An Ideological Goulash:
The Breton Extreme Rights, 1920–1940

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Of all the political historians that France has produced, René Rémont counts as one of the most renowned and best respected. According to a documentary on his life and works, filmed shortly after his death in 2007, Rémont still enjoys a cult following of sorts, especially at the famous Institut d'Études Politiques ("Sciences Po").\(^1\) However, although Rémont unarguably played a major role among French political historians, his taxonomy of the French Rights belongs in a certain context and should not be considered the definitive work on the subject. Rémont himself admitted that the spectrum had undergone major changes since the 1950s—which explains the 1982 updated version of his foundational book, Les droites en France.\(^2\)

This essay purports to add to the works that have aimed to complement, but not contradict, the Rémontian taxonomy.\(^3\) This study, however, strays from the national narrative and seeks to shed more light on the major changes that the extreme Rights underwent in Brittany during the decisive decades of the

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\(^1\) Marc Desoutter and Jean-Michel Destang, René Rémont, l'histoire à coeur battant (video, Flair Productions/Public Sénat, 19 septembre 2010).


interwar period. Special attention will be given to the autonomists of the Parti national breton (PNB—Breton Nationalist Party), an organization that belonged to the Right but that would have no place in Rémont's tripartite typology. Especially on the eve of and during the Second World War, the PNB stood for ideas that closely resembled those of European (para)fascist movements and parties. Although the absence of fascism in the Rémontian system has provoked much debate, the regional dimension has unfortunately been ignored.\(^4\)

In the case of Brittany, the political landscape was characterized by the existence of three extreme Rights: the most intransigent elements in the various monarchist movements of the day; the leagues (Dorgères' Green Shirts, Croix-de-Feu, and others); and finally the PNB. This study argues that of these three distinct types, only the PNB could be called fascist.

The extreme Right, in the Fifth Republic sense of the term, has never enjoyed much success in Brittany. Even the Front National, whose founder Jean-Marie Le Pen was born in the small Morbihan town of La Trinité-sur-Mer, has never managed to establish a strong presence in that region. In the March 2010 regional elections, the Socialist Party finished first with 37.19 percent, followed by the Liaison Committee for the Presidential Majority (23.73 percent). The Front National, on the other hand, only got 6.18 percent of the vote.\(^5\) It would, however, be misleading to assume that the far Right has always played a

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minor role in twentieth-century Breton politics, especially since a degree of extremeness can only be appreciated in context.

In *Combats pour une Bretagne catholique et rurale*, David Bensoussan points out "the strong cohesion that bound together the landed aristocracy, the clergy, and a large part of the peasantry in the defense of a model of hierarchical society that resembled that of rural Brittany under the Old Regime." Thus, more than the proponent of abstract sets of ideas, more than a lobby for class or caste interests, the Breton conservative (and overwhelmingly Catholic) Right represented a moral order that needed protection from the attacks of Paris and secular ideas in general. Unfortunately, Bensoussan's impressive study does not include any in-depth exploration of the fluid characteristics of the Breton extreme Right of those years.

From 1919 to 1932, the Breton Rights still controlled most of their pre-war strongholds. Until the elections of 1932, the Catholic Right either kept or managed to maintain a substantial presence in all of its traditional fiefs. Even then, clergy-sponsored candidates made up the majority of the deputies in the departments of Loire-Inférieure and the Ille-et-Vilaine. The Morbihan, though evenly split between the two blocs in terms of numbers of deputies, remained a generally Church-dominated department.

But aside from the persistence of its pre-war antirevolutionary characteristics, Breton conservatism had undergone many changes in the first decades of the Third Republic. Important shifts in the political landscape corresponded to the socio-economic developments that occurred in the region in those years. Although some of the pre-war structural diversity described by André Siegfried persisted after 1918, the development of family-owned land that unfolded at the national level also occurred, in a lesser measure, in Brittany.

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Nevertheless, such changes did not cause immediate, massive alterations in the traditional rural networks. A certain lag existed between the concrete, tangible transformation of rural structures on the one hand and lasting, centuries-old rural dynamics on the other.\(^8\) Thus, in order to understand the metamorphosis of the Breton Rights, one must distinguish between form and content. Without arguing for a *Sonderweg* (special path) of Breton politics, the preservation of historical memory on the one hand, and the peculiar relationships between the nobility, the clergy, and the peasantry on the other,\(^9\) molded a political climate that diverged, in some ways, from the national one.

