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## Nature Protection during National Socialism

*Burkhardt Riechers\**

**Abstract:** The discipline of Environmental History research should include studies which examine the acknowledgement, evaluation and resolution of environmental crises of ecological movements. There are just some few authors who have explored ecological movements under the era of National Socialism. Protection of nature is one of those movements which, even before 1933, presented a contradictory, ambivalent image: On the one hand, the protectors of nature had been deeply influenced by contemporary cultural criticism and by the distinctive German-national consciousness integral to large parts of the educated middle-classes since the Wilhelminian era. Their compelling argumentative connection of Volkstum, "native land", "landscape" and "soul", as well as their racial hygienic thinking, made them predisposed to National Socialism. They placed great expectations on the "Third Reich", which led to an ideological use of nature conservation in favour of National Socialism. On the other hand, however, rearmament and war preparations demanded a partial autarchy of the Reich with regard to the provision of food; consequently the struggle to raise the level of food production and the Four-Year Plan demanded the conversion of ecologically valuable natural and cultural lands into cleared farming and grazing areas. Nature protectors were forced - though willingly - to collaborate in bringing forward this development, as their concept of nature protection demanded a cooperation with the government as the only possible alternative - regardless what direction it would take them. Besides, they were unable to argue, and more so to recognize the fundamental

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conflict between economy and ecology. Even in the time after 1945, and scarcely nowadays is the past of the nature protection movement adequately investigated. Reasons for this situation may be found in the training of the protectors in the natural sciences, who - not until the 1980s - had begun to recognize the social dimensions of their work and to develop a democratic conception of protection. The propagation of an "ecological ethic" and the rejection of an anthropocentric notion of nature protection have the same roots, and give evidence of an ahistorical way of seeing what hinders rather than furthers the cause of protection.

## 1. Introduction

The discussion about questions of Environmental history came up just a few years back. Consequently a generally accepted definition for Environmental history and what it should comprise, has yet to be found. It is, however, accepted that the human being should be the primary object of Environmental History research. Pfister defines Environmental History as *"die Wechselbeziehungen von Gesellschaften mit ihrer natürlichen Umwelt oder ... den Stoffwechsel des Menschen mit der Natur"* (the mutual relationship of societies with their natural environment ... the substance exchange between human being and nature). For Radkau the research on Environmental History is *"die Erforschung der langfristigen Entwicklung der menschlichen Lebens- und Reproduktionsbedingungen. Sie untersucht, wie der Mensch diese Bedingungen selbst beeinflusste und auf Störungen reagierte. Dabei gilt die spezifische Aufmerksamkeit unbeabsichtigten Langzeitwirkungen menschlichen Handelns, bei denen synergetische Effekte und Kettenreaktionen mit Naturprozessen zum Tragen kommen"* (the investigation of the long term development of the conditions of life and reproduction of the human being. It examines how these conditions are influenced by man himself, and how he reacted to the arising disturbances. Here, specific attention is fixed on the unintentional long term effects of those human activities where synergetic effects and chain reactions with natural processes become noticeable). The definition given by Andersen seems more convincing: *"Die historische Umweltforschung beschäftigt sich mit*

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<sup>1</sup>Pfister, Christian (1993): Ressourcen, Energiepreis und Umweltbelastung. Was die Geschichtswissenschaft zur umweltpolitischen Debatte beitragen könnte, in: Environmental History Newsletter, Special issue No. 1, 1993, Mannheim, pp. 13-28, here: p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>Radkau, Joachim (1993): Was ist Umweltgeschichte?, in: Environmental History Newsletter, Special issue No. 1, 1993, pp. 86-107, here: p. 88.

dem Mensch-Natur-Verhältnis, der gesellschaftlichen Naturaneignung. Dies schließt Produktions- wie Reproduktionsverhältnisse ebenso ein, wie deren mentale und kulturelle Verarbeitung" <sup>3</sup>. (The historical environmental research deals with the man-nature-relationship and the adaptation of the human society to nature. This does not only include productional and reproductional relationships, but also their mental and cultural development). It becomes evident here that in this interrelation between man and environment not only the material exchange between man and nature is involved, but also the reactions of the human being towards the challenges brought about by the physical environment or the conflict between the anthropogenic natural usage on the one hand, and the constraints of the limited natural resources on the other. Consequently the research on Environmental History should include the following focal points: The study of the human reactions to the atmospheric changes, natural catastrophes, and other similar factors; secondly, the observation of the interrelation between the human population and its natural environment; thirdly, the conflict arising due to the different demands of the diverse interest groups existing in one specific area. Finally, the research should investigate the different methods and processes, how man tried to reduce or reduced or even solved the environmental problems, and specially which were the conditions and motives that made people act or react. The definition given by Andersen allows to observe the mental working and the methods of adaption to the environment. The history of ecological movements is considered in this context, and, to my opinion, other forms of movements for example hiking, mountaineering etc. belong to the same category.

Radkau is decidedly against an *"ahistorisch-systematischen Approach zur gegenwärtigen Öko-Bewegung"* (ahistorical-systematic-approach to the present ecological movement), which tries *"sie nur von einer einzigen Theorie her zu definieren"* (to define it by just one theory). Such an attempt, however, can be misleading, as *"Ziele und Normen der Ökologiebewegung nicht wirklich einer universalen, über Raum und Zeit erhabenen Ökologie, sondern historisch gewachsenen Bedürfnisstrukturen entstammen"* (the aims and norms of an ecological movement do not really result from a universal ecology beyond area and time, but rather from certain structures of needs and demands which evolve through the years i.e. in past history). Therefore the ecological movement is a *"historisch gewordenes Amalgam aus heterogenen, in jedem Fall aber um menschliche Interessen kreisenden Bewegungen"*\* (a historical amalgam of heterogeneous movements which in any case are settled around the interests of men). In the following two different analytical studies on ecological movements are briefly discussed.

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<sup>3</sup> Andersen, Arne (1993): *Über das Schreiben von Umweltgeschichte*, in: *Environmental History Newsletter*, Special issue No. 1, 1993, pp. 44-57, here: p. 46.

<sup>4</sup> Radkau (1993), p. 106 f.

"*Ökopax und Anarchie*" by Ulrich Linse is considered a Standard work on the history of the ecological movements in Germany in the course of the last 100 years. Linse concludes that the German party "Die Grünen" does by no means represent one of the *"zyklisch als Reaktion gegen ökonomisch-technische Modernisierungsschübe auftretenden antimodernistischen Strömungen"* (anti-modernistic trends, which came up in cycles as a protest reaction against the economical and technical thrusts of modernization). In the first place, the people's anti-modernism movement for the protection of nature and native land which came into being at the latest during the Weimar period was showing an astonishing readiness to accept the modernization plans. With it an economy boom was carried along. Anti-modernism was observed only in its reserve against the americanization of the economy, favouring a backward integrated "völkische" ideology. Secondly, the statement about the present day German "Die Grünen"-tradition of the romantic anti-capitalism and pre-fascist irrationalism is refutable, for neither romanticism nor cultural pessimism are exclusively pure German trends. Thirdly, apart from German middle-class critic of modernism, there also existed a socialist and an anarchist wing. Present day "Die Grünen" have developed from the students' revolts of the late 60s and the citizens' movement of the 1970s. They have got a character predominantly radical democratic onto left radicalist and an antiautocratic way of functioning. Finally, it must be emphasized that radical ecological movements in Germany although their first appearance reaches back to the turn of the century, had played a very minor role. Juxtaposed to the earlier times, today "Die Grünen" have a potential of 35,000 members (1985), and 2.2 million electors (1983) and have become one of the most important factors in the public media as well as in the democratic parliamentary system, especially because the consequences of environmental destruction, which affect everyone, have become immensely visible in the meantime.<sup>6</sup>

Other studies in this field are those of Groening/Wolschke-Bulmahn.<sup>7</sup> Their investigations in the history of "Freiraumplanung" (free-space-planning) deals with the development of the discipline "Landespflege" during national

<sup>6</sup> Linse, Ulrich (1986): *Ökopax und Anarchie. Eine Geschichte der ökologischen Bewegung in Deutschland*, München.

<sup>7</sup> Op.cit., p. 153-163.

