

*Research Article*

# The ecofascist legacy of the Nazis: historical roots of far-right ecologies

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**Abstract:** Aside from its unique historical path in regard to racism/nationalism and the protection of nature, Germany has also an original character in how it associates these concepts. Observing a concern with environmental protection/sensitiveness and the most terrifying political/racist regime ever witnessed in the same geography, and the establishment of a theoretical interface between the two, is a matter of considerable concern. While it can be concluded that environmentalism and fascism were in a complex alignment, the conclusion drawn after questioning and analyzing the nature of the alignment is rather different. This paper focuses on the environmental history of green ideas in far-right politics through a discussion of the historical ‘legacy’ and development of the fascist ideology and practice, namely the Nazi ideology and political period. Taking into consideration that Germany historically followed a unique path toward the concepts of racism/nationalism, and nature protection/environmental ‘sensitivity’ that reverberated within the Nazi Ecology, both theoretically and in practice, their scrutiny becomes vital if we are to understand the nature of the far-right thinking that leads today’s political parties, ideologies, social movements and political ecologies.

**Keywords:** far right, ecology, ecofascism, Nazi ecology, ecocentrism

## Nazilerin ekofaşist mirası: aşırı sağ ekolojilerin tarihsel kökenleri

**Öz:** Almanya, ırkçılık/milliyetçilik ve doğayı koruma konusunda kendine özgü bir tarihsel yola sahip olmakla kalmayıp, bu kavramları ilişkilendirme konusunda da özgün bir karaktere sahiptir. Aynı coğrafyada hem çevre koruma/duyarlılığının dile getirilmesi ve örgütlenmesi hem de şimdiye kadar tanık olunan belki de en korkunç siyasi/ırkçı deneyimin gözlemlenebilmesi son derece ilgi çekicidir. Dahası, bu ikisi arasında teorik bir ilişki bulunduğuna yönelik verilerin olduğu izlenimi ihtimali de endişe vericidir. Öyle ki, söz konusu deneyim üzerinden hareketle, çevrecilik ve faşizmin karmaşık bir uyum içerisinde olduğu sonucuna varmak ilk bakışta son derece mümkün görünmektedir. Ancak bu uyumun sorgulanması ve analiz edilmesi, farklı bir sonucu işaret etmektedir. Bu çalışma, faşist ideoloji ve pratiğin tarihsel 'miras'ını ve sürecini, yani Nazi ideolojisini ve iktidarını tartışarak, aşırı sağ siyasetteki yeşil fikirlerin çevresel tarihine odaklanmayı amaçlamaktadır. Nazi Ekolojisi tarafından hem teorik hem de pratik anlamda yansıtılan ırkçılık/milliyetçilik ve doğayı koruma/çevresel 'duyarlılık' kavramlarını ilişkilendirme politikalarının irdelenmesi ve ifşası; siyasi partilere, ideolojilere, toplumsal hareketlere ve siyasal ekolojilere yön veren günümüz aşırı sağ düşüncesinin daha iyi anlaşılabilmesi için her zamankinden daha hayati hale gelmektedir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** aşırı sağ, ekoloji, ekofaşizm, Nazi ekolojisi, çevremerkezcilik

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### Introduction

Germany's unique and pioneering approach to the struggle to protect nature and the efforts to address environmental problems that spread around the globe in the second half of the 20th century are of particular note. Based on the steps it has taken in the implementation of renewable energy and its renouncement of nuclear technologies in its efforts to combat climate change and realize adaptation strategies, Germany can be considered one of the leading environmentalist countries, boasting also a strong green movement and an environmental protection-oriented understanding at a political level.

It is particularly noteworthy that the Nazi government, one of the most dramatic and destructive in German – and likely human – history, was

remarkably ahead of its time in matters related to environmental protection when compared to other countries. The Nazi era, however, constitutes an interesting, yet atrocious, situation for environmentalism. Taking into account the existence and extension of arguments regarding the perception and protection of nature, the establishment and activities of environment-oriented NGOs, and the realization of comprehensive political implementations and legal arrangements, the fact that practices and policies regarding environmental sensitivity and protection had been experienced, both theoretically and practically, in the same period as a repressive, racist and fascist perspective and management, necessitates an examination of the Nazi-era to identify possible overlaps between environmental sensitivity and fascism.