At the superficial level, Catholic authorities frequently stigmatized the Revolution and the Enlightenment. The extensive use of such rhetoric served to remind the voters that the Chouannerie had never really ended, but now assumed a new shape. Furthermore, the nature of the Breton Catholic Right in the 1920s differed greatly from that of its 1790s ancestor. The political context had undergone much change throughout the nineteenth century. The initiative for such reforms originally came from above, with the creation of agrarian unions in the late nineteenth century by such aristocrats as Hervé Budes de Guébriant. De Guébriant's support for social Catholicism, influenced by Leo XIII's *Inter innumeris Sollicitudinis* (In the Midst of Concerns) encyclical, became rapidly popular, especially in the Léon area.\(^10\)

But the conservative wing of the Breton clergy, encouraged by Pius X's 1910 condemnation of the Sillon, rejected such endeavors. The decline of monarchist sentiment in Catholic and aristocratic circles, which had already begun before 1914, did

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9 Bensoussan, *Combats*, 60.

10 Bensoussan, *Combats*, 30. The Léon area comprises the northernmost part of Finistère.
not prevent the Breton Right from experiencing major, overlapping crises in the post-war decades. The first crisis, which pitted the partisans of the Ralliement against those of Action française and unaffiliated monarchists, continued in the interwar period. Some aristocrats, most notably in the Loire-Inférieure, still made extensive use of their inherited social capital and held on to their direct involvement in representative politics.11 The second crisis, related to the first one, escalated after the 1926 papal condemnation of Charles Maurras' Action française, which led most monarchists to sever their ties with the organization.

From a conceptual viewpoint, those developments complicated the nature of the Rights in Brittany. In addition to the rapidly changing political makeup of the region, the ideological significance of a party endorsement could at times be no more than nominal. Long before the First World War, the Breton moderate Left had already begun to experience a certain disconnection between party labels and political programmes. For instance, the candidates' statements for the 1902 elections reveal confusion not only within the Right, but also within the non-socialist Left.12 Thus the interwar period saw the continual reformulation of the political spectrum, not only at the national level, with the ebbing and flowing of the Radicals and the founding in 1920 of the Communist Party, but also at the local/regional one.

Before engaging in an overview of the far Right in Brittany, it is necessary to briefly summarize the concept of the "three Rights." In Les droites en France, Rémond states that, ever since the beginning of the Restoration, the political spectrum has known no more than three right-wing traditions: Legitimism, Orleanism, and Bonapartism.13 According to Rémond, almost every right-wing political party and movement in modern France

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11 Ibid., 29–30.
(at least until 1981) fits in this typology. Even Gaullism, whose eclectic nature complicates any attempt to associate it with any of the aforementioned families, is eventually labeled an avatar of Bonapartism. As a whole, the author does justice to the place of Gaullism in French political history.

However, the case of the extreme Right constitutes a thorn in the side of the Rémondian taxonomy. In that regard, his analysis lacks clarity. First of all, the author distinguishes between extreme Right and fascism. Whereas the latter is characterised by a Left-Right trajectory and subversive features, the former always originates on the Right (where it invariably remains) and refuses to undermine traditional social structures. While fascism consists of a revolutionary reaction, the extreme Right also "reacts," but in order to conserve. Although the author admits that fascism does not belong in the trinity, he also opines that the place of that ideology in French political history is minor, compared with Italy, Germany, and other European countries.

To Rémond, then, with the exception of Marcel Bucart's Francism and Jacques Doriot's French Popular Party, the French extreme Right cannot be seen as a variety of fascism.

In more than one way, Rémond's theory still holds water today. However, although this model provides a useful tool to understand the evolution of national political dynamics on both sides of the spectrum, it does not account for regional specificities. In that regard, the case of interwar Brittany is quite telling. Indeed, the existence of three separate extreme Rights in that region between 1918 and 1940 greatly complicates the threefold taxonomy. Although local characteristics mirrored in part those present at the national level, the development of a small, divided, but vocal autonomist movement gave the Breton political environment a peculiar tinge. Thus, the next section focuses on each of the three types of extreme Rights that coexisted in that period: the monarchist faction, the leagues, and the autonomists.

