has come to be appreciated in his own right in the West as an important New Right theorist. His works are available in a variety of European translations, and they are helping to shape the radical right's perception of global affairs. This relates particularly to the role of Russia, which is increasingly understood in terms of Dugin's neo-Eurasianist perspective[2] (Dugin 2012, 2014; Douguine 2013, 2014).

Indeed, the resonances between Russian and European radical conservatism are no longer limited to purely ideological cross-fertilization. One of the more fascinating side effects of Russia's actions in Ukraine in 2014 has been to reveal the political connections that are developing between the Putin regime and radical-conservative tendencies in the

*Email: mark.bassin@sh.se

West. The Russian government has recently underwritten the activities of the Front National in France in the non-trivial form of a nine million Euro loan, battalions of young New Right enthusiasts from France and elsewhere travel to eastern Ukraine to fight in the ranks of the Russian-supported separatist army, and Putin has given public indications of his solidarity with the extremist Jobbik party in Hungary and Ataka in Bulgaria (Keating 2014; Sautreuil 2014). The leader of the UK Independence Party Nigel Farage praises the Russian leader's "brilliant" political maneuvering, and no less a stalwart of America's conservative establishment than Pat Buchanan has begun – sensationally – to wonder if Vladimir Putin might not actually be "one of us" (Buchanan 2013; Meyerson 2013; "UK far-right leader Farage calls for alliance with Russia" 2014).[3]

This essay considers a rather different example of the resonance between Russian and European conservatism, namely the Soviet historian and geographer Lev Nikolaevich Gumilev (1912–1992). Best known for his "ethnos theory" and his Eurasianist perspective on Russian history and identity, Gumilev has become enormously popular and influential in the post-Soviet period, not least of all for Aleksandr Dugin himself, who describes Gumilev as his most important Russian mentor. As with Dugin, there are highly significant similarities between Gumilev and the European New Right in regard to a variety of fundamental assumptions and principles.[4] These similarities are all the more notable in that Gumilev – quite unlike Dugin – had no personal contacts with any European ideologues of his day, was unacquainted with their literature and ideas, and had no apparent interest in or indeed even awareness of their project. Despite this, as we will see, Gumilev and the European New Right developed perspectives that were highly comparable, founded on similar principles and articulated through similar images and allusions. Yet despite the powerful resonances in terms of basic concepts and theoretical orientation, there were nonetheless profound differences in terms of the conclusions regarding the practical implications for their respective societies that Gumilev and the Europeans deduced from these principles.

The allure of ethnos

The European New Right began to take its current form in the late 1960s. Inspired by the radical-conservative and fascist movements of the interwar period, it has nonetheless attempted (with varying degrees of success) to modulate the ultra-nationalist and expansionist bellicosity of the earlier period (O'Meara 2013b, 31, 43). Today, the New Right describes its concerns as essentially defensive, focused on the protection of the peoples of Europe against various processes of the contemporary world which, it claims, are threatening their existence (Laqueur 1996, 93–100). Most broadly, these threats emanate from the homogenizing dynamics of modernity, which seek to eradicate vital religious, cultural, and national differences and reshape all of humanity to fit a single universal model. On a global scale, this drive to standardization is apparent in the reckless quest for universal integration through globalization and *mondialisme* or "one-worldism," while within Europe it inspires the state-sponsored project of European integration (Kosiek 1999). Both processes are driven by an obsession with the rights and entitlements of the individual on the one hand and an insistence on the unconditional equality and uniformity of all individuals on the other – an ethos derisively referred to by a leading theoretician of the New Right Alain de Benoist as "individuouniversalism" (2014, 144). These developments can have only one result, namely the reduction of the entire population of the world to a uniform and colorless monocultural mass (Griffin 2000, 171; Bar-On 2013b, 152). This is precisely what is occurring today in Europe, where the indiscriminate acceptance and integration of immigrants from around the world under the aegis of so-called multi-culturalism represent an

acute threat to the integrity of Europe's indigenous populations. In the face of the integrationist and assimilationist forces of an inexorably globalizing world, the European New Right advocates the principle of *différencialisme*, or "differentialism" (Taguieff 1985, 1994; Spektorowski 2000, 2007). The "right to be different," it insists, is a fundamental human entitlement.

To counter the menace of individuouniversalism, the European New Right seeks to reanimate an older discourse of ethno-politics centered around the ideal of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, understood in terms of the *Gemeinschaft–Gesellschaft* distinction first elaborated in the nineteenth century by the sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies (Tönnies 1887; Kosiek 1991, 135; Brauner-Orthen 2001, 49–50; Brinks 2005, 125, 128–129; Wolin 2004, 271). In this juxtaposition, *Gemeinschaft* represents an essentialized organic and holistic community, not "imagined" or "constructed" but real-existing. In it, individuals feel an organic sense of belonging and solidarity on the basis of common origins, common social values, and a common culture (Tudor 2014, 97). A *Gesellschaft*, by contrast, is a formalistic and impersonal collection of individuals, who consent to coalesce for reasons which they believe will ultimately serve their individual interests. While a *Gesellschaft* always acknowledges the autonomy and prerogative of the individual, in a *Gemeinschaft* the individual cannot be separated from the group as a whole. It is a personalistic form of association, developing spontaneously rather than through deliberate construction. Belonging to a *Gemeinschaft* inheres naturally as it were in an individual's persona; it is not a matter of choice but rather determined by the existential reality of who they are (de Benoist and Sunic 1994).

In the past, the term "nation" served as a sort of colloquial equivalent which could capture the nuances of the *Volksgemeinschaft* concept (O'Meara 2013b, 228). While this usage persists, it is nonetheless problematic in the present day, for the sense of "nation" is now colored through its association with the political entity of the modern "nation-state." The New Right regards the latter as a *Gesellschaft* organized along the principles of universalism and equality – an "outdated construct based on assimilation and the destruction of distinction" (Lindholm and Zúquete 2010, 64 (quote); Savel'ev 2010, 65–66) – such that many tendencies within the New Right abandon the term "nation" altogether. In its place, the more exotic concept of the *ethnos* is frequently adopted to refer to "the basic unit of homogeneous cultural energy" that corresponds to the New Right's idealized vision of organic human communities (Griffin 2000, 168; Bar-On 2013b, 141, 144–156). Since the 1970s, the concepts of nation/nationality have been increasingly supplanted by ethnos/ethnicity – either through combining them (as "ethno-nations") or by discarding the former altogether (as "ethno-cultures" or "ethno-cultural communities") (Bar-On 2013a, 79; Schlembach 2013, 11). As ethnos is understood as "a people or *Volk* which constitutes and is defined as an organic cultural unity, possessing its own unique spirit and historical background, and existing in the world with its own, particular form of being" (Tudor 2014, 85). The ethnic community takes absolute priority over the nation-state, with ethno-cultural belonging having a higher status and value than civic entitlement. Indeed, for the New Right the organic ethnos-*Gemeinschaft* is quite simply the essential (and essentialized) *modus* of human organization, and it is only through membership in it that an individual can realize his or her full existence (Antonio 2000, 51; Bar-On 2013b, 145–146, 150, 170). An ethnos provides "a sense of identity and … a meaningful orientation to the entire world population. It is by virtue of their organic adherence to the society [i.e. ethnos] of which they are a part that men build their humanity" (de Benoist and Sunic 1994).[5]

