

**Forestopia:  
The Use of the Forest Landscape in Naturalizing National Socialist Ideologies of  
*Volk, Race, and Lebensraum, 1918-1945***

by

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**A thesis submitted to the Department of Geography  
in conformity with the requirements for the degree of**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how the National Socialists used representations of the forest landscape to naturalize, i.e., make appear as a natural and apolitical given, their vision of the New Order. The first part of the thesis investigates the 19<sup>th</sup>-century foundations of the myth on which the National Socialist propaganda built: the myth that Germans and Germany co-evolved in a special relationship with the forest that goes back to prehistoric times. By uncovering the Romantic construction of the forest myth and the involvement of German foresters in the *völkisch* radicalization of that forest myth in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Part I shows the National Socialist uses of the forest myth to be a continuation of an abiding theme, rather than an aberration unique to the Nazi period. In the second part of this thesis, the uses of the forest myth between 1933 and 1945 are examined in more detail. Over the course of the Third *Reich*, the Nazis used the forest as an analogy for three successive paradigms of *Volk*, Race, and *Lebensraum*, which corresponded to the notions of Germany as an ethnically pure and classless *Volksgemeinschaft*, a peripherally consolidated Greater Germany, and a German colonial empire in Eastern Europe. Using examples taken from German foresters' representations of both German and foreign forest landscapes in books, articles, and other cultural products, the study shows that foresters naturalized those notions and their underlying paradigms in the public discourse, thereby contributing to the racialization of German society and the construction of the Jewish and Slavic 'Other' in the collective imagination of the German people.

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— CHAPTER 1 —  
INTRODUCTION

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Germany without forests will be Germany no longer.

Poet and Publicist Ernst Moritz Arndt, 1815<sup>1</sup>

Forest, *Heimat* and Fatherland are one to the Germans.

Professor of Forestry Karl Rebel, 1934<sup>2</sup>

Save the forest – or there will be a revolution!

Professor of Forestry Rolf Zundel, 1984<sup>3</sup>

One of the more flattering cultural stereotypes about Germans is that they have an intimate, if not to say spiritual bond with the forest, often called *Waldgesinnung* or ‘forest-mindedness’.<sup>4</sup> Unlike most stereotypes, it has been embraced and nurtured by many Germans themselves for almost two centuries. The “forest in the minds of Germans”<sup>5</sup> has strong roots in the Romantic age and spreads its branches into the German cultural canons of music, art, and literature. Since the early 1800s, guardianship over the idealized German forest has been handed from generation to generation, whether in the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich,

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<sup>1</sup> *Das waldlose Germanien wird kein Germanien mehr sein.* (Arndt 1820 (1815), p. 71). Note: All translations are mine, unless noted otherwise.

<sup>2</sup> *Wald, Heimat und Vaterland sind bei den Deutschen eins.* (Rebel 1934, p. 4).

<sup>3</sup> *Appell an alle Politiker und jeden Bürger: Rettet den Wald – oder es gibt eine Revolution!* (Zundel 1984, p. 22).

<sup>4</sup> There are many ‘definitions’ of *Waldgesinnung* which are explicit in their diffuseness: “an innate . . . fervent . . . love for the forest” (Neumann 1936, p. 5); “a national characteristic” (Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, quoted in Schrade 1937, p. 3); a longing that makes “Germans find their true selves only in the mirror of sylvan surroundings” (Rebel 1934, p. 3); or plain “what identifies the German” (Guenther 1932, p. 8). More recently: “the expression of thinking and feeling of large segments of the population towards the forest . . . in which historical influences are so strong that *Waldgesinnung* cannot be explained in terms of today’s conditions alone.” (Leibundgut, 1966, pp. 1-2).

<sup>5</sup> *Der Wald im Kopf der Deutschen.* (Thus the critical poet Hans Magnus Enzensberger in the *Stern Magazin* 28/1983 p. 22).

the poems and novels of Joseph Freiherr von Eichendorff, the operas of Richard Wagner, or the tales of the brothers Grimm, to name but a few cultural icons extolling a supposed ‘Germanness’ of the forest. Similarly, in the realm of forest science, German foresters still proudly consider themselves the direct descendants of those 19<sup>th</sup>-century ‘classical’ German foresters who formulated the principles which to this day form the foundations of sustainable forest management the world over.<sup>6</sup>

Yet, as the quotations above show, the supposed cultural bond of Germans with the forest was also used for the political project of constructing and reinforcing the notion of German national identity. From national rallying symbol during the War of Liberation against

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<sup>6</sup> A note on the use of the term ‘forester’ in this study: the German equivalent of the word ‘forester,’ *Förster*, can denote a variety of functions and positions and thus requires clarification. In general, *Förster* stands for a person working in a public or private forest service at any level above that of a forest labourer. The highest level is that of the ‘administrative forester’ working in the *Forstverwaltung* or ‘forest administration’ (depending on period and jurisdiction called *Forstmeister*, *Oberförster*, *Bezirksförster*, *Forstrat*, *Forstamtsleiter*, or *höherer Forstdienst*). In this study, I am mainly concerned with administrative foresters. Before circa 1800, some of these administrative officials had completed a ‘master’s school’ run by a reputable administrative official, or had gone through a private apprenticeship with one. In most cases, however, noble descent or military merit were considered sufficient qualification for an appointment as administrative forester. After circa 1800, candidates for the administrative positions had to go through a forestry program at a university or a forestry academy, an institution which combined intermediate study and practical training. Most often, administrative foresters were placed in charge of the management of a forest district of several thousand hectares where they supervised between 6 and 20 operational foresters (see below). Other administrative foresters held executive positions in administration, academia, politics, and industry. Administrative foresters in all of those positions published in the disciplinary journals which appeared after circa 1800.

The next lower level is that of operational foresters working in the *Forstbetriebsdienst* or ‘forestry operations’ (called *Förster*, *Revierförster*, *Revierleiter*, *niederer Dienst*, or *gehobener Dienst*). While administrative officials were in charge of the entire district, operational foresters organized and supervised the actual work in the individual forest sections. At first mainly ‘trained on the job’, they went through apprenticeships after circa 1800 and professional colleges after circa 1900. As they are more practically oriented and do not participate as frequently in the professional exchange, I will only occasionally be concerned with the role of operational foresters.

The lowest level is that of forest technician or *Forstwart*, a practical labourer of above-average experience, training or education and thus suitable as foreman of the forest workers (Called *Haumeister*, *Forstwart*, *Forsthüter*, *Forstgehilfe*, or *Forstaufseher*). In this study I will not consider members of the lowest level as they were mainly local hands who were trained on the job and did not participate in the professional exchange at all.

Napoleon, to chauvinist symbol of racial superiority, to 'Green' symbol of a threatened environment, an idealized image of the German forest has been used to invent and represent the German nation. This use of the forest took two distinct forms. Up to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the forest was primarily used to nationalize nature as the forest was signified as the quintessential German landscape. After the year 1900, by contrast, the now 'Germanized' forest was used to naturalize the nation when it was represented as a 'natural' and timeless model for German society and state.<sup>7</sup>

In this study, I examine both uses of the forest. I focus on the period between the fall of the Monarchy in 1918 and the collapse of the 'Third *Reich*'<sup>8</sup> in 1945 as this was a time of particularly intensive and blatantly partisan use of forest imagery for political purposes, during which 'forest' and 'German/Germany' were not only constantly juxtaposed, but were billed as almost synonymous. Countless were the evocations of the German forest as a reminder of lost German greatness, or as an icon of German resilience or superiority – and foresters played a considerable part in inventing and disseminating those evocations. And yet, while the German public considers it a truism that forest imagery played a favourable

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<sup>7</sup> In this study, the term 'naturalization' refers to "the creation of a sense of naturalness" as defined by Zimmer (1998, p. 642). For a detailed exploration of the concepts of 'nationalizing nature' and 'naturalizing the nation,' see Chapter 2. See also Kaufmann 1998; Kaufmann and Zimmer 1998.

<sup>8</sup> The term is derived from the title of a 1923 book by Arthur Moeller van den Bruck (*Das Dritte Reich*, transl. Germany's Third Empire, 1934), who saw the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation as the first *Reich*, the Bismarck or Wilhelmine Empire of 1871-1918 as the Second *Reich* and anticipated a Third *Reich* of the future. (Cf. Stern 1961 for a discussion). The National Socialists temporarily appropriated this popular vision for their state and I use the term here not without being aware of its somewhat problematic origins. It provides a revealing label for the National Socialist period as it suggests the backward orientation and sense of continuity of the National Socialists and thus corrects or at least balances the emphasis on modernism prevailing in most interpretations of Fascism (see Wippermann 1989 for a discussion of the relationship between Fascism and modernization).

role in winning public support for the ‘benign’ goals of 19<sup>th</sup>-century unification, or the fight against acid rain in the 1980s, an all-too familiar veil of silence cloaks the injurious use of forest imagery in nationalistic German propaganda between 1918 and 1945 – and the ignominious role of foresters in this propaganda.<sup>9</sup>

In this study I lift a corner of the veil, revealing the uses and abuses of forest imagery propounded by academically trained foresters during that period. Weaving in and out of concurrent positions in the forest service, in public administration, in academia, and in industry, these foresters not only administered the forest on the ground, but also fabricated the public image of the forest on paper and celluloid. Foresters wrote for their disciplinary journals and books, they scripted early mass media renderings of the forest in radio broadcasts and films, they designed advertisements and expositions, and they made public policy. From the documents penned by foresters, an image of the German forest emerges that is neither innocent nor natural, neither ahistorical nor apolitical. This means that German foresters can no longer be seen as the politically disinterested resource managers of traditional German forest historiography.

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<sup>9</sup> Chapter 3 examines the use of forest imagery during the 19<sup>th</sup> century to provide a base line for the study period 1918-1945. For the uses of forest imagery in the acid rain debate, which lies outside the study period, see Mayer (1986), who argues that acid rain caused a “cultural trauma” in “the German soul.” Niesslein and Essmann (1986) hold that this was the reason why German politicians based their stance on acid rain abatement on public perceptions rather than facts. Boehmer-Christiansen and Skea (1991) in turn surmise that *Waldgesinnung* could thus have been responsible for otherwise unexplainable Anglo-German differences in acid rain policies. The journalist Rudi Holzberger (1995) even goes so far as to call the obsession of the German public with acid rain induced forest die-back a “mass psychosis” caused by a “deliberate staging” of the issue in the media. See also the critical accounts in DER SPIEGEL (*Der Spiegel* 1994) and DIE ZEIT (Grill 1987; and Schuh 1987).

On the contrary, foresters – particularly those of reactionary bent – were responsible for constructing a public image of the forest that rested as much on ideology as it did on science.<sup>10</sup> In so doing, those foresters were not merely responding to pressure by ‘the Nazis’ or ‘the State.’ Rather, reactionary foresters constructed a *völkisch* (folkish) notion of the German forest largely of their own accord and long before 1933.<sup>11</sup> In response to what they perceived as the decline of German society, those foresters developed what I call a “Forestopia,” an organicist blueprint for a new, *völkisch* Germany that was to be modelled on the meta-organism of the forest. Beginning as early as 1910, but increasingly during the troubled years of the Weimar Republic, reactionary foresters suggested in their writings that forestry was not just a science of nature, but just as much a race- and space-based, organic science of community that could be useful for understanding – and reforming – German society.

Thus, by 1933, the notions of both the *völkisch* forest and its presumed analogies with the German people and state were well established through the work of *völkisch* foresters. When those foresters were turning in droves to National Socialism, they brought with them a valuable propaganda tool in the concept of Forestopia. And not only was the forest a valuable vehicle for naturalizing and aestheticizing the National Socialist state, it also was

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<sup>10</sup> There were repeated attempts by left-leaning foresters to use the image of the German forest as an argument for their own political goals. On the whole, however, they were outnumbered and ‘outpublished’ by those foresters of conservative and reactionary convictions. In Chapter 4 I discuss the reasons for this prevalence of conservatism among German foresters.

<sup>11</sup> The term *völkisch* is a Germanization of the word ‘national’ that arose around 1875 and stressed a supposed superiority of the German ‘race’ or ‘blood.’ See Chapter 1 in Mosse 1964 for a discussion.

flexible. Over the twelve years that the 'Thousand-Year *Reich*' was to last, the concept of Forestopia was used in three distinct ways which corresponded to the successive National Socialist paradigms of the New Germany. Thus, during the early years of the Third *Reich*, foresters used the concept of Forestopia to popularize the National Socialist vision of a German *Volksgemeinschaft* or 'national community' when they presented the structure and so-called 'laws' of the *Waldwesen* or 'forest entity' as the obvious organicist model for this imagined community. The German forest was presented as the 'natural' model for the 'New Order' in which a compound entity (*Volk/forest*) would draw its strength from a dynamic balance between symbiosis and 'healthy' competition among its constituting members (citizens/trees). To 'cultivate' the best Germany possible, a centralized state authority was to tend, trim, and thin the individual members of the nation for the transcendent good of the community, in the same way foresters pruned and felled individual trees to ensure the improvement and survival of the forest stand as a whole.

By 1935/36, German foresters had been coopted and coerced into the service of the all-encompassing New Order that they had helped to envisage and bring about. Now they had to follow the lead of the state. Thus, as the National Socialist paradigm for the creation of a New Germany shifted from internal coordination of the *Volksgemeinschaft* to peripheral consolidation of *Großdeutschland* or Greater Germany, foresters' uses of forest imagery changed, too. Now foresters argued that the forest could serve as a spatial indicator of race: if the forest of a region bordering on Germany was akin to the German forest, that region was 'obviously' inhabited by ethnic Germans, simply because the German *Rasse* (race) was the only one able to produce such a 'German' forest. Ergo, that region should become

incorporated into the racially homogeneous Greater Germany which the National Socialists were trying to bring about between 1935 and 1939 by annexing neighbouring territories with German-speaking populations.

When Germany began invading its neighbours in 1939, however, foresters were forced to perform an about-face in their reasoning. Now that German armies stood in lands which never were and never could be claimed as being inhabited by ethnic Germans, the presence of a 'German' forest landscape could no longer serve as a 'natural' indicator of a region's Germanness. Instead, the planting of such a 'German' forest was declared an integral part of 'improving' an erstwhile foreign region into a German landscape, which in turn was seen as a precondition for the successful settlement of Germans in the new *Lebensraum* or 'living space.'

Between 1933 and 1945, German foresters thus created three distinct public images of the forest that corresponded to the successive National Socialist paradigms of *Volk*, *Rasse*, and *Lebensraum* and aided in naturalizing the respective notions of the German nation. In the early years of National Socialist rule, the forest served as an organicist model for the new German *Volksgemeinschaft*; during the middle years, the forest became an indicator of the spatial extent of race; while during the war years, the forest was cast as a means of racializing space into *Lebensraum* fit for German settlement. Together, these three distinct visions of forests and forestry provide a telling example of how landscape works politically on an everyday basis. They were scripted to naturalize the concepts of *Volk*, *Rasse*, and *Lebensraum* in the collective imagination of the German people and to mobilize them for aggression against the 'Other.' In this manner, German foresters implicated the forest

landscape in the practical politics of the National Socialist state, an implication still not acknowledged by most historians of forestry.

Why did foresters do this? I argue that they purposefully used the connotative and naturalizing potential of the forest to expand their disciplinary influence. Sensing the opportunities offered by the radical refashioning of German state and society, foresters tried to obtain a *Reich* Forest Ministry that would free them from their traditional subordination to provincial ministries of agriculture and finance and thus advance their personal and disciplinary standing. Through the socio-biologicistic concept of Forestopia, foresters suggested to the new regime that they had been quintessential National Socialists for a long time, and that they possessed a special expertise that could be valuable in the realization of the New Order. Even after they obtained their ministry in 1934, foresters competed with other disciplines and administrations for influence, funding, and the attention of party and state in general. Before long, foresters were arguing that they should hold jurisdiction over other aspects of the German environment in a 'Superministry' that would place hunting, fishing, nature conservation, and landscape planning under their direction – a plan thwarted only by the exigencies of the war.

It was in the occupied territories, however, that the ambitions of foresters misguided them most disastrously. There, on the 'clean slate' of the lands to the East, foresters saw the opportunity to carve out little empires and create landscapes in which forest planning did not take a back seat to other land uses. For such a privilege, foresters were willing to ally themselves with Heinrich Himmler and his SS.

This, then, is the rationale for yet another study on the Third *Reich*. Just as jurists, medical doctors, planners, and geographers have had to confront their role in the Third *Reich*, so must German foresters.<sup>12</sup> This study takes a first step towards debunking the persisting myth that foresters were an apolitical group who were bullied, co-opted or duped into collaborating with the National Socialists by a handful of fanatics.<sup>13</sup> I argue that foresters were in fact significant political actors, an insight which directly contributes to a – still very rudimentary – critical disciplinary history of 20<sup>th</sup>-century German forestry.

Why has such a history not been attempted? In other words, how is it that forests, foresters, and forestry are still largely regarded as ahistoric and apolitical – even in a contemporary Germany where all things ‘natural’ have come under intense scrutiny by critical Green pressure groups? The reasons are rather unflattering to forestry as an academic discipline. Many young German foresters are simply not interested in issues related to the Third *Reich* – some out of ignorance, others because they refuse to participate in what they ridicule as a collective guilt-obsession with Germany’s Nazi past. But there are also more ominous reasons for this lacuna: more than fifty years after the end of the Third *Reich*, critical inquiry into the German past still bears the stigma of ‘soiling the nest’ and easily

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<sup>12</sup> For example: Müller 1988 (“Terrible Lawyers”); Bastian 1995 (“Terrible Doctors”). For a critical look at the role of landscape planning in Nazi Germany and especially in the occupied East, see the studies by Wolschke (1980) and by Gröning and Wolschke-Bulmahn (1985, 1986; 1987a; and 1987b). On the role of geographers in the Third *Reich*, see the works by Rössler (1987; 1988; 1990), Sandner (1988), and Sandner and Rössler (1994).

<sup>13</sup> Thus the tenor of the studies done by forest historians, e.g., Hasel 1985 and Rubner 1985. For the beginnings of a critical history of foresters and forestry during the Third *Reich*, see Vogel 1989 and 1990.

leads to professional ostracism. Since the forestry profession is relatively small and because chances for foresters to find employment outside the field of forestry are limited, the threat of ostracism bears considerable weight. Considering these factors, it is not surprising that young German foresters are loath to ask critical questions that might reveal the implication of senior colleagues in National Socialism.<sup>14</sup>

Outsiders to the discipline, on the other hand, often lack the expertise to interpret the concepts and terminology employed by foresters and thus feel ill-equipped to investigate foresters' actions. German foresters themselves continue to reinforce this esoteric image by portraying forestry as an art, craft, and science that is practised by a very small, highly specialized elite who conduct their business in a ritualized fashion and in an archaic, opaque language. While engendering an *esprit de corps* among the 'green guild,' such behaviour has also led to a sterile academic isolation in which foresters write for their peers without much concern for, or inspiration from, developments beyond the pale of their own discipline. Consequently, there has been little inclusion of forestry issues in the writings of other disciplines: forestry is perceived to be a somewhat esoteric specialty. As a result, the discipline of forestry is still very much shielded from the scrutiny of critical theory that has reshaped geography and other disciplines in recent decades. German foresters so far have been loath to question the traditional epistemology of forestry, or to examine how, under which sociological conditions, and to which purpose they construct knowledge. Here a

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<sup>14</sup> Recently, several Master's theses at the Department of Forestry at the University of Göttingen have tried to analyze the National Socialist period at the individual forest district level. (See Steinsiek and Rozsnyay 1994, pp. 5-6 for a summary).

critically informed geographical perspective with its integration of natural-scientific and social-scientific approaches suggests ways to open forestry to a dialogue with critical theory. A geographical interpretation of the question of landscape and power with respect to forest and forestry is thus an important step toward opening new perspectives for forestry.

This study benefits geography because the forest is a type of landscape like any other yet it is one that geographers, as self-avowed landscape specialists, have mostly ignored in their studies.<sup>15</sup> Frequently, geographers who study the relationship between the production and maintenance of landscape and power have done so by analyzing settlement patterns and agricultural land uses. This emphasis on the cultural landscape in studies on the relationships of landscape and power has led geographers to see the forest as the opposite, that is, the 'natural' landscape *par excellence*. This often creates a view of the forest as 'waste' from which 'landscape' is wrested bit by bit. I contend that it is time for geographers to acknowledge that the forest in fact is an important part of the cultural landscape, and particularly so in the case of Germany, where the forest has undergone many centuries of alteration while continuing to cover a third of the countryside. By subjecting the German forest landscape to a theoretically informed geographical analysis of landscape and power, I show that it is also very much a political creation, whether it is on the ground, on paper, or in the collective imagination.

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<sup>15</sup> *The Dictionary of Human Geography* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., 2000), for example, devotes only one of its over 900 pages to the headword "forestry." Among the geographers who have written about forests and forestry are Williams (1989) and Cloke *et al.* (1996).

In this study, then, I attempt to connect forestry's backwater with the mainstream current of thinking about the critical re-evaluation of 'nature' that has flooded and fertilized other disciplines in recent decades. Integrating the disciplinary acuity of a trained forester with the broader social-scientific field of vision of a geographer, I focus on a particular expression of the relationship between landscape and power, namely the nexus between the forest landscape and nationalist ideology. By reading foresters' representations of the forest landscape in their contemporary political contexts, I show that German forestry was indeed a deeply political endeavour whose natural-scientific concepts were all-too easily converted into social-scientific norms which could then be abused to naturalize *völkisch* ideology. I deconstruct German foresters' representations of three successive visions of forests and forestry (*Volk*, *Rasse*, and *Lebensraum*) in journal articles, books, films, and other cultural media. These representations contain both factual and symbolic information about the ideas, practices, and contexts of the culture which created it. Reading those representations as landscape 'texts' aids in retrieving those significations and makes them available for a more critical understanding of the role of forestry and foresters in the Third *Reich*. In so doing, I aim to start a dialogue across disciplinary and language barriers between Anglo-American geography and German forestry by introducing each to the untapped, yet arguably germane literatures in the other field.

In Chapter 2, I discuss the literatures that are relevant to such an application of Anglo-American geographical theories of landscape and power to the German forest landscape. At the same time, I place the study in its research context within both forestry and geography.

In Part One of the study proper, I disprove the claim of traditional German forest history that the writings of foresters during the Third *Reich* were an *ad hoc* invention of ‘the Nazis.’ In Chapter 3, I lay bare the extensive historical roots of the nationalist construction of the forest. In particular, I demonstrate how Romantic writers and artists early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century stereotyped the forests of Germany into ‘The German Forest,’ effectively nationalizing nature by scripting the forest as the quintessential German landscape.

In Chapter 4, I examine how and why foresters took until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to join the debates on the cultural and political importance of the forest which were initiated and conducted mainly by poets, artists, and intellectuals. I also suggest why foresters overwhelmingly brought a conservative and even reactionary perspective to those discussions when they finally did.

In Chapter 5, I examine how this conservative perspective became increasingly radicalized into a distinctly *völkisch* viewpoint on the German forest which came to dominate the public discussions in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. I demonstrate how foresters introduced a socio-biological dimension to the discussion by glorifying the forest into what I call “Forestopia,” an organicist blueprint for a new *völkisch* Germany, thus effecting the shift from nationalizing nature to naturalizing the nation.

Together, Chapters 3 through 5 provide the necessary base line for understanding the writings of foresters after 1933 as the continuation of a theme, rather than a product of the ‘new times.’ Indeed, it was the very fact that the concept of Forestopia and its *völkisch* connotations were established well before 1933 that Forestopia could quickly become incorporated into Nazi propaganda: precisely because Forestopia was the result of a long-

standing nationalization of the forest, it could now be used in the naturalization of the nation. The lasting appeal of Forestopia to the National Socialists was that they could point to it as an established example of the 'natural order' they purportedly wanted to re-establish with their policies. Thus, as Part Two of the study will demonstrate, Forestopia remained a constant factor in National Socialist propaganda, even as it was continually adapted to the changing National Socialist ideas of what – and who – should constitute Germany.

In Chapter 6 I show that during the early years of National Socialism, Forestopia was presented mainly as an integrative model for the National Socialist *Volksgemeinschaft* or 'national community.' From Forestopia with its emphasis on the subordination of the individual tree to the greater good of the forest community, Germans were supposed to glean rules for reconceptualizing their own identity as mere subunits of the "total state." To illustrate this point, I examine several of the analogies between German forest and German people/German state which appeared in film, radio, books, periodicals, and speeches of that time. German forestry history, if acknowledging them at all, traditionally has interpreted these analogies as silvicultural treatises with the occasional, if ill-advised, bow to politics. By contrast, I reread these analogies as intentional political statements in the context of foresters' efforts to profitably situate themselves in the New Order.

In Chapter 7 I examine how, during the mid 1930s, the use of Forestopia shifted to defining the boundaries of the *Volksgemeinschaft* against the non-German Other. If a certain area exhibited forest structures or forestry methods in accordance with the stereotypical German forest, the area was held to be German in character. With the help of such arguments, German propaganda claimed areas such as Austria, the Sudetenland, and Alsace

for the Greater German *Reich*. By contrast, if the forests of a region could not be reconciled with the tenets of ‘The German Forest,’ that area was seen to belong to the foreign realms of ‘Slavic’ or ‘*welsch*’ nations.<sup>16</sup> I analyze the ways in which this claim was presented in the forestry literature and contextualize this use of Forestopia as contributing to the heightening racialization of German society that marked the transition of the Third *Reich* from internal consolidation to territorial expansion.

In Chapter 8 I explore how Forestopia became obsolete as a means of identifying the extent of German racial influence on the landscape once Germany had pushed its borders beyond even the most generous interpretation of German ‘ethnic soil.’ Instead, Forestopia was redefined as a blueprint for actively imprinting foreign landscapes with German racial influence and thus transform them into German ‘*Lebensraum*.’ The idealized forest thus mirrored the transition from concerns with spatializing race to attempts at racializing space that marked National Socialist foreign policy in the late 1930s. I analyze the differences between the respective uses of Forestopia in three distinct zones of occupation the Germans erected in the occupied territories from Poland to the Soviet Union, demonstrating that Forestopia was a rhetorical tool for racially stereotyping the populations of those regions and thus defining the German nation through its Slavic Other.

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<sup>16</sup> *Welsch* is a pejorative German term for the Romance peoples that is difficult to translate. It goes back to the Latin “*Volcae*” for a Celtic tribe which was used to collectively describe the Celtic inhabitants of western Europe. After the expulsion of the Celts by the Romans, the term came to denote the Romance populations of Gaul and Italy in particular. In its Germanic derivatives the word furthermore acquired the connotations of ‘foreign, incomprehensible language’ (as in “that’s Welsh to me”) and untrustworthy (as in ‘to welsh/welch’ and ‘welsher/welcher’: to fail to honour or evade an obligation, to swindle). In modern English, the word appears in “Welsh,” “Walloon” and “walnut.” In the context of foresters’ use of the word, *Welsch* stands for a person of French descent who allegedly is untrustworthy, backhanded, and irresponsible.

Foresters played a key role in naturalizing the three successive National Socialist ideas of the German nation by creating, adapting, and disseminating the concept of Forestopia, both in its literary form and in its practical implementation through forest policies. Through foresters' writings on Forestopia we can follow the shift of the National Socialist agenda from early concerns with consolidating internal power, to later attempts at spatializing the extent of 'the German race' and, finally, to dreams of racializing non-German space. In this study, I analyze foresters' representations of both 'German' and 'foreign' forests as contributions of supposedly apolitical 'technical experts' to the racialization of German society. While providing a fresh look at National Socialist propaganda through previously unexamined material, this analysis also serves to refute the view that foresters remained apolitical bystanders during the Third *Reich* or that they merely did their 'national duty.' On the contrary, foresters relished in showcasing the importance of their profession as an opportunity to increase their disciplinary clout. Finally, this re-reading of foresters' writings also provides a chilling example of how landscape representations permeate everyday politics: both the cultural construct of 'The German Forest' and its political expression in the concept of Forestopia demonstrate the inseparability of landscape and power.