<sup>7</sup> Gröning, Gert / Wolschke-Bulmahn, Joachim (1986): *Die Liebe zur Landschaft. Part I: Natur in Bewegung* (= *Arbeiten zur sozialwissenschaftlich orientierten Freiraumplanung*, vol. 1), München; *ibid.* (1987): *Die Liebe zur Landschaft. Part JU: Der Drang nach Osten* (= *Arbeiten zur sozialwissenschaftlich orientierten Freiraumplanung*, vol. 9), München; Wolschke-Bulmahn, Joachim (1990): *Auf der Suche nach Arkadien. Zu Landschaftsidealen und Formen der Naturaneignung in der Jugendbewegung und ihrer Bedeutung für die Landespflege* (= *Arbeiten zur sozialwissenschaftlich orientierten Freiraumplanung*, vol. 11), München.

<sup>8</sup> The subject "Landespflege", which had evolved in the 30s and 40s from Garden and Landscape Planning, according to Buchwald includes "the arrangement, protection and development of residential, industrial, agricultural and recreational areas". It

socialism and the subject importance of nature and environment oriented movements at the first half of the 20th century. However, they concentrate upon the period of national socialism as at this period certain ideas of nature and environmental movements and disciplines did become a political reality. The chapter about *"die historische soziale Begründung des Naturschutzes"* (the historical and social reasons for nature conservation) for the first time examines *"welchen ideologischen Elementen in der Naturschutzbewegung Einfluß zukam und welche Bedeutung ihnen für die Richtung der gesellschaftlichen Entwicklung beigemessen werden muß"*<sup>10</sup> (which of the ideological elements have influenced the nature protection movements and what importance must be given to them in the social development). These questions will be taken up again later on, as they play an important part.

Linse gives an excellent characterization of the nature protection during national socialism: The middle-class anti-modernism of nature and native land protection movements during the Weimar period, at the latest, expressed itself merely in its back-to-the-roots ideology with objections only against the "americanization of the economy". Yet, its cooperative attitude towards modernization helped enormously to bring about an economic boom. This made it easier for the national-socialist policy to integrate all the romantic values of the movement into their verbal argumentation, and helped at the same time to force the economic exploitation of the natural resources.<sup>11</sup> This contradictory image of nature protection under national socialism will be elucidated in the following. To be able to do this it is necessary to search for causes, that is, the historical genesis of the middle-class' movement of nature protection. The essay closes with a comment on the consequences of the manifestations of the movement before and during national socialism on present day developments.

## 2. Description

### 2.1. The Beginning of the Nature and Native Land Protection Movement

The idea of nature and native land protection "Heimatschutz" came up only in the last decades of the 19th century. The forced industrialization, the beginning of the rural exodus of the East towards the industrialized centres of the West

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<sup>10</sup> "includes the 'Landschaftspflege' and careful usage of natural resources, the nature protection ..., the 'Grünordnung' as well as the protection of recreational areas and green areas". (Quoted in Mrass, Walter (1970): *Die Organisation des staatlichen Naturschutzes u. der Landschaftspflege* (= Beiheft 1 of "Landschaft u. Stadt"), Diss. Stuttgart, p. 2.)

<sup>11</sup> GröningAVolschke-Bulmahn (1986), pp. 132-207.

<sup>12</sup> Gröning/ Wolschke-Bulmahn (1986), pp. 132-207.

<sup>13</sup> Refer to Linse (1986), pp. 153-163.

with its growing cities, and hence its increasing negative social, health and hygienic effects in this cities, turned a large section of the urban bourgeoisie into anti-urban and pro-rural. Pioneers in this regard were Georg Hansen, Otto Ammon and Heinrich Sohnrey, who in their thinking were quite close to Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl. It was especially Heinrich Sohnrey, who integrated the anti-urban and romantic agrarian doctrines of Riehl, Hansen and Ammon into the typical "vaterländisch-konservative" (fatherland-conservative) thoughts of the middle-class of Wilhelm's Germany. The so-called "fin-de-siècle-atmosphere" at the turn of the century and the following neo-romantic renewal movements were for one thing the result of a patriotic fatherland conservatism, but on the other hand they expressed a strong criticism for that period and had a cultural pessimism about them.<sup>12</sup> Apart from the youth' movement other groups such as the "ländliche Wohlfahrts- und Heimatpflege" (country-side welfare and preservation movement), the "Heimatkunst-" (protection of folks' art), "Gartenstadt-" (garden-city movement) and the "Heimatschutzbewegung" (native land protection movement) belonged to the neoromantic renewal movements, which manifested in a special way in the "Bund Heimatschutz" (union of native land protection) established in 1904. Here the word "Heimat" (homeland) was symbolizing the countryside as counterpart to the big cities. Similarly the word "Volk" (folk) was "*eine anspruchsvolle Bezeichnung für eine im heimatlichen, d.h. ländlichen Boden wurzelnde Gesamtheit von ländlichen Kulturträgern*"<sup>13</sup> (a term used for people living in the native countryside).

One of the founders of the "Bund Heimatschutz" was Ernst Rudorff, who coined the terms "Heimatschutz" and "Naturschutz" (protection of native land and nature protection). In Germany he is known as the founder of the idea of nature protection. In his articles written between 1880 and 1900 he represented a markedly romantic and cultural-pessimistic opinion of the, at that time, bourgeoisie nature protection movement with a strong conservative and reactionary tenor. For example, he felt strongly against the rigorous construction of hydro-electric power plants, a fundamental necessity for, what he considered, as an unnecessary industrialization.<sup>14</sup> But Rudorff's strong criticism had it not automatically to lead the union to become an outsider for the technical world and the supporters of Wilhelmini an Germany who were predisposed to industry? His in the end futile campaign to rescue the rapids of the river Rhein at Laufenburg - which were endangered by the planned construction of a hydroelectric power station - made the union members in fact consider whether a more compromisal attitude might perhaps be more adequate and helpful.

<sup>12</sup> Refer to Bergmann, Klaus (1970): *Agrarromantik u. Großstadtféindschaft, Meisenheim/Glan*, pp. 72-88.

<sup>13</sup> *Op.cit.*, p. 88.

<sup>14</sup> Knaut, Andreas (1990): *Der Landschafts- und Naturschutzgedanke bei Ernst Rudorff*, in: *Natur u. Landschaft* 3, ser. 1965, pp. 115-118, here: p. 116.

The nature protection associations started now to back the industrial world. Their support was influenced by the *"Zerrüttung der deutschen Wirtschaft nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg und nach der Währungskatastrophe der Inflationsjahre"*<sup>15</sup> (breakdown of the German economy after World War I and the currency catastrophe of the inflationary years). Its result had to be a compromise, a "reconciliation" between economy and ecology. This was successfully implemented by some nativelyland protectors like Carl Johannes Fuchs and the well known engineer Werner Lindner by supporting the concept to harmonize the technical structures organically into the landscape. These "artefacts" and "cultural monuments" of nativelyland-related architecture combined utility and suitability with beauty.<sup>16</sup> This *"organische Verbindung von fortschrittsoptimistischer Technikbejahung ... und ... Rückkehr zu den handwerklich-völkischen Wurzeln des Kulturschaffens"*<sup>17</sup> (organic combination of pro-development orientated support of technology and at the same time the backward orientation to cultural roots of folks-handicraft) became, since 1934, a leading motto for the construction of the national highways of the "Reich" under Fritz Todt.

## 2.2. The thought of nature protection and nature protection politics during National Socialism

All the members of the nature and nativelyland protection groups of the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich belonged to the educated middle classes<sup>18</sup> and hence were greatly influenced by the special German national consciousness and the criticism of the civilization. From the very beginning it maintained this typical characteristic. Schoenichen<sup>19</sup> appropriately declared that the most important motive for the nature protection was the *"völkisch romantische Motiv"*<sup>20</sup> (the motive of folks' romanticism). *"Die Naturschutzbewegung wurzelt für uns Deutsche zunächst im Romantischen"* (For us Germans the nature protection movement is primarily rooted in romanticism), in this manner Schoenichen began his description on the "völkisch"-romantic idea. *"Romantik bedeutet ... Besinnung auf unsere völkische Wesenheit und auf die*

<sup>15</sup> Linse (1986), pp. 26f.

<sup>16</sup> Op.cit., pp. 28, 32.

<sup>17</sup> Op.cit., p. 32.