Gumilev's thinking was shaped by his perception of a threat of homogenization in post-Stalinist society that was similar to that we have just noted in Western Europe.[6] In his case,

the agent of this process was neither *mondialisme* nor neoliberal globalization, but rather Soviet Marxism. From the outset, the Soviet project of modernization and development embraced a Marxist teleology of social and economic progress, according to which all of its regions and peoples should eventually attain the same level of advanced "socialist" construction. It was assumed that this process would bring about profound transformations, not the least of which would be the elimination of the ethno-national differences among the many nationalities which comprised the Soviet population. As all Soviet citizens increasingly developed the same economic, social, and cultural standards and norms, so the official dogma maintained, the material basis for their differentiation would gradually disappear, until – in a process called *sliianie* or "fusion" – they would merge together to form a single, homogeneous Soviet nation.[7] To be sure, this issue was highly politicized, and the specifics varied considerably from regime to regime. In the Stalinist 1930s and 1940s, for example, the eventuality of *sliianie* was acknowledged but pressed into the very distant future. For the purposes of the present day, Stalinism in fact developed a concept of essentialized ethno-nationality, which corresponded in important respects to the *Volksgemeinschaft* model just described.[8] For the foreseeable future, socialist development would deliver a standard level of high development for all the Soviet peoples, but the latter would remain precisely as *sovetskie natsii*, that is to say socialist ethno-nations. Under Stalin's successor Nikita Khrushchev, however, the official line was inverted dramatically. Ethno-essentialism was abandoned, and it was now maintained instead that *sliianie* was not only already taking place in contemporary Soviet society, but indeed had already progressed to the point of creating a new sociopolitical entity, the *sovetskii narod*, or Soviet nation. Khrushchev called for the acceleration and deepening of this process. While his radical position on the issue of *sliianie* was one of the factors that led to his ousting in 1964, the assimilationist inclination did not go away. On the contrary, the notion of a post-ethno-national *Sovetskii narod* continued to enjoy official endorsement down to perestroika in the late 1980s (Thompson 1989, 73, 76–77).

Along with many of his compatriots in the USSR, Gumilev was highly uncomfortable with the post-Stalinist project for the *sliianie* of the Soviet peoples, and his opposition to it provided a major stimulus for his theoretical work on the problem of ethnicity, from the 1960s through the 1980s. Like the New Right in Europe, he rejected any notion of universal or pan-human values. There is no such thing as general or universal history, he declared, and "to speak about a history of all humankind makes no sense" (Gumilev 1995, 49). The experience of history demonstrates that all attempts to impose "a universal system of values have always collapsed and led only to more bloodshed" (Gumilev and Ermolaev 1993, 182). The *sliianie* project of the Soviet state, conceived precisely in this universalist spirit, was the cardinal folly of the "political utopia" that the Soviet leaders hoped to create, and could be achieved only through the forcible mixing of the Soviet peoples – "the Ingush with the Baltic peoples in Siberia, and Koreans with Kalmyks in Kazakhstan" (Gumilev and Ermolaev 1993, 186). The goal however – to "make everyone resemble yourself" – could have no conceivable justification (Gumilev 1994b, 261).

> Why should we try to squeeze the behaviour of an Abkhazian and a Chukot, a Lithuanian and a Moldavian all into a single frame? This is pointless and harmful. How can we create a single ethnos for the entire planet [or our country]? (Gumilev 1989b, 305, 1994b, 257, 293 (quotes))

In rejecting the Soviet *sliianie* project, Gumilev echoed the conviction we have just noted in the European New Right regarding the absolute value of the differences between national groups, and he similarly emphasized the imperative to maintain these. He spoke in highly positive tones about the *mozaichnost'* or mosaic quality of the multinational Soviet

population, and believed that precisely this diversity was one of its most important qualities. Difference and diversity were necessary conditions for humankind to flourish. "If everyone merges and becomes the same," he reasoned, "then there will be no movement, no cultural development, and life will simply cease to exist" (Gumilev and Ivanov 1992, 54; Gumilev 2003c).

Like the European New Right, moreover, Gumilev's term of preference for the communities making up this mosaic pattern was "ethnos" (Rn. *etnos, etnosy*), rather than "nation" (*natsiia; narod*) or "nationality" (*natsional'nost'*). The term *etnos*, it should be noted, had its own history in the USSR, where in the 1960s and 1970s it came into much more general use than in the West. Following the lead of Iulian Bromlei, the Director of the Academy of Sciences' Institute of Ethnography, a phalanx of ethnographers set about elaborating a formal "ethnos theory," and in a sense Gumilev – although no admirer of Bromlei – was part of this movement (Bromlei 1983; Kozlov 2003; Filippov 2010).[9] But mainstream Soviet ethnography was always careful to describe the ethnos in terms that were not at obvious odds with official policy. This meant most importantly that it could, in principle, be part of the *sliianie* process, in the sense that ethnies could combine to create greater homogeneous entities, described by the ever-inventive Soviet specialists as "meta-ethnies" (e.g. Bruk and Cheboksarov 1976). Gumilev, for his part, rejected this entirely. He opted instead for precisely the same *Gesellschaft-Gemeinschaft* distinction that we have noted above, and argued that ethnies, as spontaneous organic communities, correspond to the latter category (Gumilev 2001, 24, 2003b, 233). They cohered on the basis not of individual choice or group decision but rather of natural kinship, shared historical experience, and what he called a common "behavioral stereotype" that was unique to each group. Formalized social relations, understood in Marxist categories such as class, did not play any role. For Gumilev, the ethnos was the most fundamental and durable category of human organization. Ethnic belonging was an existential mode of being, an intrinsic and immutable part of the very persona of all individuals which could be neither transcended nor transformed (Gumilev and Ivanov 1992, 51). "No human being can live outside of an ethnos," he affirmed, indeed any attempt to do so would be tantamount to "pulling oneself out of a swamp by one's own hair" (Gumilev 1988, 1989b, 145 (quote), 22, 142–145; 1994b, 254; Gumilev and Ermolaev 1993, 178).

The ethnos as a natural organism

The radical-conservative tradition in pre-war Europe had commonly conceived of the ethnos-*Gemeinschaft* as a natural organism, fundamentally shaped by the biological-genetic characteristics of its respective race. The so-called *Volksbiologie* or national biology developed by the Nazis was resurrected in Germany already in the early 1950s, and this naturalist orientation – eventually rechristened rather more discretely as "biological realism" – continues to provide inspiration and guidance for significant parts of the New Right down to the present day (Wolter 1940; Schwidetzky 1950, 1962, 1979).[10] According to this perspective, each ethnos represents a "biological reality" determined by its own unique gene pool (*genetische Sammelbecken*) and genotype, which serve to differentiate it biologically from all other groups (Schwidetzky 1950, 55; Kosiek 1991, 117–118, 121; Krebs 2012, 22). Theorists of the New Right repeat the old arguments of German *Rassenkunde* that aggression is a natural feature of interethnic relations, and that the mixing – even intermingling – of ethnies represents a "racial mongrelization" doomed to produce ethnies that are "genetically manipulated" or "biologically imploded" (Krebs 2012, 14, 23; also see Tudor 2014). Culture and ethnicity can never exist "entirely independently

of race, and, since any significant level of racial miscegenation transforms the basic structure of a racial type, it also transforms ethnic type … " (Tudor 2014, 90 (quote), 91–92).

In addition to hard-core racial science, the New Right has also sought to legitimate its biological realism with the apparently more neutral scientific arguments of cybernetics and socio-biology (O'Meara 2013b, 43–44). The systems theory developed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy in the 1960s provided a conceptual framework for understanding the ethnos as a closed natural-organic system or organism, which like all other organisms acted in accordance with universal natural laws (Von Bertalanffy 1968; Kosiek 1991, 112–115). In the same period, biologists such as Konrad Lorenz and especially his student Irinäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt extended the field of ethology – the science of animal behavior – to include human populations as well (Lorenz 1963, 1983; Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1970, 1984; Lausberg 2014).[11] This notion of a biology of human behavior, in which genetic inheritance was the "determining factor," proved very useful for the New Right's elaboration of a naturalized model of the ethno-organism (Billig 1981, 145; Kosiek 1991, 124; Kochanek 1999, 218; Brauner-Orthen 2001, 51–52).