The existence of various theoretical intersections between the notions of 'environmentalism' and 'fascism' is worrying at first glance, and it seems sufficiently plausible that a symbiosis of environmentalism and fascism developed in the case of National Socialist Germany. Various examples supporting this can be observed in the fascist doctrine and its political enforcements, although when these similarities and this 'symbiosis' are subjected to deeper analysis, the results are far removed from the initial judgment. Making such an examination, this paper questions and explicates the 'environmentalist' perspective of the Nazi government based on its governing motives, projects and policies, on the axis of ecocentric ethics.

### **Nazi government and environmental policy**

After gaining political and social strength and organizational and ideological capacity during the Weimar Period, the Nazi Party subsequently came to power in 1933, ushering in a 12-year-long period of destruction under the leadership of Adolf Hitler. The concept of Nazi Ecology, which is the focal point of this study, refers both to the political steps taken concerning the environment and the perception of nature and its components in the 12-year reign. There is no doubt that the intellectual and practical origins, the ideological expansions before coming to power, and the articulation with the environmental movement were the main factors on which Nazi ecology was based. After being established based on these elements, the Nazi ecology entered and subsequently dominated the political arena based on the facilitating practices triggered and realized by the enormous power and popular support of the Nazi government.

An examination of the environmental policies of the Nazi Party during its rule reveals certain political projects and legal arrangements that were created based on an environmental doctrine. Such a thorough examination must begin by analyzing the conversion of Blood and Soil mysticism – as the theoretical

ground of the German environmental protection movements – into an official doctrine, after which, the role of environmental ‘sensitivity’ in the Nazi government will be questioned based on its political, economic and social projects, and the supporting legal arrangements.

*The process of becoming the official doctrine of blood and soil mysticism*

It was Richard Walther Darré who joined the Nazi movement in 1930 who first convinced Hitler that the Nazi Party should seek to gain the support of the peasantry and farmers to increase its vote tally in the elections. Following the success of this strategy, he was rapidly promoted within the party and served as Minister of Agriculture between 1933 and 1942 (Bramwell 1985, 86). Although only 38 years old, he succeeded in taking control of all agricultural organizations through his political actions and arguments, and was duly given the title ‘Reich Peasant Leader’ (Frei 1993, 56-57). Darré can thus be considered one of the leading actors in Nazi Ecology considering his efforts both in the dissemination of Blood and Soil propaganda and the agricultural policies of the Nazi party. It is often argued that Darré and his actions were the main catalysts behind the environmental dimension of the Nazi Party (Lekan 2004, 13). It is also polemical and interesting that Anna Bramwell, the writer of Darré’s biography, referred to him as the ‘father of greens’ (Bramwell 1984, 7-13). In another striking claim, it has been suggested that Darré was the driving force behind the Nazi government’s plan to support organic agriculture and land use (Staudenmeier 1995, 19). For all the above reasons, an analysis of Darré, as one of the most prominent theoreticians and practitioners of Nazi Ecology, should be considered vital to any evaluation of the agricultural and environmental policies of the Nazis.

The first and most fundamental theoretical argument put forward by Darré relates to the meaning and importance of the peasantry for the unity of the German race and the Blood and Soil ideology. According to him, peasants are the ‘conveyors’ of Germany’s historical genetic heritage, the source of the youth of the German nation and the backbone of national defense (Dominick III 1992, 94). The importance of the peasantry is derived from the motivation to maintain the existence of the German nation and its cultural heritage. Throughout his career, Darré maintained an interest in the problems of the peasantry, and put forward some solid arguments dealing with the connections between nationalism and rural values. Darré saw the unity of the Blood and Soil ideology as a solution to the protection of the peasantry from racial extinction and national disintegration (Lekan 2004, 162), and so it was Darré who brought legitimacy to the implementation of the Blood and Soil ideology as an official state policy.

One of Darré's main arguments related to the problems of the peasantry concerned the health of the soil, supporting the implementation of organic farming methods. Describing the soil as a living organism, Darré argued that soil degradation disrupted the vital cycle of nature (Bramwell 1985). In parallel with his comments on soil health, Darré was responsible for the inclusion of organic farming methods in the national agricultural policy. With this political move, which he referred to as 'farming according to the laws of life', Darré was able to lead the institutionalization of organic farming and its nationwide dissemination, and became the main actor of the Nazi government's support for agricultural planning via organic farming (Staudenmeier 1995, 19).