<sup>18</sup> This refers to Linse's explanation (1986), pp. 158-160, who considers the educated middle-class man as the main carrier of critical modernistic thought and of the reform movement since the first "fin-de-siècle"-mood, because to him this role created a social existential right in the primarily highly earning industrial society of Germany during Wilhelm's reign and later.

<sup>19</sup> Prof. Dr. Walter Schoenichen was director of the "Staatliche Stelle für Naturdenkmalpflege" in Prussia from 1922 to 1938 respectively since 1935 director of the "Reichsstelle für Naturschutz" and one of the leading nature protectors in Germany.

<sup>20</sup> Schoenichen, Walter (1942): *Naturschutz als völkische und internationale Kulturaufgabe*, Jena.

*Quellströme, aus denen diese immer von neuem Kraft und Innigkeit schöpft [und mit ihr] Weckung der völkischen Abwehrkräfte gegen fremdländischen Einfluß*<sup>21</sup> (Romanticism means ... consciousness of our native essence and of our origin, from which this romanticism constantly derives energy and intimacy and with that awakens the native defence against foreign influence).

The motivation taken from the "völkischen" romanticism ideas had, there is no doubt, an irrational element about it. The way the German people transformed the landscape according to their needs, the German landscape is supposed to have influenced people's life in many essential ways, *"und es entstand das, was man wohl den deutschen Menschen genannt hat"*<sup>22</sup> (from this resulted what was called "the German man"). *"Ein Volk ziehe seine besten Kräfte aus der Natur und der heimischen Landschaft"* (A nation's energy is drawn from nature and its national landscape), as *"die Schönheit unserer Landschaft und unserer Flur, die Pflege überlieferter Kulturgüter in der Landschaft"* (the beauty of our country's landscape and our fields, the traditional cultural goods of the landscape handed down with care) are *"Kräfte, die beitragen zu der Gesamterziehung unseres Volkes und zum gesunden Wachstum unserer Kultur"* (forces, which contribute to the education of our people as well as to a healthy growth of our culture). Therefore the landscape with its fields should give the impression *"eines organischen, harmonischen Ganzen als dem Abbild einer Volksgemeinschaft"*<sup>23</sup> (of an organic, harmonious totality, the reflection of the national community).

Hence, to their opinion, the main function of nature protection is *"die heimatliche Landschaft zu pflegen und vor Entstellung zu bewahren"*<sup>24</sup> (to take care of the native landscape and to prevent its disfigurement). According to the opinion of the nature protectors the homeland and the natural landscape have similar influence on a nation and its culture. *"Die Heimat ist der stille Mitformer an unserem Wesen ... Sie ist die heimliche Mitschöpferin unserer Kultur. Die Heimat ist unser Schicksal, und unser Tun wird zum Schicksal der Heimat"*<sup>25</sup> (the homeland is silently forming our being ... It is the quiet co-creator of our culture. The country where we are born is our destiny and our doings determine the destiny of our native country). *"Die Erweckung,*

<sup>21</sup> Op.cit., pp. 35-37. That these thoughts, written in 1942, do not represent the real result of any positive discussion about the NS-period, is proved by Schoenichen (1930): *Aus der Entwicklung der Naturdenkmalpflege, in: Der deutsche Heimatschutz. Ein Rückblick und Ausblick*, published by the "Gesellschaft der Freunde des deutschen Heimatschutzes," Berlin, pp. 222-227, here: p. 227, and idem (1931): *25 Jahre preußischer Naturschutz*, in: *Naturschutz*, ser. 12, pp. 153-159, here: p. 158. The word "formulation" used here is partly the same as in (1942), pp. 35-37.

<sup>22</sup> Idem (1931), p. 158.

<sup>23</sup> Schwenkel, Hans (1929): *Die Gestaltung des Flurbildes*, in: *Naturschutz*, ser. 11, pp. 144, 142. Prof. Dr. Hans Schwenkel was director of the "Württembergische Landesstelle für Naturschutz u. Landschaftspflege" since 1922.

<sup>24</sup> Schoenichen (1931), p. 158.

<sup>25</sup> Schwenkel (1929), p. 142.

*Erhaltung und Stärkung eines urwüchsigen, naturverbundenen Heimatgefühls*" (The awaking, preserving and strengthening of a natural feeling tuned to nature and the native country) was "von hoher sittlicher Bedeutung für... Volkstum und Vaterland"<sup>26</sup> (regarded for its moral importance for ... "Volkstum" and fatherland). "Volkstum" was the third most important term of the "völkisch" romantic argumentation.<sup>27</sup> "Volkstum", they said, to be bound "an die Heimat mit all ihren natürlichen und kulturellen Gütern"<sup>28</sup> (to the home nation with all its natural and cultural wealth). A human being receives his "Volkstum aus der Hand der Heimat" (from his native country) as "Grundlage des Volkstums" (basis of his "Volkstum").<sup>29</sup> The nature and native land protectors established a context between the words "Volkstum" and culture. Culture for them is a "Wesensausdruck des Volkes" (an expression of the character of a people). "Die weiteste, Kultur hervorbringende und durch sie gekennzeichnete Gemeinschaft ist das Volk. Darin, daß in der Kultur jeder höhere Wert des Lebens beschlossen ist, und daß Volkstum die größte schöpferische Kulturgemeinschaft ist, liegt der ethische Grund dafür, Volkstum in den Mittelpunkt unserer Zielsetzung zu stellen"<sup>30</sup> (The "Volk" is the widest community, bringing forward culture and by it distinguishing itself. The fact that culture includes in itself all the high values of life and that the "Volkstum" is the biggest creative cultural community is the ethical motive for putting "Volkstum" at the center of our objective). For culture, as they said, is "ohne die Grundlage eines gesunden Volkstums und einer reichen und schönen Heimatnatur nicht möglich"<sup>31</sup> (not possible without the fundament of a healthy "Volkstum" and a rich and beautiful nature gifted nation). The nature protectors considered nature protection as a cultural question which affects the whole nation and which should awaken a sense of duty, to win over the people as a whole for its cause.<sup>32</sup>

Completely irrational and mystical, infact nature-mystical was the "völkisch"-romantic argumentation about the "soul" and "life streams" of the German man, as well as his own boundage to nature. The home country "*nähre auch unseren inneren Menschen: Geist und Seele, Verstand, Herz und Gemüt*"

<sup>26</sup> Meyer-Jungclaussen, Hinrich (1930): *Beiträge zur Heimatgestaltung*, in: Naurschutz, ser. 11, pp. 303-307, here: p. 304. Hinrich Meyer-Jungclaussen was one of the well known Garden and Landscape architects with a well staffed office in Bad Berka at Weimar.

<sup>27</sup> This German terminus, which cannot be translated adequately, means being rooted in a special way with folks' customs.

<sup>28</sup> Schwenkel (1929), p. 142.

<sup>29</sup> Giannoni, Karl (1930): *Heimat u. Volkserziehung*, in: *Der deutsche Heimatschutz. Ein Rückblick u. Ausblick*, pp. 54-69, here: p. 57. Dr. Karl Giannoni was Chairman of the "Österreichischer Heimatschutzverband".

<sup>30</sup> Opxit., p. 61.

<sup>31</sup> Schwenkel (1929), p. 144.

<sup>32</sup> Schoenichen (1931), p. 158.

<sup>33</sup> Schwenkel (1929), p. 142

(feeds our inner being: spirit and soul, reason, heart and mind). The German soul has its strong hold in its homeland, in this feeling of "Volkstum" it has found its self-determination.<sup>34</sup> This *"Durchdrungenwerden von den Lebensströmen der Natur, tiefer sich einfühlen in die blühende Welt"* (becoming imbued with the life streams of nature, deeply feeling the blossoming world) is said to be a yearning of the German *"Volkes, die wohl zurückgedrängt, aber nie ertötet werden konnte, weil sie eben zum deutschen Volkscharakter [gehörte]"* ("Volk" which could be repressed but could never be erased, because it is part of the character of the German). Because being a German means having love of nature. To nature the same importance was given as to a language, which pulsates *"durch alle Gestaltungen hindurch zu der Kraft..., die in allem Werden und Vergehen [existiert und führt] zu dem Geist, der sich im einzelnen wie im ganzen offenbare"* (is going through all creative forms to a force which pulsates in every creative progress and event and leads to the spirit which manifests itself on an individual level as well as in its totality).