To be sure, not all tendencies of the New Right embraced these racialist and biological discourses. Appreciating how they served to undermine any ambitions of broadening the appeal of his project, Alain de Benoist has been particularly outspoken on this point. Downplaying this socio-biological perspective, he emphasizes instead the importance of cultural and civilizational factors in the constitution of ethnies (Wolin 2004, 265–268; Bar-On 2013b, 148; O'Meara 2013b, 28; Schlembach 2013, 10–11). "I am hostile," he declared, "to interpretations of human reality based exclusively on biology," and he dropped objectionable references to race and genetics (de Benoist 1996, 26, 1999; Verslius and de Benoist 2014, 96 (quote)). Yet although de Benoist's option to abandon racialism caused considerable consternation for his co-thinkers in the New Right (O'Meara 2006), it did not in fact represent a complete rejection of the principles of biological realism. On the contrary, he continues to affirm the general significance of biology as one of the formative agents conditioning the nature of society (de Benoist and Sunic 1994; Kochanek 1999, 219; de Benoist and Champetier 2000; de Benoist and Sylvian 2005, 16–17; Verslius and de Benoist 2014, 96 (quote)). In particular, he explicitly supports the practice of endogamy as a natural means of "defending" the integrity of the homogeneous ethnos against genetic mixing with foreign elements (de Benoist and Champetier 2000; de Benoist and Sylvian 2005).

One of the most important characteristics of the ethnos-*Gemeinschaft* as a natural organism was its territoriality. Before 1945, the importance of organic *Verwurzelung* or rootedness in a specific geographical region and the specific space-need of individual ethnies were conceptualized in notions such as *Blut und Boden* and *Lebensraum* (Ratzel 1901; Darré 1940; Smith 1980; Corni and Gies 1994). Using a different terminology, Lorenz and Eibl-Eibesfeldt continued to maintain the significance of this connection as a vital biological nexus for the existence of the ethnos, which functions in human communities as it does in the animal world (Moreau 1983, 124; Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1995, 32, 130, 157; Kochanek 1999, 216, 219; Schlembach 2013, 11). In a recent polemic, a leading New Right ideologue loudly reaffirmed the principle of ethno-territoriality.

> Any talk about people and culture boils down to dealing with the fundamental question of territory. It is a cardinal question that is impossible to avoid, since it opens and closes every debate on identity. In effect, territory is to a people what air is to our lungs. If it happens to disappear, the cultural and biological life of an ethnic group is threatened with asphyxiation (in a very real sense) in a short span. (Krebs 2012, 85–86)[12]

Each ethnos exists in a dynamic but harmonious and primordial socio-ecological relationship with its geographical homeland, from which it draws spiritual as well as material

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sustenance. This native territory represents the group's natural patrimony, and no ethnos can long lead a healthy existence beyond its borders. In every case, the attachment to the ethno-region is exclusive to the respective group (Waldmann 1973; Spektorowski 2003b, 115). Homelands are not and cannot be shared, for the presence of multiple ethnies in one region is necessarily disruptive for all affected.

Gumilev shared the view of the ethnos as a natural organism, and he developed his own version of biological realism (Lariuel' 2006, 238). There was a special significance to this in his case, for Soviet ethnography, unlike its Western counterparts, had always strongly resisted any naturalistic perspective on ethnic life (Aksenova and Vasilev 1993, 88; Slezkine 1996, 847; Hirsch 2004, 216–217, 231–272), and thus Gumilev's theories in this regard were original in a way that the European New Right – which drew on a rich legacy of racialist "science" – was not. Indeed, Gumilev's natural-biological conception was the most sensational and controversial aspect of his work, and it attracted the hostility not only of professional colleagues, but also of the political authorities in the USSR. "I consider ethnic processes to be purely a part of natural and biospheric processes," he declared (Gumilev 1994b, 271). Ethnic existence had nothing to do with Marxist laws of social development; indeed, as a natural – *prirodnyi* or *estestvennyi* – phenomenon, the ethnos was more properly the subject of natural science than sociology (Gumilev 1989b, 20, 1990b, 8, 1994b, 277). Along with the European New Right, he asserted that ethnicity was a "biological" or "biophysical reality … . Ethnic belonging, which manifests itself in the human consciousness, is not a product of this consciousness," it is "a biological dimension located beyond consciousness and psychology, on the boundaries of the physiological" (Gumilev 2001, 45, 2004 [1967], 40, 41). Gumilev made frequent use of the metaphor of a biological organism, likening the ethnos either to an individual human being – which in a similar fashion "is born, matures (muzhat'sia), grows old and dies" (Gumilev and Panchenko 1990, 6) – or to aggregate organisms found in the natural world. "Collective forms of existence can be seen in many species of terrestrial animals: ants, herds of hoofed animals, flocks of birds, and so on." For the species Homo sapiens, "the corresponding form [of collective life] is the ethnos" (Gumilev 1989b, 226, 2001, 24). Ethnies represented "biological communities" in an entirely literal sense, which operated in terms of "biological time" (predetermined successions of organic growth, decline, and rebirth) as opposed to historical time (progressive development in a linear fashion) (Gumilev 1974, 1989b, 227).

Gumilev's specific view of the relationship of genetics to race and ethnicity, however, was highly ambivalent. Along with the rest of his Soviet colleagues, he categorically rejected the *Rassenkunde* so popular among his contemporaries in the European New Right (Gumilev 1989b, 90, 1994b, 258). In no way, he maintained repeatedly, is ethnicity racially determined or conditioned, and he explicitly denounced "Social Darwinism" in the West, which sought to apply "biological laws to social life" (Gumilev 1989b, 225–226). At the same time, however, he was in fact powerfully attracted to the science of Soviet genetics, which in the 1960s was re-establishing itself after decades of suppression led by the Stalinist agronomist T.D. Lysenko. Gumilev was associated with a number of leading geneticists, among them the internationally acclaimed scholar N.V. Timofeev-Resovskii, and he used their ideas quite extensively in constructing his own theories about ethnicity. Gumilev believed that each ethnos, as a biological or quasi-biological organism, possessed a unique genotype, which had to be protected from exogenic influences if the integrity of the group was to be maintained. On this basis, he stressed the importance of endogamy as an institutionalized group practice (Gumilev 1989b, 90). Endogamy served a specifically genetic function in "stabilizing [i.e. protecting] the composition of the

gene pool" and thereby helping to consolidate the "sustainability of the ethnic collective" (Gumilev 1989b, 227 (quote), 85, 87–88). Failure to practice endogamy would lead to *metisatsiia* or interbreeding among different *etnosy* – a process which, he claimed, "creates a mixed (*smeshannyi*) gene pool, which will produce descendants that are inferior (*nepolnotsennyi*)" (quoted in Rogachevskii 2001, 363).[13] "Open contact and free love," he declared, "destroy nature and culture" (Gumilev 1989b, 89). Like the European New Right, moreover, Gumilev was also strongly influenced by cybernetics – von Bertalanffy's writings on systems theory were published in the Soviet Union in the late 1960s and attracted a good deal of interest there (Bertalanfi 1969; Gumilev 1989b, 100, 131; Ermolaev 1990, 26; Kuz'min 1998, 281, 284, 291–292) – and also by the work of Soviet ethologists and behavioral scientists, in particular his colleague at Leningrad State University, M.E. Lobashev (Gumilev 1968a, 601, 1977, 1989b, 226–227, 295, 309).[14]

Most significantly of all, Gumilev stressed the fundamental importance of ethno-territoriality and the organic emplacement of an ethnos in its own native geographical region in terms very similar to those of the European New Right. All ethnies not only displayed a "close interconnection with their respective geographical landscape," but also represented a "necessary component part" (*sostavnaia chast'*) of this landscape, "interacting with its fauna and flora" to form an *etnolandshaftnaia tselostnost'* or "ethno-landscape totality" (Gumilev 1994b, 131, 258, 304). Indeed, the natural-geographical landscape acted as a sort of vital platform for ethnic development, one which "shelters and nourishes" the ethnos and defines thereby its most important life-parameters (Gumilev 1991b, 133, 2001, 182–183). Gumilev's emphasis on the existential importance of the external environment amounted to a veritable ecology of ethnicity (Bassin 2009). He characterized this relationship using a term he took from the classical Eurasianists (who similarly emphasized the importance of external geographical factors): *mestorazvitie*, or topogenesis (Bassin 2010, 54–55, 58, 60, 62). The ethnic homeland – its "ecological niche" – represents "one of the component parts of that system we call an ethnos" (Gumilev 1989b, 180). Gumilev drew heavily on the eminent natural-scientific traditions of ecology and landscape science in Russia – above all the work of V.V. Dokuchaev, L.S. Berg, and V.N. Sukachev – as well as the notion of the biosphere and the biospheric circulation of energy developed by V.I. Vernadskii (Bassin 2009, 887). He maintained that the ethnos represented an integral element of the "closed system" that was the natural ecosystem or biocenosis of their native regions, as natural and necessary as any other part of its plant or animal life. The ethnos was connected to its respective niche umbilically, as it were, and its survival in any other region was, under normal circumstances, unthinkable (Gumilev and Ivanov 1992, 54–55). And like the European New Right, Gumilev believed that any one ecological niche could support only that ethnos which had developed naturally within it. The prolonged presence of a "foreign" ethnos within the boundaries of another group's homeland necessarily led to the degradation and ultimate demise of the indigenous ethnos – a situation Gumilev famously characterized as a *khimera* or chimera.

