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**National Regeneration in Vichy France:
The Appeals to Renewal and Sirens of Decline**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses plans for national regeneration in Vichy France through the ideals that inspired them and the forces that shaped them during the 1930s and under the German Occupation. The thesis argues that Vichy's National Revolution was a complex mixture of reform agendas that cannot be understood as a single programme or coherent philosophy. Nevertheless, the National Revolution had ambitious aims to build a new political culture, reshape economic and power structures, change the pattern of social order and redefine French national identity; aims that reveal important continuities in French political and intellectual history. The thesis shows that, both before and after the defeat of 1940, the language of regeneration was a unifying force for the right and gave the impression of consensus, especially in times of crisis. Catchwords that warned of decline and appealed for renewal were used by a wide spectrum of the right during the 1930s. The catchwords illustrate the points at which right wing thought coalesced, especially in opposition to the Third Republic and in reaction to fears of national decline. However, analysis of the intellectual debate behind the catchwords reveals extremely broad and ambiguous reform agendas. The catchwords therefore served to disguise the diversity and divisions of the right. Under the Occupation, the catchwords and language of regeneration provided Vichy with a ready made framework for its reforms: they gave the National Revolution an intellectual provenance and a degree of energy and autonomy from Nazi models. However, when Vichy had the opportunity to turn the ideals of regeneration into policy, the divisions of the right became apparent. The catchwords could not long disguise the incoherence of the government's thinking or its policy failures. The harsh realities of the war and Occupation and the demands of Vichy's own pursuit of collaboration exacerbated the differences in reform agendas. The National Revolution must therefore be understood not only in intellectual terms but in the social, political and economic context of the Occupation, its shifting power structures, its rivalries and its delusions.