— CHAPTER 2 —  
THEORETICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE FOREST AS A POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

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Every mature nation has its symbolic landscapes. They are part of the iconography of nationhood, part of the shared ideas and memories and feelings which bind a people together.

Donald W. Meinig<sup>1</sup>

What men see in Nature is a result of what they have been taught to see.

Marjorie Hope Nicolson<sup>2</sup>

## 2.1 Introduction

This study integrates two previously unconnected disciplines: English-language human geography and German forest history. From the latter, I take the subject of the study: the forest landscape in and around Germany during the 1930s and 1940s. From the former, I draw the methods and theory which I apply to this subject: the critical perspectives on the political dimensions of landscape developed by human geographers over the last two decades. This chapter addresses the question of why such an integration should be attempted and what its benefits to the two disciplines are. At the same time, it assesses prior work within the two disciplines on which such an integration can build. Both objectives are achieved within the framework of a discussion of the relevant literature that places the study in its research context. The scope of this literature is determined by the argument at the heart of this thesis that the National Socialists used representations of the German forest to naturalize their increasingly expansionist visions of the New Germany. The wording of this argument bespeaks the presence of several premises about the political production and consumption of the forest landscape. It is those important premises which this chapter aims

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<sup>1</sup> Meinig 1979, p. 164.

<sup>2</sup> Nicolson 1959, p. 3.

to conceptualize with the help of the literature prior to the empirical examination of the argument in the subsequent chapters.

The first premise we must address is that it is not the physical forest landscape or the trees themselves which form the political message mobilized by the National Socialists; rather, the message is carried by the symbolism that is ascribed to, and recognized in, certain types of trees and forest landscapes. Our first task is thus to query the existing literature on how the symbolism of landscape is produced and consumed.

We then need to substantiate the claim that the symbolism of the forest landscape could serve to manifest National Socialist ideology and thus express political power. To this purpose, we will conceptualize the relationship between landscape, ideology, and power. What enables landscape to serve as a manifestation of ideology? How does landscape express the power structures of a given society? Obversely, how is landscape put to use in the contestation and renegotiation of those power structures? The goal is to clarify the function of landscape as a reciprocal link between political idea and practice.

The third premise contained in the argument is that representations of the forest landscape on paper or in other media are as 'real' and politically efficacious in the minds of their beholders as their counterparts of earth, leaf, and stone. With the help of the geographical literature on landscape and representation, we will establish that this assumption is correct and that representations of the forest landscape are not only 'real' to their beholders, but that they are also valid sources for this study.

Arising from the acceptance of landscape representations as sources is the question of how to analyze them. Drawing on the work of poststructuralist human geographers, I

demonstrate that landscape representations can be conceptualized as texts whose symbolism is accessible to an hermeneutic analysis of both the writing and reading of landscape representations. A second, more fundamental question concerns the goal of such an analysis: what can be learned from 'reading' landscape representations? With Roland Barthes, I argue that the textual analysis of landscape representations aids in deconstructing the mythologizing uses to which they are put by interest groups, thus unmasking them as the deliberate political actions they are.

The last premise inherent in the argument regards the ends of the National Socialist mythologizing of the forest landscape. I claim that the National Socialists mythologized the forest landscape as an analogy of Germany with the intention of naturalizing, i.e., make appear as a 'natural' given, their vision of the New Order. To substantiate this claim, I introduce the complementary processes of 'naturalizing the nation' and 'nationalizing nature' as ways to conceptualize the political utility of landscape to the project of nationalism in general and National Socialism in particular.

Following the unpacking of the conceptual premises, I place the study within the disciplinary contexts of German forest history and English-language human geography. I show that this study adds a unique perspective to the body of work of both disciplines, while at the same time beginning a necessary and fruitful dialogue between the two disciplines and language realms that will further the understanding of the German forest as a political landscape, rather than 'innocent,' apolitical Nature.

## 2.2 Landscape and Symbolism

Over the last two decades, the geographical study of landscape has adopted new perspectives. While previously the interest of geographers was often focussed on explaining past and present material forms of the landscape through an investigation of landscape as “a naïvely given, important section of reality,” a “peculiar geographic association of facts,” or “a portion of the earth’s surface that can be comprehended at a glance,”<sup>3</sup> more recent approaches acknowledge the intangible qualities of landscape. Drawing on such powerful concepts as meaning, sense of place, geographical imagination, and imaginary geographies, these approaches accept non-measurable phenomena as desirable knowledge about landscape.<sup>4</sup>

Underlying these new approaches is the conceptualization of landscape as “a way of seeing the world” in which the beholding human consciousness plays a defining role in the construction of landscape. This view is exemplified in Cosgrove’s assertion that

landscape denotes the external world mediated through subjective human experience in a way that neither region nor area immediately suggest. Landscape is not merely the world we see, it is a construction, a composition of that world. Landscape is a way of seeing the world.<sup>5</sup>

In the context of this study, the concept of landscape symbolism, particularly as it relates to national identity, is of paramount interest. Yet, on account of their ambiguity and breadth,

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<sup>3</sup> Sauer 1963, pp. 316 and 32; Jackson 1984, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> For a review of how the “character of the landscape school in geography . . . has been redefined and debated,” see Baker 1992. For annual progress reports on the role and place of landscape in human geography, see Ley 1981, 1983, and 1985; Rowntree 1986 and 1987; Cosgrove 1989b and 1990; Duncan 1993, 1994, and 1995; as well as Cosgrove and Jackson 1987. The most recent review of “Approaches to Landscape,” ranging from landscape history to the new humanistic geography, can be found in Richard Muir’s book by the same title (Muir 1999).

<sup>5</sup> Cosgrove 1984, p. 13.

defining the constituting concepts of landscape and symbolism separately, i.e., without taking recourse to using one concept in explaining the other, is notoriously difficult. At the same time, it is those very qualities that make them such powerful concepts and have inspired a growing number of studies in which landscapes are examined for their symbolism.<sup>6</sup> Cosgrove and Daniels have elaborated on this inherent interconnection between landscape and symbolism in their definition of landscape:

A landscape is a cultural image, a pictorial way of representing, structuring or symbolising surroundings. This is not to say that landscapes are immaterial. They may be represented in a variety of materials and on many surfaces - in paint on canvas, in writing on paper, in earth, stone, water, and vegetation on the ground. A landscape park is more palpable but no more real, nor less imaginary, than a landscape painting or a poem. Indeed the meanings of verbal, visual and built landscapes have a complex interwoven history. To understand a built landscape, . . . it is usually necessary to understand written and verbal representations of it, not as 'illustrations', images standing outside it, but as constituent images of its meaning or meanings. And of course, every study of a landscape further transforms its meaning, depositing yet another layer of cultural representation.<sup>7</sup>

To Cosgrove and Daniels, then, landscape is a way of symbolizing physical surroundings in a meaningful way. Conversely, it is the symbolism of a landscape that gives it meaning(s) in the mind of the beholder. The logical conclusion is that all landscapes are symbolic as soon as they become perceived by human consciousness which by default imposes certain symbolic categories on the physical elements it perceives. As Cosgrove put it succinctly: "All human landscapes are symbolic."<sup>8</sup> Consequently, in this study, I consider the forest

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<sup>6</sup> Among the many studies that make the symbolic qualities of landscape their focus are: Agnew 1998; Barnes and Duncan 1992; Cosgrove 1984; Cosgrove and Daniels 1988; Daniels 1993; Duncan 1990; Gold and Burgess 1982; Hooson 1994; Lowenthal 1991; Meinig 1979; Olwig 1984; Pringle 1991; Pugh 1990; Schama 1995; Short 1991; Simmons 1993; Squire 1988; Turner 1979. See also Chapter 7 in Muir 1999.

<sup>7</sup> Cosgrove and Daniels 1988, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> (Cosgrove 1982, p. 221). In a 1989 version of this statement, Cosgrove even omitted the qualifier 'human.' (Cosgrove 1989a, p. 125). Meinig expressed the problematic as follows: "Thus we confront the central problem: any landscape is composed not only of what lies before our eyes but what lies within our heads." (Meinig 1979, pp. 33-34).

landscape, both in its material form on the ground and in its cultural representations, to be a symbolic landscape which is given meaning through beholding and interpreting human consciousness.

### **2.3 Landscape, Ideology, and Power**

The conceptualization of landscape as receiving meaning through human consciousness – which obviously varies between people – does not reduce landscape to a passive material site onto which symbolic patterns are inscribed, or a place of meaning to which fixed and immutable values are ascribed. Landscape is not a ‘book’ in which signs and meanings are preserved to be retrieved unchanged at a later date. Rather, as Rowntree and Conkey assert, it is “an explicit cosmology that realizes - not merely reflects - a pattern of power; environmental symbolism is one of the means whereby social identity and reality are created.”<sup>9</sup> More than a site, landscape thus is a recursive and discursive process that continually reflects, reinforces, and reproduces (but also challenges and disrupts) the social and political structures of society. Because these structures reflect and influence who holds power and who does not, landscape is deeply implicated in the vying of interest groups for social control and in the production and reproduction of the social order.<sup>10</sup>

One of the ways in which the social order of a society is given palpable expression is through the structures of landscape, not only in terms of property distribution or access, but also in its symbolic content. Landscape can become a practical means of ensuring the

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<sup>9</sup> Rowntree and Conkey 1980, p. 459.

<sup>10</sup> For a review of studies concerned with the power of and in landscape, see Chapter 5 in Muir 1999.

ubiquity and preeminence of selected cultural symbols such as church spires, for instance. By designing the everyday environment of the population, a powerful interest group can thus supply hegemonic landscape interpretations and make landscape become part of what Barthes calls the “foundation for a collective morality.”<sup>11</sup>

This effect is heightened still if the public interprets the resulting landscape as ‘natural’ rather than the product of historical acts. For example, the continuing presence of extensive, contiguous, state-owned forest tracts in parts of Germany is mainly the result of the creation of hunting preserves by past feudal rulers for their courts which subsequently were transferred to the exchequer. Clearly the result of a planned imposition, this landscape is nonetheless frequently regarded as a reflection of the ‘natural’ structure of the German landscape, as the way it always has been and always should be.<sup>12</sup> As Duncan and Duncan observed, “landscapes tend to naturalize social relations.”<sup>13</sup>

Central to understanding how social relations are negotiated through the instruments of power and landscape is the concept of ideology. Gregory sees ideology simply as “unexamined discourse,”<sup>14</sup> while Anderson is more specific:

At its simplest, ideology refers to systems of ideas which give distorted and partial accounts of reality, with the objective, and often unintended, effect of serving the partial interests of a particular social group or class. Typically they do so by *appearing* to represent the interests of all the various groups in society. . . . Ideologies are not simply personal illusions or a “general climate” of belief, they are

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<sup>11</sup> Barthes 1957 p, 59.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Schama 1993.

<sup>13</sup> Duncan and Duncan 1988, p. 125.

<sup>14</sup> Gregory 1978, p. 2.

*institutionalized. They develop around social institutions, and the ruling class controls these, in widely varying degrees, depending on the institution, the time and the place.*<sup>15</sup>

Fortunately, the ideology of a powerful group, its manifestation in the landscape, and its interpretation through the landscape, are rarely all-engulfing. Nevertheless, as long as the group achieves hegemony over competing groups and subsequently succeeds in imposing its interpretation of the symbolic landscape as the preeminent one, that group is able to use the symbolic content of landscape (and, as we will see shortly, that of its cultural representations) to justify and reinforce social relations in its own interest.<sup>16</sup>

Notwithstanding their salient role in reinforcing existing power structures, landscape representations can also figure prominently in the challenging of such structures by alternating groups. For example, artists, writers, and other influential members of society can sway the cultural tastes of an era and so influence the symbolic perception and consumption of landscape, thus turning previously neglected or despised landscapes into desirable ones – with all the corollary changes in the land value or political clout of the

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<sup>15</sup> (Anderson 1973, p. 1, emphasis in the original). For a review of the interrelationships between ideology and landscape, see Baker 1992.

<sup>16</sup> Schein, for example, in a study on the self-representation of 19<sup>th</sup>-century American city elites through lithographic urban views, describes the hegemonic effect of those printed landscape interpretations as follows: "A major shift in the genre of from 'pictorial' to 'bird's-eye' views" not only captures "the story of an emerging industrial-capitalist order," it also embodies "the place of the individual within that order; and . . . actively legitimat[es]/promot[es] particular visions of change and progress." (Schein 1993, p. 7).

region in which they are located.<sup>17</sup> Landscape is thus intimately connected with culture,<sup>18</sup> a fact that further rules out either a purely idealist or materialist view of landscape.<sup>19</sup>

Landscape, then, stands in dialectical interaction with both intentional actions of individuals and recursively structured ongoing social relations. With that in mind, neither landscapes nor the cultures within which they are produced, maintained, transformed, and interpreted may be regarded as 'natural' or given, as something which can be simply described without reference to ideological systems.<sup>20</sup> Instead, culture and landscape must be acknowledged as inherently ideological and invariably bound up together in a politics of landscape. In the words of James Duncan, landscape is "integral to both the reproduction *and* contestation of political power."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Nicolson (1959) on the aestheticization of mountains and Squire (1988, as well as the subsequent exchange) on Wordsworth's Romanticization of the Lake District.

<sup>18</sup> With Cosgrove, I take culture to stand for "a signification system within an arena of social struggle." (Cosgrove 1992, p. 274). This definition highlights the contestatory character of culture now becoming accepted among cultural geographers. On the problematics of culture and cultural geography, see also Jackson 1989 and Mitchell 2000.

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of the polarity between idealist and materialist approaches, see Cosgrove 1982 and Baker 1992. Samuels attempts to resolve this polarity with his proposition of a "biographical method" that studies "authored landscapes" through the intentions of the individuals who created them. This method, Samuels argues, exposes the mutual interdependence between "the world of the mind and the world of reality" and thus renders the distinction between idealist and materialist modes of explanation moot. (Samuels 1979, p. 69). Although an interesting proposition, the concomitant reliance on an individual creator threatens to undermine Samuels' "biographical method" in light of the more recent advance of poststructuralist notions of the plurality of meanings of texts (and, by extension, landscapes).

<sup>20</sup> The argument that natural landscapes are impossible entities is two-pronged: from the natural science perspective, McKibben for one argues that no point on Earth can now escape the implications of humanity's technological progress: changes in climate, atmospheric composition, and ocean currents have eliminated 'nature' as a category independent of humans. (Cf. McKibben 1989). This is not, however, the meaning of 'natural' I am concerned with here. Rather, I am interested in the 'naturalization' of landscape as outlined below: how landscape is used to establish a 'common-sense' baseline of 'how things have always been' to rationalize and mask as 'natural' what is in fact political.

<sup>21</sup> (Duncan 1990, p. 3). The sociologist Sharon Zukin expresses the role of landscape in similar terms as "a field of impact between authority and resistance." (Zukin 1991, 18).

In this study, then, I hold landscape to be a socially created and negotiated symbolic construct: it is both product and producer of broader social contexts and thus cannot be taken to exist as a neutral, physical given. As landscape is generated and altered by everyday practices, power structures and intellectual paradigms are inscribed into the physical landscape as well as reflected in its symbolism. At the same time, both landscape and its symbolism act back on the erstwhile power structures and intellectual paradigms. Landscape is thus both repository and source of meaning, it is both restraining and enabling, it possesses qualities of both structure and agency.

For a summary of these perspectives we may look to Penning-Rowsell who argues that

*Landscapes . . . carry symbolic meanings that are not so wholly innocent as might at first be thought. Created landscapes can be assertions of power – over nature or over neighbours – and our cognition of landscapes is selective and sometimes deliberately distorted in the pursuit of our own interests. . . .*

*Landscapes may have an ideological function in mystifying rather than revealing: confusing by distortion or other emphases, rather than providing simple and accessible patterns. Thus our ways of seeing and knowing (perception and cognition) are influenced by the social relations inherent in the landscapes we view. Testing this empirically is difficult but historical evidence shows, for example, how 18th-century landscape gardens were created as expressions of political (Whig) dominance. In a similar way grouse moors and farmed landscapes are expressions of capitalist society today, and city landscapes are manipulated to proclaim the loudest social messages.<sup>22</sup>*

Similarly, I contend that the forest landscape – particularly in Europe with its long history of forest exploitation and management – is a cultural product that has individual and intentional producers and that expresses cultural messages which can be interpreted through a reading process.

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<sup>22</sup> Penning-Rowsell 1986, p. 15.

## **2.4 Landscapes 'Real' and Represented**

From the preceding discussions it is evident that landscape is a socially created and negotiated construct that is constantly changing. As landscapes are generated and altered by political decisions and everyday practices, power structures and intellectual paradigms are inscribed into the physical landscape, for example in the form of dikes, enclosures, parks, collective farms, or highways. Logically, these created aspects of the physical landscape can also transmit their symbolic messages of – amongst others – protection, power, wealth, socialism, and modernity to the beholder.

Yet, as the foregoing discussions about the symbolism and power implications of landscape have already indicated, the efficacy of landscape derives not only from its physical manifestation in the environment. As human geographers have increasingly acknowledged, landscape representations on film, paper, canvas, or in any other cultural medium, are often as 'real' to their beholders as are their physical counterparts – as well as having equally 'real' political effects.<sup>23</sup> Mitchell even suggests that landscape can be conceptualized *as* a cultural medium:

**Landscape is a medium in the fullest sense of the word. It is a material 'means' (to borrow Aristotle's terminology) like language or paint, embedded in a tradition of cultural signification and communication, a body of symbolic forms capable of being invoked and reshaped to express meanings and values.<sup>24</sup>**

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<sup>23</sup> Among the recent studies which have taken this position are: Barrell 1980 and 1992; Bermingham 1986; Cosgrove 1984; Herb 1997; Mitchell 1994; Olwig 1984; Rollins 1996; Schein 1993; and Turner 1979.

<sup>24</sup> Mitchell 1994, p. 14.

In the case of imaginary landscapes such as ‘The Orient’, ‘cyberspace’ and the extraterrestrial worlds of science-fiction,<sup>25</sup> this view of landscape as a medium is indeed appropriate, as these notional landscapes have no ‘real-world’ counterparts at all.<sup>26</sup>

When we talk about landscapes affecting the beholder and subsequently informing his or her political, economic, or aesthetic decision-making, we thus have to expand our understanding of landscape to include representations. Since both exhibit the symbolic marks of the culture that generated them, they can be examined for those marks – they are valid sources.<sup>27</sup> This echoes Osborne’s call for a more inclusive approach to the “evidence of past and present societies found in literature,” an approach that acknowledges the literary discourse as containing fact, fiction *and* symbol as equally valid, because equally intentional, vehicles of information.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, the descriptions of forest landscapes by German foresters in their disciplinary journals and books, in propaganda speeches and films, and in administrative memoranda, can be understood as ‘literature’ in the sense that they are intentional amalgamations of varying proportions of fact, fiction, and symbol.

As Cosgrove expresses it more generally:

The kind of evidence that geographers now use for interpreting the symbolism of cultural landscapes is much broader than it has been in the past. Material evidence in the field and cartographic, oral, archival and other documentary sources all remain valuable. But often we find the evidence of

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<sup>25</sup> On landscape and orientalism, see Godlewska 1995 and Gregory 1995. For a discussion of the geography of cyberspace, see Joshua Lepawsky’s recent Master’s thesis as well as his forthcoming article.

<sup>26</sup> In fact, as Said showed in his *Orientalism*, the fictitious landscape of the ‘Orient’ can not only contradict its material counterpart, it can even play a role in the reshaping of the latter. (Cf. Said 1979).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Schein’s argument that lithographic views of 19th-century American towns reveal the values of the society that produced them by reflecting “contemporary notions of space, vision, representation, and power.” (Schein 1993, 21).

<sup>28</sup> Osborne 1988, p. 167.

cultural products themselves – paintings poems, novels, folk tales, music, film and song can provide as firm a handle on the meanings that places and landscapes possess, express and evoke as do more conventional ‘factual’ sources. All such sources present their own advantages and limitations, each requires techniques to be learned if it is to be handled proficiently. Above all, a historical and contextual sensitivity on the part of the geographer is essential. We must resist the temptation to wrench the landscape out of its context of space and time, while yet cultivating our imaginative ability to get ‘under its skin’ to see it, as it were, from the inside.<sup>29</sup>

Drawing on this inclusive approach, I understand both the physical forest landscape and its cultural representations in the writings of German foresters as equally ‘real’ forms of landscape and as equally valid sources of information about the culture that created them. For, while these representations may not necessarily be mimetic reproductions of the physical reality of the forest landscape, they reveal the hegemonic interpretations which German foresters brought to their subject – which in turn allows us insights into a previously unexamined aspect of everyday life in National Socialist Germany. This leads us to the next question: how does one properly ‘read’ landscape representations to access both the intentions of the author and the reception by the reader?

## 2.5 Landscape as Text

Underlying the idea of ‘reading’ the landscape is the text metaphor. The concept of reading landscape *as* text is not new. In 1955, Hoskins skilfully read the English countryside for material signs of its historical evolution. He assumed that the landscape held a message which could be retrieved if only one “could recognise the language. It was a landscape written in a kind of code.”<sup>30</sup> Since then, the assumption that there is ‘a’ message in the

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<sup>29</sup> Cosgrove 1989a, p. 127.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Muir 1999, p. 215.

landscape has been abandoned by many human geographers, who have accepted the possibility of multiple and competing messages expressed by one and the same landscape – messages that depend as much on the reader as on the landscape text.

At the basis of this view is the idea that the act of reading involves a dialogue between a reading consciousness and a landscape text that is read. In the context of this study, there are two levels of readings and texts to be considered. At the primary level, the German foresters writing about German and foreign forests are the reading consciousness, while the forest landscapes they write about in their articles and books are the texts they read. In writing those articles and books, however, the German foresters produce a secondary level of reading. Their writings ‘become’ the forest landscape and are read by the German readership in lieu of the ‘real’ forest. In the consciousness of the German readership of the journal articles and books, the notional forest landscapes in the writings of German foresters thus replace the material forest landscapes of France or Poland. Consequently, the German readership forms its view of the forests of those countries – as well as its opinions about what should be done with them – on the representation, rather than the ‘real’ landscape. In the words of Duncan and Duncan, the representations become landscape texts that “act as a mediating influence, shaping behaviour in the image of the text.”<sup>31</sup> Thus it is not their verisimilitude but their evocative and emotive potential that makes representations of the forest landscape resonant and politically powerful. This potential of forest imagery was realized and used by the National Socialist regime.

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<sup>31</sup> Duncan and Duncan 1988, pp. 120-121.

With their writings, the German foresters created landscape texts which assumed a particular political reality. The question of whether this was done intentionally by the individual foresters, or under pressure from 'the state,' while important for issues of responsibility and redress, is secondary to the goals of this study. Whether German foresters willingly wrote propaganda or were caught in a double hermeneutic ( i.e., altering reality by writing about it), is not asked here. What I want to show is that German foresters, wittingly and willingly or not, supplied landscape texts that contributed to the naturalization of ideological goals which the Nazis had for the territories so described. I demonstrate that foresters' representations of the forest landscape were efficacious in the project of naturalizing the political, i.e., that they helped camouflage the historical contingency of German nationalism. By deconstructing the texts through a careful reading, the underlying ideological goals can be made visible, thus 'denaturalizing' the represented forest landscape and revealing it as a political product. The forest landscape appearing in the writings of German foresters will become visible as part of the social discourse through which the ideologies of German identity and territory were conceptualized and disseminated: they were vehicles for making appear 'natural' such ideas as race, nation, and Germandom.

This study, then, builds on the idea that forest landscapes can be read both *as* and *through* texts. The text metaphor mediates between landscape, representation, and reader because it is not the physical landscape *per se* that informs decision-making by individuals and societies, but the symbolic landscape image that is created in the individual and collective

imaginations through the reading of cultural representations of landscape.<sup>32</sup> The signs which constitute this symbolic imagery, and by which the landscape can be made sense of, form the iconography of landscape. It is those signs which can be read and interpreted in representations of forest landscapes.<sup>33</sup> They are not transparent, however, in the sense that they are neutral and mimetic descriptors of authentic conditions. They may or may not be correct and exhaustive. They may suggest, distort, deny, or exaggerate meanings. We must abandon the notion of textual verisimilitude and instead read forest landscape representations and their signs critically from a perspective informed by poststructuralist literary theory, a point to which I will return presently. By tacking back and forth between narrative, text, and context (that is, between the interpretative framework of a critical history of forestry, the actual texts of forest representations, and the historical context of their creation), we can deconstruct some of the layers of meaning beneath the words and images of the landscape.<sup>34</sup> The idea is not to detect one 'correct' message but to use hermeneutic analysis to understand some of the possible meanings and make them available for discussion and further analysis.

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<sup>32</sup> There are of course many other metaphors through which landscape can be contextualized: landscape as theatre, dance, the tip of an iceberg, a photograph, a spool of film, a poem, an organism, a system, carnival, spectacle, language, to name but a few. For a review of these metaphors, see Baker 1992.

<sup>33</sup> For the concept of iconography, see the introduction in Cosgrove and Daniels 1988.

<sup>34</sup> Or, as Pickles has expressed it with respect to maps, we need to deconstruct the layers of textuality: the text itself, the material it accompanies, and its larger social context. (Cf. Pickles 1992).

This conceptualization of text draws on the linguistic foundations of poststructuralist<sup>35</sup> semiology as outlined by Saussure and developed by Barthes.<sup>36</sup> With them, I see text as a signifying system composed of signifiers, signifieds, and sign. Central to poststructuralist semiology is the understanding of the sign as governed by convention.<sup>37</sup> To the poststructuralist there is no referential meaning to a sign that could be derived from some one-to-one correspondence with its object of reference. Instead, meaning is purely relational, derived from practice alone. Texts are therefore seen not as mirror descriptions of reality, but as imposing reality, produced from a pool of language that is socially constructed.

The linguistic semiological approach examines how language encodes meanings along with underlying ideologies. It does so with a focus on language itself as a determinant of social life rather than a mere medium of communication of that life. To use the window metaphor, the linguistic semiological approach does not regard language as a transparent window on the world. It is not so much interested in the view itself visible through the window as in the lens-like properties of the glass pane and the image they produce in a

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<sup>35</sup> I deliberately omit the structuralist phase of linguistic semiology as I do not see text as merely manifesting underlying structures that are somehow imprinted on human consciousness. Rather than seeing texts as being determined, then, I understand them to be informed by the discursive and recursive interaction between humans and their social and other structures. Traditionally, structuralist semiologists have assumed that all signifying systems are analogous to structuralist notions of language and have thus approached them as autonomous logical systems which exist apart from the individuals who take part in them. Consequently, the origins of the signifying system were seen as unproblematic, *langue* (the structure and system of language) was given preference over *parole* (the position of the subject in discourse), synchronic study over diachronic study, structure over action, and product over process. This resulted in a somewhat static semiology that had nothing to say about the changing social realities of signification. It is therefore necessary to move beyond to a poststructuralist position on signification that addresses semiological processes rather than fixed, timeless structures.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Saussure 1915; Barthes 1964; Barthes 1973.

<sup>37</sup> A sign is "everything that, on the grounds of a previously established social convention, can be taken as something standing for something else." (Eco 1976, p. 16).

combination of transmission and distortion. Similarly, the text concept of poststructuralist semiology acknowledges both the communicative function of landscape as factual record and the ideological role of landscape in the reproduction of social structures.