Ethno-pluralism, ethno-territoriality, and "communities of destiny"

Based on these ideas about the nature of ethnies and the existential threats confronting them in the contemporary world, the European New Right articulated its alternative to the universalization and homogenization of modernity in the form of so-called ethno-pluralism. Ethno-pluralism rejects the "racist" notion that there was any essentialized inequality between ethno-cultural groups, insisting rather on the principled equivalence of all peoples. Ethnies are not developmentally "higher" or "lower," and they are not more or

less civilized. All of them have their own rightful position in the global fabric of ethnic life, and they all share the same entitlements to self-expression, self-determination, and, as we have already seen, the "right to be different" (Laqueur 1996, 99; Karklins 2000; Spektorowski 2003b, 2007, 49). Indeed, the mutuality of the principle of difference provides the most genuine basis for interethnic solidarity, to the extent indeed that the New Right is adamant that the defense of the identities of immigrants and foreigners is no less important than that of indigenous Europeans (de Benoist and Champetier 2000). However, ethno-pluralism attaches a critical proviso to this acknowledgment of ethno-cultural equality, namely that ethnies are not merely different but essentially incommensurable. "Divergent cultures cannot reach shared understandings or be judged by common standards" (Antonio 2000, 63 (quote); Spektorowski 2003b, 118). On the contrary, each ethnos represents a veritable closed system, self-sufficient unto itself and functional only to the extent that its homogeneity in all respects is preserved. An ethno-cultural group can define itself only in terms of an essentialized us–them juxtaposition that sets it apart from all other such groups. "Confrontation," de Benoist notes, "makes identity possible" (quoted in Tudor 2014, 87). The compromising of this juxtaposition through mixing and integration inevitably undermines the group's sense of itself and with this its very existence.

For this reason, ethno-pluralism insists on the need to maintain a strict separation between all ethno-cultural groups. And the most effective means of maintaining this separation and ethnic homogeneity is to mobilize the principle of ethno-territoriality and ensure that the various ethno-cultures are kept physically separate. "Without barriers, without a certain level of separation from other peoples, and without a specific territory on which to live as a distinct people, an ethnic or a racial group would disappear through mixture or assimilation into other groups" (Tudor 2014, 88). Noting the natural inclination toward competition and conflict between ethnies, the ethologist Eibl-Eibesfeldt declared that

> the best way to maintain peaceful cooperation between peoples consists in guaranteeing to each of them a territory that each people has the right to administer in its own way, and in which it is permitted to develop itself culturally as it sees fit … . Peaceful collaboration between different peoples is [only] possible on the condition that each ethnic group possesses its own territory and can regulate its own affairs without exposing itself to any repressive domination or to territorial amputations. (Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1995, 157, quoted in Krebs 2012, 87; Lausberg 2014)

If the ethno-territorial principle is respected, there is no reason that several different groups cannot co-exist and prosper within a single state structure, as the example of Switzerland clearly indicates (Krebs 2012, 86).

Gumilev developed what was effectively an ethnopluralist perspective of his own, which reproduced all of the basic points we have just noted. Rejecting Marxist teachings about the "progress" of humanity through ever-higher stages of social, economic, and cultural development, he declared that no ethnos was more or less civilized or developed than any other. All were equal, sharing similar organizational patterns and undergoing the same process of natural development. At the same time, however, each ethnos represented a unique, self-contained, and self-sustaining entity. Gumilev placed immense emphasis on ethnic individuality, maintaining that the real-existing differences between groups were reflected in a subjective group awareness of a *svoi-chuzhoi* (us–them) juxtaposition which – precisely echoing de Benoist – provided cohesion and identity (Gumilev 1970, 47, 1976, 121, 97–98, 1989b, 41, 48, 51, 169). Ethnic individuality means that different groups cannot be combined or merged without injuring their integrity. "It is impossible to unite (*ob"edinit'*) ethnies, for the resulting union will always involve the principle of compulsion. Ethnies cannot simply be made to love each other" (Gumilev 1989d, 33).

Precisely like the European New Right, Gumilev concluded that the only way to ensure peaceful coexistence was to segregate ethnies physically on the basis of their respective natural homelands (Gumilev 1989e, 157). Gumilev considered this arrangement to be the "optimal variant of ethnic contact" – one in which all ethnies live "next to each other but separately (*porozn'*), cultivating peaceful relations and not interfering in the other's affairs" (Gumilev and Ivanov 1992, 54–56; Gumilev 1994a, 130–131 (quote), 1994b, 267, 1995, 36). The historical pattern of ethnic settlement in Siberia provided a good example of what he had in mind. Ethnies in Siberia:

> occupied the different landscape regions that corresponded to their [historical habitation and] cultural-economic patterns, and they did not disturb each other but rather helped them. The Iakuts settled in the broad floodplains of the Lena river, the Evenks in the watersheds of the taiga uplands, and the Russians along the river valleys. The expanses of the steppe were left to the Kazakhs and Kalmyks, and the forests to the Ugrian peoples. (Gumilev 1989b, 133–134)[15]

This symbiotic variety – a "colorful diversity" (*pestrota*) and "mosaic quality" (*mozaichnost'*) – was an important biological aspect of ethnic survival, indeed "the optimal form for human existence." Organized natural separation helped to minimize competition for resources, and enhanced opportunities for helpful cooperation (Gumilev 1989b, 302).

Although an ethnos is a cohesive entity, for the New Right it nonetheless represents only one level on a continuum or hierarchy of ethnic affiliation. Internally, it comprises smaller units of so-called sub-ethnic groups, such as the Bretons or Alsatians in France, or the Bavarians or Swabians in Germany. At the same time, ethnies themselves represent constituent units of yet larger entities, referred to as "cultures" or, rather more loosely, as *Schicksalsgemeinschaften* or "communities of destiny." Despite the clear differentiation of their component ethnies, the latter nonetheless share common interests and experience some sense of common identity (Faye 2011, 134, 139, 156; Bar-On 2013b, 196; Tudor 2014, 86).[16] These poly-ethnic aggregates correspond loosely to the notion of *Weltkulturen* or "world civilizations" elaborated by Oswald Spengler after World War I and reanimated in the 1990s by the Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington (Spengler 1918–1923; Huntington 1996). There is an important difference, however: While Spengler and Huntington included the USA as part of *das Abendland* or "the West" (albeit with different nuances), the European New Right explicitly rejects this association. Europe is described as a self-contained civilizational entity unto itself, different from, and indeed opposed to, the USA (Laqueur 1996, 93). Over centuries of cohabitation across a common continental space, the primordial European ethno-cultures have developed similarities and objective affinities, to the extent that certain New Right theoreticians not only view them as "a highly unified population in terms of biology and anthropology" but indeed also argue for the existence of a European – and incidentally also a "white" – racial type, essentially opposed to those that developed on the continents of the Americas, Asia, and Africa (Lausberg 2014; Tudor 2014, 89, 92).