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14 Ibid., 138, 250, 322–33.
15 Ibid., 196, 203–25.
The far Right that dominated the 1920s was essentially monarchist. After the condemnation of Action française, the 1928 legislative elections marked another turning point in the metamorphosis of the Breton Rights. Although twenty out of the forty-three candidates of the Right had associated themselves with the Fédération républicaine, the latter often constituted no more than a superficial label. In most cases, the Catholic Right reached electoral agreements. In six districts, however, located mostly in traditionally conservative bastions, two Catholic lists participated in the election. While such partisan divisions cost the Right the constituencies of Rennes 2 and Quimperlé, the social Christians prevailed in the four other contested jurisdictions. The 1928 elections therefore marked the beginning of the irreversible decline of the relics of the monarchist party in Brittany and the advent of a more pragmatic though still adamantly Catholic Right.

The middle of the interwar period not only precipitated the decline of the monarchists but also saw a change in the nature of the extreme Right. Although the monarchists remained present on the political scene, their position on both local and national spectrums was altered by the growing success of other parties and organizations. Three types of extreme Rights, each nevertheless connected with the other, followed one another over the course of twelve years. Such monarchist groups as Action française soon had to compete with organizations like the Dorgéristes, who were more prevalent in the countryside, and the Croix-de-Feu, which enjoyed a relatively strong presence in urban environments. Finally, the era of the autonomists, whose movement experienced a radical rightward shift in the second half of the 1930s, succeeded that of the leagues.

The increasing popularity of Henri Dorgères, in the context of the May 1930 law on social insurances, led some agrarian

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16 Ibid., 155; see also Jean Le Cour Grandmaison, *Le marquis de La Ferronnays (1876–1946)* (Paris: Siloë, 1952).

17 Bensoussan, *Combats*, 147–51.
notables to revert to a more aggressive, anti-government stance. His anti-statist campaign proved a success in that it triggered the development of Dorgèrism in Morbihan and Finistère. On 2 February 1930, ten thousand peasant demonstrators flooded the streets of Rennes to protest the imminent passing of the law on social insurances. The law was seen as unfair, for it favored salaried workers and, as a result, demanded more substantial contributions from peasant families. Dorgèreres, by adding a more broadly anti-statist, anti-urban, anti-civil servant dimension to the issue, not only managed to provide the peasantry with an alternative to social Catholicism but also, and in spite of alienating the Christian democrats, attracted a sizeable portion of the conservative elite. Even after the underachievement of his Parti agraire in the 1932 legislative elections, the popularity of Dorgèreres kept growing. After the Progrès Agricole de l'Ouest became the Parti agraire’s main organ of propaganda, and especially after the catastrophic events of February 1934, the corporatist model became an increasingly popular option in rural milieus.

While the Dorgèrist presence in Brittany grew even more visible after the creation of the Green Shirts in 1935, to see the advent of corporatism as a sign of a change in peasant mentalities would be misleading. The Church still enjoyed much power in the region and, although the monarchist elements had almost disappeared, the enemy remained the Paris-centered, republican state. Although he still enjoyed a relative degree of influence under Vichy, Dorgèreres never succeeded in converting the majority of the Breton conservatives to the idea of a dictatorship of the peasantry. The animosity of the Christian

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19 Bensoussan, Combats, 411–12, 416.
20 Ibid., 472.
democrats toward the Parti agraire\textsuperscript{21} prevented the development of substantial fascist or quasi-fascist movements in the region.

However, some organizations such as Action française and the Croix-de-Feu/Parti social français (PSF) remained a concern to the authorities, especially in urban environments, long after the 10 January 1936 law banning the leagues. In Rennes, the authorities forbade an "Epiphany party," which was due to take place on 20 February 1936. One of the organizers, however, a certain Mlle de la Blanchardière, managed to postpone the meeting, a decision that greatly unnerved the prefect of Ille-et-Vilaine.\textsuperscript{22}

Just as the Croix-de-Feu had renamed their organization following the ban, more local, low profile groups took care of organizing meetings. Thus, just a few days after the prefect's instructions to prevent the delayed celebration of the "Epiphany party," another, more obscure organization named Dames Royalistes de Rennes sent the following invitation:

The Royalist Ladies beg your presence at the Garden-Party [sic] that will be taking place on Sunday the 2\textsuperscript{nd} of June, from 4:00 PM until midnight, at their president's, Madame de Léon des Ormeaux, 152, Rue d'Antrain, in Rennes. We shall dance. Bridge. Supper at 9:00. Please register before the 27\textsuperscript{th} of May if you wish to attend the supper. Free entrance.