To secure the future of Germany it was an important demand for the protection of the native ground and *"lebendiger Verknüpfung des Volkes mit ihr, damit ihre Lebensströme ununterbrochen in den Adern des Volkes kreisen"* (steady relationship of the "Volk" and nature so that its life streams circulate uninterrupted in the veins of the "Volk"). For the nature protectors it meant to allow the soul of the German people to "recover" on the "organic" ground of their native landscape and through a strong rooted "Volkstum" to save the German culture from decline. At the same time they observed a number of dangers which threatened the existence of the German "Volk", its soul, native land and its landscape. They were speaking of the *"imperialistisch-wirtschaftlichen, amerikanisierend-rechenhaften Geist, der das deutsche Seelenleben gefährde"* (imperialist-economical, americanizing-calculative spirit, which endangers the German soul), and of the *"weltzivilisatorischen Gleichmäßigkeit als Grundsatz"*<sup>35</sup> (the maxim that all world civilizations are equal), of the *"Sumpf eines rationalistischen Materialismus"* (the morass of a rationalistic materialism), of the danger of *"sich ... restlos technisieren und schließlich entseelen [zu] lassen"* (allowing to get completely mechanized and soulless at the end), of the danger of a *"rationalistischem Bildungswesen"* (rationalistic education system) and of *"technischem Dünkel"*<sup>36</sup> (technical conceit). A result of too quick a change from the agrarian to an industrial nation meant for them *"jene Gewinnsucht und jenen Rückgang an Idealismus, die unser Volk so stark in Besitz nahmen, daß manchem die*

<sup>34</sup> Giannoni (1930), p. 57

<sup>35</sup> Guenther, Konrad (1928): *Die Natur als Urquell deutscher Volkskraft*, in: *Die Kommanden*, ser. 3, pp. 626f. In the remarks of Guenther are of pantheistic thinking and a monistic nature soulfulness. Guenther was professor in zoology at Freiburg and one of the wellknown German authors dedicated to nature protection.

<sup>36</sup> Giannoni (1930), pp. 65f.

<sup>37</sup> Schwenkel (1929), p. 143.

*niederdrückende Erkenntnis kam, daß unser Volk gar nicht mehr deutsch sei*" (the addiction to profit and decline in idealism, which took our "Volk" firmly into its grip that it came as a depressing realization to some of them that our "Volk" has stopped to be German). *"Schwer leide [das deutsche] Volk an seiner Natur entfremdung"*<sup>38</sup> (The German "Volk" is suffering deeply from its alienation from nature).

This forceful argumentative combination of "Volkstum", nativeland, landscape and soul resulted in a totalitarian way of thinking among the nature protectors, which immensely promoted their undemocratic attitude, rooted in the critic of civilization and their special German consciousness. Schoenichen's statements are concrete examples of this way of thinking. He said that the *"überlieferten urtümlichen Reste [des] Naturhaften [so weit] wie wirtschaftlich nur irgend tragbar... erhalten bleiben, wenn die deutsche Volksseele nicht krank und siech werden [solle] von jenen Giftstoffen, die das liberalistisch-marxistische Zeitalter ihr einflößt"*<sup>39</sup> (handed down traditional remains of naturalness should be preserved as long as it is economically acceptable ... in order to prevent the German "Volksseele" [soul] to become sick and invalid of the poisonous stuff, which the liberalistic-marxistic era is filling into it), and that several of the sick big cities *"in den verflorbenen Jahrzehnten der hauptsächlichliche Herd des furchtbaren völkischen Zersetzungs-vorganges gewesen [seien]"*<sup>40</sup> (have been in the past decades the main seat of this terrible decay of the people). Even anti-semitic comments had to emphasize the argumentation. Schoenichen spoke of *"mancherlei architektonischen Verirrungen, die geistig nicht ganz normale Künstler der hinter uns liegenden jüdisch-demokratischen Zeit des Zwischenreiches uns beschert haben"*<sup>41</sup> (a number of architectural aberrations which eccentric and abnormal artists of the Jewish democratic era between the two "Reichs" have bestowed upon us). In an extremely far fetched argumentation referring to the Genesis, Schwenkel denied the Jews any kind of relationship to nature protection at all. He compared the mosaic thinking of total control over nature to the nordic educated man in tune with nature who observes nature with respect, without being aware of his accusing christians of subjugation of nature indirectly by this statement.<sup>42</sup> Such remarks should be still more embarrassing as Klose the later director of the "Reichsstelle für Naturschutz" and close friend of Schwenkel - had a Jewish grandfather.

<sup>38</sup> Guenther (1928), pp. 626f.

<sup>39</sup> Schoenichen, Walter (1933): Address delivered on the occasion of the firstmeeting of the "Reichsbund Volkstum u. Heimat" from 5. until 8. Oct. 1933, in: Nachrichtenblatt für Naturdenkmalpflege, ser. 11, pp. 8f., here: p. 8.

<sup>40</sup> Ders. (1939): Biologie der Landschaft, Neudamm/Berlin, p. 93.

<sup>41</sup> Op.cit, p. 91.

<sup>42</sup> Schwenkel, Hans (1937): Presse u. Naturschutz. Lecture given in the presence of the editors of the press in Württemberg, in: Naturschutz, ser. 18, pp. 117-122, here: p. 117.

The mental proximity of the nature protectors to national socialism with its strong components of "völkisch"-nationalism, pessimism with regard to civilization, and antisemitism also proved to be much influenced by social darwinism, racial hygiene and lastly by the "organic" thoughts.<sup>43</sup> Their study of natural sciences reached back to the turn of the century at a time when Ernst Haeckel's ideas got broad acceptance. Schoenichen and Schwenkel were both deeply influenced by Darwin's Evolution Theory and by an understanding of nature that helped them *"zu einem richtigen Verständnis des Menschen bzw. der menschlichen Gesellschaft überhaupt"*<sup>44</sup> (to a better understanding of the human being, and the human society). Since *"Organismus... eine Harmonie der Teile mit der Idee des Ganzen [sei, müsse] als solch ein Organismus ... das Deutschtum in uns einziehen, um mit dem eigenen Organismus lebendig zu verwachsen"* (organism ... is to be defined as harmony of various parts but with an idea of totality, the "Deutschtum" [Germanism] must move into us as an organism that grows together with our own organism). *"Ein deutscher Nährboden [lasse] Gewinnsucht und materielle Gesinnung [und die den Deutschen] fremde Art ganz von selbst an Kraft verlieren"*<sup>45</sup> (A fertile German ground does not allow greed for profit, materialistic convictions, and all sorts of foreign ways alien to Germans), what in the opinion of nature protectors was achieved by the German native land itself. Consequently the countryside should give *"den Eindruck ... eines organischen, harmonischen Ganzen als dem Abbild einer Volksgemeinschaft"*<sup>46</sup> (the impression ... of an organic and harmonious totality as an illustration of a community of the people). In the face of what they considered a danger that the German "Volk's" energy would suffer from degenerated elements it would be a necessity to withdraw the worthy women of clean racial hygiene from the professional life, in order to enable them to fully concentrate on their real function of *"hochwertiges Keimplasma von Geschlecht zu Geschlecht weiterzuleiten"*<sup>47</sup> (transmitting the high-graded plasma germ from generation to generation). The above mentioned

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<sup>43</sup> The so-called "organicism" was rooted in the romanticism and nature, theoretically influenced organism conception of Schelling, Savigny, Adam Müller and Heinrich Leo, which was understood by them differently to the "Aufklärung" (enlightenment) idea of law that emphasized "reason" and "purpose" and to the ideas of the French Revolution which emphasized the mechanical State and civil individualism. They considered the State metaphysically as a totality of an absolute spiritual organism and as an organic appearance of the people. This corresponded with the german-romantic conception of "Volkstum", to which an individual being as a part of the whole organism had to subjugate.

<sup>44</sup> Gröning/ Wolschke-Bulmahn (1986), p. 136.

<sup>45</sup> Guenther (1928), pp. 626f.

<sup>46</sup> Schwenkel (1929), p. 142.