Darré, who became one of the most prominent political figures in the Nazi government's environmental wing, put forward some striking insights and arguments related to the impacts of cities and urbanization on rural values, villagers and the national consciousness. Referring to big cities as machines vacuuming the villagers from rural lands, Darré claimed that urbanization was severing the ties between the villagers and the soil, and stated that through the restoration of the unity of Blood and Soil, villagers would reconnect with the land, leading to a rebuilding of national solidarity (Lekan 2004, 160-161).

The phenomenon underlying Darré's arguments related to agriculture, the environment, anti-urbanism, and the problems and values of the peasantry was strikingly related to his belief in the supremacy of the German race. When the subtext of his arguments on matters such as the exaltation of the peasantry and rural values, anti-urbanism, and the emphasis on organic farming and soil health are examined carefully and in detail, it can be seen that they were born out of a racist framework. For example, through his emphasis on healthier soil and the strengthening of the ties between villagers and the land, Darré sought to achieve racial purity and integrity, and so it is clear that Darré's political motivations concerning the protection of the peasantry and peasant values from racial extinction and national deterioration were not based on an environmental consciousness. Further proof of this can be found in one of Darré's arguments about anti-urbanism, in which he claimed that Nordic blood was being polluted by foreign admixtures in the cities, stating that racial purity could only be maintained through the preservation of the peasant farmers and their land. Only in this way could the values of the holy peasants, as the 'reservoirs of the best German blood', and therefore the purity of the German race, be preserved (Dominick III 1992, 95).

Another example of Darré's racist leanings can be seen in his criticism of the modern social order. Darré strongly criticized the opposition and the rejection of racial purity in modern society, and like Hitler, claimed that the policies

supporting environmentally friendly agricultural activities were aimed directly at defending the existence and validity of natural laws and the welfare of villagers (Lekan 2000, 162). Underlying the peasant welfare and unity of the Blood and Soil ideology was the notion that the sacred values and racial purity of the German race were to be preserved, as noted above.

It is thus clear that one of the main figures behind Nazi Ecology proposed, defended and cultivated his arguments, political endeavors and 'sensitivity' related to ecological matters on racist foundations.

### *The interaction between development and environment in Nazi period: The Autobahn Project*

In addition to the incorporation of the Blood and Soil ideology into the political sphere as an official doctrine by the government, it is also of vital importance to analyze the economic development and industrialization policies of the era to question the sincerity of the Nazi Movement in matters related to environmental protection. The Nazi government persistently emphasized the concept of environmental protection and its links to nationalism in its cooperation with environmental organizations, while simultaneously seeking to implement large-scale industrial policies to ensure its economic breakthrough. The fact that the government took matters of environmental protection into account in its industry- and technology-oriented activities is remarkable, and merits deeper analysis.

In this part of the study, the process behind the planning and implementation of the Autobahn (highway) project – one of the most comprehensive development efforts of the Nazi government – will be examined. The reason for choosing this highway project as a case study is related both to the power of National Socialism, and its reverberations within the interactions of development-environmental protection, which reveal the underlying motives.

Fritz Todt and Alwin Seifert, two prominent actors in the Autobahn project, both played very important roles during the industrialization drive, and can also be considered architects of the Nazi Party's commitment to environmental values (Staudenmeier 1995, 20). Todt, selected by Hitler as the chief engineer for the implementation of the project, was an important figure who took environmental sensitivities into account throughout this process. While Todt's ecological principles were in complete harmony with the Völkisch ideology, his professional approach sought the development of technology in harmony with nature and the soil. Just like Darré, Todt integrated his environmental concerns with a Völkisch nationalist perspective, and followed this intellectual direction throughout the Autobahn project (Staudenmeier 1995, 20).

Alwin Seifert, on the other hand, was responsible for the ecological 'design' of the project, which in actuality constituted a major threat to the environment. In 1933, Seifert wrote a report to Todt, the project head, stating that the roads should cause as little damage to the countryside as possible, and that environmental degradation should be minimized. Seifert also called for the prevention of any unnecessary tree felling, building curved rather than straight roads to follow the natural geography of the land, to use appropriate materials and maintain focus on environmental concerns at every stage of the project. Upon receiving the report, Todt visited Seifert to convince him to join the project, and the two established a strong collaboration (Dominick III 1992, 109). Seifert had a personal audience with Hitler with Todt's arrangement, becoming a member of the party in 1937, and being granted the title of honorary professor by Hitler.