At the bottom of the letter, in smaller font one could read:

A collection will be taken in order to cover the costs of the supper and others, and for the benefit of Madame la Duchesse de Guise's charities and royalist propaganda. Young women are to invite their dance partners.


Although a police report dated 18 May 1936 points out that the Dames Royalistes had organized this banquet every year, the local authorities certainly began to show interest in the organization after the passing of the 1936 law.

Thus the first half of the 1930s marked the cohabitation and, to some extent, the blending of monarchist groups with various corporatist and nationalist movements. That phenomenon was, of course, by no means confined to Brittany. The limited but increasing visibility of another, apparently idiosyncratic movement nevertheless contributed to redefine political dynamics in the region. By 1934, the majority of Breton autonomists unarguably belonged in the far Right. It would, however, be a mistake to see the Breton autonomist movement of the interwar years as an essentially reactionary phenomenon.

The first wave of Breton nationalism, also known as "first Emsav," began in the first half of the nineteenth century and ended in 1914. Though generally monarchist, the movement originally focused on the preservation of Breton culture and, more specifically, that of the Breton language. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the Emsav had evolved into a more

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24 Michael J. C. O’Callaghan, Separatism in Brittany (Trewolsta: Dyllansow Truran, 1983), 57–60. See also Alain Deniel, Le mouvement breton (Paris: La Découverte, 1976); Jean-Jacques Monnier, Résistance et conscience bretonne, 1940–1945, l’hermine contre la croix gammée (Fouesnant: Éditions Yoran, Embanner 2007); Olier Mordrel, Breiz Atao, ou histoire et actualité du nationalisme breton (Paris: Éditions Alain Moreau, 1973). Although Mordrel, given his role as a prominent leader of the PNB during World War II, cannot be considered the most rigorous historian of Breton autonomism, his testimony is invaluable if one wants to understand the ideological bases of the movement in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

25 The Breton name "Emsav" was derived from the verb en em sevel (to get up). It can mean "uprising" or "renovation." See Joël Cornette, Histoire de la Bretagne et des bretons, vol 2, Des Lumières au XXIe siècle (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2005), 453.
politically grounded movement, with the founding, in 1898, of the Union régionaliste bretonne (URB).

As its name indicated, the party's ambitions did not go so far as to demand the complete independence of Brittany. The URB aimed for the economic, administrative, and cultural autonomy of the region. In fact, the leaders of the party, many of whom were clergymen and noblemen, viewed their brand of Breton nationalism as compatible with French nationalism—which explains their ties with Maurras' Action française. Therefore, the URB's goal did not consist of "achieving the exclusive teaching of Breton in Brittany, [but] that the Breton language be taught as much as French, which it could complement in baccalauréat examinations without being more out of place than the Malagasy, Annamite, and Arabic languages, which have already been officially offered as options."26 But the party did not confine its demands to the linguistic and cultural realms, but also asked for the economic development of the region: "[t]he taxes that the Bretons pay are used to develop such harbors as Le Havre, Cherbourg, [and] Bordeaux. When will we be allowed to use our own money, so that we transform Brest into a transatlantic port?"27 Essentially, the autonomists contested what they perceived as the French government's policy of internal colonialism, as well as the economic neglect of Brittany.

The more romantic features of the Emsav were not, however, completely abandoned. In 1900, the members of the URB founded the Gorsedd Vreizh (Assembly of Brittany), a neo-druidic association, whose purpose consisted of preserving Brittany's cultural heritage and links with other Celtic nations, especially Wales.28 But the extremely conservative line of the URB soon alienated its more republican members, who split in 1899 and founded the Association des Bleus de Bretagne (League of Breton Blues). The movement became even more

27 Ibid., 121.
eclectic and visible after the First World War. Although the great involvement of the Breton youth in the conflict resulted in a certain consolidation of French national sentiment, the interwar period also saw the advent of the second Emsav. The cultural and linguistic assimilation of Brittany, the popularization of Wilson's principles on the right of self-determination, and the strengthening of the Sinn Féin Party in Ireland had, of course, much influence on the radicalization of the movement.

