BOOK REVIEWS

Predecessors of the Greens

The Environmental Movement in Germany. Prophets and Pioneers, 1871–1971. RAYMOND H. DOMINICK III. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1992. xiv, 290 pp., illus. $35.

Many American environmentalists and social scientists have welcomed the resurgence of an environmental movement in West Germany in the past few decades. The ecology-minded Green Party that became active in the 1970s and its "postmaterialist" politics have received widespread support and approval in the United States. For German cultural and intellectual historians, however, the new environmentalism brought back dark memories of the lament over modernity that played a crucial role in German nationalism of the 19th and 20th centuries and in National Socialist ideology. Had the antimodernist sentiment merely shifted its political location from right to left, while preserving some of its more unsettling illiberal features? Are there traditions of environmentalism in Germany that are not subsumed by Nazism and cultural despair?

Raymond Dominick's study of environmental organizations and ideas in Germany from the 1870s to the 1970s effectively illustrates the pervasiveness of concern for the environment among the Germans and shows that not every German lament over threats to nature is part of a more sinister ideological package. Following the rapid industrialization of the late 19th century, schools of forestry were founded, and publicists and politicians expressed concerns that public health might be at risk owing to the increasing pollution of lakes, rivers, and the air. German nationalism and fears of despoliation of *German* nature by modernity, romantic suspicion of science and technology, and aristocratic disdain for commercial civilization were partly responsible for the emergence of an environmental movement, but so were pragmatic local politicians across the political spectrum who were faced with the need for clean air and water and recreational opportunities for the middle and working classes. Dominick also points to Goethe and Humboldt's German humanist arguments for the need to respect the unity of human beings and nature.

Dominick offers a history of protests against localized threats to the environment. Berlin's successful struggle from 1908 to 1915 to prevent developers from reducing the size of some of the city's large forests and successful Bavarian opposition to a plan to gain hydroelectric power from two Alpine lakes are two examples of how defense of local traditions, the engagement of powerful individuals, and public demonstrations reversed decisions to damage the environment in the name of progress and development. Scientific societies, groups of fishermen, public health groups, and outdoor clubs were precursors of the first national conservation societies. The state got involved as well. Before World War I the Prussian government hired Hugo Conwentz to work on preservation of *Naturdenkmäler* (natural monuments). The years preceding World War I saw the growth of organizations such as the German League for Bird Protection, the Nature Park Society, and the League for Conservation in Bavaria. Furthermore, even in an era famous for its worship of economic growth, conservation legislation found support among all the major political parties. The Social Democrats, often criticized for being too much under the sway of scientific assumptions, turned their attention to conservation legislation as it affected worker protection and housing. Industrialization produced problems, but it also gave rise to an educated middle class that joined concerned aristocrats to draw attention to threats to nature.

Having shown that conservation in Germany had multiple political coordinates, Dominick examines the affinities between National Socialism and nature conservation. Though not all conservationists became Nazis, and not all Nazis extolled the virtues of nature, there was considerable congruence in their thinking, especially with regard to national regeneration, "blood and soil" ideology, idealization of the national community and the peasantry, racist rejection of internationalism, antimodernism, rabid anticommunism, and hostility to science, technology, and materialism. Historians of Nazi culture will recognize in the book familiar rhetoric from Hitler, Goebbels, Hans Frank, and other Nazi ideologues such as Richard Darre, who saw farmers as the source of the true German character and warned that "to remove the German from the natural landscape is to kill it." The famous autobahns were built to blend into the countryside and do as little damage to the environment as possible. As evidence of the overlap between Nazism and the environmental movement, Dominick found that by 1939 59 percent of leaders of conservationist organizations had joined the Nazi party, compared with 10 percent of all adult males, 45 percent of medical doctors, and approximately 25 percent of teachers and lawyers. Moreover, among German professionals, foresters had the second highest rate of participation in the Nazi party (veterinarians had the highest). Dominick sees the "unique nexus between National Socialism and nature conservation" as amounting to the "nationalistic solipsism" that "the natural environment existed to create the German *Volk*" (p. 114).