<sup>47</sup> Schoenichen (1926) in the second edition of "Methodik u. Technik des naturwissenschaftlichen Unterrichtes", quoted in Moewes, Franz (1936): Walter Schoenichen zum 60. Geburtstag, in: Festschrift zum 60. Geburtstag von Prof. Dr. Walter Schoenichen als Textbeilage zu Naturschutz 7, ser. 17, pp. 3-7, here: p. 4.

mental proximity of the nature protectors to the National Socialism was of advantage for the latter which they exploited accordingly for their ideology. Above all it was Schoenichen after the "Machtergreifung" - as director of the "Staatliche Stelle für Naturdenkmalpflege" in Berlin and in this function the greatest nature protection authority - who in his numerous articles and public speeches expressed the great expectations and hopes in the new government.<sup>48</sup> It therefore was by no means the outflow of an opportunistic thinking when the nature protectors considered their task as part to bring about national socialist reality. Since both, nature protection and national socialism were considered to be "angewandte Biologie" (applied biology), "*Naturschutz ... nichts anderes als die Anwendung nationalsozialistischen Gedankengutes auf einen Sonderfall*"<sup>49</sup> (and nature protection ... nothing else but an application of national socialist thoughts of a special case), the engagement of the nature protectors for the protection of nature is to be seen "*als Teil unseres großen nationalsozialistischen Wollens*"<sup>50</sup> (as a part of our greater national socialist will). For them it was certain that nature protection would be given due attention inspite of the sacrifices that had to be made for the interests of economy, for this was guaranteed in the "*Persönlichkeit des Führers und seiner Mitarbeiter ... in ihrer heimatgebundenen Festigkeit, aber ebenso die nationalsozialistische Weltanschauung, deren Ziel es ist, eine neue Volksgemeinschaft zu begründen, die fest im Boden der Heimat wurzelt*"<sup>51</sup> (person of the Führer and his cooperators in their devotion to nature, and too in the national socialist "Weltanschauung" aimed to establish a new people's community which is firmly rooted to the native land). After the "Machtergreifung" in 1933, Klose made them announce that "*mancherlei günstige Äußerungen und Anzeichen erweisen, daß ... das nationale und sozialistische Deutschland den Belangen des Heimat- und Naturschutzes in wesentlich anderem Maße Rechnung zu tragen gewillt ist, als dies zu irgendeiner früheren Zeit geschah*" (several favourable comments prove and there are signs that ... national and socialist Germany is ready to take the concerns of native land and nature protection much more serious than had ever happened at any other time). The nature protection circle Berlin-Brandenburg cherished "*das unbedingte Vertrauen, daß die von Reichskanzler Adolf Hitler geführten nationalen Regierungen den Ruf der Heimat hören und die Mitarbeit des Heimat- und Naturschutzes planmäßig in den Dienst des deutschen Wiederaufbaues zu stellen wissen werden*" (the absolute trust, that the national

<sup>48</sup> Refers to Schoenichen (1933) u. *ibid.* (1934): *Vom Naturschutz im neuen Staat*. Lecture given at the "Naturschutzwoche" in Berchtesgaden on Aug. 20, 1934, in: *Naturschutz*, ser. 16, pp. 2-4.

<sup>49</sup> Schwenkel, Hans (1936): *Biologisches Denken und Naturschutz*, in: *Laudatio* edition for the 60. anniversary of Prof. Dr. Walter Schoenichen, pp. 9-11, here: p. 11.

<sup>50</sup> Lahn, Arthur (1941): *Naturschutz! - Und Du?*, in: *Der Märkische Naturschutz* 46, pp. 381-389, here: p. 384.

<sup>51</sup> Schoenichen (1934), S. 3f.

government led by the Reichs Chancellor Adolf Hitler will hear the call of the native land and will be ready to cooperate systematically with the nativeland and nature protection in the rebuilding of the German nation). He therefore will be "*mit all seinen Organisationen freudig bereit* [sein]"<sup>52</sup> (prepared for action, together with the entire organisation).

The hopes of the nature protectors did they find fulfillment in the "Third Reich"? Very soon disillusionment set in among them. Though, the "Reichsnaturschutzgesetz" - passed on the 26th of June in 1935, and welcomed everywhere - came into force with its "Durchführungsverordnung" (rules of execution) standardizing the German nature protection law and administration (not to be forgotten that until the enforcement of the "Bundesnaturschutzgesetz" in 1976 the "Reichsnaturschutzgesetz" continued to be in force), however, through it the nature protection did certainly not get any further advantage in comparison to the Weimar law and administration.

Some data will illustrate this: While in 1931 Prussia had 300 and in 1933 400 nature protected areas, in 1937 the approximate number was 35 and in 1940/44 about 135.<sup>53</sup> Not an outstanding record for nature protection in the Third Reich. Furthermore it is interesting to note that the budget plan for the "Reichsstelle für Raumordnung" was approximately 35 times higher than that of the "Reichsstelle für Naturschutz!"<sup>54</sup> All the work concerning nature protection was done by honorary commissioners of nature protection. Their alleviation, however, was never seriously considered because it would have implied more costs. The lack of commitment was also clearly visible in the little interest shown by the communal authorities. During times of National Socialism communal authorities too often showed a total lack of interest in the financial support of the commissioners. Quite often the commissioners got shameful small amounts or no support at all, what meant for some of them to miss their important yearly meetings, as even their travel expenses were withheld.<sup>55</sup>

One of the greatest challenges for nature protection in National Socialism were the so called "Landeskulturarbeiten" implemented extensively from 1934 onwards. The "Freiwillige Arbeitsdienst" respectively "Reichsarbeitsdienst" dedicated themselves mainly to the service of agriculture: e.g the erection of

<sup>52</sup> Klose, Hans (1933): *Heimatschutz im nationalen Deutschland*, in: *Naturdenkmalpflege u. Naturschutz in Berlin u. Brandenburg* 17, pp. 205, 207.

<sup>53</sup> The approximate evaluation of the number of nature protected areas in Prussia 1937 and 1940/44 and the exact number in 1931 and 1933 have been determined or taken from: Schoenichen (1931), p. 155; Klose, Hans (1944): *Von unserer Arbeit während des Krieges u. über Nachkriegsaufgaben*, in: *Naturschutz*, ser. 25, pp. 2-5, here: p. 4; idem (1957): *50 Jahre staatlicher Naturschutz*, Giessen, p. 32, 35; Eberts, Heinrich (1937): *Introducing lecture in Wiesbaden on the occasion of a voyage on the river Rhine on Oct. 4, 1937*, in: *Naturschutz*, ser. 18, pp. 247f., here: p. 248.

<sup>54</sup> Data from Gröning/ Wolschke-Bulmahn (1986), pp. 187f.

<sup>55</sup> Schwenkel, Hans (1940): *Die Aufgaben der Naturschutzstellen*, in: *Naturschutz*, ser. 21, pp. 13-17, here: p. 16f.; Klose, Hans (1939): *Naturschutz als Selbstverständlichkeit*, in: *Naturschutz*, ser. 20, pp. 1-4, here: p. 3.

dams, the measures to secure embankments, the drainage work, the cleaning up of the fields and the afforestation in 1935/36 solely to an intensive management of approximate 300.000 hectares of fertile land. The increased productivity profit achieved was 21 Million RM.<sup>56</sup> This "struggle for self-sufficiency" began in 1934, and was aimed to obtain at least a partial self-sufficiency in food-stock for the German "Reich", and was integrated in the Four-Year-Plan of 1936, as the progress of re-armament and the independence of the Reich in case of war would be endangered by any failure in the production of food. A total of 978 Million RM were spent from 1934 to 1937 for the national cultivation works of the countryside, and an output increase was achieved of indirectly approximate 250.000 hectares new cultivated land, or solely in 1937 an area of 270.000 hectares was developed to produce maximum output.<sup>57</sup> The Four-Year-Plan foresaw 1 billion RM for the promotion of the "Landeskulturarbeiten" from 1937 to 1940, which was to help to improve a total of 2 million hectares, and, above all, to clear-up the fields and transform the (ecological valuable) wet meadow land into economic high quality arable land and pastures.<sup>58</sup>

The forced melioration of land for agricultural acreage in the "Third Reich" was the main item of exploitation of nature for economical purposes at that time. This violent conflict of the objectives of the "Landeskulturarbeiten" and the interests of nature protection are nowhere mentioned by Göring, the "Reichsforstmeister" and "Reichsjägermeister", who at that time was the top most of the official nature protectors and at the same time commissioner for the Four-Year-Plan. There are no future oriented statements about nature protection delivered to us. The increase of national food-supply was given maximum priority. Since it would have been dangerous to criticise the "Landeskulturarbeiten", the nature protectors were anxious not to give room for doubt about their full consent of the program. They stated that it is "*selbstverständlich [daß] dem großen nationalen Aufforstungswerk [keine] unnötigen Hemmungen auferlegt werden*"<sup>59</sup> (by no means there would be any obstacles for the great afforestation work), "*kein Wort soll gesagt werden*" (no word should be uttered) against the forced development in the transformation of natural land into cultivated land, they spoke about the "*restlos anzuerkennende*

<sup>56</sup> Tholens, Hermann (1937): *Der Arbeitsdienst im deutschen Landeskulturwerk*, in: *Raumforschung u. Raumordnung*, ser. 1, pp. 181-187, here: p. 184-186.