In spite of its insignificant electoral presence, the movement straddled the political spectrum and attracted the sympathies of some members of the extreme and Catholic Rights and the Left alike. Marcel Cachin himself, the father of the Parti communiste français and an uprooted Breton from Paimpol, favored more autonomy for the region. Among the members of the defunct Fédération socialiste de Bretagne (FSB), Émile Masson's socialism did not prevent him from playing an active role in the conservative URB, in which he held the position of vice-president of the party's literary section. In 1911, he founded the PNB, a motley crew of libertarian, radical, and right-wing elements.

Although the PNB did not survive the war, it attempted to reconcile the various tendencies of Breton nationalism. For that purpose Masson created Brug (Heath), an anarchist publication in which he tried to synthesize his struggle for Breton autonomy and his internationalism. Masson, who died in 1923, indirectly inspired Ar Falz (The sickle), whose editor, Yann Sohier, saw the USSR's language policy as a model that France should follow: "[b]efore the [1917] Revolution . . . the avowed goal of the government was to 'russify' the immense empire of the Tsars. Lenin's and the Communist Party's orders called for the '[a]bsence of a unique language [and for] the education in all

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29 Cornette, Histoire de la Bretagne, 2:460.
30 Bougeard, La Bretagne, 80; Barbin, Le mouvement breton, 122.
31 Cornette, Histoire de la Bretagne, 2:467.
[Soviet] nations in their own local languages." As disproportionate and inappropriate as such a comparison may seem, the example of the Soviet Union served the purpose of addressing the longstanding issue of centralization. Thus, the communists attempted to rephrase the conflict that opposed Jacobins and Federalists, the latter becoming the heralds of progress, while the former represented the bourgeois reaction.

The most active form of Breton autonomist activism was, however, associated with the forces of conservatism. By 1924, *Bretz Atao*! (Brittany forever!), the main Breton nationalist journal, had moved away from the Catholic brand of the movement and eventually founded the Parti autonomiste breton (PAB) in 1927. But the attempts at transcending ideological differences and building a unique party were short-lived. By the early 1930s, the second Emsav had entered a bipolar phase. While the left-leaning federalists formed their own league, the nationalists created the PNB. The latter soon began to resort to illegal methods. On 8 August 1932, the Gwenn-Ha-Du (Black and White), the party's secret society, "celebrated" the four-hundred-year anniversary of the annexation of Brittany by blowing up a monument commemorating the event. Three months later, the same organization sabotaged the railway near the town of Ingrandes, thereby stopping the train carrying Édouard Herriot, then President of the Council. The action was itself loaded with symbolism, for it took place at the historical border between France and Brittany.

By the late 1930s the political ambiguity of the movement had completely disappeared. Although some members of the Left initially sympathized with the Gwenn-Ha-Du, the

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33 Excerpt from Paul Laberenne’s *Internationale de l’enseignement*, in Ar Falz, May–June 1934, nos.15–16, 173.
34 Bougeard, *La Bretagne*, 80; Bensoussan, Combats, 228.
35 Barbin, *Le mouvement breton*, 144. Herriot was on his way to Nantes to celebrate the quadri-centenary of the Franco-Breton unification. The choice of Ingrandes, given the context and the fact that that town used to be located on the Franco-Breton border, had a symbolic meaning.
escalation of violence, which culminated with the blowing-up, in 1938, of a monument commemorating the 1790 Federation, led the autonomists to take root on the right of the political spectrum. Some members of Breiz Atao! even succumbed to the fascist temptation and founded their own paramilitary groups: the infamous Bagadoù stourm (Combat Sections), also known as the Black-and-White Shirts, and the Kadervenn (Combat Plough).

After the beginning of World War II, these groups actively collaborated with the Nazi occupier as early as 1939. In 1940, persuaded that Brittany would enjoy more autonomy under Hitler's Reich, the leaders of the movement even drafted an outline for a Breton constitution.37 Due to the wartime behavior of some of its members, the autonomist movement experienced a decline of popularity in the 1950s and early 1960s, only to attract a new generation of supporters in the last third of the century. The third Emsav, which officially began in 1945, shares some similarities with the politically diverse movement of the early 1920s. Indeed, the 1960s and 1970s saw a revival of demands for regionalization and for more effort on the part of the authorities in favor of teaching Breton in school.38 Since the 1980s, however, the autonomists have focused on economic, cultural, and environmental matters more than on purely political ones.