This study, then, is a semiological landscape study in that it regards landscape representations as systems of signs, or texts, to be read. Yet the system context reaches beyond the level of signs to that of texts as well: just as we have to be able to grasp the relationships between signs in order to understand their meanings within a text, we need to gain an idea of the whole of which the text is a part to truly comprehend it. In this case, the whole refers to the intertextual realm in which the texts are linked together. No text is created from a *tabula rasa*; rather, it is informed to some degree by previous texts that have helped to determine the conditions under which it is created. Similarly, a text is 're-produced' anew each time a reader brings her or his previous experiences to the act of reading. Landscape texts must then be seen intertextually, the multilayered product of a chain of significations negotiated in a continuing three-way interaction between author, text and reader. For this study, this means that our reading of foresters' writings of the 1930s and 1940s must take place in the context of the historical knowledge of that period now available to us. At the same time, the representations of the forest landscape by German foresters during the Nazi regime have to be re-inserted into the immediate context of their creation, i.e., the intertextual field of the 1930s and 1940s. Finally, these texts must be situated in a historical sequence of nationalist idealizations of the forest. This is necessary because the texts German foresters wrote in the 1930s and 1940s are in many ways continuations of an abiding nationalist theme that dominated writing in the forestry discipline for at least several

decades before the onset of the National Socialist regime. In turn, this nationalist theme built on the Germanization of the forest landscape in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in a process of nationalization of nature. The intertextual sphere of 1930s and 1940s representations of the forest landscape thus extends from c. 1800 to the present.

In reading foresters' representations of the forest landscape as texts, I adopt a post-structuralist linguistic semiology which denies that texts contain a stable meaning placed into them by an individual author. I agree, however, with Duncan and Duncan that this outlook does not necessarily have to lead to a radically relativistic or even fatalistic position. Despite the plurality of meanings suggested by the foregoing observations, "there *is* an empirical reality to which explanations are accountable."<sup>38</sup> To make meaningful statements that link a landscape representation to an empirical reality, it may be sufficient to approximate the contextual conditions of the representation's creation as diligently and with as much reflection as possible. Even if the meaning thus grasped is but one amongst many possible meanings, it will contain some degree of truth and validity. In this spirit, I set out to investigate the nationalist construction of the German forest and its political abuse by the National Socialists not as an exercise in search of an absolute and unique truth, but as a contribution to a mosaic of truth whose completion is an ongoing process.

## **2.6 Landscape and the Naturalization of the Political**

In trying to conceptualize the symbolism and ideology in, and of, landscape, I have repeatedly alluded to the concept of naturalization. I showed that landscape, symbolism, and

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<sup>38</sup> Duncan and Duncan 1988, pp. 117 and 125, emphasis in the original.

ideology are closely connected: they all can be seen as systems of signification and structures of domination – or resistance. They can be used to produce order, assert authority and project totalization – or to undermine them. Ideologies are encoded in landscapes via symbolism and in turn landscapes and their symbolism serve to reinforce – or challenge – ideologies. Where does naturalization come into play? Or, in other words, exactly how ‘does’ landscape naturalize ideology?

Eagleton asserts that “ideology seeks to convert nature into culture . . . [it] is a kind of contemporary mythology,” one of whose functions is to “‘naturalize’ social reality, to make it seem as innocent and unchangeable as Nature itself.”<sup>39</sup> Duncan and Duncan inject the concept of landscape into this equation, arguing that landscape – and, I would add, its representation – represents “an important way in which ideologies become naturalized.”<sup>40</sup> The ideological power of landscape rests with the ‘common-sense’ appeal of a seemingly ‘natural’ landscape: anyone can ‘read’ their everyday surroundings, regardless of their educational, social, or economic status.<sup>41</sup> Landscapes are simply

interpreted according to an ingrained cultural framework of interpretation, . . . they are often read ‘inattentively’ at a practical or nondiscursive level, . . . inculcating their readers with a set of notions about how the society is organized: and their readers may be largely unaware of this. If, by being so tangible, so natural, so familiar, the landscape is unquestioned, then such concrete evidence about how society *is* organized can easily become seen as evidence of how it *should, or must* be organized.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Eagleton 1983, p. 135.

<sup>40</sup> Duncan and Duncan 1988, pp. 123 and 117, emphasis in the original.

<sup>41</sup> This is true at least for the developed nations of Europe, where literacy is ubiquitous and access to cultural landscape representations, whether in form of books, magazines, films, or other cultural media, is easily affordable.

<sup>42</sup> Duncan and Duncan 1988, p. 123, emphasis in the original.

In his book on “Nature’s Ideological Landscape,” Olwig assesses the power of naturalization similarly:

To identify natural values with a thing such as landscape is to objectify those values and mask or mystify their social origins. The identification of nature with a process of growth and development is removed, and hence its historicity. . . . Human values no longer arise from a process of development in social and environmental relations, rather they seem to be posited by physical nature alone. We continue to deal with nature’s ideological landscape, but the ideology is attached to a thing rather than to a social process.<sup>43</sup>

From these assessments it arises that landscape can play an important ideological role in the social process, namely by supporting a set of values and unquestioned assumptions about the way a society *is*, or should be, organized. The political value of landscape to interest groups thus rests with its capacity to make political power arrangements seem a natural given and objectify values which in fact are socially constructed. This power of landscape as a conduit of ideology is further heightened if it is falsely perceived as ‘Nature’ and consequently credited with representing the ‘natural’ baseline state of affairs. Via the process of naturalization, landscape can thus become a device of hegemony whereby ideological interests design the everyday environment as a reflection of their ideas of social order while passing it off as the ‘natural’ state of affairs. To sum up, the idea of naturalization refers to the deliberate process of rendering a political or cultural fact innocent, natural, or eternal by denying its historical contingency.

In the case of the use of forest representations by German foresters, naturalization of the political was employed with the intent of conferring authority on German claims of ethnic purity and superiority, continuity and contiguity of occupance, and territorial demands – all claims interlinked with questions of identity and nationalism. In this study, I thus expand the

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<sup>43</sup> Olwig 1984, pp. 95-96.

general notion of naturalization by building on the refined concept of ‘naturalizing the nation.’ This concept was developed by Oliver Zimmer in his work on the role of Alpine nature symbolism in constructing a Swiss national identity that was not based on ethno-linguistic notions of nationalism. According to Zimmer, in the process of naturalizing the nation, “group history and nature are fused into one single discourse of national identity,” in which landscape is projected as a “force capable of determining the character of [the] nation and of its inhabitants.”<sup>44</sup> In the case of Switzerland, the Alps were portrayed as the source and protector of a distinct Swiss identity, thus placing the determinants of national identity in the realm of nature and its influences, rather than the arena of political or social forces.

In Zimmer’s view, the process of naturalizing the nation is complemented by a second process that mostly precedes, sometimes accompanies, and sometimes follows it. Zimmer calls this second process the nationalization of nature and defines it as the creation of a “pattern which portrays the natural environment as an expression of an alleged national character.” Characteristic for the process of nationalizing nature is that “historical myths, memories, and supposed national virtues are projected onto a significant landscape in an attempt to lend more continuity and distinctiveness to . . . national identity.”<sup>45</sup> In other words, the Alps had to be signified as quintessentially Swiss before they could be seen as in turn producing Swiss national characteristics in their population.

In a dialectic circle, these two processes reinforce one another, connecting nature and nation in an ever-closer association that produces a national myth of nature as well as a

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<sup>44</sup> Zimmer 1998, p. 659.

<sup>45</sup> Zimmer 1998, pp. 650 and 643.

nature myth for the nation. Examples of such ‘quintessential’ nature/nation constructs are the landscapes that greet us on the covers of tourism brochures, as engravings on money and stamps, or as the settings of novels: the mountains of Switzerland, the ‘North’ of Canada, the cypresses of Italy elicit the nation they have come to represent in our imagination.

Short has called this function of landscape a “National Environmental Ideology,” denoting an intellectual construction which embodies beliefs, values and information and which can influence events, behaviour and perception, in short: a myth.<sup>46</sup> Demonstrated by Short for the landscape categories of wilderness in the U.S., countryside in Great Britain, and city in Australia, I argue that the forest landscape performed a similar function in Germany: the German forest served as a myth for nationbuilding, rooted in a nationalist ideology that pursued its aims by annihilating time and reifying space in landscape texts that essentialized, eternalized, and naturalized the national idea through the forest motif.<sup>47</sup>

This review of the aspects of landscape symbolism and its political use in the process of naturalization has identified three interweaving arguments:

1. landscape and its representations are endowed with symbolic meaning,
2. this symbolism undergoes veiled ideological uses by political interests that take the form of naturalizing the nation; and
3. the intentionality of those uses can be unveiled through a reading of landscape as text that shows the calculated mythologizing of landscape meaning.

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<sup>46</sup> Short 1991, pp. xvi and xvii.

<sup>47</sup> Short 1991, p. 55.

The clasp I use to braid these three arguments into an integrated approach to political landscape symbolism is the work of the French poststructuralist Roland Barthes (1915-1980), in particular his myth theory as outlined in his *Mythologies*.<sup>48</sup> Here symbolism, ideology, textuality, and intertextuality come together in an integrated perspective on landscape as a political systems of signs and its messages.

Barthes himself frequently referred to landscape as a text that could be read just like any other.<sup>49</sup> Showing landscape and its representations to be cultural facts that, like all other expressions of human activity, can be made to serve political interests, Barthes cautioned against a naïve conceptualizing of landscape as an innocent, ‘natural’ category. Instead, he held landscape to be a signifying system, i.e., a text, and thus to be the product of historical cultural conventions. These conventions establish ‘codes’ that enable the reader to recognize the meaning of a word or phrase in a linguistic text, or the meaning of landscape elements in a landscape text. Because we can draw upon such codes in the form of stereotyped cultural models (in the case of landscape, for example, those of ‘tranquil’ or ‘majestic’ landscapes), we can tentatively place and organize details we encounter in the reading process so they make sense. Although derived from previous cultural conditioning through books or other media, these codes can eventually come to inform direct perception by determining what individuals see in nature. Cultural codes can thereby turn “culture into nature, serve as the foundation of the real, of ‘Life.’”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Barthes 1957a.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. his essays “The Blue Guide” in Barthes 1957a and “The Eiffel Tower” in Barthes 1957b. For an appreciation of Roland Barthes’ use of landscape, see Duncan and Duncan 1992.

<sup>50</sup> Barthes 1975, p. 206.

Barthes' theory of myth builds on the assertion that political interests can willfully distort old conventions (or outright invent new conventions), turning a sign into a myth by ascribing a new, deformed meaning to an already existing sign and thus overriding the erstwhile meaning. This, I claim, is what happened to the German forest. With its signification governed by cultural codes which, in turn, are subject to convention alone, the forest image could be changed by political interests through a planned alteration of those cultural codes. While retaining its benign cultural denotations as the apolitical, natural landscape *par excellence*, the forest was radicalized into assuming *völkisch* political connotations: it was mythologized to serve as a 'natural' justification for reactionary political interests.

Barthes' theory of myth has been applied to landscape by geographers, particularly James and Nancy Duncan.<sup>51</sup> So far, however, no substantial body of studies addressing different types of landscapes has been generated. This is a shortcoming because from the foregoing it is evident that each landscape representation needs to be read in its individual contemporary intellectual and social context as it is always more than just the landscape itself, it is a *re*-presentation that must be approached intertextually, "showing the way that texts from other conceptual realms cross-cut, transform and, in turn, are transformed by the texts in question."<sup>52</sup> Consequently, representations of the German forest landscape must be immersed in their immediate and less immediate contexts, be they social, historical, economical, or physical. Barthes himself stressed the historical and geographical specificities of myth as necessary components of the study of myth, arguing that

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<sup>51</sup> Cf. Duncan and Duncan 1992.

<sup>52</sup> Barnes and Duncan 1992, p. 13.

every myth can have its history and its geography; each is in fact the sign of the other . . . I have not been able to carry out any real study of the social geography of myths. But it is perfectly possible to draw what linguists would call the isoglosses of myth, the lines which limit the social region where it is spoken<sup>53</sup>

This study attempts such a specific socio-geographical examination of the use of the forest myth in the project of German nationalism.

## 2.7 The Forest Landscape in German Forest History

While English-speaking human geographers were debating the virtues of different approaches to the study of landscape and its history – if rarely focussing on the forest landscape as such – , German foresters until recently were still unconvinced of the necessity of theorizing their understanding of the forest and forestry at all. Traditionally, most studies in German forestry that focussed on the social or political aspects of forest and forestry were conducted by scholars specializing in forest policy and forest history. The division of labour was simple: forest policy was concerned with the present, while the domain of forest history was the past.<sup>54</sup> Yet forest history was ill-prepared to offer contributions to a critical history of the German forest landscape for two reasons: institutional weakness and self-censorship.

In 1978, one of German forest history's most eminent scholars, Karl Hasel, admitted that forest history was “without doubt the most backward and thus endangered part of forestry and forest science.”<sup>55</sup> He lamented that the training of practitioners and the funding of

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<sup>53</sup> Barthes 1957a, p. 149.

<sup>54</sup> The subdiscipline of forest policy has produced only few studies that are relevant to the conceptualization of the forest as a political landscape as it is pursued in this study. I will discuss those studies in the substantive chapters where appropriate.

<sup>55</sup> *Die Forstgeschichte ist ohne Zweifel der rückständigste und daher gefährdetste Teil der Forstwirtschaftswissenschaft.* (Hasel 1978, p. 73).

research in forest history was neglected in West Germany, despite the obvious relevance of historical studies to forestry, given the long-term nature of its operations. Hasel demanded that forest history be conceived of and taught as a comprehensive and distinct subject. Yet, as late as 1989, he felt compelled to justify the existence of his craft by titling an article with the polemic question “Learning from Forest History?” He posited that learning was possible: “forest history does not provide simple answers for solving the problems of today, but [it] can indicate how to judge developments and how to avoid errors which could have far-reaching consequences.”<sup>56</sup>

This leads us to the second reason for the failure of German forest history to contribute to a critical history of the forest landscape: the self-censorship of its practitioners. To take up Hasel’s question again: without doubt it is the study of forestry under National Socialism that could provide the most compelling lessons to be learned from forest history. Yet, during my own studies in forestry at the University of Freiburg in the 1980s, not one lecture dealt with forestry during the Third *Reich*. Nor was there much to be found in the literature. In Mantel’s 1972 “Bibliography of German Forestry, 1560-1965,” for example, the National Socialist period is not covered at all – in spite (or because?) of the fact that Mantel himself was a prolific writer in the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, on the other side of the Iron Curtain, Thomasius’ 1973 book on “Forest, Culture, and Society” does not mention the Third *Reich*. Back in West Germany, Hasel’s 1971 book on “Forestry and the Environment”

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<sup>56</sup> Hasel 1989, quoted from the author’s English abstract in the TREE-CD electronic bibliography.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Chapters 7 and 8. In fact, Mantel’s numerous writings about forestry and National Socialism came out of the starting blocks so swiftly after the National Socialist takeover that they provoked suspicions of overzealousness among his colleagues. (Cf. the unfavourable political assessment in Mantel’s personnel file in the Freiburg University Archives B 1 / 1295).

offered only one page on the events of the Third *Reich*, despite the numerous environmental laws which the Nazis launched, for example the Law against Forest Devastation of 1934 and the *Reich* Nature Conservancy Law of 1935, the latter even remaining in force until 1976.<sup>58</sup>

It was not until the 1980s that the first studies appeared which dealt explicitly with forestry during the Third *Reich*, yet they remained descriptive in their approach. Hasel, for instance, in a 1985 working paper on the experiences of Badenian foresters during the National Socialist regime, seemed to be more concerned with the effects the regime had on the professional lives of the foresters than with their implication in the functioning of the regime. Similarly, Rubner's 1985 book "German Forest History 1933-1945," while using extensive local and personal sources in the attempt to understand the emergence and the functioning of the National Socialist forest administration, did not interpret those detailed findings within a larger theoretical frame of reference.<sup>59</sup>

In 1989, Gundolf Vogel at the Department of Forestry at the University of Freiburg published a Master's thesis which finally attempted such a first interpretation of forestry under the National Socialists, in this case within the framework of political economy.<sup>60</sup> More recently, eleven Master's theses at the Department of Forestry at the University of Göttingen have tried to write 'everyday histories' of National Socialist forestry by using records from individual forest district offices.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> (Mantel 1972; Thomasius 1973; Hasel 1971). For a chronology of the legislation, see Appendix II of this study.

<sup>59</sup> Hasel 1985b; Rubner 1985.

<sup>60</sup> Vogel 1989 and 1990.

<sup>61</sup> See Steinsiek and Rozsnyay 1994, pp. 5-6 for a summary.

In 1994, Steinsiek and Rozsnyay voiced their surprise about this long-time paucity of studies about forestry between 1933 and 1945:

Until quite recently, there were no comprehensive publications that could have illustrated the function of forestry in the Third *Reich* on the basis of political economy and National Socialist ideology. This is all the more surprising as the Nazi regime regarded forestry as very much in agreement with National Socialist ideas.<sup>62</sup>

The apparent reason for this lack of scholarly attention to recent forest history in Germany is that forest history customarily defined its study period as ending in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: there was no subdiscipline of forestry that covered the history of the most recent hundred years. But what was the underlying cause for the decision to let forest history peter out in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and leave the forest history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century unwritten? One of the reasons may be the personal life histories of the scholars themselves.

To many forest historians, writing about the National Socialist period would have meant writing about a part of their own personal and professional past – or about that of their fathers. Hasel, Rubner, and Mantel all began their careers in the 1930s, with the latter two following in the steps of their prominent fathers.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, for young foresters joining the ranks of academia during the first three decades after the end of the war, it would have meant placing their elder colleagues and their supervisors under the microscope.<sup>64</sup> This is not to

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<sup>62</sup> *Allerdings mangelte es bis in die jüngste Zeit hinein an umfassenderen Publikationen, welche geeignet gewesen wären, die Funktion der Forstwirtschaft im Dritten Reich aufgrund der Wirtschaftspolitik und der NS-Ideologie zu verdeutlichen. Dies überrascht umso mehr, da doch das Forstwesen aus der Sicht der damaligen Machthaber nationalsozialistischen Vorstellungen in ganz besonderem Maße entsprach.* (Steinsiek and Rozsnyay 1994, p. 3). Three years later, Seling attested German foresters that they continued to be held back by an “apolitical understanding of society. *apolitisches Gesellschaftsverständnis* (Seling 1997, p. vii).

<sup>63</sup> On the role of paternal tradition in the forestry profession, see Chapter 4.3.

<sup>64</sup> A case in point: in the 1980s, forest history at the University of Freiburg was taught on the basis of a textbook written by Hasel, while forest law relied on a textbook by Mantel.

suggest that research into the past of these and other foresters would necessarily have produced closets and skeletons. Nevertheless, younger German foresters were loath to work on the forest history of the Third *Reich*. As I was told by two German forestry professors: “why would you want to cause trouble for yourself?” The danger of ‘causing trouble’ for oneself arises from the very real prospect of professional ostracization in the relatively small field of forestry. With foresters thus unwilling to write their own disciplinary history of the Third *Reich*, could not others step in and write from the outsider’s perspective? Unfortunately, it is not easy for non-foresters to acquire the necessary silvicultural background knowledge or to comprehend the specialized language of foresters.<sup>65</sup> Thus no outsider to the discipline has attempted such a history.

Whether for reasons arising from institutional weakness or self-censorship, most foresters who eventually addressed aspects of 20<sup>th</sup>-century forest history chose to either end their studies in 1933 or begin them in 1945. In her 1997 dissertation, Seling aimed to uncover the sociohistorical roots of the *Dauerwald* or ‘continuous forest’ movement from 1880 on.<sup>66</sup> She stressed the continuity of the mentality and socialization of German foresters from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present, but ended her analysis in 1930, three years before that same *Dauerwald* doctrine was made the official silvicultural dogma of National Socialist Germany. Similarly, Huss ended his treatment of the history of the *Dauerwald* idea in 1933.

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<sup>65</sup> Foresters themselves have recently begun to pay attention to the language of their profession and its disciplinary effects. Cf. Hehn 1991; Schanz 1995 and 1996; von Detten 1994.

<sup>66</sup> On the *Dauerwald* movement, see Chapter 4.

Obversely, Wagenknecht limited his examination of silviculture in East Germany to the years 1945 to 1990, without addressing the extensive roots in the years prior to 1945.<sup>67</sup>

It is only in the most recent years that studies have appeared which transgress those marker years of 1933 and 1945. Steinsiek and Rozsnyay, for example, have begun to extend the analysis of the effects of the Third *Reich* into the early post-war period. Their “Fundamentals of German Forest History, 1933-1950, with Special Emphasis on Lower Saxony,” uses the forests of the *Land* or province of Lower Saxony as a case study for the effects of the *Reich* legislation and thus lays some of the foundations necessary for a comprehensive treatment of National Socialist forestry on the national level.<sup>68</sup>

To sum up, until the 1980s, when the first veterans of the 1968 student revolts began to advance into positions of academic power, German students were made aware that it did not behove them to study the National-Socialist period and castigate their elders. As a new generation is taking over, this is beginning to change, albeit at a slower pace than in other disciplines. This is due to a peculiarity of the forestry profession which is addressed in Chapter 4, where I show that the discipline of forestry has traditionally attracted relatively more conservative students who are less likely to take a critical stance toward authority.

What is missing so far, then, is a theoretically informed, critical history of forestry during the Third *Reich* which can interpret forestry not merely as a self-contained disciplinary discourse, but which can insert it into the general development of German society during the

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<sup>67</sup> Huss 1990; Seling 1997; Wagenknecht 1991. Silviculture can be defined as the theory and practice of controlling forest establishment, composition, and growth.

<sup>68</sup> Steinsiek 1995; Steinsiek and Rozsnyay 1994. The same authors have also supervised the aforementioned eleven Master's theses which have extended the analysis down to the level of the local forest district office.

first half of the twentieth century. In this study, I will contribute to the beginnings of such a critical disciplinary history. More specifically, I will use theoretical concepts from English-language human geography to conceptualize how the forest was used as a political tool by the National Socialist regime to pass its political goals off as common-sense, innocent, and 'natural' – and how foresters implicated themselves in the definition and pursuit of those goals. Evidently, then, this study will follow a new direction as far as German forest history is concerned. But how does it contribute to English-speaking human geography?

## **2.8 The Forest Landscape in English-Language Human Geography**

There are several shortcomings to be noted in the treatment of the forest landscape by English-speaking human geographers. To begin, the forest landscape is blatantly missing from most of their studies. The relative 'legibility' of urban and agricultural landscapes has led geographers to neglect the forest landscape as forms of the cultural landscape's Other: bush, wilderness, waste, nature. In geographical studies, trees thus frequently figure as well-defined individuals and clusters found in landscape gardens or on estates, and in the context of their mythical, symbolic and aesthetic values.<sup>69</sup> Forests stands, by contrast, have not received much academic attention.<sup>70</sup> Yet silviculture is every bit as political as agriculture, and to a trained and careful observer the forest landscape and its representations reveal many insights into the society that constructed them. As a forester trained in Germany, I am able to read the representations of forest landscapes by German foresters in such a way, which

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<sup>69</sup> Cf. Davies 1988.

<sup>70</sup> Among the exceptions are Daniels 1988 and Cloke *et al.* 1996.

allows me to unpack messages contained in the language and concepts of German forestry and translate them for readers trained in geography.

Apart from the continuing absence of the forest as a landscape category, another shortcoming of most English-language geographical research on the issue of political landscape symbolism in general is the fact that it is limited largely to the English language. Cosgrove chides that “English-speaking geographers still remain markedly parochial in their attention to the complex ways that nationalism, territory and landscape interweave.” The point is expanded by Duncan who criticizes that “the majority of the world’s population represent for these [white, middle class, Christian, English-speaking] geographers ‘the other.’”<sup>71</sup> This has implications not only for the access to both primary and secondary literatures, but also determines the frameworks of cultural, political, and legal experiences in which the studies are contextualized by the researcher. In this study I transgress the boundaries of language and culture to submit German-language materials from forestry to critical theory derived from English-language human geography.

I further argue that most research into landscape symbolism has been limited in its explanatory potential by telescoping the *processes* leading to that particular configuration into the *conditions* at the moment of representation. This practice may cause geographers to focus on landscape symbols as finished products while neglecting the actual processes of their creation along with their inherent conflicts. Hence Rowntree and Conkey criticize that

most geographic studies are based on the assumption that environmental symbols are a given; that they are static and unchanging. These studies commonly describe symbolic forms, chart their distribution, or discuss how they may reflect certain social values. Rarely is the linkage between

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<sup>71</sup> (Cosgrove 1992, p. 278; Duncan 1993, p. 367). For a rare glimpse beyond the pale, see the review by Cosgrove and Jackson (1987) of an international array of studies.

landscape and social processes examined. But by neglecting process, crucial issues that can expand the explanatory power of cultural geography are ignored.<sup>72</sup>

Mitchell, too, questions the usefulness of the resulting “traditional motionless landscape images” and calls for “revisionist accounts” instead.<sup>73</sup> Likewise, Daniels wants to see studies that “emphasize the fluency [*sic*] of landscape, not its fixity, its poetics as well as its politics” to show how “mutable and ambiguous” landscape images can be. In his view, landscapes

picture the nation. As exemplars of moral order and aesthetic harmony, particular landscapes achieve the status of national icons. . . . But even apparently singular histories and geographies may be open to varying interpretation, even appropriation, by those once marginalized in, or excluded from, the dominant national culture. . . . Landscape imagery is not merely a reflection of, or distraction from, more pressing social, economic or political issues; it is often a powerful mode of knowledge and social engagement, [yielding] many fields of vision, in their own time and since, in their making and re-making, in their mobilization by many social interests.<sup>74</sup>

Tagging this note to the end of his methodological considerations, however, Daniels implicitly acknowledges that the normal practice of landscape interpretation is still relatively static. The prevailing static perspective on landscape and its symbolic content which Mitchell and Daniels criticize ignores the discursive dimension of landscape and disregards the possibility of constant change in both landscape and its symbolic meaning. More importantly, it ignores their ideological character: the possibility that either one can be manipulated by political interests, dominant or not, to serve their agendas. As we have said before, society and landscape must be conceptualized together in a politics of landscape that is played out in the physical landscape as well as its cultural representations – in an ideological landscape of stone and paper that is in a continual state of contestation and

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<sup>72</sup> Rowntree and Conkey 1980, p. 459.

<sup>73</sup> Mitchell 1994, p. 2.

<sup>74</sup> Daniels 1993, pp. 5, 8 and 243.

change. As Kobayashi writes, “it is in understanding the diffusion of power within the landscape that geographers face their greatest methodological challenge.”<sup>75</sup> I would add that this challenge extends to understanding the diffusion of power *through* landscape and its representations.

Connected to the previous criticism is the final caveat that reading the cultural landscape by geographers often implies a unidirectional perspective as landscape configurations are surveyed for clues about the power structure of the society that shaped them. As Cosgrove warned:

Too easily the claimed dialectic of social order and symbolic order becomes subsumed in practice under a more powerful linear logic wherein the symbolic is the outcome of an existing social structure.<sup>76</sup>

This study reverses the customary thrust from social to symbolic order and illuminates how ideas of order derived from the forest landscape were used to shape social structures. Specifically, it shows how biological tenets gleaned from the forest landscape were used to define and make acceptable in the public imagination the increasingly aggressive and expansionist National Socialist notions of the German state. In so doing, this thesis aims to address the discussed disciplinary shortcomings and to realize the synergisms to be had from an integration of perspectives drawn from both forest history and human geography.

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<sup>75</sup> Kobayashi 1989, p. 179.

<sup>76</sup> Cosgrove 1982, p. 220.

**PART ONE**

**FROM THE FORESTS OF GERMANY TO 'THE GERMAN FOREST,'  
1780-1933**

— CHAPTER 3 —  
NATIONALIZING NATURE:  
THE ROMANTIC CONSTRUCTION OF ‘THE GERMAN FOREST’  
INTO A SYMBOL OF GERMAN SELF-IDENTIFICATION

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You are like the strongest, mightiest oak  
In the innermost grove,  
Like the highest, oldest, most sacred oak,  
Oh Fatherland!