The New Right today calls upon the European peoples to develop an appreciation of their shared cultural-historical affinities that could serve as the basis for their eventual geopolitical mobilization. As de Benoist explained, "in a globalized world, the future belongs to large cultures and civilizations capable of organizing themselves into autonomous entities and of acquiring enough power to resist outside interference" (de Benoist and Champetier 2000). Practically, a pan-European consolidation could take various forms. De Benoist himself proposes the creation of a European federation, based not on the liberalizing and universalizing foundations of the European Union but rather on the principle of ethno-regionalism. Membership of various peoples in a single political structure would

be based on mutual recognition of their similarities and common interests, while respect for essential differences would be guaranteed by the institution of ethno-territorial autonomy (Spektorowski 2003b, 112, 124, 2007). Other New Right theoreticians call for a revival of an imperial state – on the model of the ancient Roman or Holy Roman empires – as a strategy for the desired poly-ethnic agglomeration of the future (O'Meara 2013b, 231–235; Tudor 2014, 102–103). Such a neo-imperial political structure would represent a "complex 'mosaic' of different European peoples" (O'Meara 2013b, 234), within the framework of which "ethnocultural groups of all levels and types [would] have the right to live with freedom and separately from others … to live autonomously in their own territories and to resist mixing" (Tudor 2014, 106, 112). A further difference with Huntington is that the New Right regards Russia as a natural historical part of the European ethno-cultural zone, and considers it to be a vitally important component of any future pan-European empire. This is an important source of the considerable support for Dugin's neo-Eurasianist project noted at the outset of this essay, and indeed the European New Right has formulated its own trans-continental vision of "a federal, imperial Grande Europe, ethnically homogeneous (that is, European), based on a single autonomous area, and allied to Russia." This continental bloc is often referred to today as "Euro-Siberia," and when consolidated could aspire to become "the premier world power (in a world partitioned into large blocs), self-centered, and opposed to all the dangerous dogmas now associated with globalism."[17]

For his part, Gumilev developed his own elaborate scheme of ethnic hierarchy. Below the ethnos were subordinate entities which he also called "sub-ethnies" (*sub-etnosy*). These resembled the ethnos in many respects, and were commonly rooted in a particular geographical locality (Michurin 2004, 548). Within the corpus of the Great Russian ethnos, Gumilev identified *Pomory*, Cossacks, *Chaldony* (Russian Siberians), *Kriasheny* (Orthodox Tatars), and other groups as sub-ethnies.[18] At the other end, ranged above the ethnos were "superethnies" (*superetnosy*). The superethnos was an assemblage of different ethnies whose mutual sympathy came from the innate quality of what Gumilev called "complementarity" (*komplimentarnost'*). Complementarity between the members of a superethnos was reflected in the "political, ideological and religious values" that they all shared (Gumilev 1989b, 481; Michurin 2004, 564), but superethnic coherence was based most importantly on a deep sense of "common historical destiny" (*obshchaia istoricheskaia sud'ba*) that was basically identical to the *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* concept of the European New Right (Gumilev and Ivanov 1992, 53). Like the European New Right, moreover, Gumilev located his superethnos concept in the Spenglerian discourse of world-historical civilizations, and he described its ideal internal organization in terms of what can be readily recognized as ethno-regionalist principles.[19] Within the limits of a single superethnos, that is, ethnic life should be "separate but equal," with each ethnos remaining carefully within the boundaries of its respective ecological niche. Repeating the imagery of the New Right, Gumilev described the superethnos as a "mosaic totality," an arrangement which helps to preserve ethnic individuality and restrict the scale and intensity of interethnic conflict (Gumilev and Panchenko 1990, 8). Mixing between the ethnies in a single superethnos was further controlled by the universal observance of the principles of endogamy (Gumilev 1989b, 109, 89, 479; Laruelle 2000, 179).

The New Right's reception of Gumilev

Unlike Aleksandr Dugin, Lev Gumilev was never a very well-known figure in the West, beyond certain scholarly communities. There was little free flow of ideas in general

between the USSR and the West, and this was especially true in the case of Gumilev's work, which did not enjoy official support or even approval. But despite this, and the relative paucity of translations of Gumilev's writings into European languages, he is not an unknown entity for the European New Right. The latter's discussions of Dugin and Russian neo-Eurasianism frequently acknowledge the inspirational role of Gumilev as the spiritual godfather of neo-Eurasianism and as Dugin's mentor in particular. More specifically, the resonance of Gumilev's ideas with their own ethno-regionalist principles is also frequently stressed. "For Gumilev … the new Russia must adhere to the principle of ethnopluralism. It is thus not a question of Russianizing the people of the periphery [of the Russian Federation] but of making of them definitive allies of the 'imperial people'" – that is, ethnic Russians (Verslius and de Benoist 2014, 83–84; Steuckers n.d.). Indeed, the originality and distinctiveness of his theories about ethnic life can be appreciated in surprisingly fine detail. There is, for example, an awareness of the specialized concepts and terminology he developed, such as his notion of *passionarnost'* as the driving force of ethnic development or his model of ethnogenesis as a life cycle in which each ethnos passes through a set of fixed stages (Steuckers n.d.).[20] Alain de Benoist is particularly taken with Gumilev's ecological explanation of the connection between the ethnos as a "biologized organic community" and the natural world. He notes the latter's use of the term *mestorazvitie* with interest, and clearly feels that Gumilev's understanding of ethno-territoriality corresponds to his own. Gumilev, he summarized quite accurately, believed that ethnies were created

> by the place, by space, by its topographic and economic characteristics … This is why any change to the collective habitus, any modification of this space and place, alters the destiny of the ethnos; it can be fatal and lead to its dissolution. (de Benoist 2012, 244; Bar-On 2013b, 204–205)

A recently published German far-right text on the concept of ethnos offers Soviet ethnos theory as a sort of model for the proper understanding of the phenomenon, and includes a full-page portrait of its most important theoretician: Lev Gumilev (Böttger 2014, 216).

Beyond these general observations, the New Right deploys Gumilev's theories and specialized terminology more instrumentally as a legitimating conceptual framework for their own ideological and political priorities. A recent essay devoted to Gumilev posted on a Swedish New Right website pointed out how his description of an ethnos as an organic feature of a natural-geographical landscape and ecosystem provides "an ecologically based argument against large-scale migration."[21] The Gumilevian "superethnos" is moreover a useful notion for the purposes of conceptualizing what a poly-ethnic and cohesive community of European peoples might look like. "In the 1930s, we saw how a European superethnos began to take form, when so-called nationalists repeatedly wanted to avoid a war among fraternal peoples [of Western Europe], so they could fight together against the Bolshevism of the east." This interwar project to develop a proto-superethnos has been resurrected in the present day, as the "nationalist parties" in the different European countries collaborate in a manner that today can help "create a superethnos out of the European peoples." The ascription of superethnos status to the European ethno-cultural community serves not only to support the solidarity of its members, but also to essentialize yet further their collective incompatibility with all other foreign groups.

> This may be kept in mind when considering a European immigration policy that has among other things placed millions of members of the Muslim superethnos in the heart of Europe. Whatever one may think about this, the conflicts that arise are entirely predictable.

The complications associated with the integration of the Roma peoples are similar in nature. The Roma "are not a part of the [European] superethnos" and consequently "lack

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solidarity" with it. It is only because of this lack of superethnic empathy that their "high fertility is seen as a problem" – in the case of any of the genuinely European peoples, it is implied, such a quality would be welcomed as a positive natural advantage and benefit.