<sup>57</sup> Schm. (1938): *Short report on the business report for 1937 of the "Reichsverband der Wasser- u. Bodenverbände e.V."*, in: *Raumforschung u. Raumordnung*, ser. 2, pp. 376f., here: p. 376; without author (1937): *Erweiterung des deutschen Lebensraumes durch Landeskulturmaßnahmen*, in: *Raumforschung u. Raumordnung*, ser. 1, pp. 280f., here: p. 280.

<sup>58</sup> Göring, Hermann (1937): *Speech in the presence of the leaders of the "Reichsnährstandes" from 23. March 1937 (extract)*, in: *Deutsche Landeskulturzeitung*, ser. 6, pp. 130-132, here: p. 130; Geith, R. (1937): *Reichsbeihilfe bei Grünlandumbruch u. Grünlandverbesserung*, in: *Op.cit*, pp. 101f., here: p. 101.

<sup>59</sup> Schoenichen, Walter (1934a): *Ödlandaufforstung? - Jawohl! Aber mit Bedacht!*, in: *Naturschutz*, ser. 15, pp. 78-82, here: p. 80.

*Erzeugungsschlacht*" (the production battle to be fully acknowledged) and about the, by no means, anti-economical Nature Protection Law.<sup>60</sup> Consequently the nature protectors were forced to support this loss to nature protection on the one hand, while on the other hand, however, they were willing to do it. In principle they recognized the necessity of the national cultivation work, and therefore a significant interference in the landscape was necessary, moreover, with these measures the extremely acute problems of unemployment and economical misery were to be alleviated.<sup>61</sup> From the very beginning they pleaded for a close cooperation with the administrative authorities, who were planning and implementing the interference in nature, in order to extract from them some compromises, and to save some of the nature protected areas.<sup>62</sup> The stand of the nature protectors was marked with pragmatism, which was characterized by the principles of concession, compromise, balance and cooperation, and by that they contributed to forward the economy boom, and, at the same time and as a result, they were responsible for the exploitation of nature. Their "vaterländischer" German-nationalistic conservatism, which had influenced the political conviction of a larger part of the educated middle-classes since the Wimpelminian Empire, did not allow them to question the authoritarian State and its economic policies.

So, on principle, they avoided to discuss the conflict between economy and ecology. Instead they rekindled the idea of the "völkisch"-romantic value complex, pointing out, that a one-sided economic efficiency would violently shake "*die Lebensgrundlage aller deutschen Gesinnung und aller deutschen Kultur*" (the life basis of every German thinking and every German culture) and which would mean "*für den nationalsozialistischen Staat*" (for the national socialist state) an unacceptable "*Fehlenergebnis*"<sup>63</sup> (erroneous outcome).

Finally, it might be interesting to start the question, how far reaching was the openness of the NS-politicians towards matters of nature protection, taking in consideration that the neo-romantic movements for renewal, from which the nature and nativeland protection movement originated, and the NS-movement have partly the same historical roots. To this question there is no general answer. Politicians who were adherents to agro-romanticism, tended to have a

<sup>60</sup> Klose, Hans (1937): *Naturschutz u. Landeskultur*. Lecture held in a advisory board for leaders of the "Verband Deutscher Landeskulturgenossenschaften" on 5. Febr. 1937, in: *Deutsche Landeskulturzeitung*, ser. 6, pp. 43-48, here: pp. 44—46.

<sup>61</sup> *Op.cit.*, p. 46; Schwenkel, Hans (1933): *Was für Aufgaben hat der Heimatschutz in heutiger Zeit?*, in: *Naturschutz*, ser. 14, pp. 121-123, here: p. 122; Schoenichen, Walter (1933a): *Appell der deutschen Landschaft an den Arbeitsdienst*, in: *Naturschutz*, ser. 14, pp. 145-149, here: p. 145.

<sup>62</sup> 63.*Op.cit.*, p. 145, 149; idem (1934a), pp. 79-82; idem (1934b): *Landschaftsgestalter an die Front*, in: *Op.cit.*, p. 93; idem (1937): *Naturschutz u. Landschaftspflege als Planungsaufgaben*, in: *Raumforschung u. Raumordnung*, ser. 1, pp. 194—197, here: p. 196; Schwenkel (1933), p. 122; ders. (1934): *Warum brauchen wir Naturschutzgebiete?*, in: *Naturschutz*, ser. 15, pp. 171-177, here: pp. 175, 177; Klose (1937), p. 48.

<sup>63</sup> Schoenichen (1934b), p. 94.

positive attitude towards nature protection: e.g. Rosenberg, Darre, Himmler and Hess. Hess was a follower to the biologically-dynamic cultivation method, his influences, however, were dwindling, and his position in the Third Reich got weaker, like Rosenberg's and Darre's. In his capacity as "Reichsminister" for agriculture Darre enacted a number of exemplary decrees for the nature protection,<sup>64</sup> and he took care of the preservation of the more or less untouched landscape too<sup>65</sup>, however, he tolerated no criticism against the battle to increase the production as such<sup>66</sup> but he was gradually superseded by his state secretary Herbert Backe, who achieved much better results in the increase of food-stock production. Himmler had been a follower of the Artamanen movement and as "Reichskommissar für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums" responsible for the configuration of the countryside in the "deutschen Ostgebiete" (German Eastern Districts). However, he carried his love for animals to perversion; he suggested, for example, the colonizing of storks in the concentration camp of Esterwege<sup>67</sup>, or he ordered to set up nesting possibilities for birds on all the SS and police estates.<sup>68</sup> On the other hand there were politicians like Bormann and Backe who were no nature protectors, and even for the top most official nature protector Hermann Göring the fencing of the bison in Schorfheide was his only interest in this matter.

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<sup>64</sup> Refers to *Der Preuß. Minister f. Landwirtschaft, Domänen u. Forsten* (1933): Decree of July 20, 1933 concerning the "Berücksichtigung des Natur- u. Heimatschutzes bei Kulturbauarbeiten", in: *Nachrichtenblatt f. Naturdenkmalpflege*, ser. 10, p. 69; *der Preuß. Landwirtschaftsminister* (1934): Decree of April 19, 1934 conc. "Berücksichtigung des Natur- u. Heimatschutzes bei Kulturbauarbeiten", in: *Nachrichtenblatt f. Naturdenkmalpflege*, ser. 11, p. 65; *der Reichsminister f. Ernährung u. Landwirtschaft* (1934): Letter of Nov. 14, 1934 conc. "Berücksichtigung des Natur- u. Heimatschutzes bei wasserwirtschaftlichen u. Bodenkulturarbeiten", in: *Nachrichtenblatt f. Naturschutz*, ser. 12, p. 49; *idem* (1937): Decree of Nov. 16 1937 concerning "Berücksichtigung des Naturschutzes bei Meliorationsarbeiten", in: *Nachrichtenblatt f. Naturschutz*, ser. 14, p. 115; *idem*. (1937a): *Reichsumlegungsordnung* of June 16, 1937 *auf Grund des Umlegungsgesetzes* of June 26, 1936, in: *Op. cit.*, pp. 73-75, pp. 73f.; *idem* (1938): Decree of Aug. 19, 1938 conc. *Schaffung von Windschutzanlagen*, in: *Nachrichtenblatt f. Naturschutz*, ser. 15, p. 177; *idem* (1939): Decree of Aug. 16, 1939 conc. *Naturschutz u. Denkmalpflege bei Umlegungen*, in: *Nachrichtenblatt f. Naturschutz*, ser. 16, pp. Ulf.

<sup>65</sup> Todt, Fritz (1935): Letter to Alwin Seifert of 25. 10. 1935 (-BAK, NS 26/1188); Seifert, Alwin (1962): *Ein Leben für die deutsche Landschaft*, Düsseldorf/Köln, pp. 122-124; Klose (1937), p. 46.