Friedrich Gottlob Klopstock, 1769

They have to remain and they have to be recreated, those old Germanic forests. Nowhere must the German be in want of trees.

Ernst Moritz Arndt, 1815

### 3.1 Introduction

National Socialist propaganda frequently presented the German forest as a common-sense analogy of the German ‘national character,’ people, and state. This represented the first time official state propaganda employed the forest for its purposes, yet the use of the forest for naturalizing nationalist ideology was not invented by the Nazis, nor by their *völkisch* precursors. Rather, both seized upon the forest as a stock theme precisely because it already possessed well-established patriotic connotations. Consequently, the Germanization of the forest in *völkisch* and National Socialist propaganda can no longer be considered an aberration, as German forest history has traditionally insisted, but instead must be recognized as an abiding theme. My task in this chapter is to prove this contention and show how, and by whom, the forest was originally constructed as ‘German.’

To this purpose, I go back to the years 1790 to 1820 and analyze how writers and artists of the early Romantic school aestheticized the forest into a nostalgic topos, and how later

Romantics 'Germanized' this notion of the forest, that is, how they constructed the Romantic forest as representing 'Germanness,' Germans, and Germany. Three caveats must accompany my emphasis on the Romantic period. First, the focus on the Romantic period is not meant to suggest that the Germanization of the forest began then. In fact, as I will show in this chapter, the Romantics built on Classical Roman sources from the first century that already depicted the forest as epitomizing Germany.

Neither am I claiming that the Germanization of the forest was universal, i.e., that all early 19<sup>th</sup>-century Germans recognized or even accepted the forest as an icon of Germany. The infatuation of the Romantics and their educated audience with their nostalgic idea of the forest can scarcely be taken as a reflection of what the general population saw as the 'meaning' of the forest they encountered in their everyday lives. Moreover, even the Romantics themselves were not without trepidation about the danger of idealizing nature. As early as 1798, the eminent Romantic poet Novalis (or Friedrich von Hardenberg, 1772-1801), lamented that educated Germans no longer experienced nature directly but were instead developing an "ill-fated habituation to printed Nature" as they increasingly derived their image of nature from books and works of art.<sup>1</sup> Yet the point here is not to argue that this Romantic notion of the German forest was shared by all segments of society, or that it was a true representation of the forest. The point is to show that the Romantic idealization of the forest with its nationalist overtones found its way into the cultural canon of the emerging German middle class and so became a cultural institution that replaced previous,

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<sup>1</sup> *fatale Gewöhnung an die gedruckte Natur* (quoted in Hörisch 1996, p. 99).

less favourable perceptions of the forest. And as books and prints became more affordable, the ideas about the forest that were manifested in these cultural media began to inspire not only the imagination of the literati but that of everyone receiving a formalized education.

Finally, I am not positing that the Germanization was completed in the Romantic period or that it has remained unchanged since then. On the contrary, the Germanization of the forest must be seen as an ongoing process in which layers of interpretation overlay one another. As each generation adds its own layers, it both embraces and rejects previous interpretations, in the process reinforcing some aspects while erasing others. Yet, as the subsequent chapters will show, forest propaganda between the years 1918 and 1945 not only added new layers of interpretation, but frequently harked right back to the Romantic period. This was based partly on the pre-eminence of Romantic works of art and literature in the Germanization of the forest. But there was another, equally important reason that arose out of the political situation of Germany after the defeat of 1918: right-wing propaganda compared the beleaguered position of the rump-*Reich* after the Treaty of Versailles to that of the scattered Germanies of the Romantic period struggling against Napoleon. In effect, this propaganda equated German Romanticism with German nationalism and compared the Wars of Liberation against Napoleon with the German resistance against the implementation of the Treaty of Versailles. Hence, if we want to understand the appeal of National Socialist forest propaganda, we have to become familiar with the strings this propaganda plucked and why they resonated with Germans of the 1920s and 1930s.

### 3.2 The Search for German History in the Germanic Forest

The construction of the forest as a symbol of Germany began late in the 18<sup>th</sup> century when German writers of the Storm and Stress movement and the early Romantic school revalued the forest as a positive topos in their poetry and plays. Since Classical times, the forest had been associated with the forces of evil: the realm of darkness, sorcery and beasts, the forest was no place where humans went readily.<sup>2</sup> It was considered a moral vacuum that defied the progress made by human civilization. Yet that was exactly what the authors of the emergent Romantic mood were looking for: a symbol that negated the Enlightenment claims of universal rationality and progress. Abandoning bucolic and Arcadian descriptions of nature that had been based on Classical notions of aesthetics prevalent since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, German poets of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries turned to the forest precisely because it was a non-symmetric, unharmonious, and non-civilized landscape. Authors such as Klopstock, Hölderlin, Tieck, Novalis, Wackenroder, and the Schlegel brothers made the forest their champion, claiming that it represented not a God-forsaken wilderness, but His uncorrupted work. In their works, they turned the forest from antithesis of Enlightenment into epitome of Romanticism, from wilderness into landscape, and from evil into divine.

Preparing this revaluation of the forest were a number of developments in the arts that took place during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, all of which contributed in some way to a taming of the forest image. For example, the aestheticization of nature in the concepts of the sublime and the picturesque; the Ossianic celebration of the Nordic over the Mediterranean landscape; the Deist argument that wild nature was proof of a powerful God; and the Gothic revival with

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<sup>2</sup> For reviews of the image of the forest in the public imagination since Classical times, see Glacken 1967; Bechmann 1990; Harrison 1992.

its appreciation of the tree symbolism in Gothic cathedrals.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, the actual forest also changed to present a more inviting appearance. Unsustainable cutting practices had thinned the accessible parts of the forest to the point where they resembled open, light-filled parks more than dark, foreboding thickets. As a result, most literate, urban Germans (and we must not forget that the forest was praised and painted predominantly for a wealthy urban audience) were far removed from the pathless, primeval forest wilderness of the remote areas. This meant that they could enjoy the ‘sweet shivers’ of Romantic forest descriptions as tantalizing flights of the imagination, rather than as accounts of reality.

Yet this re-evaluation of the forest was not just another reorientation of aesthetics, it was also a deliberate political project as it served the distinct purpose of providing a crystallizing core around which the concept of a common Germanness (*Deutschheit*) could be built. This was a necessary first step towards unifying the German-speaking peoples scattered over almost 2,000 separate Germanies ranging from independent hamlets to powerful kingdoms. At first, the emphasis was on defining a distinct cultural nation (*Kulturnation*) vis-à-vis the Enlightenment notion of a universal cosmopolitan civilization and the predominance of the French language in 18<sup>th</sup>-century German public life.<sup>4</sup> After 1801, however, when Napoleon’s

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<sup>3</sup> See. Nicolson 1959; Glacken 1967, particularly chapters 7 and 14; Nash 1967.

<sup>4</sup> By the 18<sup>th</sup> century, French had replaced Latin as the literary language of the educated classes. Even at the court of Frederick the Great (1740-1786), the king who established Prussia as a major European power, French language, philosophy, and music were *de rigueur*. Thus, when Frederick wrote his instructions for a new higher education curriculum in history and geography that was to focus on “*l’Allemagne étant la patrie de la jeunesse*,” he did so in French (*Oeuvres de Frédéric le Grand VII*, cited in Demandt 1990, p. 31). In his *De la littérature allemande* (1780), Frederick scoffed at the idea of using the German language in literature: “In our own country I hear a jargon devoid of any grace, and which each person manipulates as he pleases, with no discrimination in the choice of terms. . . . I have been seeking to unearth our Homers, our Virgils, . . . . But I find nothing. I should have been spared my pains. Let us admit sincerely and frankly that up to this time literature has not flourished on our soil. We shall yet have our classic authors. Everyone will want to read them for both pleasure and profit. Our neighbours will learn German, and our language, polished and perfected by our writers, will be spoken not only in court circles but throughout Europe. This happy time is not yet here, but it will come.” (Translation adapted from Snyder 1958, pp. 118-119). With this dismissal,

armies began to advance across the fractured political landscape of Germany, the emphasis shifted to defining a unified political nation that could repel the French assault and hold its own among the European powers. But the prospects were bleak. Weakened by infighting, the Germanies were no match for Napoléon's *armée levée en masse*. In 1806 Napoleon routed the Prussians at Jena, squashing the last German resistance and completing his hold over all of Germany. German intellectuals, who once looked to the French Revolution as a beacon of liberty, now found their hopes betrayed by the self-anointed *Empereur*. With every day of French occupation more of them turned into ardent German patriots. Deeply shaken by their military and moral defeat, these patriots realized that national unity was not only the key to regaining freedom for Germany, but also was indispensable if Germany wanted to claim a future place among the nations of Europe.

If there was to be a future united Germany, though, it could only be melded from the multitude of Germanies, which meant overcoming regional jealousies and forming a new national identity. Yet how could the geographical composite of 'Germany' ever form a nation if its people did not even know how to feel as a nation? The emerging national movement realized that it had to find ways to suggest to Germans what it meant to be German. The Prussian General von Scharnhorst, one of the architects of the German insurrection against Napoleon, captured the essence of this task:

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Frederick touched off a public discussion about the virtues of German in which literary heavyweights such as Lessing, Möser and Klopstock staunchly defended the German language. Nonetheless, the Prussian Academy still prescribed the use of French instead of German until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and the influence of French in public life even lasted well into the nationalistic 19<sup>th</sup> century: as Germany's envoy to St. Petersburg and Paris in the early 1860s, future Chancellor Otto von Bismarck still had to write his reports for Berlin in the French language. (cf. Schlosser 1983, pp. 163 and 135.)

One must inspire a sense of self-reliance in the nation, one must give it opportunity to become acquainted with itself.<sup>5</sup>

But what could serve to introduce, represent, and endear the German nation to itself, in other words, what could serve as a national symbol? The Romantics, who were in close contact with the national movement if not largely synonymous with it, responded to that challenge by Germanizing the forest, soon making, in the words of one foreign traveller, “the German oaks murmur mysteriously of a wondrous thing, of a powerful age...”<sup>6</sup> To the Romantics, this powerful age was to be found at once in the past and in the future, as they used the notion of past Germanic glory to inspire a future united Germany.

In both the cultural and the political definition of Germany, the German authors of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries reworked descriptions of the Germanic forest and its inhabitants by the first-century Roman historian Tacitus: one being his *Germania*, a tongue-in-cheek description of the densely-wooded Germanic lands and its fierce denizens; the other being an account in his *Annals* of the historical figure of Arminius, legendary chief of the Cherusci who annihilated an entire Roman army in the dense Teutoburg forest. The Germanic forest as described in these two accounts was not only fundamental to the Romantic project of constructing a national identity, but ultimately constituted a stock theme

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<sup>5</sup> *Man muß der Nation Selbständigkeit einflößen, man muß ihr Gelegenheit geben, daß sie mit sich selbst bekannt wird.* (In a letter to fellow-officer Carl von Clausewitz, quoted in Aubert 1915, p. 22).

<sup>6</sup> Harro Harring, a Danish painter and poet, describing his journey to Dresden in 1819: “What had been strange for centuries now returned to light; the German had made himself a jacket like his fathers wore, and he strode in this jacket towards the future - a future which stretched out magnificently before him, decorated with all the blessings of peace, rich in promises, and rich in proud hopes! The German wandered on blood-soaked ground whose freedom was purchased through the death of thousands of excellent men, who sacrificed themselves as offering for a long-yearned-for atonement! The German oaks murmur mysteriously of a wondrous thing, of a powerful age...” (quoted in Koerner 1990, p. 242). The “jacket like his fathers wore” refers to what was supposedly the ‘traditional’ German garb of the Reformation period but in fact was invented by the German Romantics as a means of national identification (see footnote 68).

of National Socialist forest propaganda. Consequently, I will begin my analysis of the historical signification of the German forest with a brief discussion of these two sources.

With the *Germania*, written in AD 98, the Roman historian Tacitus pretended to present a geographic-ethnographic description of the Germanic tribes. In reality, it was a moralizing reflection on Tacitus' decadent contemporaries in his native Rome. By idealizing the barbarian Germanic tribes as fierce, independent, and virile, Tacitus intended to highlight what he saw as the servility and degeneracy of his fellow-Romans.<sup>7</sup> Tacitus' irony was evident to his contemporaries; upon its rediscovery in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, however, the *Germania* was misinterpreted and misrepresented as a faithful description of the Germanic tribes. German humanists were eager to show how German virtue could reform the corrupt ways of the Roman Church and so they presented Tacitus' *Germania* as the authentic portrayal of an innocent and virtuous Germanic people before the corrupting influence of the Roman Catholic church.<sup>8</sup> In arguing thus, the German humanists pursued interconnected religious and nationalist objectives. Primarily, this interpretation of the *Germania* gave support to their call for a German reformation. Secondly, it equated Germanic with German and thus gave the fledgling humanist German nationalism claim to two thousand years of

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<sup>7</sup> Similar to the popular Asterix comics which, if from the opposite perspective, juxtapose virile, forest-dwelling Gauls with debauched, urban Romans.

<sup>8</sup> Among the humanists were Konrad Celtis, Ulrich von Hutten, Philipp Melanchthon, and Sebastian Münster. Other authors used the *Germania* for exactly the opposite argument. Enea Silvio, the future Pope Pius II, pointed out the beneficial role of the Roman Catholic church in the civilization of the formerly barbarian Germanic tribes in his *Germania antiqua* of 1455 (cf. Hermand 1988, p. 6; von See 1970, p. 14). For a discussion of the German humanists' use of the *Germania*, see Chapter 1 in von See (1970), Chapter 2 in Kuehnemund (1953), and Schama 1995, pp. 92-99.

Germanic *cum* German history.<sup>9</sup> In this manner, 16<sup>th</sup>-century humanist nationalists used the *Germania* to proclaim the existence and the virtues of a traditional German language, culture, law, and nationality, all of which they saw buried, but surviving, underneath centuries of Latinizing influence.

Building on Tacitus' dichotomy between Romans and Germanic tribesmen, the humanists carefully constructed the image of the German as an individual who was freedom-loving, virtuous, loyal, generous, and chaste; and the image of the Germans as a people who were indigenous, unmixed, and 'rooted in the soil' (*bodenständig*).<sup>10</sup> The pinnacle of this sort of argumentation was the etymological interpretation of the Latin tribal name 'germani' as having derived from the Latin words for 'germ' and 'to sprout': *germen/germinare*. Based on this argumentation, some humanists declared Germany the "true seed of all excellence."<sup>11</sup>

Around 1800, the Romantics refined the humanists' appropriation of the *Germania*, mining the text for presumably historical references with which they could buttress their claims of Germanic uniqueness, and here they found Tacitus' rendering of the forest

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<sup>9</sup> In the English language, equating 'Germanic' with 'German' appears a rather unproblematic proposition as the terms are relatively similar. In the German language, however, the equivalent words do not resemble one another. While 'Germanic' translates into *germanisch*, (derived from the Latin collective tribal name 'germani'), 'German' translates into *deutsch*, a word which does not derive from the tribal name 'Teuton.' Rather, *deutsch* and its older form *teutsch* are derivatives of West Frankish *\*theodisk*, meaning 'belonging to the people, popular,' which stood in opposition to *\*walhisk*, which denoted 'Romanized people' and in turn became the source of 'welsh' and *welsch* (cf. Chapter 1, footnote 15). The implied meaning of *teutsch* was that it denoted something 'native,' whereas the term *welsch* was applied to things 'foreign,' a meaning surviving in the name of the walnut tree, for instance. Hence, when German/*teutsch* nationalists in the 16<sup>th</sup> century claimed a Germanic/*germanisch* history for the German people, they were making a new and controversial claim.

<sup>10</sup> The humanists based their judgement on passages from Tacitus and Caesar that described the ancient Germans in such terms. On chastity, for example, see Tacitus' *Germania* cap. 18, line 1; and Caesar's *De Bello Gallico*, cap. 6, lines 19-21.

<sup>11</sup> *verum germen nobilitatis* (Jakob Wimpfeling in his *Epitome rerum Germanicarum*, cap. 70, quoted and translated in von See 1970, p. 16).

particularly interesting.<sup>12</sup> Tacitus had been most impressed by what looked like “terrible forests” to him, but which were home and temple to the proud and fierce Germanic tribes.<sup>13</sup> The connection between forest life and vigour that Tacitus seemed to suggest led the Romantics to single out the forest as the ancestral home of the German people.<sup>14</sup> In the forest, the Romantics argued, the memory of that ancestry had survived, and they set out to recover and reclaim it for the resurrected German nation they were trying to realize.

The second motif the Romantics developed in their characterization of the forest was the historical figure of Arminius (18 BC - AD 19) as described by Tacitus in his *Annals*.<sup>15</sup> Hermann, as he is known to Germans, was the son of Segimer, chief of the Germanic tribe of the Cherusci. As the son of an allied chief, he went to Rome to study the art of Roman

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<sup>12</sup> For example, Hölderlin in his *Germanien* of 1801.

<sup>13</sup> *terra aut silvis horrida aut paludibus foeda.* (*Germania*. cap. 5, lines 1-2). With *silvis* (forest in the sense of weald) Tacitus referred to the forested uplands in the south of Germany, while with *paludibus* (swamp) he described the riparian forests of the river valleys and northern lowlands. (Cf. Much 1937). Tacitus mentioned sacred Germanic forests in numerous parts of his *Germania* (cap 7, line 6; cap. 39, line 2; cap. 40, line 8; cap. 43, line 12) and his *Annals* (cap. 2, line 12; cap. 4, line 73; as well as cap. 3, line 12, where he mentions the *silva Herculi sacra* as the forest in which the covenant is made to fight against the Romans). An example of one such passage is in cap. 39 of the *Germania*: “The forest is the centre of their [the ancient Suebi] whole religion. It is regarded as the cradle of the race and the dwelling-place of the supreme god to whom all things are subject and obedient.”

<sup>14</sup> They did not, however, pay equal attention to the assessment by another first-century Roman writer, the satirist Juvenal (between AD 58 and 67 - 127), who had ridiculed the Germanic tribes as “acorn-burping.” (Fischer 1987, p. 25). The attraction of the *Germania* as a literary ‘proof’ for the alleged forest heritage of Germans persisted well into this century. As Schama relates in vivid terms, in 1943 the Nazis dedicated a SS-unit in Italy to forcefully ‘repatriate’ the oldest surviving manuscript copy of the *Germania* because of the promise held by its beginning words: “*de origine et situ germanorum.*” (Schama 1995, pp. 75-81).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. books 1, 2, 11, 12, and 13. See also Chapter 2 in Schama (1995). The original Germanic name of the chief is unknown. Tacitus only referred to him by the Latin name Arminius, which German humanists of the 15<sup>th</sup> ‘translated’ back into German as Hermann. While the words Arminius and Hermann had a similar ring, there also was the added attraction that at the root of the name Hermann is the word *Heermann* meaning warrior (literally: ‘army-man’).

war. For his bravery as the commander of a Cheruscan contingent fighting in the Roman army, Hermann was awarded Roman citizenship and Roman knighthood. Upon returning to his homeland in AD 7, however, he found his people chafing under the harsh rule of governor Varus. He then turned against the Romans. Secretly, Hermann fomented rebellion and united a number of Germanic chiefs in a campaign to push the Romans out of Germany. He staged a local rising and tricked Varus into marching through the dense Teutoburg forest to quell the unrest. As the forest was hardly passable, Varus had to march his army of some 20,000 men in a long train, leaving them vulnerable to attack. Before long, the ambush came and all of Varus' men were slaughtered in a battle that lasted three days. In Rome, the unprecedented loss of three whole legions caused panic and led emperor Augustus to withdraw the Roman lines from the Elbe river to the Rhine.<sup>16</sup> In AD 15, a Roman punitive expedition under Germanicus Caesar almost met with the same fate when Hermann again fought them in the Teutoburg forest. Shortly thereafter, the Romans gave up forever the idea of occupying the lands between Rhine and Elbe.

The *Hermannsschlacht* (Hermann's Battle) proved that Rome was not invincible, marking the end of Rome's imperial ambitions in northern Germany. In the long term, Hermann's throwing back of the Romans prevented the Latinization of a large part of Germany and established the Rhine as the linguistic border between Romance and Germanic peoples, laying the seed for future Franco-German rivalry.<sup>17</sup> To the Romantics intent on stoking that rivalry, Hermann represented a inspiring example of Germanic heroism against

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<sup>16</sup> Only a few cavalry escaped this worst defeat the Roman legions had ever suffered. The numbers of the three lost legions, XXVII, XXVIII, and XIX, were never used again.

<sup>17</sup> In the main, the peoples west of the Rhine adopted Roman law and Romance languages, while those east of the Rhine retained Germanic laws and languages.

foreign domination.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, the primeval Germanic forest that had brought forth such a hero provided the Romantics with a timeless preserve of ‘Germanness.’ All the German people had to do to resurrect the greatness they once knew was to get in touch with their forest heritage – and the Romantics were determined to help the German people in the way they knew best: by creating and publicly expressing the new national sentiment in their scholarly, artistic, and literary works.

### **3.3 Writing Germanic Roots for the German Forest**

One of the first rationales for actively constructing a German national sentiment in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century came out of the work of the philosopher and poet Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803), who influenced almost all Romantic authors with his relativistic outlook on art and history. Herder rejected the idea that all nations should abide by the standard of Classical aesthetics and instead held that each nation had an inherent collective voice that expressed itself in popular, i.e., presumably unauthored, legends, tales, and songs. Each nation’s voice was different and only together could they harmonize in the symphony of humankind.

Herder gave expression to a form of nationalism that was relativist and universalist: all nations had equal rights to live out their own indigenous cultures that had formed partly in response to their specific environmental circumstances. Moreover, they should be allowed to do so without foreign interference in the form of aesthetic dictates or political pressure.

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<sup>18</sup> According to Kuehnemund (1953, p. xiii), Hermann’s alleged exclamations “Rather death than slavery!” and “In unity there lies strength!” appeared over 130 times in German literature between 1500 and 1945.

From this position, Herder called for the creation of a “new mythology” that was national and related to the German people, that is, based not on Classical ideals and themes from the Mediterranean but on the folklore and idiom of the Germanic lands.<sup>19</sup>

But what was German folklore and where was it to be found? In public and literary life, Latin and later French language and culture had to some degree overwritten German language and culture. Scholars thus had to unearth the foundations of German culture: the language, laws, and customs of the German and Germanic past. They did so by collecting and editing German songs, legends, and tales as well as legal codes, medical texts and other prosaic sources from the medieval and Renaissance eras. In many of these sources the forest played a prominent role, suggesting that the forest constituted a reservoir of cultural memory from which the past could be reconstructed.<sup>20</sup>

Among the scholars who were influenced by Herder and pursued this new connection between German forest and German culture were the brothers Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm (1785-1863 and 1786-1859). Today, the Grimms are best known for their collection of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Children’s and Household Tales, 1812-1815).<sup>21</sup> This is not the place to discuss the veracity of the Grimms’ contention that they collected the tales straight from the mouth of German peasants, a claim that has been disproven by scholarship over the

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<sup>19</sup> *Vom neuen Gebrauch der Mythologie* (On a Novel Use of Mythology, 1765) In *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. I, pp. 73-74. For a discussion of Herder’s proposal, see Jamme 1991, pp. 29-31.

<sup>20</sup> For example: *Volksmärchen* (Popular Fairy Tales, 1797) by Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853); *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (The Boy’s Magic Horn, 2 vols., 1805/08), a collection of popular song lyrics by Achim von Arnim (1781-1831) and Clemens Brentano (1778-1842) from which many songs were later reworked by Schubert, Schumann, and Brahms; Herder’s own *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern* (The Nations’ Voices in Song, 1778 and 1807); *Die Deutschen Volksbücher* (The German Popular Books, 1807), a collection of texts from the Reformation era by Johann Joseph von Görres (1776-1848).

<sup>21</sup> In the German-speaking countries, only the Bible sells more copies.

years.<sup>22</sup> Whatever their alterations of the original material, the Grimms established a written record of the tales and legends which allowed for the further study of those materials and at the same time gave testimony of the importance of the forest in the German popular tradition.<sup>23</sup>

With their fairy tales alone, the Brothers Grimm led “a philological mystification of German forests,”<sup>24</sup> but their other philological work was equally instrumental in suggesting the importance of the forest to the study of German culture.<sup>25</sup> In their 7-volume collection of *Weisthümer* (Local Forest Laws, 1840-1878), for example, the Grimms published an enormous body of local forest ordinances, but not for the purpose of merely cataloguing legal texts. Rather, the Grimms sought to resurrect from the language of these source materials the eclipsed spirit and laws of the German people.<sup>26</sup> Influenced by the Romantic historiography of Herder, the Grimms conceived of the forest as a symbolic preserve of the true spirit of the folk that could be accessed through the language used in describing it.

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<sup>22</sup> For a discussion of the Grimms, see the various works by Jack Zipes (for example: Zipes 1987; 1988; 1994).

<sup>23</sup> The nationalist agitator Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, in his *Deutsches Volkstum* (Germandom, 1810), called the collection “one of the best examples of popular national literature.” (quoted in Snyder 1958, p. 142.) On Jahn, see footnote 66 in this chapter.

<sup>24</sup> (Harrison 1992, p. 164). In a 1936 dissertation on *Der Wald in der deutschen Dichtung* (The Forest in German Literature), Wolfgang Baumgart lists 48 out of the 210 Grimms’ tales in which the forest figured as “a world in itself” (Baumgart 1936, pp. 36-37).

<sup>25</sup> For example: Wilhelm Grimm’s *Deutsche Heldensagen* (German Heroic Legends, 2 vols., 1816-1818); and Jakob Grimm’s *Deutsche Mythologie* (German Mythology, 1835).

<sup>26</sup> They also used it to determine the spatial extent of those spirits and laws and, by extension, the Germanness that had brought them forth. Their statement that “east of the Elbe river there are no *Weisthümer*” suggests the Elbe as the dividing line between Germanic and Slavic peoples.

In 1813, the brothers launched a journal entitled *Altdeutsche Wälder* (Old German Forests)<sup>27</sup> in which they proposed to gather neglected texts that linked the German language and forest to the genesis and continuity of the authentic German culture they were trying to substantiate.<sup>28</sup> “I strove,” wrote Wilhelm Grimm, “to penetrate into the wild forests of our ancestors, listening to their whole language, and watching their pure customs.”<sup>29</sup> To the Grimms, the forest was a textual source through which they could scientifically study the German language, folklore, and customs. The similarity of forest folklore across the German lands, the Grimms argued, recalled the united past of the German nation and revealed the current political divisions as unnatural.<sup>30</sup> The Grimms hoped to do their part in overcoming this division by standardizing the German language so that it could once again serve as a unifying bond of national culture.<sup>31</sup>

While the Grimms and other German scholars inspired by Herder’s historiography tapped into the German forest tradition as a domestic source of ‘Germanness,’ German poets and

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<sup>27</sup> The Grimms pioneered the Romantic use of the word *deutsch* in the novel sense of ‘Germanic,’ of which this title and the *Deutsche Grammatik* (Germanic Grammar, 1819) are examples.

<sup>28</sup> In the article on *Waidprüche und Jägerschreie*, for example, the Grimms analyzed 205 ‘Hunter’s Sayings and Hunting Calls’ to distil from them the underlying ancient German language and customs. They chose hunters’ language because “in those estates who, like shepherds and hunters, are in free contact with nature and safe from obstruction and coercion imposed by the state, the old tales, songs, and customs are most likely to have survived.” *Einmal ist es schon an sich glaublich, daß unter Ständen, die wie Hirten und Jäger unter allen am freisten [sic] mit der Natur verkehren, und vor der Hemmung und dem Zwang des Staates am sichersten sind, Sage, Lied und Sitte lange Zeiten hindurch dauern müssen.* (*Altdeutsche Wälder*, 1816, vol. 3, p. 98, reprinted 1966 by Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt).

<sup>29</sup> quoted in Snyder 1978, p. 40.