Differences I: *Gemeinschaft, Gesellschaft,* and the state

The wide-ranging commonality between Gumilev and the European New Right in terms of orientation and basic concepts begins to fracture, however, in consideration of the more practical political and social imperatives that were and are derived on the basis of their shared ideological orientation. As Rafel Soborski has recently pointed out, "ideological continuity does not mean conservation in fixed ideational structures but rather a state of a dynamic interplay in which highly flexible concepts are able to adapt to, and combine with, new ideas to meet emerging political challenges" (2013, 132). Ideas and interpretations are "operationalized" so to speak in terms of specific historical and political circumstances, and because these circumstances in Western Europe differed in many respects from those in the post-Stalinist USSR, it is unsurprising that the respective political projects differed as well. We can see these differences in regard to a number of major issues. To begin with, although both the European New Right and Gumilev focus on the conceptual juxtaposition of *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*, their understanding of what this juxtaposition entails is actually quite different. For the former, the two are seen as intrinsically opposed, indeed mutually exclusive entities, organized in different ways and on the basis of very different principles. Indeed, one of the major problems of the modern world for the New Right is the fact that ethnies – which naturally represent *Gemeinschaften* – are nonetheless formally organized as political *Gesellschaften*, in the form of nation-states. As we have seen, the New Right opposes the contemporary nation-state system, in which they see embodied the collective evils of modernity: individualism, universalism, and homogenization (O'Meara 2013b, 227). The solution they offer is nothing short of revolutionary, in some cases going so far as to call for nation-states to be dismantled altogether, in order to liberate their peoples and enable their ethno-cultural rebirth.[22] This, they believe, would enable the reanimation of European ethnic life in the spirit of *Gemeinschaft* and the political reassociation of the ethnies themselves – along strict ethno-regionalist principles – into the pan-European federation or empire (or federated empire) discussed above (Spektorowski 2003a, 55, 58–59, 2003b, 121–123). Moreover, because the familiar forms of nationalism as a collective identity structure developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are closely associated with the institution of the nation-state, certain tendencies in the New Right reject populist nationalism as well. In the contemporary world, nationalism is "founded on a political ideal of State and citizenship" rather than the aspirations for genuine ethnic consolidation, and thus can never be "sufficient to create a common identity" (de Benoist 2002; Spektorowski 2003b, 121; O'Meara 2013b, 48–49; Tudor 2014, 86 (quote), 101–102).

Gumilev took an entirely different position on these questions – a position conditioned by the deep ambivalence of his relationship to the political status quo in the USSR. Having endured many years of banishment in his youth and the organized obstruction of his subsequent academic career, Gumilev was certainly a bitter critic of the Soviet order. At the same time, however, and unlike the European New Right, he was not opposed in principle to the state structure of the USSR, and he certainly entertained no idea whatsoever of its radical or revolutionary reorganization. Indeed, rather than stifling and subverting the integrity of its constituent ethno-cultures, he believed that across most of its history Russia had offered these peoples the optimal conditions for free development. This had been the case

since the earliest formation of the imperial state, and there had at least been an effort to maintain it after the revolution, in the form of the Soviet "Friendship of the Peoples" (*druzhba narodov*) policy, promulgated in the 1930s. Gumilev believed that the principles of ethno-regionalism were already effectively inscribed into this policy, and throughout all of his writings he was unstinting in his support and praise for it (Gumilev 1988, 3, 1989a, 1994b, 261; Lavrov 2000, 354). For him, the entire point was not the destruction of the Soviet status quo, but rather the defense and reanimation of those positive elements of it against the challenges mounted by the proponents of the modernizing *sovetskii narod* project. It was against the latter that Gumilev's critique was directed, and not against the constitution or existence of the Soviet state as such. Gumilev was in no way a revolutionary – during perestroika he bristled even at the suggestion that he might be a "democrat" (Gumilev 1991a) – but rather saw himself as a deeply conservative patriot and thoroughly loyal Russian nationalist. In the same spirit that he accepted the Soviet state as a legitimate geopolitical framework for its constituent ethnies, he did not question the legitimacy of the existing nation-state structure of Western Europe, and he did not believe that it inherently subverted the integrity of the ethnies which it included. Gumilev may have concurred with the New Right that the European ethnies were made up of numerous sub-ethnies, but in contrast to the former he did not see this circumstance as undermining the legitimacy of the European nation-states, and he would never have countenanced the devolution of ethnos status to the sub-ethnos level.

There was a further difference between Gumilev and the New Right in regard to the *Gemeinschaft–Gesellschaft* juxtaposition. Although Gumilev saw the two as fundamentally contrasting categories, they were not mutually exclusive. To the contrary, in his view the two forms naturally coexisted as equally legitimate and necessary categories of human communal existence. *Gemeinschaft* corresponded to the "natural" mode of existence, in other words the "ethnosphere" represented by the *etnos*, while *Gesellschaft* was the "social" mode or the "sociosphere," represented by a *sotsiuum* or *obshchestvo* ("society") (Gumilev 1989b, 18, 49, 50). Every human individual, he maintained, operated simultaneously in both modes, as a member of society and a representative of an ethnos. The two were very different, but there was no inherent contradiction or friction between them. He likened the distinction between them to the contrast between units of length and weight, that is to say, variables that were "parallel but incommensurable" (Gumilev 1968b, 40, 1989b, 18, 21, 51, 175, 2004 [1967], 38–39). Here again, Gumilev's understanding reflected his essential ambivalence toward the Soviet status quo, in this case the dogmatics of Marxism–Leninism. While his naturalist model of ethnies as biological and ecological organisms extravagantly contravened the strictures of Soviet Marxism, his description of the sociosphere corresponded quite precisely to the letter of Marxist–Leninist dogma. He accepted the Marxist principle that the historical development of the *sotsiuum* was determined by the growth of the material means of production, and that over history it evolved progressively into ever more developed and "advanced" forms: slave-owning societies evolve into feudalism, feudalism into capitalism, and capitalism into socialism (Gumilev 1967, 55, 1968b, 36). To the end of his life, Gumilev affirmed his fidelity to this Marxist schematic, and – in contrast to many Soviet intellectuals whose Marxist avowals were made strictly out of censorial considerations – there was no question as to his complete sincerity in this matter. He not only saw no inherent contradiction between the *zakonnomernosti* of dialectical materialism that explained social evolution and the biological–ecological laws that controlled the development of ethnies, but he also believed that with his theories he actually achieved Marx's own unfulfilled ambition of marrying the history of nature to the history of humanity (Gumilev 1978, 103, 1994b, 271; Gumilev

and Ivanov 1992, 51; Gumilev and Balashov 1993, 135). The ideologues of the New Right, by contrast, simply dismiss Marx in a single voice as a leading prophet of the "materialistic Liberalism" (Kosiek 1991, 135; de Benoist and Sunic 1994; Böttger 2014, 19).

Differences II: segregation and exclusion

Gumilev's position also diverges significantly from that of the New Right in regard to the practice, as opposed to the theory, of ethnic segregation. As we have seen, ethno-pluralism advocates separation and exclusion based on ethno-cultural criteria. While this principle is valid for all groups, its implementation is imperative above all for the purposes of defending indigenous European ethnies against intruder populations from Asia, Africa, and the New World, who are civilizationally and (as many New Right theoreticians continue to insist) racially foreign (Ceuppens and Geschiere 2005, 397). These latter groups represent the most acute threat, insofar as they overloaded the "capacity for assimilation" of Europe's indigenous population and thus prepare the conditions for its collective *Völkertod* or "ethnic death" (Kosiek 1991, 120). "Separation" is used in the New Right discourse in an entirely literal sense, as the physical segregation of groups onto separate, discrete territories. In practice it represents a program for the removal – effectively the ethnic cleansing – of peoples identified as foreign from the European ethno-homelands. Failure to implement such a policy would intensify competition over resources between different ethnies in a single region – precisely Gumilev's scenario for an ethnic chimera which could only lead to the destruction of the host ethnos. "Immigrants are perceived as land occupiers (*Landabnehmer*)," wrote the ethologist Eibl-Eibesfeldt.

> They take advantage of the most precious resource available to a *Volk*, namely the land. When this happens, they come to be regarded as invaders, and this more-or-less automatically stimulates a reaction of territorial defence … . If one *Volk* allows another free immigration and the development of minority communities [in its ethnic space], then that country begins to decline and inter-ethnic competition begins to develop. (Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1995, 130, cited in Lausberg 2014; also see Krebs 2012, 87–88)

It goes without saying that immigration into Europe, which is the principal source of the continent's "problematic" poly-ethnic population, should cease (Kosiek 1991, 111; de Benoist and Champetier 2000; Verslius and de Benoist 2014, 102). The real challenge, however, is the question of what to do with those many millions of immigrants who are already in situ. De Benoist considers it "unrealistic" that immigrant communities currently ensconced in Europe will decide to leave, or that it would be possible "to oblige them to leave," and thus he opts for the sort of territorial partitioning of European soil just noted (de Benoist and Sylvian 2005, 19; Spektorowski 2007, 40). Other New Right ideologues, however, see no problem with the prospect of enforced repatriation, and rather than countenance the conversion of Europe into a patchwork of indigenous and foreign ethno-territorial enclaves they call for the return of all non-European immigrants to their original homelands (Spektorowski 2007, 49; Bar-On 2013b, 191).