<sup>66</sup> Seifert (1962), p. 105.

<sup>67</sup> In: "Das Schwarze Korps" 41 of 12. Dec. 1935, p. 5, taken from Gröning/Wolschke-Bulmahn (1987), p. 30.

<sup>68</sup> Letter of the Reichsführer of the SS dated Sept. 21, 1937 to all the chiefs of the SS-Hauptamt (main office of the SS), Rasse- u. Siedlungshauptamt (main office of race and settling) Central office of the Police, SS administration office and to the leaders of the SS-Totenkopfverbände and concentration camps, printed in Mittelweg 3 (1992), p. 18. Special thanks to Mr. Jochen Wimmer for providing information about this source.

Of considerable importance to me is to state that in the first place the chances for a realization of nature protection - besides having little support among common people in the Third Reich - depended on the objectives of NS-policy, which were directed by Hitler himself and concentrated exclusively on re-armament and the preparation for war, and thus a huge part of economical and ecological resources had to be sacrificed for it.

### 3. Conclusions

Considering the mentioned mental proximity of the nature protectors to the national socialism and the fact that they supported the NS-Regime from the beginning, one may ask about eventual similar developments after the Second World War. Did nature protectors critically evaluate their in part quite fatal role during the Third Reich? They did not, and Andersen's estimation that after 1945 there was no continuity is wrong too, when he states that it was *"nicht zuletzt als Folge des Nationalsozialismus [sei es] zu dem immer wieder propagierten Ausgleich zwischen Natur und Industrie ... auch in der Nachkriegszeit nicht gekommen, [denn] seine Ideologie [habe] die Begriffe Natur und Heimat so weitgehend diffamiert, daß es kaum möglich war, in der politischen Diskussion auf sie zurückzugreifen. [Zugleich hätten] sich die zumeist konservativen Träger einer Industriekritik durch ihre Mitwirkung während der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus desavouiert, so daß auch hierüber keine Kontinuität gegeben [gewesen sei]"*<sup>69</sup> (in the end partly due to National Socialism that the repeatedly propagated balance between nature and industry ... did not come about even after the war time, as its NS-ideology had so markedly defamed the words nature and "Heimat" (native land), that it was more or less impossible to mention them during political discussions. At the same time the critics of industry, in general of conservative views, had discredited themselves due to their close concurrence with National Socialism, so that even here no continuity was existent). There was an evident organizational and personal continuity in the person of the director of the "Reichsstelle für Naturschutz" Klose who became director of the "Zentralstelle für Naturschutz und Landschaftspflege" in 1949, and in the yearly meetings of the "Arbeitsgemeinschaft deutscher Beauftragter für Naturschutz und Landschaftspflege" in 1947. But since Klose had not been a party member and the few remaining notable nature protectors were indispensable for nature protection work, it is more important to investigate to what extent they have concerned themselves after 1945 with the role of nature protection during the

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<sup>69</sup> Andersen, Arne (1987): Heimatschutz. Die bürgerliche Naturschutzbewegung, in: Brügge-meier, Franz-Josef/Rommelspacher, Thomas (Hrsg.), Besiegte Natur. Geschichte der Umwelt im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, München, pp. 143-157, here: p. 156f.

"Third Reich". This, however, they never did. Rather dubious is the "völkisch"-romantic stance of the nature protectors, which hardly changed, and was expressed in a number of articles in the magazine "Naturschutz und Landschaftspflege" and elsewhere. They just took care that no direct National Socialist vocabulary and reference was used. So for example "*alle noch nicht im Mammonismus Versumpften . . . dazu berufen, dem brutal vordringenden Materialismus die Stirn zu bieten und Träger - nicht einer überspitzten hohlen Zivilisation, sondern einer echten deutschen Kultur zu sein*"<sup>70</sup> (all who have not yet lost themselves in the marsh of mammon ... are called upon to defy the brutally advancing materialism and to propagate against a hollow civilization, and in pro of a genuine German culture). "*Ein Volk ohne Raum wie das deutsche muß um seines Bestandes willen die Forderungen des Naturschutzes ernster ... nehmen als Völker mit unbegrenzten Möglichkeiten wie die Amerikaner ... oder die Russen.*"<sup>71</sup> (Compared to other folk groups like the Americans ... or the Russians with unlimited possibilities, a people with limited space like the Germans for their own survival must take the demands of nature protection more seriously). "*Draußen in der Landschaft lebt die bodenständige Kraft, die zum unüberwindlichen Bollwerk gegen alle Versuche artfremder Überwucherung wurde.*"<sup>72</sup> (In the countryside exists a native energy which is acting as an unconquerable bulwark against any alien overgrowth). In a publication of 1954 Schoenichen shows quite clearly how deeply set his way of thinking was with regard to racial hygiene and racial anthropology and how he let it reflect, even in public.<sup>73</sup> Contrary to what Andersen says, for nature protectors words like "Heimatland" and "Volkstum" had not been in any way discredited, in fact they further used them in their political discussions without embarrassment. Schoenichen's anti-democratic understanding of nature protection, even after 1945, was evident when he stated in his appeal "*bei der Begutachtung von Fragen des Naturschutzes [sollten] alle die von vornherein ausgeschaltet sein, die nach eigenem Geständnis unfähig sind, die Sprache der Natur zu verstehen*"<sup>74</sup> (expert opinions on questions of nature protection should not be permitted of all those persons who by their own confession are unable to understand the language of nature).

Even the "Werkstatt Naturschutzgeschichte"<sup>75</sup> (workshop for the History of Nature Protection) organized in November 1989 by the "Arbeitsgemeinschaft

<sup>70</sup> Schoenichen, Walter (1951): *Wozu noch Natur?*, in: *Naturschutz u. Landschaftspflege* 3/4, ser. 26, pp. 34f., here: p. 34.

<sup>71</sup> Schwenkel, Hans (1951): *Die Lebensnotwendigkeit von Naturschutz u. Landschaftspflege für unsere Zukunft*, in: *Op.cit.*, No. 5/6, pp. 45—48, here: p. 45.

<sup>72</sup> Dittmann, Kurt (1957): *Die Liebe zur Heimat hat gesiegt*, in: *Natur u. Landschaft* 1, ser. 32, pp. 2f., here: p. 3.

<sup>73</sup> Schoenichen, Walter (1954): *Naturschutz, Heimatschutz. Ihre Begründung durch Ernst Rudorff, Hugo Conventz u. ihre Vorläufer*, Stuttgart.

<sup>74</sup> *Idem* (1951), p. 34.

<sup>75</sup> *Arbeitsgemeinschaft beruflicher u. ehrenamtlicher Naturschutz (ABN) (1990): Geschichte des Naturschutzes*. Several articles, in: *Natur u. Landschaft* 3, ser. 65, S. 103-133.

beruflicher und ehrenamtlicher Naturschutz" (ABN), a successive organization of the "Arbeitsgemeinschaft deutscher Beauftragter für Naturschutz und Landschaftspflege", does not give any hint that the ABN was critically discussing the past of the nature protection movement and their concept of nature protection. Though, admittedly, it is quite interesting and important to discuss the work of the founders of the nature protection movement, Ernst Rudorff and Hugo Conventz, and to differentiate the various time phases in the development of nature protection, it would have been much more helpful if, instead, they would have given priority to those problems which are of more burning actuality. What matters in the end is the fact that it had been the technocratic concept of nature protection on the one hand, and on the other hand the opinion based on the romantic-mystic thinking that the human being must submit himself to nature and its laws, what had banished the social dimension in the movement for nature protection.<sup>76</sup> Consequently this helped to make NS-ideology presentable in society and to establish a land preservation concept hostile to mankind (especially in the Eastern areas). Among present-day nature protectors we are still missing similar reflections, as well as their thoughts concerning the question whether such a concept for the protection of nature - moreso during the period of the Third Reich with its special aims and objectives - would not have been a failure from the beginning.