<sup>30</sup> Harrison 1992, pp. 164-169.

<sup>31</sup> Indeed, the Grimms went on to become the authority on the standardization of the modern German language as it is written today, with works such as *Deutsche Grammatik* (Germanic Grammar, 1819); *Geschichte der deutschen Sprache* (History of the German Language, 2 vols., 1848); and their definitive *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (Dictionary of the German Language, 1854ff).

literati of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century looked further afield for Germanic inspiration, namely in the Nordic and the Celtic traditions.<sup>32</sup> Again, Herder played a pivotal role. Although he was not the first to conflate Germanic, Celtic and Scandinavian cultures into a Nordic culture, his works did much to popularize that notion.<sup>33</sup> In a glowing review of 1765, he introduced German readers to Paul Henri Mallet's *Histoire de Dannemarc* of 1755, a six-volume history of Scandinavia.<sup>34</sup> When Herder read Volume II, in which Mallet described the *Monumens de la mythologie et de la poésie des Celtes et particulièrement des anciens Scandinaves*, a revelation surged through his "German blood" as he realized "that our ancient Germans were the brethren of the brave Danes, sharing their religion, laws, custom, and traditions." Herder ended the review as follows:

This book may serve as the armoury for a new German genius, a genius that soars on the wings of the Celtic imagination and creates poems which are more appropriate to us than Roman mythology could ever be.<sup>35</sup>

This statement illustrates how unaware 18<sup>th</sup>-century writers were of the different origins of the Celtic and Germanic tribes,<sup>36</sup> yet it also shows how eager they were to form a common

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<sup>32</sup> It had also been Herder who first suggested collecting German folk literature in his essay *Ossian und die Lieder alter Völker* (*Ossian and the Songs of Ancient Peoples*, 1773).

<sup>33</sup> Von See (1970, p. 16 and *passim*) sees the deliberate conflation initiated by the 15<sup>th</sup>-century German humanists.

<sup>34</sup> Mallet was deeply influenced by Montesquieu's idea that 'national characteristics' could be explained with the influence of climate. In his *De l'Esprit des Lois* of 1748, Montesquieu had claimed that freedom made its home in the Germanic forest (XI, p. 6). This freedom, Montesquieu argued, was a direct result of the natural restraint of the inhabitants of the cool northern regions of Europe, a restraint that made oppressive laws unnecessary. This calls to memory a sentence in the *Germania* in which Tacitus declares that among the Germanic tribes, sound custom is more effective than sound laws are among other peoples. (*plus ibi boni mores valent quam alibi bonae leges* (cap. 19). Cf. Much 1937, p. 47).

<sup>35</sup> *Es kann dies Buch eine Rüstkammer eines neuen Deutschen Genies seyn, das sich auf den Flügeln der celtischen Einbildungskraft in neue Wolken erhebt und Gedichte schafft, die uns immer angemessener wären, als die Mythologie der Römer.* (*Sämtliche Werke* (Collected Works, vol. 1, pp. 73-74)).

<sup>36</sup> A fact also illustrated by the title of Mallet's volume II, which subsumes Scandinavians under the rubric of Celts.

Nordic front against the advance of Latinization, whether it came in the form of Roman mythology or the French language. In his critique *Über die neuere deutsche Literatur* (On Recent German Literature, 1766/67), Herder himself explained the absence of a thriving and distinct German culture with the exhaustion of the once vast German forest through the centuries:

As the forests were removed, so was their [the Germans'] culture, allowing the passage of winds and foreign custom alike; . . . had Germany been guided by the forces of time alone, following the thread of its own culture, our thinking would undoubtedly be impoverished and limited; yet at the same time our thinking would be true to our soil and embody its own ideal, rather than being so deformed and shattered.<sup>37</sup>

Because the fortress of the forest had been razed, “winds and foreign customs” from Rome and Paris were allowed to sweep through Germany. To fend off those foreign influences and to reestablish a German cultural identity, Herder exhorted German authors to use elements from the common storehouse of Nordic mythology to recreate a uniquely German mythology that subsequently was to be disseminated through a new German literature. Soon, German poets responded to his suggestion and enriched their work with figures and images from Nordic mythology. And, as the forest was one of the most salient elements of Nordic mythology, it came to assume a prominent role in the new style of German literature as well.

One of the first poets to follow Herder’s call was Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724-1803).<sup>38</sup> Like Mallet, Klopstock worked and lived at the court of King Frederic V in

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<sup>37</sup> *Mit den Wäldern ist ihre Kultur ausgehauen, den Winden und fremden Sitten ein Durchzug verschaffet; . . . wäre Deutschland bloß von der Hand der Zeit, an dem Faden seiner eigenen Kultur fortgeleitet; unstreitig wäre unsere Denkart arm, eingeschränkt, aber unserem Boden treu, ein Urbild ihrer selbst, nicht so mißgestaltet und zerschlagen.* (*Über die neuere deutsche Literatur* (On Recent German Literature, 1766/67, in *Sämtliche Werke* (Collected Works, Vol. 1, pp. 365-366.))

<sup>38</sup> Among them also the young Goethe, who met Herder in Strasburg in 1770. Herder introduced the young student to the works of Rousseau, Shakespeare, and MacPherson, prompting Goethe to rhapsodize about the Germanic origins of the Gothic style in his *Von deutscher Baukunst* (On German Architecture, 1773), the beginning of his Storm and Stress period.

Copenhagen, where he first became acquainted with Scandinavian history and culture. It was James MacPherson's *Ossian Odes* (1760-63), however, which awakened in Klopstock a keen interest in the Celtic/Nordic theme with its descriptions of northern nature and its distinct mythology. Klopstock adopted the Celtic/Nordic theme and 'Germanized' it by inserting the figure of Hermann. The result was a trilogy of plays<sup>39</sup> written in the alleged style of Celtic bards in which the Cheruscan chief appears as a Nordic Redeemer rising from a forest of oaks, that Germanic tree *par excellence*:<sup>40</sup>

*Du gleichst der dicksten, schattigsten Eiche  
Im innersten Hain,  
Der höchsten, ältesten, heiligsten Eiche,  
O Vaterland.*

You are like the strongest, mightiest oak  
In the innermost grove,  
Like the highest, oldest, most sacred oak,  
Oh Fatherland!

Here the oak symbolized the united German nation, standing strong and tall from many centuries of growth, towering over the other nations together forming the grove of Europe.

Klopstock's interpretation of Hermann was the first national epic of Germany, suggesting the leap from Hermann as a national hero to Germany as a heroic nation. It also was the first of more than 75 dramas, odes, poems and novels that celebrated Hermann over the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>41</sup> Yet, if Hermann was the quintessential Germanic hero, so was his ally in his fight

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<sup>39</sup> *Hermannsschlacht* (Hermann's Battle, 1769), *Hermann und die Fürsten*, (Hermann and the Princes, 1784), and *Hermanns Tod*, (The Death of Hermann, 1787).

<sup>40</sup> Chorus from *Hermanns Schlacht*, translation from Kuehnemund 1953, pp. 79 and 119. It was such emotive poetry and the oak-laden paintings artists such as by Karl-Wilhelm Kolbe (nick-named *Eichen Kolbe* or 'Oaken Kolbe') and Pascha Weitz that led Schama to speak of a "virtual oak-fetish in the art and literature of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries." (Schama 1995, p. 103). On the Germanization of the oak in general, see Hürlimann's *Die Eiche, heiliger Baum der deutschen Nation* (The Oak, Holy Tree of the German Nation, 1987), the title of which is a pun on the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. On the Germanization of the oak in landscape painting, see the chapter *Eichenwälder und ihre symbolische Bedeutung am Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Oak Forests and their Symbolic Meaning at the End of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century) in Müller-Hofstede 1974.

<sup>41</sup> There had been other thematizations of Hermann before, for example, by Johann Elias Schlegel in 1743 and by Justus Möser in 1749.

against the Romans: the German forest. Through Klopstock's integration of the forest into the plot, the forest, and particularly the oak, had become a 'German' theme.<sup>42</sup>

Klopstock's creation of a distinctly Germanic mood with its unity of nature, art, and religion was developed further by the Romantics. Yet while they continued to rework the Classical sources, the Romantics mostly championed the medieval era, which they saw as the last time that such a comprehensive harmony of all aspects of creation had been achieved. More importantly, they argued, that harmony had been achieved in an exemplary fashion in the 'German Middle Ages.' Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853) and his friend Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder (1773-1798), for example, tried to convince Germans from all Germanies that they shared a common cultural heritage in the so-called *altdeutsch* (Old German, here in the sense of an adjective roughly equivalent to 'Reformation-era') traditions that set them apart from the other nations of Europe. In their writings, they took the reader back to the German Middle Ages and celebrated everything *altdeutsch*: Gothic cathedrals and half-timbered houses, the *vaterländische* (fatherlandish) art of Albrecht Dürer and Hans Sachs, the Rhine and Nuremberg, folk songs and traditional garb, the German language – and the German forest because in the forest they saw both a physical remnant of, and spiritual gateway to, that past era of German greatness, the 'Wooden Age' of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries:

So Franz wandered forth and finally lost the road by coming into a thick forest, which seemed to have no end. He walked further and still came upon no exit; the woodland became thicker and thicker. [...]

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<sup>42</sup> Klopstock was also one of the first *vaterländisch* poets who wrote odes and hymns to the German people (*Mein Vaterland* (My Fatherland)) and developed a vision of a German polity built on a foundation of German custom, rather than a general Western culture (*Die Deutsche Gelehrtenrepublik* (The German Republic of Savants, 1774)). Kuehnemund describes Klopstock as "a passionate singer of religion, of nature as God's creation, of mother-tongue, love, fatherland and friendship in a world where Reason and Rococo seem to rule supreme. . . . He and Herder, above all others, have filled the terms of *Volk*, *Volkstum*, *Deutschtum*, *Nation*, and *Vaterland* with a new and mystic element, thus giving them an almost virgin ring. This emotional factor is difficult for the non-German to grasp." (Kuehnemund 1953, p. 73).

While Franz spoke to himself in this way, he stepped out of the forest and a beautiful plain with pleasant hills lay before him. In the distance crucifixes and a few small chapels stood in the glow of the morning sun.<sup>43</sup>

Through writings such as this, the forest gained an increasingly positive role in the public imagination. While it was still seen as a wondrous and mythical place, it became less threatening and more intriguing. By 1797, the new mood had become distinct enough to allow Tieck to distil it into a single expression: *Waldeinsamkeit* or ‘forest solitude’:<sup>44</sup>

*Waldeinsamkeit,  
Die mich erfreut,  
So morgen wie heut  
In ewiger Zeit,  
O wie mich freut  
Waldeinsamkeit*

Forest solitude  
You delight me  
Tomorrow as today  
And for all Eternity –  
My delight,  
Forest solitude.

In this poem and the framing tale, Tieck established the idea of the forest as a ‘splendid isolation’: spatially and temporally removed from reality with its harsh atmosphere of struggle, *Waldeinsamkeit* offered a refuge where the soul, embodied by the figure of the solitary Romantic wanderer,<sup>45</sup> found solace and peace through communion with nature. *Waldeinsamkeit* became a cornerstone in the construction of the Romantic German forest on

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<sup>43</sup> This passage is from Tieck’s *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen* (Franz Sternbald’s Travels) of 1798 (pp. 150 and 152), a novel about the wanderings of a pupil of Dürer who defends his passion for *altdeutsch* art against his companion’s preference for the Italian Renaissance. In that same year, Tieck also published his friend Wackenroder’s *Herzensergiessungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders* (Effusions of an Art-Loving Monk), a series of fictitious biographies of German artists from the Middle Ages that was the first programmatic statement of a Romantic theory of art.

<sup>44</sup> *Der blonde Eckbert* (The Fair-Haired Eckbert). This literal translation is based on Siegel 1978, p. 26. Below is a contemporary poetic translation by Thomas Carlyle from “German Romance: Specimens of Its Chief Authors,” 1827, Vol. II, Edinburgh: William Tait, p. 26:

Alone in a wood so gay  
‘Tis good to stay,  
Morrow like to-day,  
For ever and aye:  
O, I do love to stay,  
Alone in a wood so gay.

<sup>45</sup> Another concept pioneered by Tieck, this time in his Oriental tale *Almansur* of 1790.

which virtually all later Romantic poets and writers built.<sup>46</sup> No one, however, did so more often or more skillfully than Joseph Freiherr von Eichendorff (1788-1857), the “poet of the German forest.”<sup>47</sup> In numerous poems and stories, Eichendorff celebrated *Waldeinsamkeit* as a world apart:<sup>48</sup>

*Waldeinsamkeit!*  
*Du grünes Revier,*  
*wie liegt so weit*  
*die Welt von hier!*

Forest solitude!  
Thou green realm,  
how far away  
the world is from here!

The forest that provided such a solitude was a world of innocence and redemption in precious isolation from humans with their desires and plottings. It allowed individuals to spatially separate themselves from their fellow-humans and their wickedness. At the same time, the forest was also a temporal elysium:

And for ever and ever, Siglhupfer remained blissfully lost in the forest.<sup>49</sup>

In this final sentence of Eichendorff’s tale *Die Glücksritter*, the forest becomes nothing less than a gate to time itself, opening the way to eternal life. Yet, as we saw in the works by Tieck and Wackenroder, the temporal dimension of the forest was not just extended forward to an individual spiritual future, but also backward to a collective German past.<sup>50</sup> And it was precisely from this function as a presumed window to the past that the forest derived most of its political appeal to the German patriots.

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<sup>46</sup> Almost 50 years later, in 1841, the late August Wilhelm Schlegel called the concept of *Waldeinsamkeit* the “quintessence” of Tieck’s entire oeuvre. (Tieck, *Schriften* (Writings), ed. by G. Reimer. 1828-1854, vol. xxvi, p. 484).

<sup>47</sup> Rubner 1981, p. 306.

<sup>48</sup> *Der Umkehrende* (The One who Turns Around, 1816).

<sup>49</sup> *Die Glücksritter* (The Adventurers, 1841).

<sup>50</sup> This should come as no surprise as Tieck was deeply influenced by Herder’s historicism. (Cf. Mitchell 1993, p. 79).

Tieck and Wackenroder had popularized the notion of the forest as a time warp that could take the reader back to the glorified German Middle Ages.<sup>51</sup> While his friend Wackenroder died before he could further develop this notion, Tieck went on to become one of the most influential authors of the Romantic movement and soon transferred the new concept to other writers in the Romantic circles of Jena, Halle, and Berlin.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, Tieck inspired the emergent Romantic school of painting at Dresden with his notion of the German Romantic forest.

### 3.4 Caspar David Friedrich and the Dresden Patriots

In 1802, the Romantic painter Philipp Otto Runge (1777-1810) introduced Tieck to a fellow-painter who had set up his studio at Dresden and who greatly admired Tieck: Caspar David Friedrich. As Tieck himself explained, the admiration soon became mutual:

[Runge] led me to a very special poetic landscape painter, Friedrich, born in Swedish Pomerania. His truly wonderful nature impressed me deeply. . . . Friedrich expresses the religious mood and

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<sup>51</sup> A few years later, in 1804, Friedrich Schlegel took up this notion when he demanded in his *Aesthetics* that "Old German poetry and modern Romantic productions should be the constant companions of our young artist and will lead him back to the fairyland of the old Romantic days, chasing from his eyes the prosaic mist engendered by the imitation of the pagan antique and unsound babble of conventional art." (p. 147, quoted in Siegel 1978, p. 43).

<sup>52</sup> During the years of French occupation, these artistic circles produced some of the most strident political agitators for German liberation. At Jena, for example, Tieck met August Wilhelm Schlegel and Novalis, whose poetry also celebrated the Romantic forest as a reminder of past German greatness; while the philosophers Fichte and Schleiermacher looked more to the future than the past and were more openly political in their writings and public speeches on German national renewal (For example, Fichte's 14 *Addresses to the German Nation* and Schleiermacher's *Hallenser Sermons*, both of 1807/08 (cf. Schlosser 1983, p. 177; and Siegel 1978, pp. 18-22). In his *Addresses*, Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814), the foremost philosopher of his time, used the example of the successful rebellion of the ancient Germans against the Romans in AD 9 to inspire his audience to rebel against the French: "All the blessings which the Romans offered them, as a result of which they would have had to become non-German, meant slavery. They would have become half-Roman. They assumed as a matter of course that every German would rather die than become a Roman, and that a true German would want to live only to be and remain a German and to bring up his children as Germans." (Translation based on Snyder 1958, pp. 134-135).

excitement that recently seems to have stirred our German world in a particular manner, in sensitive, solemn, melancholy landscape motives.<sup>53</sup>

Tieck thought that Friedrich had found a way to paint the ideas of Romanticism as “largely a reality,” thereby making them intelligible in a way that the obscurer poetry of Novalis could not.<sup>54</sup> In other words, Friedrich’s art translated Romanticism into a visual experience, thus popularizing it with a wider audience.<sup>55</sup>

During the first decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Friedrich was in contact with many of the Romantics, exchanging and developing artistic ideas. At the same time, and partly as a result, his house in Dresden became the meeting place of a circle of patriots, a mixed lot of poets and painters, writers and officers, philosophers and theologians. For all of them, Friedrich’s house was a place where they could meet like-minded patriots and debate ideas about how to mobilize the German people against the French occupiers. This is how Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert (1780-1853), the most popular nature philosopher of the time, remembered the meetings at Friedrich’s house in his autobiography:

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<sup>53</sup> From Tieck’s autobiographical *Eine Sommerreise* (A Summer’s Journey, 1834), quoted in Siegel 1978, p. 38. Dresden, the residence of the kings of Saxony, at the time was the focal point for German landscape painting. Besides its beautiful setting in the Elbe valley and its proximity to a wide variety of landscape forms, Dresden also boasted an art academy along with its accompanying gallery and exhibitions. A substantial number of artists took up residence in Dresden to benefit from these opportunities to train and market their skills. At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the most noted German-speaking landscape painters lived in Dresden: Adrian Zingg and Johann Christian Klengel. Both were instrumental in ‘Germanizing’ the Dutch prototypes of landscape painting and had a formative influence on Friedrich. (Cf. Mitchell 1993, p. 27).

<sup>54</sup> After Novalis’ death in 1801, Tieck edited his literary estate (cf. Krieger 1985, p. 9). Tieck’s comment on Friedrich is quoted in Koerner 1990, p. 23.

<sup>55</sup> Naturally, not everyone was willing to share Tieck’s enthusiasm for the new Romantic blending of religion, nature, and art that Friedrich’s paintings expressed. In 1808, Friedrich’s first commission for an altar painting led to a heated debate that rippled through the literary world for two years. The painting in question showed a crucifix on top of a rugged rock outcropping, surrounded by spruce trees. Writing from the prevailing neoclassical perspective on religious art (and, adding insult to injury, partly in French), the eminent critic Chamberlain von Ramdohr accused Friedrich of profanity and insolence: “It is true presumption when landscape painting wants to slink into the church and creep on to the altars.” (quoted in Koerner 1990, p. 49; see also Krieger 1985, p. 11).

So we sat there and stood there . . . with our small circle of friends and companions of our youth . . . as if behind a high wall, even if often with a heavy heart about the universal want of the fatherland, protected and isolated from the outward raging storm. [Dresden belonged to the kingdom of Saxony which was technically allied with Napoleon, M.I. ] . . . I had very soon formed an acquaintance and friendship with a man from whom one could hear the most about the political storms most frequently. He was no famous military person or famous diplomat, but the noble Pomeranian, C. D. Friedrich, the highly honoured landscape painter of his time and in that circle. . . . I often came to listen to Friedrich, to the outpourings of his heart . . . and never went away without being comforted by many things.<sup>56</sup>

In Friedrich's studio, a remarkable synaesthetic spirit was in the air: poets influenced painters, painters inspired new poetry, publicists reviewed the paintings and disseminated the national idea in their journals and pamphlets. The subject of all their thoughts and actions was Germany: a united, free, and democratic Germany. Each in their own way, they promoted the idea of German nationhood and insurrection, and often Tieck's Romantic German forest formed part of their artistic and political appeals to the German people.

In this section, I will look at the works of Friedrich and his associates as examples of how German Romantic artists signified the forest as German. The emphasis on Friedrich and his Dresden circle should not be taken to mean that their thinking was unique or that there were no other German artists and writers celebrating the forest as fatherlandish. In fact, Friedrich and his associates were in frequent contact with the Romantics in the nearby circles of Jena, Halle, and Berlin, as well as those further afield in Göttingen, Heidelberg, Vienna and Koblenz.<sup>57</sup> Common to all of these patriotic paintings and writings is the use of the forest

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<sup>56</sup> From *Der Erwerb aus einem vergangenen und die Erwartung von einem zukünftigen Leben* (Gains from a Life Past and Expectations from a Life to Come, 1855), quoted in Siegel 1978, p. 71. Schubert founded his reputation on a 1808 book entitled *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaft* (Views from the Night Side of the Natural Sciences), an organicist philosophy of nature in which he argued the existence of a night side of the universe. The Romantics embraced his theory as it allowed as normal many states of mind that were fundamental to the Romantics, but anathema to rationality, such as clairvoyance, dreaming, and rapture.

<sup>57</sup> (Cf. Schlosser 1983, p. 177). In fact, some of the connections I present were the result of exchanges between these circles that took place away from Dresden.

as a representation of the Germanic past. By conjuring up that past through the analogy of the forest and the inspiring example of Hermann as described by Tacitus, the patriotic intellectuals and artists around Friedrich tried to exhort the German people to conceive of themselves as the heirs of the proud tribes who once defeated the Roman empire. The reference was clear: the Germans could equally well fight off the French yoke if only they could feel and fight as one people.

One of the publicists who was associated with Friedrich and who pursued that nationalist goal with all his might was Ernst Moritz Arndt (1769-1860). Using his pen to stoke hatred against the French at every opportunity,<sup>58</sup> Arndt published an extensive body of pamphlets, songs, speeches, and poems, with some going through twelve editions and reaching a total print run of upwards of 60,000 copies, a truly enormous print run for that time.<sup>59</sup> One of Arndt's schemes involved planting strips of anti-French defensive forests in which the French army was to become entangled. Meanwhile, the Germans should hold these forests sacred as their Germanic forefathers had done:

They have to remain and they have to be recreated, those old Germanic forests. Nowhere must the German man be in want of trees.<sup>60</sup>

This equation of the forest and Germanness and manliness was a powerful and suggestive

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<sup>58</sup> Arndt by no means discredited himself with his rabid denouncements of the French: In 1848, he was elected to the first German parliament, during the Third *Reich* he was called a 'social politician,' and the University of Greifswald, where he was made professor in 1806, still bears his name.

<sup>59</sup> *Katechismus für den deutschen Kriegs- und Wehrmann* (Catechism for the German Soldierman). Another of Arndt's pamphlets, *Was bedeutet Landsturm und Landwehr* (What is the Meaning of Reserve and Militia?), reached between 76,000 and 100,000 copies in ten editions between 1813 and 1819. By comparison, most books at that time did not exceed 1,000 copies, most journals had less than 2,000 subscribers, and the biggest newspapers sold no more than 5,000 copies (cf. Schäfer 1974, Appendix IV). According to a contemporary source cited by Schäfer, these figures should be multiplied by five to arrive at an approximate number of readers for each printed item.

<sup>60</sup> *Sie müssen bleiben und sie müssen wieder geschaffen werden, die alten germanischen Haine, dem deutschen Menschen müssen nirgends Bäume fehlen.* (Quoted in Schoenichen 1926, pp. 92-93).

poetic device that Arndt used repeatedly. In the following poem, he tried to rally the Germans after the death of Ferdinand von Schill, a Prussian officer and hero of the Coalition Wars, who in 1809 had tried to start a general uprising against Napoleon. But the insurrection failed: Schill died fighting, the officers of his dragoon regiment were executed on the spot, and 500 of his enlisted men were sent to French galleys. Now Arndt fanned the public outrage:<sup>61</sup>

*Dann, auf getürmten Leichen  
Der Schänder schreitend, pflücket  
Den Schmuck, der Freie schmücket,  
Das Laub der deutschen Eichen;  
Dann schwört den Schwur der Treue  
Dem lieben Vaterlande  
Daß nie Despotenschande  
Die heilige Erd' entweihe.*

When, upon the corpses piled  
The violator strides, snatching  
The jewels that adorn the free:  
Those leaves of German oaks.  
Then swear the oath of loyalty  
To this fatherland so dear  
That never shameful despotism  
May desecrate its holy ground.

Here Arndt entreats Germans to swear allegiance to the new idea of the nation, the *Vaterland*, and stop the *Usurpator* from further stripping the German forest/nation of its finest leaves/youth. Arndt uses the leaves of ‘German oaks’ as an emblem of honour and valour bestowed on those who fought bravely – and died – in battle. But more than that, the oak is the symbol of the fatherland and those who served it. In 1813, the Prussian king formalized the oak leaf as a new emblem of Germany when he instituted a medal for bravery in the Wars of Liberation (1813-1815): in the *Eiserne Kreuz* (Iron Cross), the Teutonic cross as the established symbol of Germany was joined by a flanking cluster of oak leaves.

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<sup>61</sup> *Aufruf an die Deutschen bei Schills Tode* (Call to the Germans upon the Death of Schill, 1809). Other works by Arndt with titles that speak for themselves: *Katechismus des deutschen Soldaten* (Catechism for the German Soldier) with a chapter on the *Erziehung des Deutschen* (The Education of the German, 1809); *Ueber Volkshaß* (On National Hatred, 1813); *Lieder für Deutsche* (Songs for Germans, 1813) and *Kriegslieder* (War Songs, 1813); *Der Rhein, Deutschlands Strom, aber nicht Deutschlands Grenze* (The Rhine, Germany’s River, but not Germany’s Border, 1813). For a detailed analysis of Arndt’s impact as a political publicist during the Wars of Liberation, see Schäfer 1974).

One of the young volunteers whose memory the new medal was intended to honour was the poet Theodor Körner (1791-1813), also a regular at Friedrich's house and a close friend of the painter. In February of 1813, when the Prussian king appealed to the German people to form *Freikorps* (free corps), Körner was one of several friends of Friedrich who joined the *Lützower Jäger* (Lützow Rangers)<sup>62</sup> while Friedrich, too old to fight himself, sponsored their equipment.<sup>63</sup> Up to the eve of his death, Körner composed patriotic songs and poems which he recited to his comrades to raise their spirits before battle. His untimely death in a skirmish in August 1813 surrounded Körner with a tragic aura, prompting his father, Christian Gottfried Körner (1756-1831), the poet and intimus of Schiller, to publish the songs in the collection *Leier und Schwert* (Lyre and Sword) through which they gained wide popularity.<sup>64</sup> While Arndt was whipping up the patriotic feelings of Germans with his incendiary prose, Körner's lyric style was set in a more somber mood. Still, just like in Arndt's poem, the forest and particularly the oak stood for Germany's glorious past:<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> The free corps was named after its founder and commander, Ludwig Adolf Wilhelm Freiherr von Lützow (1782-1834), who later became a general in the Prussian army.

<sup>63</sup> In the spring of 1813, Dresden alone contributed over 500 volunteers to the free corps (cf. Gärtner 1988, p. 89). Most of these volunteers were probably from the substantial student population, which made up one fifth of Dresden's total population (cf. Koerner 1990, p. 94). By June of 1813, the Lützow Rangers comprised three battalions and numbered 3,200. (cf. Münter 1988, p. 42).

<sup>64</sup> Several of his poems later formed the basis for songs by Franz Schubert (1797-1828), while his *Gebet während der Schlacht* (Prayer during Battle) of 1813 was set to music by the composer Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826):

<i>Gott, ich erkenne dich!</i>	God, I acknowledge thee!
<i>So im herbstlichen Rauschen der Blätter</i>	So when autumn leaves rustle around me,
<i>Als im Schlachtendonnerwetter,</i>	So when the thunders of battle surround me.
<i>Urquell der Gnade, erkenn ich dich.</i>	Fountain of grace, I acknowledge thee –
<i>Vater du, segne mich!</i>	Father, oh bless thou me!