As we have seen, Gumilev echoed the New Right's fierce opposition to the process of social homogenization – driven in his case by Soviet discourses of ethnic *sliianie* and *sovetskii narod* – and similarly endorsed the principled call for the territorial segregation of ethnies into discrete ethnic homelands. More than this, he described the salubrious effect that the latter principle had had in the historic settlement patterns of Soviet ethnies. Nevertheless, these principles did not in his case translate into anything resembling the New Right's activist program of social exclusion in the present day. To be sure, as a closed political space the USSR remained largely untouched by the in-migration from

other parts of the world that affected Western Europe. But across the trans-continental expanses of the Soviet Union itself, closed to the outer world, there was massive internal movement and intermingling of populations whose geographical and ethnic distinctions were in many ways comparable to those of the European West. Indeed, the Soviet state actively encouraged such inter-regional migration, among other things, as part of its program to develop the *sovetskii narod*. Given the entire conceptual thrust of Gumilev's ecology of ethnicity, he might have been expected to denounce these population movements and call for the repatriation of Soviet ethnies back to their original ethno-regions. In fact, however, Gumilev did no such thing. His strident denunciations of official Soviet nationality policy never included any sort of critique of the demographic processes or settlement patterns of his own day. More broadly, and despite his principled insistence on the importance of preserving ethnic distinctions, he gave no indication that he believed the Soviet ethnies posed any inherent danger to each other merely by virtue of their differences, or even by their physical presence in each other's territorial homelands. Certainly he issued no call to separate or exclude any group from the Soviet polity that might correspond to the unrelenting appeals toward this end from the European New Right.

The reason for Gumilev's position relates to his belief described above that the peoples of the USSR were bound together by the same sort of civilizational affinities that the New Right argued were characteristic for indigenous European ethno-cultures. The Soviet nationalities were all joined together symbiotically as part of a single Eurasian "community of destiny," which shared a common historical legacy and for many centuries had formed a single political space. It was not only in regard to the ethnic space of his own ethnos (the Great Russians) that he perceived the potential danger of invasion by foreign groups. Rather, he argued that this threat was equally relevant for all groups. Indeed, he maintained that it was most acute for the indigenous ethnies of Siberia – the so-called little peoples (*malye narody*) – and it was only in regard to them that he ever made an explicit call for the implementation of the strict segregationist and isolationist principles of ethno-regionalism. In order to protect the ethno-national integrity of the *malye narody*, he wrote,

> I support the creation of reservations (*rezervatsii*). If the small nationalities of the north are left as they are, then scoundrels – of whom there are quite a few in Siberia – will treat them badly. It is necessary that the government intervenes on their behalf .... Special protective zones should be created for them [on their traditional homelands], which the non-indigenous population would be permitted to enter only with permits. (Gumilev 1990a)[23]

Gumilev's entirely genuine concern for the welfare of his country's non-Russian peoples – quite unthinkable for the European New Right – was much appreciated in his lifetime by the groups in question, and among Kazakhs, Tatars, Yakuts, Kalmyks, and other nationalities his popularity remains undiminished down to the present day. By the same token, his refusal to prioritize the interests of ethnic Russians and to recognize the other Soviet peoples as a competitive menace attracted sharp critique from the burgeoning Russian ethno-nationalist movement (Bassin 2015, 179–181). The only exception that Gumilev – a notorious anti-Semite – allowed was for the Jews, whom he explicitly identified as a hostile foreign ethnos (or superethnos, as he maintained) that presented a mortal threat to the Russians and others, both historically and in the present day. In the context of Russia, Gumilev used the term chimera almost exclusively in reference to the Jewish people alone. Because the Jews possessed no natural homeland within Russia, the only solution possible was a radical exclusionism that would remove them altogether from the body politic.

It is also important to note that, while Gumilev and the European New Right both use the notion of supra-national civilizations, the specifics of their respective civilizational schemes are at odds. Embracing a meta-geographical perspective of "Eurasia" which

originated in the nineteenth century, Gumilev rejected the traditional notion of an absolute and necessary dichotomy between Europe and Asia (Bassin 1991). To the contrary, Russian civilization developed as a unique amalgam of European and Asian societies, and represented a sort of third in-between continent that was clearly set apart from and opposed to the other two. This perspective was elaborated most fully in the doctrines of Eurasianism, developed by nationalist Russian émigrés in the 1920s and 1930s. Gumilev adopted the Eurasianist perspective in all its essentials, famously referring to himself as the "last Eurasianist" (1995). For him, as for his predecessors, Europe – and in particular Western Europe – was Russia's elemental and essential enemy, against which his country had always struggled, from the beginning of its historical existence down to the present day. Like the classical Eurasianists, he drew no civilizational distinction between Europe and the USA, and included both of them in his conceptualization of *Zapad* or the West. For the European New Right, as we have already seen, the calculus is entirely different. On the one hand, they do indeed draw an elemental distinction between the USA – a crass and materialistic hegemon seeking to dominate the rest of the world – and Europe, with its rich historical legacies and unbroken traditions of ethnic life. On the other hand, the New Right generally views Russia itself as an important part of European civilization, which shares with the West-European countries the vital imperative to defend European civilization against the hegemonic predations of the North American superpower (O'Meara 2013b, 210–225).[24] While Aleksandr Dugin may have assimilated elements of this latter perspective, nothing could be further from Gumilev's own views.

A final difference between Gumilev and the New Right involves their attitude toward the imperial legacy of their respective homelands. For all of its fascination with the notion of a European "empire" of the future, the New Right can conceive of such a thing only through contrived fantasies about the ethnophilic virtues of the historically remote Romans or Carolingians. By contrast, in regard to the more recent European imperial experience of the modern period, their judgment is actually very critical. De Benoist develops this point at length in reference to the French empire, asserting that its wanton brutality was dedicated to the dissemination of the same vices of universalism, rationalism, and complete global integration that the New Right opposes today. He consequently rejects any form of imperialist nationalism, French or otherwise, and dismisses associated claims to European superiority over other parts of the world (de Benoist 1999, 18; Schlembach 2013, 7–8). To the contrary, he aligns his sympathies with the global struggle against "Western imperialism" – directed in the present day principally by the USA – and declares that the stakes in this struggle are as vital for Europe as for anyone else (de Benoist and Champetier 2000). Gumilev, by contrast, staunchly defended the formation and development of the Russian imperial state, which he depicted as an essentially harmonious and voluntary process, in which non-Russians were always treated as equal members (1991b, 140). He did not deny that Russian expansion had occasionally involved forceful conquest, but this was not its principal feature. "It is clear to anyone with even the slightest superficial knowledge of Russian history that the incorporation (*prisoedinenie*) of Siberia would have been unimaginable without voluntary agreement and mutual trust" (Gumilev 1991b, 140, 1992, 2004, 22; Gumilev and Ivanov 1992, 56 (quotes); Lavrov 2000, 352). This trust was based on the deep natural sympathies between the Russians and the peoples they brought into their imperial structure, and the toleration and respect the former showed their new subjects. All these different ethnies are connected not by a common way of life, kinship, or language, "but by sharing a common historical destiny. They were friends" (Gumilev 1964, 9). Thus the Russian state developed as a voluntaristic joint project, based not on conquest, but everywhere on the principles of friendly cooperation and mutual toleration (Gumilev 2003d, 247, 234). While this tradition

may have been subverted during the Soviet period by a "universal ideology of reducing everyone to the same level," the empire's subjects had at all other times been allowed to maintain their autonomy and traditional internal organization to the maximum extent possible (Gumilev 1989f, 35). "In [Russia's] 'prison house of peoples' it was possible [for different ethnies] to live in their own way" (Gumilev 2003a, 13). The challenge for the present, consequently, was not to struggle against this legacy by destroying the primordial unity of the former empire, but rather to reaffirm the original Russian imperial project by reanimating its original egalitarian and collectivist spirit.