Seifert's main responsibility was to harmonize technology and nature in the planning and implementation of the Autobahn project. The outcome of his efforts and his writings on the formation of the Nazi ecology were derived from his influence on the perceptions of technology of environmental conservation groups. In other words, Seifert encouraged these groups 'to anticipate and to attempt to steer the potentially destructive applications of technology' (Dominick III 1992, 110).

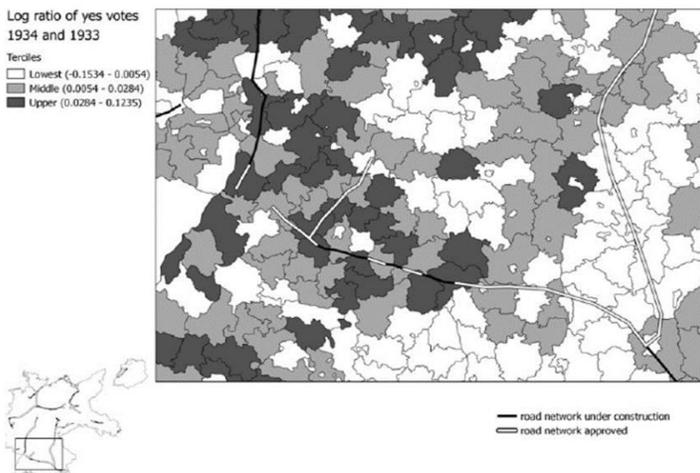
To control the environmental impact of the project, Seifert hired 15 environmental consultants (Lekan 2004, 215), most of whom had been members of active environmental protection organizations back in the Weimar Period, which can be interpreted as a reflection of popular support enjoyed by the Nazi government when it came to ecological matters. It comes as no surprise that just like other figures concerned with Nazi ecology, Seifert – one of the architects of this racially driven project – had very radical and extremist views on race. According to Seifert, in the formation of cultural structures, race is as equally effective as ecology and geography (Lekan 2004, 225). It can thus be understood that Seifert's perspective of the interaction between race, culture and the environment was in line with the content of the project.

In addition to the attempts of the project to balance technology and environmental protection, the emphasis placed on national unity and racial consciousness can also be considered important in understanding the main arguments and characteristics of Nazi ecology. As can be observed from its intellectual origins, the constitution of Nazi ecology's theoretical and practical background was derived simply from a perception of natural unity, the holiness of the German nature and soil thesis, and last but not least, the claims of racial superiority. The emphasis on these arguments in the project in fact reveals the consistency and originality of the Nazi ecology on a racial-environmental basis.

For example, in the project, the first criterion taken into consideration when deciding upon the route of the highway was the importance of the cultural and historical aspects of the region or city, rather than the level of economic development. The roads were planned to pass along lakesides, over mountain slopes and through regions with natural landscapes, allowing all public segments to see and experience the cultural and natural treasures when using the highway. According to the Nazis, German people would thus strengthen their ties with their homeland and develop a racial consciousness (Lekan 2004, 233).

The effects of the highway project on the National Socialist regime and the German economy were also of critical importance in clarifying the perception of the Nazi ecology's political and social dimensions. Aiming to promote the power and vigor of National Socialism and its striking and stimulating role in the recovery of the German economy (Dominick III 1992, 109), the Nazi government considered the project to be one of the most comprehensive and vital political accomplishments in German history, and 'advertised' it as such. The project accelerated the German economy in terms of employment, and notably in the production of vehicles. For example, between 1932 and 1937, approximately 1 million workers were hired, a 5-fold increase in motor vehicle production was achieved and employment in the automotive sector quadrupled. (Overly 1975, 113-115).

