Preface

With extreme right parties in government in Austria and Italy, and Jean-Marie Le Pen contesting the run-off in the 2002 presidential elections in France, few people will dispute their continuing relevance in the politics of Western Europe. Indeed, ever since the first small electoral successes of parties like the Centrumpartij in the Netherlands or the Front National in France in the early 1980s, the extreme right has been the most discussed group of parties both in and outside of the scholarly community. Thousands of newspaper articles and hundreds of pieces of scholarly work have been devoted to extreme right parties, predominantly describing their history, leaders or electoral successes, as well as proclaiming their danger. Remarkably little serious attention has been devoted to their ideology, however. This aspect of the extreme right has been considered to be known to everyone. The few scholars that did devote attention to the ideology of the contemporary extreme right parties have primarily been concerned with pointing out similarities with the fascist and National Socialist ideologies of the pre-war period. If the similarities were not found, this was often taken as 'proof' that the extreme right hides its (true) ideologies, rather than as a motivation to look in a different direction.

Although concerned with the ideology of the extreme right, this book is also about so-called 'party families'. In particular, it is about how we can use ideology as a focus for identifying and analysing a specific party family, in this case the extreme right. The study is limited in two ways. First, it is limited in that not every (alleged) extreme right party is included in this study, which only draws from parties in Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands. This limitation derives from the method chosen: an intensive and in-depth analysis of party literature. The second limitation, as a consequence of the method chosen, is that the parties are taken at their word. Since there is no *proof* to the contrary, it is assumed that extreme right parties are as (dis)honest in their propaganda and literature as other political parties. As various other authors have pointed out, (all) political parties hide certain aspects of their ideology from their programmes, mostly for opportunistic

reasons. This notwithstanding, when selecting a relatively broad sample of party literature, and when being aware and critical in analysing this material, one can study party ideology in a scholarly way. This is what will be done in this study for this particular group of extreme right parties; it can, of course, also be done in exactly the same way for other families of parties, such as liberal or social democratic parties.

There is another limitation in this study: as the focus is on families of parties, the (whole) political party is the unit of analysis. This means that each (extreme right) political party is considered as a unitary actor, and I look for the ideology of 'the' party. That there are different factions within each party is accepted as a possibility, as is their possible relevance for certain aspects of the party; but they are not the subject of research here. Only when the different factions are so strong and divided on a certain topic or ideological feature that they inhibit the creation of a (majority) view of the party, will this be explicitly discussed.

Finally, the picture of the party ideology developed here is a picture which falls within a certain historical, societal and political context. Various factors have helped to create the party ideology, but these will be only scantily touched upon in this study. Extreme right parties, like all new parties, have to find their place in an already formed political and ideological space (Linz 1967; Ignazi 1996), which influences their behaviour and ideology. To some extent, certain ideological arguments and features only appear in their propaganda as reactions to arguments and features of other parties. Other topics are addressed by (extreme right) parties, only because other parties challenge them on these topics. For example, virtually all extreme right parties are at one time or another linked to anti-Semitism, even if they have never addressed topics such as Jews, Judaism or Israel themselves before that time. It is only in such instances that this study will discuss the interaction of extreme right parties with their political and social environment, and then only briefly. For the rest, the book will deal with the extreme right parties themselves, and most specifically their history, literature and, above all, ideology.

But not before I have said my words of thanks to all who have made it possible for me to write this book. Throughout the years I have profited from financial, material, personal, and intellectual assistance from a great variety of people and organisations. For the collection and analysis of the party literature I have visited various archives, where I have been very kindly assisted by René Blekman (Anne Frank Stichting, Amsterdam), Monika Deniffel (Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich), Alois Fischer (Bundesarchiv, Koblenz), Gabrielle Nandlinger (Blick nach Rechts, Bad Godesberg), Roeland Raes and Dirk De Smedt (Vlaams Blok, Brussels). Part of these visits has been made possible by a travel grant from the Dutch Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO); in other instances, such as the visits to party meetings of

the Deutsche Volksunion and the Vlaams Blok, I have benefited often from financial aid from the 'Vakgroepsfonds' in Leiden.

I feel privileged to have studied and worked at the Department of Politics in Leiden, which combines a pleasant social climate with a highly stimulating intellectual climate. I want to thank all my former colleagues for contributing to this general climate. I especially want to thank Hans Oversloot, Huib Pellikaan and Margo Trappenburg, for their many hours of small and big discussions on various scholarly topics, and for their help with and reading of earlier parts of this book. *In extremis* this applies to Joop Van Holsteyn, who has been (and still is) the best scholarly colleague and teacher possible. Deepest gratitude is also due (finally) to Peter Mair, whose optimistic support and sharp mind have helped me to develop beyond my originally narrow boundaries; a *Doktorvater* in the truest sense of the word.

I further want to thank all (former) Dutch Ph.D. students in political science, with whom I had the privilege to participate in the so-called 'Promo-club' and 'Polybios' sessions between 1993 and 1997. Since defending my Ph.D. at the University of Leiden in January 1998, I have benefited greatly from the stimulating environment of the Central European University in Budapest. The change of scenery and the unique blend of cultures has helped me to sharpen some of my main thoughts in the book. I thank all my former CEU colleagues and students, wherever they might be now.

In addition, a number of people outside my departments have discussed different queries with me or commented on chapters of the book. I would like to thank all of them, and in particular Uwe Backes, Hans-Georg Betz, Kris Deschouwer, Marc Spruyt, Andreas Umland and Jaap Van Donselaar. I owe special thanks to Roger Eatwell, who through the wonderful world of Internet has become one of my closest colleagues. My friend and colleague Petr Kopecky has helped me in a great many ways, among others by brainstorming on any possible academic and other (i.e. football) matter. Marjo van Ammers and Anna Siskova, the two women in my life, have kept me sane by being less bothered with the book, while at the same time supporting me in my endeavour. A final thanks goes out to Tim Mudde, who has made my scholarly work both difficult and possible. I am grateful for all the help he has extended to me, and even more for the fact that we still respect each other despite our differences of opinion.

Edinburgh