(Translation from: Dulcken, Henry William (1856) *The Book of German Songs*, London: Ward and Lock.)

<sup>65</sup> *Mein Vaterland* (My Fatherland, 1813).

*Wie heißt des Sängers Vaterland? -  
 Jetzt über seiner Söhne Leichen,  
 Jetzt weint es unter fremden Streichen;  
 Sonst hieß es nur das Land der Eichen,  
 Das freie Land, das deutsche Land  
 So hieß mein Vaterland.*

The bard's fatherland – what is its name?  
 Today it weeps over the bodies of its sons,  
 It weeps under the foreign knout;  
 But once it was called the land of oaks,  
 The free land, the German land  
 Such was called my fatherland.

The land of the oaks is the land of the free is the land of the Germans. With this equation Körner conjures up the free Germanic past to serve as an inspiration to the German people of his day: had not the Germanic tribes, once they united to fight the common enemy, become strong enough to defend their freedom against the Romans? Körner reminded the Germans that they had a proud tradition of freedom from foreign domination and that the current situation was intolerable. Where Arndt preached hatred against the French, Körner lamented the German misery, as in the following poem written in 1810:

## Die Eichen

Abend wird's, des Tages Stimmen schweigen,  
 Röther strahlt der Sonne letztes Glühn;  
 Und hier sitz' ich unter euren Zweigen,  
 Und das Herz ist mir so voll, so kühn!  
 Alter Zeiten alte treue Zeugen,  
 Schmückt euch doch des Lebens frisches Grün,  
 Und der Vorwelt kräftige Gestalten  
 sind uns noch in eurer Pracht erhalten.

Viel des Edlen hat die Zeit zertrümmert,  
 Viel des Schönen starb den frühen Tod;  
 Durch die reichen Blätterkränze schimmert  
 Seinen Abschied dort das Abendroth.  
 Doch um das Verhängniß unbekümmert,  
 hat vergebens euch die Zeit bedroht,  
 Und es ruft mir aus der Zweige Wehen:  
 Alles Große muß im Tod bestehen!

Und ihr habt bestanden! Unter allen  
 Grünt ihr frisch und kühn mit starkem Muth  
 Wohl kein Pilger wird vorüberwallen,  
 Der in eurem Schatten nicht geruht.  
 Und wenn herbstlich eure Blätter fallen,  
 Todt auch sind sie euch ein köstlich Gut;  
 Denn verwesend werden eure Kinder  
 Eurer nächsten Frühlingspracht Begründer.

Schönes Bild von alter deutscher Treue  
 Wie sie bess're Zeiten angeschaut,  
 Wo in freudig kühner Todesweihe  
 Bürger ihre Staaten festgebaut. -  
 Ach, was hilft's, daß ich den Schmerz erneue,  
 Sind doch alle diesem Schmerz vertraut!  
 Deutsches Volk, du herrlichstes von allen  
 Deine Eichen steh'n - du bist gefallen!

## The Oaks

Evening comes, the day's voices hush,  
 Redder shines the last glow of the sun;  
 And here I sit underneath your branches,  
 And my heart within me is so full, so brave;  
 Old loyal witnesses of former times,  
 Life's fresh green bedecks you,  
 And the strong figures of ages long past  
 Are still preserved for us in your splendour.

Much of the noble past has shattered,  
 Much beauty died an untimely death;  
 Through the rich, leafy wreaths  
 The evening glow shimmers there its farewell.  
 But by faith undaunted,  
 Time has threatened you in vain,  
 And from the rustling branches comes the call:  
 All that is great must overcome death!

And you have subsisted! Amidst everything  
 You grew anew with bold strong courage.  
 Probably no pilgrim will have wandered by  
 Who did not rest in your shade;  
 And when your autumn leaves fall,  
 They are still your precious goods;  
 Because decaying, your children become  
 The beginning of your next glorious springtime.

Lovely picture of old German faithfulness,  
 When it gazed upon better times,  
 When in joyously bold, deathly sacrifice  
 Citizens built firm their nations.  
 Oh, what good does it do to think of past grief?  
 All are familiar with this pain!  
 German nation, you most glorious of all,  
 Your oak trees stand - you have fallen!

In this poem, Körner tells the history of Germany through its tree, the oak. Gazing into the oak trees above him, the poet is transported by these “old loyal witnesses” to a better past. Through this year’s fresh foliage that adorns and nourishes the trees, he can see the “strong figures” of their gnarled trunks and branches that were formed many years ago. Likewise, the German youth fighting for Germany in Körner’s day is nothing but the latest growth on the limbs of a continuously growing stem, the nation, and in their actions we can see the will of the whole people. True, there is death and decay as leaves are shed and even limbs fall away, but in this death there is the promise of return as every fallen leaf contributes to next year’s growth again, making the tree as a whole mightier than before. Is not the sacrifice of the soldier for his fatherland the same, Körner asks, when he soaks the soil with his blood so his people may live? He knows that the fates of battle or the tooth of time may kill a part, whether leaf or young soldier, but they cannot overcome the whole: “Time has threatened you in vain.” As a whole, the oak grows and thrives, its roots reaching back beyond the advent of Christianity and far into Germanic times: the German oak was already there, offering its shade, before the first pilgrim walked the German lands.

But then the poet despairs: in their might and fortitude built up over centuries, the oaks are stronger than ever, yet the people whose life they watched unfold under their canopies, the German people, are weaker than ever. Only the oak remains now to tell “of old German faithfulness” when the German people defied all odds and carved an empire for themselves. Körner ends the poem with a sigh, resigning himself to the knowledge that all of this is plain to see for the German people, but that they continue to fail to take their fate into their own hands. Körner does not rouse the fighting spirit of the Germans as Arndt tries to do, but lets them draw their own conclusions from his allegoric depiction of their fate. In laying out

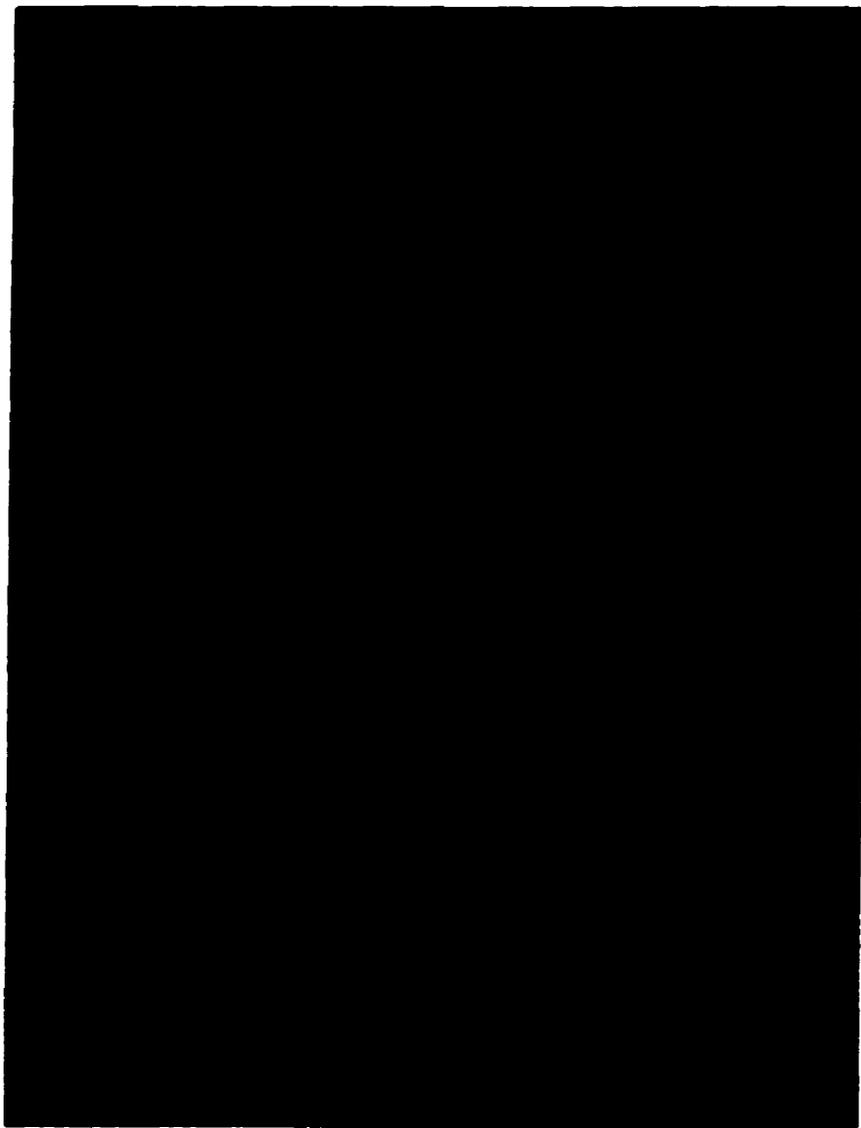
their misery before them, Körner forces them to acknowledge their meekness, but he also presents them with the inspiring example of the oak. Remember, he calls out to the “German nation, you most glorious of all / your oak trees stand” – and so may you if you remember who you are!

In memory of both the poet and the poem, another associate of Friedrich, Georg Friedrich Kersting (1785-1847) painted a scene called *Lützower Jäger auf Vorposten* (Lützow Rangers on Outpost Duty, 1815, Figure 3.1) that captures the mood of Körner’s poem on canvas. Of Friedrich’s friends in the Lützow Rangers, only his pupil Kersting returned, the others were killed: Friesen, Hartmann, and Körner.<sup>66</sup> Kersting expressed his sorrow over the loss of his friends in the painting that shows the three volunteers on outpost duty in a dense forest of majestic oaks, presumably on the eve of Körner’s death. All three wear the distinctive black uniform of the Lützow corps,<sup>67</sup> *altdeutsch* berets, and, ominously, the Iron Cross. The upper half of the scene is filled with low hanging branches, brushed by the fading light of a low sun. The three figures are sheltered by the heavy branches overhead, concealed from the enemy by the mighty trunks around them. We are completely enveloped by the forest, joining the rangers on guard. The outer world, the open field where the enemy could appear

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<sup>66</sup> Friedrich Friesen was an assistant to *Turnvater* Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778-1852), the founder of the patriotic ‘gymnastics’ movement and a nationalist agitator. During the French occupation, Jahn organized gymnastic exercises designed to revive the morale of his compatriots by improving their physical fitness. Not by coincidence, they also served as a form of premilitary education. He commanded a battalion in the *Lützow Rangers* and later, as Arndt had done before him, suggested growing a *Bannwald* (forest barrier) against future French incursions. Like his mentor Jahn, Friesen was one of the earliest spokesmen against the French. Ferdinand Hartmann was a painter-friend from Dresden.

<sup>67</sup> The black uniform with its red lapels and gold (brass) buttons provided the underground democratic student fraternities of the restoration period with their emblematic colours. In the Weimar Republic and the Federal Republic, these ‘democratic’ colours were adopted as national colours. By contrast, the empire of 1871 used the ‘monarchistic’ colours black/white/red, as did the Nazis until 1935, when the swastika banner became the official flag (which consisted of a black swastika in a white circle before a red background).



***Figure 3.1: Lützower Jäger auf Vorposten* by Georg Friedrich Kersting (1815)**

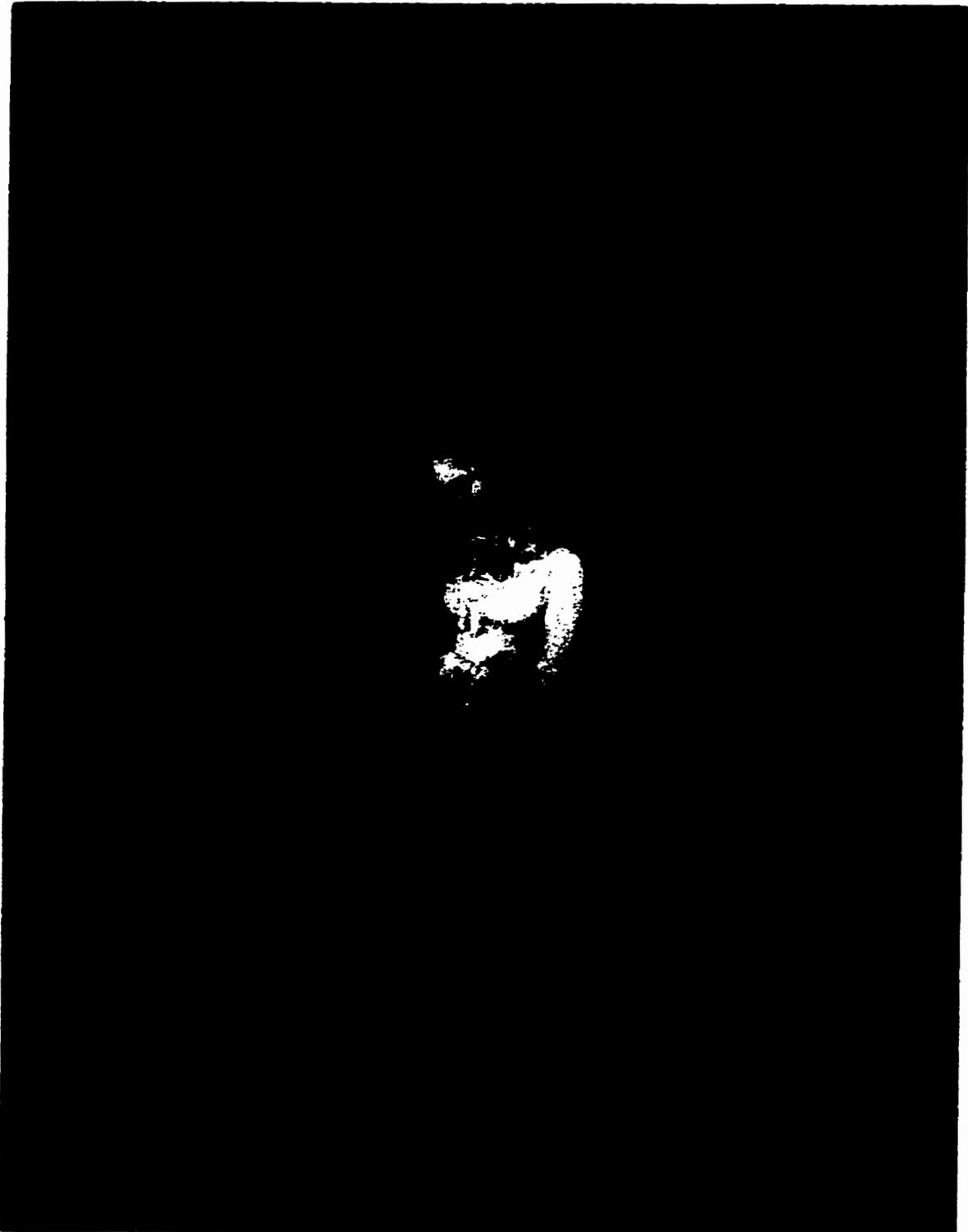
at any moment is visible only through a few gaps between the tree trunks. The glare of the outside world seems far away, while our eyes have adjusted to discern the myriad shades of light inside the forest. The glare of the evening light beyond the trees in the west is the Mediterranean culture of the French, already waning, yet still intent on prying open the German forest and piercing its mystic twilight with the beam of Rationalism. In this

allegory, the Romantic idea of the forest weds the sentiment of national fervour to produce a telling symbol of ‘us vs. them’: here is the German in his ‘natural habitat’ of the German forest, ready to defend his realm – and vice versa, for the German oaks are guarding the rangers just as they are guarded by them.

In the twilight among the oaks are the three rangers, motionless and silent as the trees themselves. They do not face one another, and seem lost in contemplation. Nothing in their posture suggests that they seek quarrel: calmly cradling their rifles, they merely stand ready to defend the green world of which they seem a part. In a companion picture, Kersting expressed how their death had indeed made them part of the German forest. In *Die Kranzwinderin* (The Wreath-Weaver, 1814, Figure 3.2), a young woman in a white *altdeutsch* dress<sup>68</sup> sits in a forest very similar to that of the Outpost. Again the mood is quiet, but not somber: the young woman is graceful and composed, a truly cultured Germania. She is not afraid in this forest, for it is hers. From oakleaves, she fashions wreaths for the three fallen heroes, but they are the wreaths of victory, not those of mourning. The three enormous

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<sup>68</sup> As mentioned earlier, the early Romantics had glorified the supposed traditional garb of the German townsman of the Reformation era. In 1814, Arndt codified these ideas into a new national costume in his book *Über Sitte, Mode und Kleidertracht* (On Custom, Style, and Costume): high-waisted, high-collared, long-sleeved dresses for women, and broad velvet berets, shoulder-length hair, and wide cloaks for men. Arndt called the men’s dress “natural and manly” and said that those who wore it contributed to the regeneration of Germany (pp. 50-51). During the years of occupation and the Wars of Liberation, the *altdeutsch* garb became a patriotic symbol in the paintings of Kersting and Friedrich among others. After 1815, however, when the nationalist movement leaned on the princes to make good on their promises of democratic and social reforms, the *altdeutsch* garb became associated with democratic tendencies and in the reactionary Karlsbad decrees of 1819 even was outlawed as *Demagogentracht* (‘demagogues’ dress). ‘Demagogue’ was a “derogatory term used by conservatives for someone who espoused the ideal of a unified German state established by constitution and governed with the consent of its citizens.” The Karlsbad decrees of September 1819 were initiated by Prussia and Austria, but implemented all over Germany as a way of suppressing the national and liberal ‘demagogues.’ Passed in response to the assassination of the anti-liberal playwright August von Kotzebue by a democratic fraternity student, the decrees “limited freedom of the press, banned from the schools and universities teachers professing liberal or nationalist ideas, forbade student fraternities of all kinds and outlawed the *altdeutsch* costume” (Koerner 1990, p. 243). They “suppressed liberty in the Germanies for a full generation, and, in effect, determined what kind of political system the Germanies were to have for the time being.” (Snyder 1958, p. 158).



***Figure 3.2: Die Kranzwinderin*** by Georg Friedrich Kersting (1815)

oak trunks closest to her are inscribed with the names of Friesen, Hartmann, and Körner: the three fallen rangers are gone, but they live on in (and as) the forest of the nation that preserves their memory. Whether as trees or as youthful soldiers, Friesen, Hartmann, Körner, and all the other heroes of the Wars of Liberation shelter Germania, protecting her from violation.

This reciprocity and interchangeability of trees and men is also an integral part of Eichendorff's patriotic poetry. He, too, had joined the Lützow Rangers in 1813, dedicating many poems to his fellow combatants. As in his earlier poetry, he still portrayed the forest as the symbol of a better world to which humans could only aspire, but now Eichendorff called upon Germans to fulfil their duty as guardians of the forest as the site of that utopia. In Eichendorff's poems of that period, we can discern the same imagery as in Kersting's paintings. Men and trees become one, together forming a formidable force because they are unyielding:<sup>69</sup>

*Gleichwie die Stämme in dem Wald  
wolln wir zusammenhalten,  
ein feste Burg, Trutz der Gewalt,  
verbleiben treu die Alten.*

*Like the trees of the forest  
we shall stand by one another,  
a mighty castle that defies intrusion,  
forever loyal we shall be.*

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<sup>69</sup> *Die Tiroler Nachtwache* (Tyrolian Night Watch, 1810).

because they are loyal:<sup>70</sup>

*Banner, der so kühle wallt!  
Unter deinen grüne Wogen  
hast du treu uns auferzogen,  
frommer Sagen Aufenthalt!  
Lebe wohl,  
lebe wohl, du schöner Wald!*

*Was wir still gelobt im Wald,  
wollens draußen ehrlich halten,  
ewig bleiben treu die Alten:  
Deutsch Panier, das rauschend wallt  
lebe wohl,  
schirm dich Gott, du schöner Wald!*

**Banner, wafting so briskly!  
Beneath your waves of green  
you faithfully did raise us,  
you home of pious tales!  
Farewell,  
farewell, you forest beautiful!**

**In the forest once we swore a silent oath,  
and now, outside, we must obey,  
forever faithful we must remain:  
German banner, wafting briskly  
farewell,  
protect thee God, you forest beautiful!**

and because they protect one another:<sup>71</sup>

*Die jungen Jäger sich zeigen  
dort drüben im grünen Wald,  
bald schimmernd zwischen den Zweigen,  
bald lauernd im Hinterhalt.*

**Glimpse if you can the young rangers  
over there in the forest so green,  
now shimmering between the branches,  
now lurking in ambush unseen.**

Eichendorff's message was clear: as long as the Germans stood together like trees in a forest, they could not be vanquished. Despite his urging tone, a sprightly mood emanated from Eichendorff's patriotic forest poetry that was different from that of the scornful Arndt or the

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<sup>70</sup> *Der Jäger Abschied* (Rangers' Farewell). Written in 1813, this poem was inspired by a poem called *Im Speßhart* (In the Spessart Forest) that Friedrich Schlegel had published in 1807 already:

*Dann denk' ich, wie vor alter Zeit,  
Du dunkle Waldesnacht!  
Der Freiheit Sohn sich dein gefreut,  
Und was er hier gedacht.*

**Then I think of how, in days of old,  
Thou dark forest night,  
The son of freedom cherished thee  
And what he thought here.**

*Du warst der Alten Haus und Burg;  
Zu diesem grünen Zelt  
Drang keines Feindes Ruf hindurch,  
Frei war da noch die Welt.*

**You were house and castle to the ancients;  
To this camp so green  
No cries of enemies did penetrate -  
The world was free then.**

<sup>71</sup> *Soldatenlied* (Soldier's Song of 1813/14). The poem continues:

*Wohl sinkt da in ewiges Schweigen  
manch schlanke Rittergestalt,  
die andern über ihn steigen,  
hurra! in dem schönen Wald,  
"es funkelt das Blau durch die Bäume -  
ach, Vater, ich komme bald!"*

**Yes, into silence eternal there sinks  
many a slender knight's figure;  
but over his body the others push onward  
hooray! in the beautiful forest,  
"behind the trees blue sparkling I see -  
oh, Father, I soon will be there!"**

melancholy Kömer. Eichendorff's war in the forest was an exciting outing that promised adventure and camaraderie among "the young rangers." Even if some might find their final resting place in the forest, their memories lived on forever in the murmuring of the trees:<sup>72</sup>

*Wo wir ruhen, wo wir wohnen:  
jener Waldeshort  
rauscht mit seinen grünen Kronen  
durch mein Leben fort.*

Wherever we may rest or dwell:  
that forest which we called our shelter  
will murmur with its crowns so green  
on and on through all my life.

Yet Eichendorff's forest did not just murmur of the days of youth and the company of friends, it also preserved the memory of a distant past when Germany was united, strong, and free. In the following passage from his *Ahnung und Gegenwart*, written in 1810 after the failed popular uprisings in Spain and Austria, Eichendorff presented the forest as the refuge of a wholesome peasant freedom from which resistance welled up against the demands of a degenerated courtly elite:

They razed the forest, for they are afraid of the forest and how it speaks to them of the old times.<sup>73</sup>

To Eichendorff's readers, the analogy needed no explanation: the readers imagined themselves as the freedom-loving peasants, while the mannerist courtiers were the French. But what could those courtiers be afraid to hear in the murmur of the forest? It was the voice of freedom itself:

Most of all, it is the refreshing air of an everlasting feeling of freedom that blows towards us from that beautiful forest solitude.<sup>74</sup>

In these passages, Eichendorff associated the forest with the past and with freedom – forest solitude had become a political code word. With this politicization of the concept of forest

<sup>72</sup> *An die Lützowschen Jäger (To the Lützow Rangers, 1814).*

<sup>73</sup> *Die Wälder haben sie ausgehauen, denn sie fürchten sich vor ihnen, weil sie von der alten Zeit zu ihnen sprechen. (Ahnung und Gegenwart: II, p. 293).* Written in 1810-1812, published in 1815.

<sup>74</sup> *Es ist zunächst der erfrischende Hauch eines unverwüstlichen Freiheitsgefühles, der uns aus jener schönen Waldeinsamkeit entgegenweht. (Vermischte Schriften, p. 29).*

solitude, Eichendorff contributed to a current of fatherlandish writing that swelled during the years of French occupation after 1806. As a form of literary protest, fatherlandish books and plays were meant to educate the German people about the current political situation and about their proud past – their Germanic past.

Thus, when the Romantic patriots tried to inspire the Germans to think of themselves as a nation, they referred their readers back to the examples of their Germanic ancestors.

In the forest, the memory of those ancestors was supposedly preserved and it spoke to contemporary Germans through the murmur of the trees:<sup>75</sup>

*Um mich wogt es wie ein Meer,  
Fast wie in vergangenen Tagen,  
Da die Wälder ringsumher  
Rauschten von uralten Sagen.*

It surges 'round me like an ocean  
Almost like in days of yore,  
When the forest all around  
Murmured of the ancient tales.

Yet the forest murmured not just to remind Germans of a great past, but also to ready them for the fight to reclaim that past and their freedom:<sup>76</sup>

*Einen Wald kenn ich dort droben  
Rauschend mit den grünen Kronen  
Stämme brüderlich verwoben,  
Wo das alte Recht mag wohnen.  
Manche auf sein Rauschen merken,  
Und ein neu Geschlecht wird stärken  
Dieser Wald zu deutschen Werken.*

I know a forest way up there  
With green crowns murmuring  
And trunks in brotherly embrace,  
Where the old law survived.  
Many heed its murmurs,  
And it will raise a new generation  
To act in truly German ways.

“To act in truly German ways” was to take up the fight with the foreign oppressors until they were expelled, no matter how much sacrifice it might take:<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> *Der Freiheit Wiederkehr* (The Return of Freedom, 1814).

<sup>76</sup> *An die Meisten* (To the Masses, 1810). Like *The Rangers' Farewell*, this poem was inspired by Friedrich Schlegel's poem *Im Speßhart* of 1807. In Eichendorff's poems, the forest was often situated “way up there” (*dort droben*), as opposed to the ‘world down here.’ While this dichotomy was a means of elevating the forest poetically, it also reflected (and still does) a geographical fact. By the time Eichendorff was writing, the German forest had been mostly cleared for agriculture in the valleys and remained only on the hilltops where soil, water regime, and micro climate were less favourable for agriculture.

<sup>77</sup> *Trost* (Consolation, 1816).

*Im Walde da liegt verfallen  
der alten Helden Haus,  
doch aus den Toren und Hallen  
bricht jährlich der Frühling aus.*

In the forest lies abandoned  
the old heroes' abode,  
but from its doors and halls  
spring breaks forth each year.

*Und wo immer müde Fechter  
sinken im mutigen Strauß,  
es kommen frische Geschlechter  
und fechten es ehrlich aus.*

And wherever tired fighters  
slump in fearless quarrel  
fresh faces will replace them  
and carry on the honest fight.

The “fearless quarrel” had been fought in the forest before by the Germans: it was the *Hermannsschlacht*. While Eichendorff did not name Hermann, his readers knew whom he meant by “the old heroes.” By contrast Arndt, with his usual intensity, grabbed the German people by the lapels after their defeat in 1806 and shook them in Hermann’s name:<sup>78</sup>

Not a tear, Hermann, for your people?  
Not a tear? and dishonor burns,  
And the enemy governs, where the free  
Gained victory and fell!

Not a loud voice, where Luther spoke?  
All thunder which the heavens send  
Should call: People awake! Cowards  
Seize your swords!

Arndt placed Hermann and Luther in a sequence that was to highlight the finest of German achievements *vis-à-vis* the Latin influence.<sup>79</sup> Whether against caesars or popes, the German people had always known how to defend their free ways and now they should accept defeat? Never! Arndt exclaimed with every word he published. After the Russian disaster of the *Grande Armée* in 1812, Arndt even invoked a Holy War against the French:<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> *An die Deutschen* (To the Germans, 1806).