At first glance, interwar Brittany's political dynamics seem to fit Rémond's trinity. The Legitimists and their more moderate descendants, though scattered in various parties of the Right,


could easily be distinguished from the Christian democrats, understood as an avatar of Orleanism. In fact, the interwar period marked the apex of the conflict that opposed the two Catholic Rights. Finally, some elements among the region's heterogeneous Radical Party fit Rémont's description of Bonapartism, which he describes as a "political Janus." 39

The case of the far Right, however, complicates the picture. Whereas the assertion that Action française descended from the Restoration's Ultras makes sense, such leagues as the Croix-de-Feu and Dorgères' Green Shirts do not really agree with any of the three traditions. It could be argued, however, that those movements underwent a process of hybridization and retained only some elements of each Right. Rémont, after all, also shows himself to be quite open to the idea that his primary Rights could have blended and produced eclectic, secondary offspring. Although he is rather categorical in his view that the leagues belonged in the Bonapartist tradition, this part of the far Right constituted, indeed, more of a partial synthesis of previous movements than a novelty on the political scene. 40

The PNB, however, does not correspond to any of the Rémontian types. The autonomist movement, which had started off as an offshoot of nineteenth-century romanticism before knowing a period of ideological eclecticism, operated its right-wing shift during the 1930s, a course that pushed it into the arms of the Nazis. In spite of their links with monarchist circles, many right-wing autonomists held opinions that could not be reconciled with any of the three Rights.

The idiosyncratic features of the PNB should not, however, rule out its inclusion in a typology of political parties and movements. A close look at the PNB, especially between 1934 and 1943, shows that the organization shared many characteristics with contemporary fascist parties. 41 Of course, the

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German and Italian fascists had drafted programs that spoke to their respective nations/states as a whole, which constituted a fundamental difference from the Breton far Right autonomists. Nonetheless, the fact that the latter operated at the regional level does not make the 1930s and 1940s PNB any less fascist. From the PNB leaders' perspective, Brittany had as much a claim to becoming an internationally recognized nation as any other. Unlike its Italian and German counterparts, the Breton nationalists were irredentist ex nihilo.

Rémond, who was quick to assert the quasi-absence of any form of fascism in France, would also be forced to admit that the PNB fits his own definition of that ideological family. Firstly, the party's origins as part of a politically eclectic movement, as well as its trajectory toward the right of the spectrum, shared similar characteristics with Hitler's NSDAP and Mussolini's Partito Nazionale Fascista (PNF). Secondly, such organizations as the Bagadoù stourm and the Kadervenn unarguably imitated other fascist paramilitary groups. Thirdly, the large majority of the autonomists rejected communism, and did not show much enthusiasm for liberalism either. Moreover, the recourse to racist language and neo-pagan/Celtic symbolism, combined with an ambivalence in the party's attitude toward the Church, differentiated the PNB from the conservative Right. Finally, the belief that the economic development of the region should benefit the Breton population, as opposed to the French government and investors, reinforces the argument that the 1930s and 1940s PNB constituted a small, but relatively vocal brand of fascism.

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42 Mordrel, Breiz Atao, 17–21, 133–34.
The period spanning the years 1928 to 1940 saw the simultaneous superimposition and succession of three types of extreme Rights in Brittany. Much of this study has dealt with the place of the Breton autonomist movement in the Rémondian typology. The first reason for this choice has to do with the complex, multidimensional nature of the second Emsav. Secondly, Rémond's *Les droites en France* not only neglected the question of fascism, but also failed to address the place of autonomist and separatist movements in French politics. Therefore, this essay focused on the fate of the PNB over that of the other extreme Rights in the region.

Interwar Brittany does not constitute that exceptional a case, but one that provides a good illustration of the transition that the French political landscape was experiencing in those years. Whether or not the supporters of these parties and movements had precise ideas regarding their location on the spectrum, such cases of spectral confusion and non-linear political genealogies are of interest, especially in view of the constant evolutions and reformulations of political dynamics that have been occurring in Europe over the past twenty years. Although the regional approach has been used on numerous occasions, it still provides an adequate window into the world of French and European politics.