The earlier movement for nature protection had been a movement mainly supported by the middle classes, and had never concerned with social aspects, quite contrary to the proletarian movement.<sup>77</sup> Their understanding of nature protection even until the 70's was primarily technocratic and apolitical, and to achieve their objectives they tried to follow the legislative-administrative rules of every political system - democratic or totalitarian - and to cooperate with it. The local population's interests in nature protecting measures were but marginally considered. At present this tendency is still evident in reports and plans of experts, who describe the physical parameters as climate and soil as well as flora and fauna, but almost no information is given about the economical and social aspects of the population of a region or place. In this respect a change - though not everywhere - was first noted in the 80's, when the movement for nature protection in its associations' activities allowed questions regarding the technical environmental protection as well as economical questions to be touched.

Though the civil nature protection movement in its cooperation with the State - regardless to its governmental form - was inevitably pragmatic; an immanent part of its societal image even after World War II was its point of

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<sup>76</sup> Refers to the statements of Gröning/Wolschke-Bulmahn (1986), pp. 135-177, here, however, there exist few examples for a convincing definition of the concept of social-oriented nature protection.

<sup>77</sup> See Zimmer, Jochen (1987): *Soziales Wandern. Zur proletarischen Naturaneignung*, in: Brüggemeier/ Rommelspacher, pp. 158-167 and Wolschke-Bulmahn (1990).

view regarding man-nature-relationship, which for them was apolitical and mystical romantic where the human factor was considered a disruptive item. The anti-democratic comprehension of society and the romantic appreciation of nature together with a mystification of nature where there was no acceptance of the fact that the social processes are the result of concrete societal conflicts which mixed up in a sort of union.

There are two more aspects to be classified under the same context which essentially determined the current discussion on nature protection: The question about the so-called "ecological ethics" and the "anthropocentric" debate. Meanwhile in the face of a global environmental problem, which threatens the biological equilibrium of the earth, it is questionable, whether measures can be taken in time, which are the result of a democratic decision making process. The demand of our time is a process of rethinking, an individual development of awareness which should take place through education, changed standards of values and in the end through a different kind of ethics.<sup>78</sup> There will be no one to contradict the fact that basic conditions for the preservation or reconstruction of the ecological balance on earth is a reconsideration, individually and collectively, and a changed standard of values which means the drastic reduction in consumption and the realization that other living creatures are not just resources for production. For several theologians and philosophers a social discourse and as its result the societal consensus is the precondition and the starting point<sup>79</sup> To obtain this, however, will be a problem, as long as the "ecological ethics" is spoken of in general, without a clear specification.<sup>80</sup> "Ecological ethics" used in such occasion brings problems: In the first place, the word "ecology" as a term taken from natural sciences and used in this context evidently serves the purpose to determine the ecological facts for a decision-making process, not needing any further social discussion as natural scientific facts are considered an authority on its own which need not be questioned. We have seen already how during the Third Reich the scientifically legitimized biological and race-hygienic arguments of the nature protectors were accepted without any criticism, and in fact were actively supported. The supposed objectivity of the natural sciences quite often mislead the ecologists and biologists to propagate ecology as a social model,<sup>81</sup> not taking in

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<sup>78</sup> Refers to publications among others of Erdmann, Karl-Heinz (1992): *Perspektiven menschlichen Handelns: Umwelt u. Ethik*, Berlin/Heidelberg with numerous contributions of on philosophical and theological subjects etc.

<sup>79</sup> Op.cit.

<sup>80</sup> See Wolschke-Bulmann (1990), p. 238.

<sup>81</sup> This gets clear especially when the nature protection has to be substantiated. Until today the nature protectors have not been able to explain why certain rare plants and animals have to be protected. The more there are convincing arguments in the general discussion (biological equilibrium, bio-indicators, bio-genetic potential, aesthetic, ethic), the more often the nature protectors, e.g. to get an area declared as nature protected, just mention that in this particular area this and that animal and plant which

consideration that by doing it a kind of systematic constraint is built up from which people could hardly free themselves. The ecological policy must not become the *"autoritative Domäne naturwissenschaftlicher Experten"* (authoritative domain of natural sciences experts) *"und auf diese Weise demokratischen Prozessen [entgleiten]"* (and thus get lost to the grip of democratic processes), as there are the environmental norms which are negotiated in social processes, and *"die historische Wirksamkeit ökologischer Sachverhalte ist stets an sozialgeschichtliche Kontexte gebunden"*<sup>82</sup> (the historical effectiveness of ecological facts is depending on the social-historical contexts). For this instance the Third Reich is an obvious example. Protecting nature "from within" promotes an undemocratic way of thinking, which excludes the people from matters of nature protection.

There is, however, another reason why the thought of "ecological ethics" appears problematic. The one who equates ecological facts with social necessities is liable to come to "einem naturalistischen Fehlschluß"<sup>83</sup> (an erroneous naturalistic conclusion), as he infers from "to be" to "should be", which since the beginning of the new conception of the world is not possible anymore, if not by falling back into popular-science philosophical naturalism. Whereas in the earlier European "order of existence" the relationship between man and his world is interpreted on the background of his primary orientation to god, with the early modern Cartesianism this personal transcendence reference faded away, and man considered himself as a worldly wise subject apart from nature, which became now an "Objekt seines Wollens" (object at his will).

The man of modern age could not longer derive his "Wertordnung" (system of values) from his "Seinsordnung" (order of existence), instead he had to develop it with the help of his own "rational power". As a result the ecologist is depending on the ethicist when new norms of acting of the fellow beings are to be developed, norms which are not based on (ecological) "Teilrationalitäten" (partial rationalities) but on a "Gesamtrationalität" (total rationality), on the "Vernunft" (reason).<sup>84</sup> An important part of the old European as well as modern times "Seinsordnung" was an anthropocentrism, which brings man at the centre of nature and creation and subjugates his fellow creatures according to his own free will. But in 1 Moses 2.15 it is explained that this cannot mean unlimited domination. The increasing exploitation of nature by man, however, cannot be the only result of anthropocentrism (which applies to the christians in the

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is threatened from extinction are to be found, not taking into consideration that these arguments have no socially relevant basis.

<sup>82</sup> Radkau (1993), pp. 101f.

<sup>83</sup> Weiß, Heinrich (1988): Die Anthropozentrik-Debatte zu § 1 Bundesnaturschutzgesetz, in: Berliner Naturschutzblätter 1, ser. 32, pp. 13-19, here: p. 15.

<sup>84</sup> Refers to the explanations of Weiß (1988) and (1988a): Vorbemerkungen zur ökologischen Ethik, in: Berliner Naturschutzblätter 4, ser. 32, pp. 173-180, which define the decisive facts in relation to the debate of nature protection to a definitive way.

occidental christian countries). Several scientists are demanding that anthropocentrism should be substituted by a biocentric or physiocentric way of thinking according to which nature would be protected in itself and for its own self.<sup>85</sup> The debate on anthropocentrism derives special importance by asking, whether the "Bundesnaturschutzgesetz" is anthropocentric too. It has been demanded that the protected object in a nature protection law must be "die Natur an sich und nicht in irgendwelchen Funktionen" (nature in its own self and not in one of its functions).

An ulterior motive for such reflections is the idea that nature should be given an absolute value, in order to obtain an unrefutable general argument, which in future would free nature protectors from the embarrassment of lacking arguments. But in contrast to the basic thought of the human dignity here it is not a matter of "besondere Qualität der Unantastbarkeit im Kernbereich eines Existierenden" (special quality of the unimpeachability in the inner core of the existing), but rather the existence of nature in itself. However, it is not clear, how "nature in itself", nature in its totality can be defined and what role can a similar nature-definition play in the day by day jurisdictional process, since "nature in itself can "weder wahrgenommen noch erkannt und bewertet werden"<sup>86</sup> (neither be perceived nor be recognized and evaluated).

This article, as we hope, will have clarified of what importance it is, in the context of the historical environment research, to investigate the work and manifestations of nature protection in the past and to where it may lead us, if we erase its historical and social dimensions. Here the historian may be helpful in the discussion of nature protection at present, evaluating its actual position, and based on it, forming its path for the future.

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<sup>85</sup> Refers to Weiß (1988) and Baumgartner, Hans Michael (1992): Probleme einer ökologischen Ethik, in: Erdmann (1992), pp. 19-30, which refers to Meyer-Abich (1984): Wege zum Frieden mit der Natur, München/Wien and to Birnbacher (1980) (Hrsg.): Ökologie u. Ethik, Stuttgart.

<sup>86</sup> For the discussion about anthropocentrism in nature protection laws see Weiß (1988), pp. 14, 17.