<sup>79</sup> Luther himself was a great admirer of Hermann and on occasion wrote ‘Hermannia’ instead of Germania (cf. Demandt 1990, p. 31).

<sup>80</sup> *Vaterlandslied* (Song for the Fatherland, 1812). Translation modified from Snyder 1958, p. 144.

*So ziehn wir aus zur Hermannsschlacht  
Und wollen Rache haben.*

*Wir wollen heute Mann für Mann  
Mit Blut das Eisen röten,  
Mit Henkersblut, Franzosenblut –  
O süßer Tag der Rache!*

*Ihr Deutschen alle Mann für Mann  
Zum heil'gen Krieg zusammen!*

To Hermann's battle march the brave,  
'Tis fell revenge we brood.

This very day, yes, man for man,  
Will steep in blood the steel.  
In tyrant's blood, in Frenchmen's blood –  
O day of sweet revenge!

All you Germans man for man  
Come fight the Holy War!

Arndt was not alone in spoiling for another *Hermannsschlacht*. Within Friedrich's circle, he was joined by Heinrich von Kleist (1777-1811), a former officer in the Prussian army who now engaged the French with his sharp quill.<sup>81</sup> From his time spent as a French prisoner of war in 1807, Kleist brought back to Dresden and into Friedrich's circle an even stronger hate for the French: "*We are the subjugated peoples of the Romans.*"<sup>82</sup> Living only a few doors from Friedrich, Kleist was one of the focal points of the patriotic group between 1807 and 1809 and it was to them that he first read his inflammatory pieces of those years: *Germania an ihre Kinder* (Germania Addressing her Children, 1809),<sup>83</sup> *Katechismus der Deutschen* (Catechism of the Germans, 1809), and, in desperation over the Austrian defeat at Wagram, *Das letzte Lied* (The Last Song).

Shocked by the failure of the Spanish popular uprising in 1808, Kleist wrote his drama *Die Hermannsschlacht* (Hermann's Battle) during the autumn of 1808 specifically to rouse the German people from their complacency: "I dedicate this to the Germans." It was the first

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<sup>81</sup> Other 'Hermannophiles' included Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué (*Hermann, ein Heldenspiel in 4 Abenteuern*, (Hermann, a Heroic Play in 4 Adventures, 1818)), Grabbe (*Hermannsschlacht*, 1838, posthumously) and Steckling, who published a biography of Hermann in 1816.

<sup>82</sup> In a letter to his sister in 1806, quoted in Kuehnemund 1953, p. 87.

<sup>83</sup> The war song *Germania an ihre Kinder* culminates in the invective against Napoleon: "Will you rise, Germania? Has the day of reckoning come?" (*Stehst Du auf, Germania? Ist der Tag der Rache da?*); and: "Murder him! Judgment Day / Will not ask you for your reasons!" (*Schlagt ihn tot! Das Weltgericht / Fragt nach euren Gründen nicht!*) (translation from Kuehnemund 1953, pp. 90 and 120).

openly political drama with clear references to the contemporary situation, as Kleist himself insisted: "It is meant for the present."<sup>84</sup> The characters are quickly unveiled: Varus was Napoleon, the quibbling Germanic chiefs were the collaborating princes of the Rhenisch Confederation, Marbod (the chief of the Markomanniae who at first supported Hermann but later refused to join his union of Germanic tribes) represented the Austrians who had failed to support the Prussian cause in the Fourth Coalition War of 1806, and Hermann was King Frederick William III of Prussia, the beacon of hope for the German cause in his safe exile in Eastern Prussia. The German forest, however, where all took place, was still the same.

Kleist's *Hermannsschlacht* was read aloud in turn by the members of Friedrich's circle and made a lasting impression on Friedrich.<sup>85</sup> This influence can be clearly discerned in three of his paintings: *Hermanns Grab* (Hermann's Grave), *Grabmale der gefallenen Helden* (Tombs of the Fallen Heroes), and *Der Chasseur im Walde* (The French Dragoon in the Forest). Just as he had earlier given visual expression to the Romantic mood, Friedrich now depicted on his canvasses the imagery of patriotism.<sup>86</sup> In all three paintings, the majestic forest represented a rising Germany, while the lost French cause was symbolized by a minute and forlorn human figure. And just as Kleist's drama could not be staged during the French occupation,<sup>87</sup> Friedrich's paintings had to await the liberation of Dresden in the spring of

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<sup>84</sup> Quoted in Kuchnemund 1953, p. 86.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Siegel 1978, p. 86; Aubert 1915, p. 5.

<sup>86</sup> In the words of Aubert: "The Romantic sentimentality becomes here an expression of the emotional life of a sorely afflicted people." *Die romantische Sentimentalität wird hier Ausdruck für das Stimmungsleben eines schwer geprüften Volkes.* (Aubert 1915, p. 8).

<sup>87</sup> No one dared to publish, let alone stage such an openly anti-French play, but its manuscript circulated clandestinely and Kleist wrote on one of them: "Woe to thee, my Fatherland! To sing thy glory / Is denied to me, thy loyal bard." (*Wehe, mein Vaterland, dir! Die Leier zum Ruhm dir zu schlagen, / Ist, getreu dir im Schoss, mir, deinem Dichter, verwehrt.*) (translation from Kuchnemund 1953, pp. 95 and 120). The play was finally published posthumously in 1821 (by Tieck, who edited Kleist's papers) and premiered in 1839

1814 to be exhibited publicly. Immediately, a Patriotic Exhibition was launched to showcase the pictures that had been created clandestinely under the noses of the French army. Friedrich contributed the said three paintings to the exhibition and achieved considerable success.<sup>88</sup> In the fall of 1814, he sent the *Chasseur* to the academy exhibition in Berlin, where it was generally acclaimed and reviewed positively.<sup>89</sup>

By 1814, Friedrich was by no means an unknown painter. Beginning with his controversial *Tetschen Altar* of 1808, Friedrich had made a name for himself as a painter of mystical religious landscapes that suggested the presence of the divine in nature.<sup>90</sup> In September of 1810, he sent two of his paintings to the Academy Exhibition at Berlin where they immediately captured public attention. Both paintings, *Mönch am Meer* (Monk by the Sea, 1809), and *Abtei im Eichwald* (Abbey in the Oak Forest, 1810), received the greatest possible honour when the young crown prince of Prussia purchased them for the palace.<sup>91</sup> At the same time, Friedrich was named a permanent corresponding member of the Royal Prussian Academy of Arts at Berlin. Friedrich's success did not mean that his paintings were universally acclaimed, for his audience was often baffled at what they saw: the human figure, if present at all, was usually dwarfed by the elemental forces and dimensions of nature: the signature of an all-powerful God. Endless horizons, enormous expanses of seemingly void skies, immense trees all reduced the human figure to a humble, almost inconsequential size.

(Kuehnemund suggests that it was not until 1861). The fact that such an openly topical play was staged decades later only bespeaks the continued relevance of the theme to the German imagination.

<sup>88</sup> Emmrich 1964, p. 99.

<sup>89</sup> Aubert 1915, p. 16.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. footnote 55.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Mitchell 1993, p. 121.

Not surprisingly, such stark images were disconcerting to an audience accustomed to Classical aesthetics. On the other hand, they could not easily draw away from the suggestive force of Friedrich's vision. In a review, Kleist described his own puzzlement upon beholding the Monk by the Sea:

It seems that when one looks at it, it were as if one's eyelids were cut away. . . . But my own thoughts about this wondrous painting are too confused; therefore I have resolved . . . to enlighten myself by the remarks of those couples who pass by it from morning until night. I listened to the the different comments of the viewers around me and pass them on as belonging to this painting . . . because this painting does not permit silence.<sup>92</sup>

With such attention attached to his name, Friedrich's paintings at the 1814 Patriotic Exhibition were thus eagerly awaited by the audience. As his friend, the Norwegian painter Johann Christain Clausen Dahl (1788-1857) would later write, the audience

at the time of the Wars of Liberation sought and found in them a specific, I might say, political prophetic interpretation: signs of an almighty, invisible hand that intervenes in the muddled affairs of humans and the liberation of Germany from the burden of a foreign yoke.<sup>93</sup>

In Friedrich's three canvasses, the patriotic message of the national movement met with a heightened receptivity of the contemporary audience: the patriotic message had entered the mainstream. But how could that message be expressed by a painter whose paintings were almost devoid of humans and their creations? What, if not buildings, landmarks, or human figures, could represent Germanness? Friedrich's answer was simple: the forest. In the forest, Friedrich pulled it all together: poetry, art, nationalism, all focussed on the German forest as the main vehicle of symbolism.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> The review appeared in Kleist's journal *Berliner Abendblätter* on 13 October 1810. The translation is from Siegel 1978, p. 74. See also Mitchell 1993, pp. 121-126, for a detailed account of what he calls "one of the most famous reviews in the annals of art criticism."

<sup>93</sup> Dahl had been living in Friedrich's house in Dresden after 1823. The quoted passage is from a obituary for Friedrich written by Dahl in 1840 and is reprinted in Krieger 1985, p. 13.

<sup>94</sup> For general treatments of the role of the forest in German art, see Schrade 1937; Köstler 1941, Immel 1942; Gusovius 1957; Köstler 1971; Gusovius 1974; and Weyergraf 1984.

In *Hermanns Grab* of 1812, Friedrich takes us into a rugged forest deep in the heart of the Harz mountains (Figure 3.3). Here, in a cave deep in the forest and not in a crypt or cathedral, is the inner sanctum of Germanic history: the casket of Hermann. This is how the art historian Jens Jensen describes the scene:

The picture opens like a funnel, leading the viewer's eyes to the dark cave with the sarcophagus. A French soldier is humbly looking down at it; he is almost crushed by the jagged wall of rock that cordons off the picture powerfully and definitively. As in a grave of Christ after the Resurrection, the cover stone does not seal the tomb - it lies obliquely against the walls, making the tomb look as if it were opening. The fir trees symbolizing hope loom up before the wall of rock, increasing the impression of strength and unyielding faith.<sup>95</sup>

Friedrich created a setting in which the immediacy of nature itself seemed to threaten the single French intruder depicted in the painting, while sheltering the Germanic hero's grave. Friedrich achieved that effect by depicting the French soldier in a way that suggested that he did not belong in this landscape. With his strikingly blue cape, the dragoon disrupts the warm, harmonious earth tones of the rock and the natural greens of the forest that dominate the painting. He has lost his horse, stumbling on foot through the forest. In the middleground the vegetation shows the signs of battle and death: cut stumps and broken trunks, symbolizing youthful lives broken off too soon in a violent struggle. In the foreground, however, lush ferns are plentiful, a sign of what this land is capable of supporting. Finally, the background is dominated by the framing rocks, at once solid and soaring like the faith of the German nation. Evergreen spruce trees, the symbol of loyalty and hope, spring forth from the rocks themselves, rooted in the crevices and reaching

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<sup>95</sup> (Jensen 1981, p. 123). Jensen, as almost everyone else writing about Friedrich's painting, mistakes the evergreen trees for firs. They are in fact spruce trees. The difference is significant as firs are limited mostly to the hills of southern Germany, while spruce occurs across all of Germany and much of Europe. Such ignorance is not uncommon among authors writing about Germans and their love affair with the forest: Schama, in his *Landscape and Memory* (1995, p. 102), believes German 19<sup>th</sup>-century forests to have been replanted with larch and fir instead of pine and spruce. In fact, larch and fir are far too specific in their ecological site demands and hence limited in their geographical range to have been planted across the whole of Germany.

towards a sky that is nowhere visible in the painting - but it is there, the spruce trees point the way to the light.<sup>96</sup>



**Figure 3.3: Hermanns Grab by Caspar David Friedrich (1812)**

Hermann's grave is in the deepest forest, tucked away in the mountains on "the last foot of ground" where he wished "to die the death of heroes," as Kleist has Hermann say in Act I, scene 3. This deep forest is the heart of Germany, the ultimate retreat for the heroes defending their country. And though they may die in battle, they live on in the tenacious

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<sup>96</sup> Gärtner 1988, p. 101.

spruce trees that hold on to even the barest of rocks, and in the lush ferns when “spring breaks forth each year,” as Eichendorff had put it. Hermann’s body may lie in the coffin, but his spirit cannot be contained, it pried the lid ajar. *Hermanns Grab* is a memorial to the spirit of Hermann, but it is also a memorial to those who fell in that spirit during the Wars of Friedrich’s own time. Friedrich inscribed the painting with the words: “May your loyalty and invincibility as a warrior set an example for us eternally,” but one senses that these words are not just addressed to Hermann; they commemorate those who died in the Wars of Liberation.<sup>97</sup>

In a companion painting called *Grabmale der gefallenen Helden* (The Tombs of the Fallen Heroes, 1813, Figure 3.4), Friedrich makes that dedication even more evident. The scene is similar to that of Hermann’s Grave but Friedrich enriched the middleground with four sarcophagi and added a gleaming white obelisk on which an angelic figure is chiseled underneath crossed swords. The preface that accompanied the painting read:

Rest in peace saviours in distress. Dedicated to the noble fallen ones for freedom and justice.  
F. H. K. Arminius. Noble young saviours of the fatherland. God help preserve you.<sup>98</sup>

The initials stood for Friesen, Hartmann, and Körner, Friedrich’s artist-friends who had fallen in the ranks of the Lützow Rangers. Friedrich thus commemorated the sacrifice of his own friends, but he was dismayed that there were no efforts to erect a public monument to all the men who had died in the Wars of Liberation.<sup>99</sup> When his own efforts to bring about

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<sup>97</sup> Quoted in Jensen 1981, p. 123.

<sup>98</sup> Siegel 1978, p. 88.

<sup>99</sup> In a letter to Arndt written in 1814, he complained about this oversight and suggested that Arndt supply the inscription for a monument he had designed. (Reprinted in Koch 1985, p. 18).



**Figure 3.4: *Grabmale der gefallenen Helden* by Caspar David Friedrich (1813).**

such a monument came to nought, Friedrich attempted to at least paint one in his *Schwert als Kreuz im Gebirge* (Sword as Cross in the Mountains), a painting of which no records survive.<sup>100</sup> According to the Swedish scholar Per David Amadeus Atterbom who saw it on the easel in Friedrich's studio in 1817, the painting showed

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<sup>100</sup> Jensen 1981, p. 126; Sumowski, 1970, p. 202.

a majestic forest landscape, in which, amid the loftiest mountain tops, high over tremendous spruce trees and lower dark zones, the point of a colossal sword is thrust into the rocky ground, greeting the viewer as a radiant cross in the golden shimmer of the sun.<sup>101</sup>

The inverted sword in the forest symbolizes the claim by Arndt, Körner, Friedrich Rückert (1788-1866),<sup>102</sup> and other patriotic poets that the war against the French was a Holy War.<sup>103</sup> Here was the German sword *cum* Protestant cross, towering in the quintessentially German setting of a Nordic spruce forest in the mountains.

It is in the third painting inspired by the *Hermannsschlacht* that Friedrich paints that spruce forest itself as the epitome of Germany. Friedrich painted *Der Chasseur im Walde* (The French Dragoon in the Forest) around the time of the disaster of the *Grande Armée* in Russia in the winter of 1812/13, Figure 3.5). Again, the painting depicts a scene from the *Hermannsschlacht*, Act V, scene 3, in which Varus wanders into a strange forest where he meets an *Alraune*, a Germanic prophetess, whom he asks “Where am I?” To which the *Alraune* answers “two steps from thy grave.”<sup>104</sup> Friedrich depicted Varus as a French

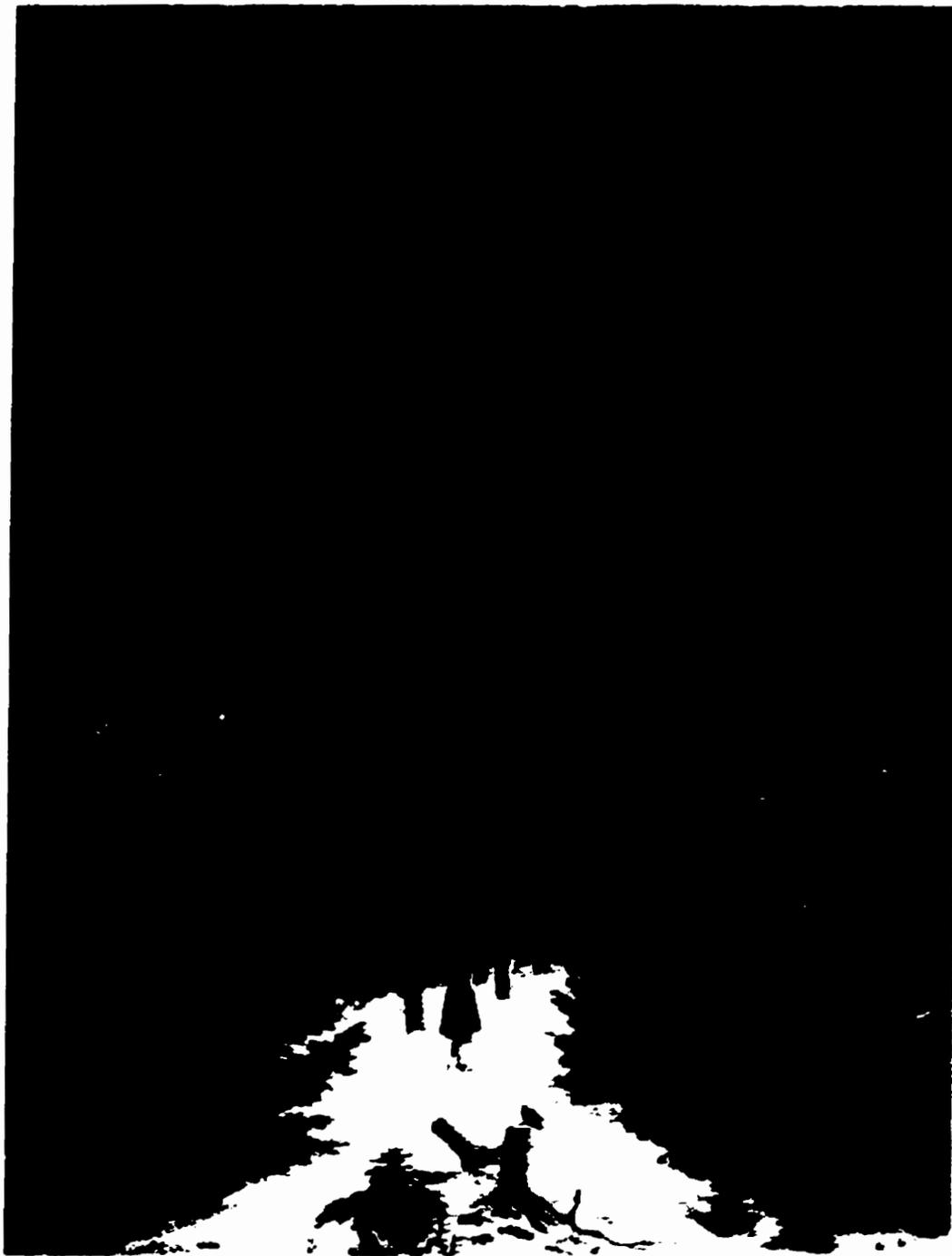
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<sup>101</sup> *eine majestätische Waldlandschaft, auf der inmitten der höchsten Bergesspitzen hoch über gewaltigen Fichten und dunklen niederen Partien ein kolossales Schwert mit der Spitze in den Felsboden gestoßen ist und so als leuchtendes Kreuz im goldigen Sonnenschimmer den Beschauer begrüßt.* (Reprinted in Sumowski 1970, p. 202).

<sup>102</sup> In the *Geharnischten Sonnetten* (Armour-Clad Sonnets) in his collection of *Deutsche Gedichte* (German Poems) of 1814.

<sup>103</sup> Jensen 1981, p. 126.

<sup>104</sup> (Siegel 1978, p. 87; Kuehnemund 1953, p. 93). In the *Vossische Zeitung* of December 7, 1814, the painting was described by an anonymous reviewer: “A raven, perched on an old tree, sings the song of death to a French Chasseur who is walking lonely through a snow-covered forest.” *Einem französischen Chasseur, der einsam durch den beschneiten Wald geht, singt ein auf einem alten Stamm sitzender Rabe ein Sterbelied.* (reprinted in Gärtner 1988, pp. 101-102).



*Figure 3.5: Der Chasseur im Walde* by Caspar David Friedrich (1812/13)

Dragoon, again without his horse, but the true hero of the painting is the dense, towering spruce forest covering more than three quarters of the canvas. The Dragoon, his back to the beholder, stands dwarfed before these trees, hesitant on a path that seems to lead into the thick of the woods. His gaze penetrates “the secret space” beyond the turn in the path, where we cannot see.<sup>105</sup> But the Chasseur has seen his fate in the shadow before him: the German forest will swallow him up, and the “opening chasm, from which there is no way out for the Chasseur . . . will close like a relentless and gentle trap.”<sup>106</sup>

The Chasseur is bound for what is called a *Holzweg* in German. Literally a ‘timber-track,’ a *Holzweg* is a skidding-track that simply peters out in the forest. Yet, to be on a *Holzweg* stands also for ‘being on the wrong track,’ headed for a dead end, which is exactly what the French soldier is facing. But he cannot turn back, for tree stumps block the path, signs of death and loss, signifying the carnage he has been through on the retreat from Moscow. A crow, the bird of death, perches on one of them, turning towards the Chasseur in anticipation of his death, while the young spruce trees growing vigorously in the foreground on both sides of the path seem to converge and cut off the path behind him with their lush green foliage – one even pushes up on the path itself.<sup>107</sup>

The Dragoon has no choice: the way back is cut off by the young trees, symbolizing the youth of Germany attacking the French troops in such militia free corps as the Lützow Rangers. To return to his homeland, the Dragoon must pass through the dark, dense, towering forest before him: Germany and its armies. Gazing into the “secret space” of the

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<sup>105</sup> Koerner 1990, p. 160.

<sup>106</sup> Jensen 1981, p. 125.

<sup>107</sup> Emmrich 1964, p. 99.

forest ahead, he realizes how hopeless his situation is: he stands arrested, his sabre dragging on the ground, the whole scene breathing the atmosphere of suspended life and imminent loss.<sup>108</sup>

It will be the forest that defeats the Chasseur, the German forest, for Friedrich painted this forest as the unmistakable product of German forest science as it developed in the last decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The forest in this painting is a so-called *Normalwald* or age-class forest: trees of a single species, spruce in this instance, of uniform age and height, planted in dense formation that allows little light to reach the forest floor. Starved for light, the lower branches die off, while the crown pushes higher and higher to reach the light. As a result, the trees are uniformly slim and exceedingly tall.<sup>109</sup> In Friedrich's *Chasseur*, we catch a glimpse of the resulting forest interior through an opening in the forest skirt: a dark labyrinth of bare trunks rising from a barren forest floor, a dark world in the shadow of the dense canopy overhead. Normally, the trees making up the forest skirt have green branches all the way to the ground as there is enough light available. The fact that there are none in this case indicates that the fringe trees were removed in a recent cut, a circumstance further suggested by the presence of the young spruce trees pushing up vigorously on both sides of the Dragoon. Evidently, we are looking at the boundary between two age-class stands: this is a spruce forest managed according to the tenets of Classical German forest science.

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<sup>108</sup> Friedrich set the whole scene in the winter, with light snow covering the trees and the path. This is more than a historical allusion to the winter disaster of the *Grande Armée*, as it also reflects Friedrich's own statement that he perceived the snow and winter atmosphere as the turning point from life to death. (cf. Buderath and Makowski 1986, pp. 123-124).

<sup>109</sup> Friedrich was the first painter to depict this new type of forest landscape, most clearly so in the *Nachmittag* (Afternoon) and *Abend* (Evening) images of his cycle *Die Tageszeiten* (The Times of Day, 1820-22). In these paintings, various pine stands are depicted at different stages of the *Normalwald*. Cf. Buderath and Makowski 1986, pp. 125-127.

Beyond the technical aspects that characterize this forest as typically German, there is also its Gothic appearance as suggested by the soaring silhouette of the spruce trees. The two trees that receive the Chasseur into the darkness of the interior form a symmetric gate, an entrance to the sanctum of the forest. As they recede into the background, the tops of the trees soar higher and higher, drawing a silhouette of staggered Gothic spires that gives the whole arrangement the form of a cathedral entrance. Frequently, Friedrich painted spruce trees and Gothic cathedrals as though the latter rose from the former: the Gothic cathedral is but a human copy of God's own cathedral of the forest.<sup>110</sup> In ignorance of the French origins of Gothic architecture, Friedrich and his contemporaries celebrated the Gothic style as quintessentially German,<sup>111</sup> and so the Gothic silhouette of the forest in this canvas symbolizes that this cathedral forest is German, expressing a stereotypical "German verticality [of] height and depth" that stands in opposition to foreign "shallowness."<sup>112</sup> To the Dragoon, however, this German cathedral promises not redemption, but doom, for he does not belong here.

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<sup>110</sup> For example: *Kreuz und Kathedrale in den Bergen* (Cross and Cathedral in the Mountains, 1811); *Winterlandschaft mit Kirche* (Winterlandscape with Church, 1811); *Kreuz im Walde* (Cross in the Forest, 1813).

<sup>111</sup> The French origins of the Gothic style were not accepted in Germany until after 1840.

<sup>112</sup> *Topoi wie Wald oder Kathedrale sind nun dann Nationalstereotypen, wenn sie deutsche Vertikalität – Höhe und Tiefe – gegen "angelsächsische Flachheit" abgrenzen.* (Keller 1996, p. 92). In his *Ewiger Wald* (Eternal Forest) of 1922, the conservative nature writer Raoul Heinrich Francé (whom we will meet in Chapter 5) expressed this stereotype thus: "Like no other people, the German *Volk* has expressed its indomitable strength and aristocratic character in that will to the vertical which we can observe from the Germanic long tent to the nave of the Cologne cathedral. *Das deutsche Volk sprach wie kein anderes seine unbeugsame Kraft und den Adel seiner Art in jenem Willen zur Senkrechten aus, die wir mit ihm vom spitzen Langzelt bis zum Hochschiff des Kölner Domes verfolgen.* (Francé 1922, p. 22).

With paintings like the *Chasseur*, Friedrich gave visual expression to the Romantic glorification and Germanization of the forest. More than that, he established landscape and particularly the forest landscape not only as an allegory of Germany past and present, but as “a mode of auguring a new Germany.”<sup>113</sup> In the words of art critic Linda Siegel: “In Friedrich’s art the landscape echoed the fate of Germany in the nineteenth century, captured the solitary German Romantic forest, and mirrored the tragic fate of man.”<sup>114</sup> With the suggestive use of oak and spruce trees and forests as symbolizations of Germany, Friedrich helped give currency to the idea that the forest represented Germanness.

So did Arndt’s anti-French polemics, Körner’s patriotic songs, and Kleist’s political plays.<sup>115</sup> It was Eichendorff’s rhapsodizing poetry, however, that proved to have the most lasting effect beyond the Romantic period proper. The joyful mood of many of his poems, even those that dealt with loss and death for the fatherland, ensured that their popularity outlived the immediate political crisis which they were written to address. Eichendorff became the quintessential forest poet of the German educational canon and his poetry and novellas remain among the most popular pieces of German literature to this day.

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<sup>113</sup> Koerner 1990, p. 243.

<sup>114</sup> Siegel 1978, p. 55.

<sup>115</sup> This is not to say that the Germanization of the forest did not meet with opposition or ridicule. In 1817, for example, the critic Count August von Platen complained in his *Etwas über die neuere deutsche Poesie* (Something on the New German Poetry) about German poetry having lost its way in a *Dichterwald* (‘poets’ forest’): “All one hears about is bards, skalds, and oak forests. . . . Every leaf in this poets’ forest rustles with sighs of longing.” *Da hört man von nichts als Barden, Skalden und Eichwäldern. . . . Jedes Blatt aus dem Dichterwald säuselt Sehnsucht von sich.* (reprinted in Eichendorff’s *Sämtliche Werke* (1993) vol. XVIII, part 1 pp. 56-57). Von Platen was referring to a programmatic collection of songs, sonnetts, ballads, legends, and tales published in 1813 by the poet Justinus Kerner (1786-1862) under the title *Deutscher Dichterwald* (The German Poets’ Forest). Eichendorff contributed two poems to this collection under the pseudonym Florens.