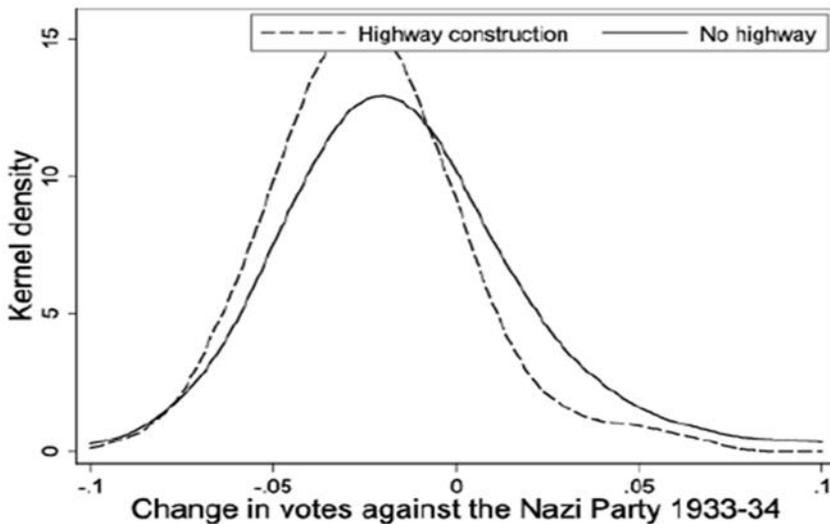
Figure 1: Rise in popularity of the Nazi Party between Nov.1933–Aug. 1934



Source: Voth and Voigtlander 2014.

The impact of these economic indicators on the exponential increase in public support for the Nazi government was undeniable, as can be seen in Figures 1 and 2. The so-called ecological ‘sensitivity’ of the Autobahn project served to garner support from among both the environmental groups and the German people, who had historically characterized the German Blood and Soil ideology in a ‘special’ trait.

Figure 2: Change in votes against the Nazi regime, Nov. 1933–Aug. 1934, conditional on the Autobahn connection.



Source: Voth and Voigtlander 2014.

As can be seen, the highway project, which melded together the main arguments of Nazi ecology and the nation’s historical origins, is directly connected with National Socialist propaganda issues concerning economic growth and employment.

### Nazi ecology and legal arrangements

Undoubtedly, the most groundbreaking advancements of the Nazi period were the legal arrangements made, which were ecologically substantial and enhanced the Party’s association with environmental protection. With the enactment of the Animal Protection Law in 1933 and the Nature Protection Law in 1935, the Nazi government demonstrated its effectiveness also on legal grounds. An analysis of

these two laws is crucial for the identification of any similarities and contradictions of Nazi ecology with the ecocentric approach, and necessitates a thorough questioning of the Nazi government's ethical understanding and the underlying motives of its natural protection perspective.

#### *Animal Protection Law (Reichstierschutzgesetz)*

Signed in November 1933 and entering into effect in February 1934, the Animal Protection Law offers a solid ground for an evaluation of Nazi ecology in action. Although the aim of the law was declared as being to protect the welfare of animals rather than their capacities for human use (Ferry 2000, 143), the first article covered the prohibition of 'unnecessary animal torture or abuse'. Building on this first article, the extent of the 'unnecessary' criteria was explained through some subjective and anthropocentric concepts. According to the law, an animal is being maltreated and tortured if the human action serves no 'reasonable, legitimate branch'.

Similarly, the following provisions of the law reveal the pragmatic perspective of the Nazi ideology. For instance, the very same article that forbids the use of animals for training, filming or exhibitions, or any activities that may cause them pain, permits killing for fur by anesthesia. Moreover, the provision of the law governing the permission to be sought by authorities for the use of animals for transportation or mining reflects the ethical perspective of the Nazi ideology.

The third part of the law, which regulates the use of animals in experiments, contains another clear example of Nazi pragmatism. Despite the prohibition of the use of animals for experiments, as expressed in the related provisions, it would be indirectly permitted under a set of listed exceptions. Accordingly, the use of animals for experiments would be permitted for academic trials by institutes or laboratories upon the granting of permission by the Reich Minister of Interior.

Another problematic aspect of the Animal Protection Law was related to the definition of the hierarchy of animal species based on their 'usefulness'. The law states that prior to conducting experiments with horses, dogs, cats or monkeys, it must be proven that the so-called experiments could not be conducted with another species. This provision thus states an example of anthropocentric perception in defining a certain hierarchy among species regarding their use by human beings.

### *Nature Protection Law (Reichnaturschutzgesetz)*

The most prominent aspect of the Nazi regime was its enactment of the legal framework for the 'protection of nature' in 1935. With the leading effort of the German folk derived from the environmental 'sensitivity' that started to emerge in the second half of the 18th century, the law was welcomed with remarkable support and gratification nationwide, which can be attributed to four major factors (Uekötter 200, 276).