Conclusion

Although Lev Gumilev was an intellectual and political product of the Soviet period, the powerful resonances and dissonances between his thinking and that of the New Right in Europe that we have traced above are highly significant in regard to present-day attitudes and ideas. The popularity and influence of his work has grown dramatically since the collapse of the USSR, and many of the ideas emphasized in this essay, such as his biological–ecological perspective on the nature of ethnicity or his notion of the superethnic affinities bonding the peoples of the Russian empire and Soviet Union, are embraced today as they never were before 1991. Indeed, it can be argued that despite Aleksandr Dugin's high visibility, Gumilev is actually the more indicative thinker for contemporary Russian conservatism. The juxtaposition between Gumilev and the European New Right also shines a revealing light on the ideological relationship between Gumilev and Aleksandr Dugin himself. In certain respects, such as his avowal of Russian nationalism and fetishizing of the ethnos, Dugin clearly aligns with Gumilev. But in other regards, notably his Europhilia or his preparedness to identify Russia's deepest geopolitical interests with those of Western Europe, he is clearly operating with an entirely different set of values. For Dugin, as for the European New Right, Eurasianism is a shared greater-European project. Gumilev's Eurasianism, by contrast, defined Russia precisely in terms of its civilizational differences from and historical opposition to the West, above all Nikolai Danilevskii's "Romano-Germanic" world of Western Europe.

In a more general sense, the resonances and dissonances discussed in this essay allow for some reflection on how we analyze and valorize ideologies, particularly in comparative perspective. Such an analysis properly begins with a close examination of the ideas themselves: how they are constructed and how they fit together into apparently coherent frameworks and perspectives. When different agents or groups profess similar ideas, they may seem to share an ideological commonality. Yet while ideas and sets of ideas do possess a certain internal logic and dynamic that is in a sense autonomous, they nonetheless become fully meaningful only as they are "operationalized" in terms of specific social and historical contexts and political agendas. And because these contexts and agendas can vary greatly across space and time, similar ideas can take on significances, point to imperatives, and have effects that are correspondingly different. One example of this can be seen in the work of Afrikaans ethnographers in apartheid South Africa, who were highly receptive to Soviet ethnos theory and borrowed heavily from it for their own purposes (Sharp 1981; Gordon 1988). Nevertheless, these ideas always remained what one specialist calls "European baggage in an African context," and their deployment, shaped by very special conditions, did not necessarily correspond to that of Soviet ethnography itself (Skalnik 1988; Filatova 1994, 52–54; Sharp 2002; Morris 2012, S152 (quote)). The juxtaposition between Gumilev and the European New Right that we have examined provides another example. The similarities between them are extremely significant, but they

must also be evaluated in light of the equally important differences between the practical implications that were associated with them.

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Notes

1. Long before the collapse of the Soviet Union, Alexander Yanov (1978) inadvertently called attention to this European–Russian juxtaposition by referring to the then-emergent Russian nationalist movement as the "Russian New Right."
2. For Alain de Benoist's appreciation of "mon ami" Dugin, see de Benoist (2012, 119, 244), also see O'Meara (2013b, 238, 243, 256n), and Tudor (2014, 84, 98n, 108–111).
3. The growing political synergies between the Putin regime and radical conservatism in the West is an important subject which merits a separate examination; see Shekhovtsov (2014), Orenstein (2014), Polyakova (2014), Servettaz (2014), and Harding (2014).
4. For earlier studies, see Kochanek (1998), Kochanek (1999, 216–222), Lariuel' (2006), Shnirelman (2007, 358), and Shekhovtsov (2009, 703–704).
5. For de Benoist's attempt to qualify his use of the ethnos concept, see de Benoist (2014, 159–161). Indeed, even the German term *Volk*, which would also seem to provide an alternative to "nation" unencumbered by any nation-state associations, does not always convey the full organic sense of the more exotic ethnos, as can be seen in the demand of one New Right ideologue in Germany for the "Weiterentwicklung des deutschen Volkes als *Ethnos*" rather than a nation-*Gesellschaft* (Böttger 2014, 10, emph. original); also see Krebs (1994).
6. For comprehensive considerations of Gumilev's thinking, see Bassin (forthcoming), Beliakov (2012), Lavrov (2000), and Pavochka (2011).
7. On the history of the *sliianie* concept, see Simon (1991).
8. On the resonances between essentialist conceptions of nationality in Stalinist Russia and pre-war Germany, see Tishkov (1996, 27), Slezkine (1996, 853), and Shnirelman (2005, 105).
9. In fact, there were many similarities between Bromlei's and Gumilev's conceptions of ethnos; see Bassin (forthcoming), and Ivanov (1985).
10. In the 1930s, Ilse Schwidetzky was the assistant to Egon Freiherr von Eickstedt, one of the leading racial theorists in Nazi Germany. After the war, she worked in the Department of Anthropology at Mainz University, where she continued to publish actively on issues of *Rassenkunde*. Schwidetzky's work is widely cited in the literature of the New Right (Benthall 2002; Krebs 2012, 21, 85). For critical studies, see Billig (1981), and Moreau (1983).
11. A Nobel prize-winning scientist, Konrad Lorenz was a member of the Nazi Party from 1938 to 1945. In the 1960s, he belonged to the editorial board of the French New Right journal *Nouvelle École* (Lindholm and Zúquete 2010, 61, 192n).
12. Strikingly, this author characterizes this attachment using the expression *le Sang et le Sol* – that is, Blood and Soil (Krebs 2013).
13. Although these comments were made in the early 1980s, Gumilev had expressed himself in a similar spirit half-a-century earlier, in the 1930s; see Gerstein (2004, 230).
14. Lobashev maintained that while behavioral patterns themselves were not genetically inscribed or inherited in animal populations, and had to be taught afresh to each new generation, a certain predisposition to learning them – what he called *signal'naia nasledstvennost'* – did indeed form a part of an organism's genetic inheritance (1961, 1967). Lobashev's ideas were fundamental for Gumilev, who explained the cross-generational transfer of the ethnic "behavioral stereotype" as an example of *signal'naia nasledstvennost'*. It is extremely interesting to note that Alain de Benoist made the same argument at roughly the same time as Gumilev: "L'homme ne nait pas avec une culture (l'idée d'une culture surgissant tout armée des chromosomes est un fantasme raciste), mais *avec la faculté d'assimiler une culture*" (de Benoist 1979, 93–94, emph. added, cited in Davis and Godneff 1981, 534). While Gumilev did not refer to Konrad Lorenz in his writings and was not necessarily aware of his work, the strong resonances between them are noted in Onoprienko (2013) and Dugin (2002).

15. For a somewhat different geographical arrangement of the same ethnic groups, see Gumilev (2001, 292).
16. During the Nazi period, the *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* concept was used primarily in reference to an individual ethnos. See Jackson (2006, 464) and Wolin (2004, 140–141).
17. The author of this particular project is Guillaume Faye (Bar-On 2013b, 187–200; O'Meara 2013a, 61 (quote), 2013b, 235–244).
18. See the charts in Gumilev (2001, 33, 35).
19. Gumilev referred frequently to Spengler (his widow remarked that he had even fancied himself a sort of "Russian Spengler" (2003,18)), but in fact he had more in common with the Russian tradition of civilizational discourse, in particular as developed by Nikolai Danilevskii, Konstantin Leont'ev, and especially Nikolai Trubetskoi (Gumilev 1989b, 28, 69, 121, 131,147,149, 244, 358n, 1989c, 30, 1990a; Beliakov 2012, 144–146ff; Shitikhin 2012). Gumilev wrote an introductory essay to a major post-Soviet collection of Trubetskoi's writings (1995).
20. Also see the article on Gumilev at the *Metapedia* website: Gumilev (n.d.). *Metapedia* is the New-Right version of *Wikipedia*.
21. All of the quotations in this paragraph are from Andersen (2010).
22. On the revolutionary dimension of the New Right, see Lindholm and Zúquete (2010, 52).
23. He was not consistent on the point, however, and elsewhere dismissed the idea of reservations in the Soviet Union (Gumilev 1989a; Gumilev and Okladnikov 1982).
24. Gumilev's divergent views on Europe are noted by at least some New Right ideologues: see the discussion in Steuckers (2014).

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