After World War II, German conservation organizations, owing in part to the Nazi taint and in part to the country's focus on economic recovery, reorganized and regrouped, but did so slowly. As in the years before World War I, an economic boom led to pressures on the environment that in turn brought the environment's defenders to the fore. Dominick notes some continuities and changes. Apocalyptic authors of the 1950s, such as Adolph Metternich and Erich Hornsmann, echoed the cultural pessimism of pre-1933 Germany but focused on threats to humanity in general rather than just to Germany. Dominick sees postwar environmentalism partly as an expression of a sense of responsibility following Nazi immorality. Yet I believe that postwar German concerns about the dangers posed by "man" or "technology" could also be seen as a flight into generalities that amounted to avoidance of responsibility for facing the political elements of the German past.

In view of the great scholarly and journalistic attention the ecological movements of the 1970s and '80s in West Germany received, the legislative record established by the Federal Republic of Germany with regard to the environment before these movements emerged is striking. Dominick refers to an impressive array of constitutional and legislative measures passed in the Federal Republic of Germany between 1949 and the early 1970s, including establishment of the Central Office for Conservation and Care of the Countryside (1952); measurement and investigation of health effects of radioactivity (1956); legislation to standardize management of water supplies (1957); clean-air legislation (1959); a constitutional amendment concerning protection against radiation (1959); guidelines on noise in the workplace (1960); the Federal Construction Law, requiring land-use planning in all real estate use (1960); mandatory use of biodegradable detergents (1961); and connection by the Ministry for Health Affairs of air, water, and noise pollution to public health (1961). In the 1960s and '70s laws were

passed dealing with pesticides, nuclear power, legal remedies against polluters, and trash removal. In 1974 an Environmental Office in the Ministry of the Interior was established. Though the "new social movements" certainly slowed and in some instances stopped further construction of nuclear power plants, this extensive environmental legislation was already in place before these movements emerged.

It is not clear why Dominick ends his account with the year 1971, especially given that the Green Party was not founded until the late 1970s. This also leaves out the intertwining of the environmental and "antinuclear" movements of the early 1980s. Moreover, the book does not cover the important subject of environmentalism—or the lack thereof—in the former East Germany. The shock with which West Germans greeted the ecological catastrophe left behind by communism in East Germany was itself surprising. Given the close contact between East and West made possible in the era of détente, could Western journalists and environmentalists not have seen earlier what was so obvious after the Wall came down? One hopes that Dominick and other historians will turn their attention to providing an account of the destruction of the environment in East Germany.

The differences between the radical democratic, leftist, multicultural Greens and the totalitarian, racist Nazis are evident enough. But there are continuities between the German cultural despair of the right before 1945 and the cultural despair of the West German left from the 1960s to the 1980s. They include a disdain for liberal democratic politics, a tendency to see in science and technology autonomous forces beyond human control, a deep suspicion of the Enlightenment, and an inclination toward apocalyptic political visions. The Greens were not descendants of the Nazis, yet neither were they simply American liberals who happened to speak German. They were heirs to a disquieting German counter-Enlightenment tradition.

Dominick is right to distinguish conservation and environmentalism from Nazism and to indicate the multiplicity of sources of environmental concern in Germany. Moreover, it is well to remember that the Nazis were advocates of "reactionary modernism," which blended technological modernity with themes of the German counter-Enlightenment. They "struggled" and "battled" to control nature, unlike environmentalists who try to reconcile with nature—efforts the Nazis would have considered pacifist and effeminate. Yet Dominick protests a bit too much. Historians of German political culture, such as Fritz Stern, Richard Lowenthal, and myself, have not equated the Greens with Nazis but merely pointed out that romantic and counter-Enlightenment skepticism can take, and has taken, different political forms. Dominick conceives the ideological affinities of environmentalism and Nazism too narrowly and thus underestimates the continuities between the counter-Enlightenment of the old right and the postmodernism of the new left. He nonetheless succeeds in drawing to our attention the traditions other than those of cultural despair from which Germans have approached environmental problems.

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A Village Reemergent

Cuello. An Early Maya Community in Belize. NORMAN HAMMOND, Ed. Cambridge University Press, New York, 1991. xxii, 260 pp., illus. $90.

Rigoberta Menchú, a Maya villager, this year received the highest moral accolade from the civilization that conquered her people, the Nobel Peace Prize. The Maya villagers endure. Out of their vision and experience they created a civilization encompassing millions of people and spanning over 2000 years (400 B.C. to A.D. 1697). Five centuries of foreign domination have left them battered but large-