- It was one of the very first examples of environmental protection law;
- It came into being after the poor performance of the Weimar period;
- It had a direct influence on the perception of conservationists towards the Nazi regime regarding their 'pledge' to protect German nature, and
- It met all of the expectations of nature conservationists.

Another decisive impact of the law was its effect on the gaining of popular support for the Nazi regime. With the support of this legal act, the Nazi regime succeeded in transforming the negative public reactions to the Weimar period into solid public support for their legacy (Lekan 2004, 170). As can be observed in the efforts to transform the Blood and Soil mysticism ideology into official doctrine, the Nazis aimed to gain the popular support of the conservationists and factions that emphasized the nation-nature connection in a political sense.

The impact of the law on the cultural sphere was another crucial matter to be underlined. As Oskar Karpa (Lekan 2004, 169) points out, the law was a 'milestone not only in the development of German Heimatschutz ideals but also in the stepwise realization of the National Socialist program'. It can thus be stated that the impact of the law served not only the political sphere but also the cultural agenda of the Nazi ideology.

### *Provisions of the Reich Nature Protection Law*

The first section of the law defines its scope, including plants and non-hunttable animals, natural monuments and their surroundings, and nature reserves. Even though it took a multi-faceted view of nature protection, one sentence, in particular, reveals the fundamental motives behind the legal arrangement, in that the scope of protection does not cover every single member/species, as the beneficiaries of protection are those 'whose preservation is of general interest because of their rarity, beauty or peculiarity, or because of their scientific, native, forest or hunting importance'. Thus, the pragmatic and ethnocentric perspective of the Nazi ecology is once again underlined in the very first provision of the law.

The second provision emphasizes the protection of rare or endangered animal/plant species, while the third and fourth provisions deal with nature reserves and monuments. Provisions 7–10 define the institutional structures that would hold sway at national to local administrative levels, aimed primarily at improving the centralist vision of the Nazi regime. For Dominick III (1992, 107–108) and Clossmann (2005, 31), these provisions had the function of strengthening the central authority of the Reich.

The 18th provision offers another solid example of the underlying motives of the Nazi ideology in legislation related to the protection of nature, providing the Reich with crucial and far-reaching expropriation authority over protected areas through a central agency: the Reich Forest Master. In other words, the Reich obtained an extensive administrative tool through the mediation of nature protection legislation.

By depicting the protection of nature as a civic duty rather than a hobby (Lekan 2004, 16), the Nature Protection Law aided the Nazi government in gaining popular support, especially from environmental NGOs..

### *Exemptions*

The most prominent and obvious provision among all the others is the 6th, which defines exemptions to ‘overcome’ RNG, and divulges the intrinsic intention of the Nazi government’s environmental protection perception (Kuran 2018, 82). According to the 6th provision, all measures and authorizations can be rendered null and void for:

- The Wehrmacht,
- important public roads,
- maritime and inland navigation and
- vital business enterprises.

It can thus be stated that RNG also dictates the pragmatic, extractivist, expansionist and ethnocentric perspective of the Nazi government, even in a legal document that was supposedly enacted to protect the environment.

### *The implementation phase of Nature Protection Law*

Despite its ‘thorough’ and far-reaching image, at first sight, the implementation of the law was less effective and weaker than expected (Ditt 2000, 108), which can be attributed mainly to the economic policies of the Nazis and its huge industrial investments. During the Nazi era, not only the autobahn project and military

activities, but also the reclamation of unused land, both to avoid a repeat of the famine experienced during World War I and to achieve the goal of autarky (Uekötter 2007, 274).

The inefficient operation of nature and the protection offices that were responsible for monitoring the projects and investments in terms of their effect on nature was another factor that rendered the implementation phase ineffective. The fact that the members of those units, which were responsible for implementing the relevant provisions of the law at a national level, 'lacked the necessary political clout', constituted an important problem at this point (Lekan 2004, 207).

An analysis of the budgets of the nature protection offices, which were expected to effectively ensure the implementation of the law, reveals the 'sincerity' of the Nazi government's legislative acts. According to Lekan (2004, 207), while vast financial backing was assigned to infrastructure/superstructure projects, the budgets assigned to the nature protection offices were not enough for them to effectively perform their duties. For this reason, tasks such as the inventorying of ecologically valuable areas, the determination of natural monuments, and the organization of lectures to advise the public about the need to protect the environment were not fulfilled due to a lack of resources. Furthermore, even though the members of the nature protection commission were given the duty of supervising large-scale projects (such as highway projects, opening the land to agriculture), their studies or opinions were not taken into account, as the whole process was intended, ultimately, to 'serve the interests of political power' (Ditt 2000, 178).

In summary, while the law deals with environmental protection in a – relatively – comprehensive and detailed manner, its implementation was lacking. The Nazi government, which was ultimately responsible for the enforcement of the law, made extensive exceptions for military and economic purposes, and violated the fundamental 'protective' logic and provisions of the law in question. For these reasons, it would seem quite reasonable to imply that the emergence and implementation of the Reich Nature Protection Law provides a clear understanding of Nazi ecology (Kuran 2018, 84).

Possibly one of the most substantial outcomes following the enactment of the law – apart from the increase in the amount and number of protected areas and natural monuments – was the increase in public support for the Nazi government. The law was crucial for the Nazi government in transforming the negative public opinion that had arisen as a result of the environmental protection clauses of the Weimar period, which were turned to their advantage for use as propaganda. This situation also helped prevent possible public protests

and criticisms, and the subsequent decline in electoral support, that might be encountered against the large-scale projects carried out for economic development (Lekan 2004, 2005). It can also be stated that the law helped the Nazis disguise their expansionary, repressive and racial policies, and served the Nazi attempts to create a 'unified and authoritarian legal system in the early 1930s' (Clossmann 2005, 31). Thus, the Nature Protection Law, just like other nature-oriented Nazi policies and initiatives, served as propaganda and increased the popular support of the Nazi ideology and power rather than nature protection.

The fact that the law led to a striking increase in the number of nature reserves and national monuments is the clearest evidence of its success in the implementation phase. However, here too, the nature conservation groups and offices that have achieved the acquisition evaluated this issue in terms of racial motives such as ending the alienation of nature and raising the commitment to the German homeland. Thus, it is again apparent that the trigger behind these gains of the law was nourished by the ethnocentric perception.

In addition to the above, an analysis of the limited gains of the law also reveals the Nazi government's choice to prioritize economic development and military goals over the protection of nature, considering the exceptions listed in the 6th provision of the law. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the budgets allocated to the authorized offices were insufficient, and that the obligation that they be consulted was often ignored, meaning that their assessments could not be taken into consideration during the planning of the projects.

Our analysis of the Nature Protection Law in terms of its content and implementation reveals and clarifies the environmental nature of Nazi ecology. It can be stated that the Nazi government developed a comprehensive and relatively satisfactory legal understanding, but favored economic and military goals by excluding them from the scope of the law. In cases where the law prioritized environment protection – on paper – there was a lack of adequate opportunities for implementation, with the emphasis being more on development and Wehrmacht. For all these reasons, the law was never properly implemented, and so the environmental protection motivations were left unsatisfied.

## **Conclusion**

Germany, which has an extraordinary history of environmental protection, holds a distinctive position in terms of its practical and intellectual basis. In the 18th century, the perception of the environment was interpreted uniquely through the creation of an axis between the forests and the national identity and consciousness. This perception, which gained strength through a historical

process, reached its peak in theory and practice under the National Socialist regimes, which also offered a 'fruitful' and rich environment for discussions of far-right ideologies regarding environmental catastrophes.

Although it has a highly intriguing history in environmental protection, the policies and practices of Germany emerged out of a point of nationalistic thought, racial superiority, national renewal, protection of national consciousness, and cultural wealth. The environment as a whole and its entities have been subjected to values falling within the framework of its ethnic, cultural, historical and political discourses, and senses for the German nation. It would, therefore, seem fair to imply that Nazi ecology defines the environment both as an ethnic incentive and based on its benefit to man.

To conclude, the Nazi regime, at first glance, maintained a comprehensive consciousness and 'sincerity' related to environmental protection, but ensured the adoption of an attitude that would not compromise the goals of autarky, development, popular support, and the expansion and strengthening of authority in all policies and practices. In all those steps that constituted the practice of Nazi ecology, the outcome was always in favor of the Nazi regime, which regarded environmental protection as one of its main propaganda tools which historically promised a remarkable potential, in achieving its goals for remaining in power. This 'instrumentalization' of environmental sensibilities and problems promises far-right perspectives huge potential political ammunition in the age of ecological crisis.

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