Eichendorff's work also crossed over into other media. Robert Schumann and Franz Schubert, for example, made many of his poems into songs and piano pieces. Other composers such as Albert Lortzing, Carl Maria von Weber, Johannes Brahms and Richard Wagner also set to music the emotive topography of Romantic forest writing.<sup>116</sup> Their operas animated the forest as setting and actor, their songs and piano pieces carried *Waldweben* or 'the sigh of the forest' into the salons of the emerging bourgeoisie.<sup>117</sup>

Each in their own way, these and other artists and writers further constructed the concept of a distinctly German forest whose character and influence would be forever incomprehensible to non-Germans. For example, Wagner cautioned the French against staging a translated version of Weber's 1821 opera *Der Freischütz* in Paris:

Yet would you understand what you are singing? I very much doubt it. What causes these doubts is difficult to explain, at least as difficult as explaining to you the German character that is so foreign to you and that gave rise to this music. I'd almost have to start with the forest - but then you don't know that one either.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Weber's *Freischütz* (The Freeshooter, 1821), for example, is a reworking of a tale by Arndt called *Der Freischuss* (The Free Shot, 1807). Siegel (1978, pp. 103-104) suspects a further overlap with some of Friedrich's works: "It is tempting to draw a parallel between [Friedrich's painting of 1819] *Two Men Contemplating the Moon* and Weber's opera, *Der Freischütz*, for both painter and composer deal with their subject matter in much the same picturesque manner. Weber imitates the moaning of the trees and the rising of the moon through discordant harmonies, syncopated rhythms, and unusual coloristic effects: tympani on the offbeats to symbolize the devil, the low tones of the clarinet to produce a feeling of eeriness. In the same way, through his brushwork, free use of color (especially the purple tones of the sky), and distorted natural phenomena Friedrich paints an equally convincing portrait of the mysterious German Romantic forest. . . . A little known work of Friedrich, *Wolf Glen*, is related in style and subject to *Two Men Contemplating the Moon*. . . . Might it be possible that *Wolf Glen* is related to Weber's opera, *Der Freischütz*, which in 1821 elicited an enthusiasm from German audiences unmatched in the history of German Romantic music? The most celebrated part of the opera . . . was the finale of the second act, the 'Wolf Glen' scene."

<sup>117</sup> For treatments of the forest theme in German music, see Schmidt 1955; Gusovius 1957; Galli 1964; Leibundgut 1964; Budde 1987.

<sup>118</sup> *Aber versteht ihr wohl, was ihr singt? - ich bezweifle es sehr. Worauf sich mein Zweifel gründet, ist aber schwer zu sagen, gewiß nicht minder schwer, als diese euch so fremdartige deutsche Natur zu erklären, aus welcher jene Klänge hervorgingen, und fast würde ich glauben, wieder beim 'Walde' anfangen zu müssen, den ihr aber eben nicht kennt.* (Quoted in Budde 1987, pp. 51-52).

Wagner's statement shows how self-evident the idea of a special relationship between Germans and their forest had become to German intellectuals by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century. In particular, there are two aspects to this relationship which we can identify in Wagner's statement. First, 'the forests of Germany' had been unified successfully into the notion of 'The German Forest.' Most writers, Wagner included, used the notation *Deutscher Wald* to express what they saw as a certain unity and uniqueness inherent to the German forest. For a better understanding of this, we may examine the grammatical construction of *Deutscher Wald*, which is revealing in itself.

Among the possible constructions (for example those involving the plural form, as in *Deutsche Wälder* (German forests), and/or the possessive case, as in *die Wälder Deutschlands* (the forests of Germany), a construction has prevailed which is based on the singular and the adjective *deutsch* (German), which can mean both 'belonging to Germany' and 'possessing the inherent quality of Germanness.' The capitalization of the adjective *Deutsch*, however, speaks for the latter interpretation. In the German language, adjectives which denote nationality or language are not capitalized. By contrast, all nouns are capitalized. Hence, the appropriate notation for 'German forest' would be *deutscher Wald*. Many authors, however, used *Deutscher Wald*, which means that they treat the collocation 'The German Forest' as a compound noun.

The second aspect of the relationship between Germans and their forest which we can see in Wagner's statement is the degree to which both were seen as having co-evolved. What Wagner had no hope of explaining to the French was the mystical connection between the German people and their forest: they were both manifestations of the same Germanic environment. The German forest stood for fervent love of the *Vaterland*, for mythical ideas

of a primeval Germanic freedom rooted in natural law, for liberation from foreign dominance and struggle for national unity, for heroism, vigour, and manliness. It was portrayed as soulful, melancholy, and brooding, but also as vigorous, primeval, and indomitable – and those qualities were also ascribed to Germans as national characteristics because trees and humans both are rooted in the same soil.

Naturally, not everyone agreed with these generalizations, but even the ridicule of critics such as Marx only serves to underline how prevalent a theme the Germanized forest already was:

Goodhearted enthusiasts . . . , of German blood and liberal thinking are seeking the history of our freedom . . . in the primeval Teutonic forests. But what distinguishes the history of our freedom from that of the wild boar if it is to be found only in the forest?<sup>119</sup>

This was a stab at those German nationalists who were using Montesquieu's assertion that freedom resided in the Germanic forest as a political argument.<sup>120</sup> What prompted Marx to his ironic remark was the realization that the Germanized forest, while still being an intensely patriotic symbol, now also served as a valve to regulate the emotional well-being of a politically castrated bourgeoisie<sup>121</sup> by providing an escape from the reality of political powerlessness. What had changed?

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<sup>119</sup> *Gutmütige Enthusiasten . . . , Deutschtümler von Blut und Freisinnige von Reflexion, suchen unsere Geschichte der Freiheit jenseits unserer Geschichte [sic] in den teutonischen Urwäldern. Wodurch unterscheidet sich aber unsere Freiheitsgeschichte von der Freiheitsgeschichte des Ebers, wenn sie nur in den Wäldern zu finden ist?* (from *A German Ideology* (1856) quoted in Fischer 1987, p. 23.)

<sup>120</sup> Cf. footnote 34.

<sup>121</sup> The expression is Fischer's (1987, p. 24).

### 3.5 From Protest Symbol to State Symbol: The German Forest in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

After the defeat of Napoleon, the German rulers had been eager to return to 'business as usual.' Jealously guarding their prerogatives, they had quickly dismissed the idea of national unity and refused to grant democratic freedoms, both of which had formed an integral part of the patriots' demands. Squabbling between the now liberated Germanies continued and in the wake of the restoration after the Congress of Vienna in 1815, German patriots even found themselves persecuted by the reactionary authorities.<sup>122</sup> In the words of Kuehnemund:

The invigorating storm of the popular uprisings of 1812/13 – this grandiose spectacle of the wrath of a protesting nation, of a "Volk in Waffen" [a nation in arms, M.I.] – had long since subsided pitifully. Great political perspectives had shrunk again to Philistine proportions as princes trembled while their subjects grumbled.<sup>123</sup>

Thus, in the arts of the restoration period, the forest still represented Germanness, but the political dimension of that message was no longer welcomed by the German authorities who were trying to re-establish their monopoly on political expression. As a consequence, the forest and the Germanic and medieval Germanness that the Romantics had constructed around it took on an added meaning as they became a thinly-veiled code for the continued longing of German intellectuals for unity and democracy.

Friedrich, for example, after 1817 generally dressed his staffage figures in *altdeutsch* clothes to keep alive the memory of the Wars of Liberation and to express his democratic beliefs. The painting *Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer* (Wanderer above the Sea of Fog,

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<sup>122</sup> Among them some of the most prominent patriots: Ernst Moritz Arndt was suspended from his position as professor at Bonn in 1820, while Friedrich Ludwig Jahn was incarcerated from 1819-1825 and afterwards remained under police surveillance. Both were rehabilitated when Frederick William IV of Prussia, the 'Romantic on the throne,' became king in 1840.

<sup>123</sup> Kuehnemund 1953, p. 100.



***Figure 3.6: Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer by Caspar David Friedrich (1818)***

1818, Figure 3.6) is a particularly telling example of this new subversive mood in forest depiction.<sup>124</sup> The painting shows a man standing on a mountain top high above a wafting sea of clouds that shrouds a forested mountain landscape. He stands with his back to the beholder, wearing the uniform of a Saxon volunteer detachment of forest rangers. The man is Colonel Friedrich Gotthard von Brincken, a high-ranking forestry officer who was killed in action in 1813.<sup>125</sup> This is how Koerner interprets the *Rückenfigur*, that solitary figure turning its back to the beholder:

On the one hand, the *Rückenfigur* expresses nostalgia by the historicism of its costume, which invokes an earlier epoch of political, social and cultural cohesion, . . . On the other hand, referring to the new national idea, the *Rückenfigur* transposes the metaphysical yearning for union with nature into the contemporary political imperative of a unified state. Friedrich's *Rückenfigur* thus embodies not history, but a missed encounter with history. Its project of reunification takes place always as déjà-vu, repeated in the Renaissance; in the Romantic era; in the nationalistic Friedrich-renaissances of the twentieth century, culminating in the Nazi reception of Romantic landscape; and perhaps even in our time, as the borders of the Germanies unravel. . . . Friedrich's *Rückenfigur* is a traveller in this purgatory, and through its gaze, . . . we can discern the troubled and still unstable relation between art and history. It is discernible in *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*, where the deceased patriot beholds a Germany whose form as yet can be only imagined, as the product of the heart and of desire, and whose boundaries are already established as disturbingly infinite.<sup>126</sup>

Friedrich's forester in his historicizing costume thus embodies the past with its sacrifices – and the missed opportunities to turn those sacrifices into the foundation for a new, united, and democratic Germany. Quite simply, the *Rückenfigur* also expresses how German middle-class intellectuals turned away from political reality after their failure to gain political recognition at the Congress of Vienna.

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<sup>124</sup> (Cf. Jensen 1981, p. 128; Koerner 1990, p. 243). As mentioned earlier (cf. footnote 68), the *altdeutsch* garb was outlawed in the reactionary Karlsbad decrees of 1819 as *Demagogentracht* ('demagogues' dress').

<sup>125</sup> Koerner 1990, p. 179.

<sup>126</sup> Koerner 1990, pp. 243 and 244.

But Friedrich's painting is at the same time filled with hope for a better future. As we join the *Rückenfigur* in his gazing over the shrouded forest landscape before him, we look out with him over a promising future. Just as the fog lifts to reveal what can already be discerned as a majestic forest landscape, Germany will rise from obscurity. Already, solitary trees perched on the highest rock formations rise above the fog, stretching their strong limbs toward the sun. Just as the forest ranger who gave his life to the German cause, these trees are the strongest of their kind, exposed to danger but also breaking the ground for others to follow in the shelter of their canopy.

Friedrich's painting of 1818 is thus still filled with hope that a new Germany would eventually become reality, but with the continuing clampdown by the princes and the failed revolutions of 1830 and 1848 a united and democratic Germany seemed to slip farther and farther from the grasps of Germans as the century wore on. Yet, the further political unity seemed to retreat, the more important the expression of cultural cohesion became. And here the German forest continued to express a cultural commonality that was so dearly missed in the political realm. By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the identification of the forest with Germany was so common that Eichendorff for one could interweave German forest, state, and people into one:<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> *Libertas Klage* (Liberty's Lament).

*'s war ein mächt'ger Wald da droben,  
Treulich Stamm in Stamm verwoben,  
Mir zum grünen Dom erhoben.*

*Weh', du schönes Land der Eichen!  
Bruderzwist schon, den todbleichen,  
Seh' ich mit der Mordaxt schleichen.*

*Und in künft'gen öden Tagen  
Werden nur verworrne Sagen  
Um den deutschen Wald noch klagen.*

T'was a mighty forest up there,  
Entwined stood trunk with trunk,  
A green cathedral mine.

Woe, you lovely land of oaks!  
Fraternal strife, pale as death  
I see slinking with the murd'rous axe.

And in desolate days to come  
Only confused tales  
Will mourn the German forest.

This “German forest” Eichendorff mourned was the united Germany that he and the other patriots had fought to bring about for almost forty years now. But the state of affairs when Eichendorff wrote his poem, one year after the frustrated revolution of 1848, was more stifling than ever. It took twenty more years and another war against France to finally bring the German states together in a united empire – without Austria. In 1870, the Prussian Premier and Chancellor of the Northern German Federation, Otto von Bismarck, provoked a war against France and co-opted the independent southern German states into an alliance against the French.<sup>128</sup> Bismarck used the public euphoria over the swift victory of the united German armies to push the princes into conferring the Emperor’s crown on King Wilhelm I of Prussia and on 18 January 1871, the *Kaiserreich* (Empire) was proclaimed.

Now that political unity had finally been achieved, the notion of the Germanized forest was put to work to represent an officially sanctioned German national identity. Just as the brothers Grimm had hoped, the forest proved suitable for providing a unifying history that transcended regional differences and emphasized cultural commonalities between the German states. And once again, Hermann and his forest battle emerged as the bracketing

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<sup>128</sup> Meanwhile, threatening gestures by Russia ensured the neutrality of Austria, which had become a rival for hegemony within Germany. By the 1860s, this rivalry led to the ludicrous situation where Prussia and Austria both warred and negotiated unification with one another at the same time.

element of this scientifically sanctioned German forest history. A national monument to Hermann, begun in 1841 but put on hold for lack of funds, now received public attention as well as funding and was completed as swiftly as the artisans' progress would allow. In 1875, Emperor Wilhelm I himself unveiled a gigantic statue of Hermann on a hilltop in the Teutoburg forest, near the assumed site of the battle. The bronze colossus of 27 metres faced west, whence the legions of Rome came and where Germany's 'arch enemy' France was still looming beyond the Rhine.<sup>129</sup> The hero wielded a sword inscribed with the words:

*Deutschlands Einigkeit meine Stärke  
Meine Stärke Deutschlands Macht*

German Unity My Strength  
My Strength Germany's Power

The words were meant to call Hermann's mottoes to mind: "In unity there lies strength!" and "Rather death than slavery!" The *Hermannsdenkmal* monument reminded Germans that they had found strength only when thinking and fighting as one people: united had they defeated the Romans in AD 9, the French in 1813 and again in 1871.<sup>130</sup> In the same vein, the inscription on the shield exhorted Germans to remain "Steadfast" (*Treufest*) and to preserve

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<sup>129</sup> Meanwhile, another national monument celebrating Germanic heritage took shape on the banks of the Rhine: the *Niederwalddenkmal*. Built between 1874 and 1885, a Valkyrie-like figure by the name of Germania stands "on guard at the Rhine," as the namesake popular national song of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Germany proclaims. (*Die Wacht am Rhein* also swore an oath to "Father Hermann" that the Rhine river "remains German" and that "no *Welscher* will ever land on its shores." (on the term *welsch* see footnote 9 and Chapter 1, footnote 15)). A giant warrior maiden in Germanic dress, the Germania monument towers over a wooded range high above the Rhine at Rüdeshheim, commemorating the resurrection of the *Reich* on the foundations created by generations of Germans struggling against Romance peoples. The monument was financed by the *Kriegervereine* (War Veterans Associations), which had only been founded in 1873, but counted over one million members by 1900 and assumed a significant role in conservative German politics. (On both the *Hermannsdenkmal* and the *Niederwalddenkmal*, see Chapter 3 in Mosse 1975).

<sup>130</sup> In his *Entwurf einer Teutschen Gesellschaft* (Proposal for a German Association) of 1814, Arndt had already drawn a parallel between the fight against the Romans and against the French. Arndt insisted that the Wars of Liberation must be linked to Hermann's Battle to foster the historical consciousness of Germans. Jahn, in his *Deutsches Volkstum* (Germandom, 1810), had demanded that "monuments must be erected to our national heroes. We must celebrate such occasions as the triumph of Arminius over Varus in AD 9." (quoted in Snyder 1958, p. 142.) Now, two generations later, the euphoria over the outcome of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870/71 and the subsequent unification of the *Reich* sped up the completion of the monument to Hermann: the lack of a national monument was finally felt even by the government.

that unity despite all setbacks fate might cast at them. Meanwhile, interest in Hermann as a historical figure was stirring in the scholarly community as well.<sup>131</sup> Numerous books attempted to reconstruct the forest life of the Germanic tribes through the study of Germanic language, custom, and history, while over 700 theories were advanced on the question of the precise location of the *Hermannsschlacht* alone.<sup>132</sup>

The intense scholarly interest in the forest as a site of Germanic history was part of a general rise in scientific interest in the forest that had begun in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Building on the cultural Germanization of the forest established by poets, painters, and composers, scientists now tried to do their part by seeking evidence for the claim that the forest had determined German national characteristics and shaped German history. One of the most influential figures in establishing this new nexus between the forest, nationalism, and science was the novelist, cultural historian and sociologist Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl (1823-1897). Riehl had studied with Arndt at Bonn where he conceived of a *soziale Volkskunde* (literally: 'folk science' in the sense of social anthropology). In his widely read multi-volume *Naturgeschichte des Volkes als Grundlage einer deutschen Sozialpolitik* (The Natural History of the German People as a Foundation for German Social Politics, 1851-1869), Riehl argued that the character of the German people had been determined by the

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<sup>131</sup> A Germanics journal was launched under the title *Thusnelda* (the name of Hermann's wife) as early as 1807, followed by an archaeological journal entitled *Hermann* in 1814.

<sup>132</sup> It is worth mentioning that the adoration of Hermann as a national hero also spilled into America, emigrating in the hearts and minds of the four million who left Germany to seek economic, religious, and political freedom in America. By 1818, there was a Hermann's Lodge of Freemasons in Philadelphia, and in 1834 and 1836 towns by the name of Hermann were founded in Missouri and Wisconsin, respectively. Beginning in the 1840s in New York, patriotic lodges of the Fraternal Order of Sons of Hermann sprang up in the United States, numbering 500 before the end of the century and boasting 33,000 members in 23 states. At the 1885 annual convention, the Sons of Hermann decided to erect a monument to Hermann patterned after the *Hermannsdenkmal*. Measuring 10 m and resting upon a 20 m pedestal, it was unveiled on September 25, 1897 in New Ulm, Minnesota.

environment they lived in: the primeval German forest had brought forth an equally primeval stock of hardy and resourceful Germans. In his own day, he continued, the “socio-political value” of the forest was greater than ever as it was the only remaining source where the German people could refresh their folkish strength constantly eroded by agricultural satiety and urban comfort: “A people must die out if they cannot replenish their natural, raw power of *Volkstum* (‘national character’) from the *Hintersassen* (‘hardy backwoodsmen’) living in the forest.” To the German people of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the forest thus no longer was a wilderness to be fled for the tilled plains, but a “truly magnificent preserve of our most unique national custom.” From those “remains of Germanic forest-freedom (*Waldfreiheit*) which seem so out of place amidst our modern conditions, a profound influence emanates on custom and character of all classes of the people.”<sup>133</sup>

In his *Naturgeschichte*, as in his novellas and novels, Riehl frequently juxtaposed field and forest as ‘tame’ and ‘wild’ forms of land use which were needed to complement one another: intensive agriculture, industrialization and progress were necessary to keep abreast with other nations, but it was from the forest and its primeval population that the German nation again and again received the strength and character that made and sustained it as a nation in the first place.

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<sup>133</sup> . . . daß der Wald auch einen sozialpolitischen Wert hat. . . . Ein Volk muß absterben, wenn es nicht mehr zurückgreifen kann zu den Hintersassen in den Wäldern, um sich bei ihnen neue Kraft des natürlichen, rohen Volkstums zu holen. . . . Der Wald ist für uns nicht mehr die Wildnis, aus der wir ins geklärte Land hinausstreben sollen, sondern eine wahrhaft großartige Schutzhege unserer eigensten volkstümlichen Gesittung. . . . Aus den Trümmern germanischer Waldfreiheit, die so fremdartig aus unseren übrigen modernen Zuständen hervortreten, strömt tieferer Einfluss auf Sitte und Charakter aller Volksschichten. (Riehl 1851-1869, quoted in Bülow 1938a, p. 547; see also Bülow 1938b). For a discussion of Riehl’s essentially *völkisch* interpretation of landscape, see Mosse 1964, pp. 19-24. For an abridged English version of Riehl’s work, see Diephouse 1990.

In a similar vein, the geographer Friedrich Ratzel wrote in his *Anthropogeographie* of 1891 about *Waldvölker* or 'forest peoples' as living in such close interconnection with the forest that "the nature of the forest interlaced with their entire being." Among them Ratzel counted the Germanic tribes who had "emerged directly from the forest onto the stage of history."<sup>134</sup>

While Riehl and Ratzel thus stressed the internal, folkish or social-hygienic function of the forest for the German nation, other authors emphasized the external, military importance of the forest for the defence of the nation against its neighbours. Harking back to the defeat of the Roman legions in the dense forests of Germania, these authors depicted the forest in military diction.<sup>135</sup> During the Wars of Liberation, Jahn and Arndt had already demanded a *Bannwald* (forest barrier) to be planted on the densely populated French border.<sup>136</sup> Arndt had even warned that "without its forest, there will be no Germany anymore."<sup>137</sup> In 1844, the Prussian forester Frömbling sought to guard Germany from within through a network of isolated, self-sufficient militia villages dispersed over an impenetrable *Wehrwald* ('defense forest,' Figure 3.7). In Frömbling's scheme, each farm, each hamlet, each estate was set in the middle of fields that in turn were surrounded by a forest strip on all sides. The enemy would have to fight their way from compartment to compartment, each time facing the local militia defending their very own fortified homestead. Quoting the example of Hermann's

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<sup>134</sup> *Es treten Völker in so enge Verbindung mit dem Wald, daß die Natur des Waldes sich in ihr ganzes Dasein verflucht. . . . Germanische Stämme sind unmittelbar aus dem Wald in die Geschichte eingetreten.* (Ratzel 1921/22 (1882/1891), pp. 313-314).

<sup>135</sup> Cf. Weyergraf 1987, p. 7.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. footnotes 60 and 66.

<sup>137</sup> Arndt 1820 (1815), p. 71.

battle, Frömbling recommended this “forest fortification” as a “territorial defence suited to the German national character” as it built on the hardiness of German forest-dwellers and their familiarity with their surroundings.<sup>138</sup> This, Frömbling, argued, would give the defenders a great advantage over any foreign attackers who, unaccustomed to the forest environment, would be outclassed by this formidable team of trees and men.

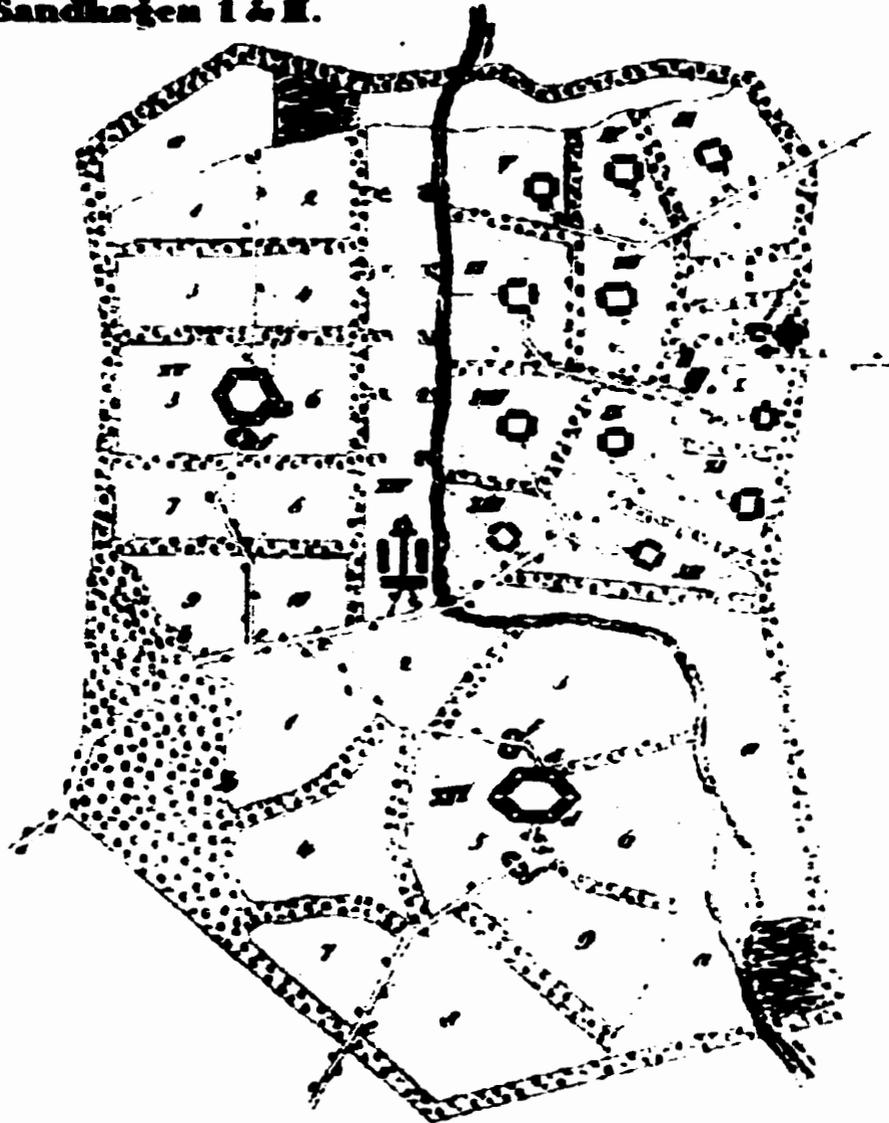
With this suggestion, Frömbling was one of the few 19<sup>th</sup>-century foresters who themselves commented on the military, political, or cultural importance of the forest to Germany or expanded on the alleged Germanness of their ward. Many foresters were indeed uncomfortable with the way Wagner and others were glorifying the forest and insisted that “the common forest effusion . . . must be left to poets and aesthetes.”<sup>139</sup> In fact, for most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, foresters did exactly that: they remained absent from the debates about the cultural and political dimensions of the forest, leaving the field to the “aesthetes.”

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<sup>138</sup> *Waldfortifikation . . . eine dem deutschen Volkscharakter entsprechende Landesvertheidigung* (Frömbling 1844, unpaginated preface).

<sup>139</sup> *Von der sonst üblichen Waldschwärmerei wird man allerdings hier nichts entdecken. Diese muss den Dichtern und Schönggeistern überlassen bleiben.* Thus the forest economist Philipp Geyer in the preface to his 1879 book *Der Wald im nationalen Wirtschaftsleben*. (The Forest in the National Economy, 1879, p. v).

**Bauerdorf Kiefernwalde  
an den Domänen  
Sandhagen I & II.**



**Figure 3.7: Frömbling's scheme for defending Germany by planting militia hamlets in forest cells, demonstrated in the case of the "farmers' village of Kiefernwalde"** (from Frömbling 1844, plate 4). An example of an early attempt by foresters to impose a utilitarian design on the landscape, in this case for the purposes of defence. Homesteads and estates of varying sizes (in solid black) sit on parcels of land (delineated by dotted lines) that are surrounded by forest strips (tree symbols). The landscape is laid out to produce optimal lines of fire and ranges for the newly introduced bored rifle, then the weapon of choice of most foresters.

### 3.6 Conclusion

During the first few decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Romantic writers, artists, and intellectuals successfully stereotyped and idealized the forests of Germany into ‘The German Forest,’ claiming that the forest represented the essence of ‘Germanness.’ Over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this notion continued to inspire the pens and brushes of German patriots as they used the forest to invent a heroic Germanic past, to construct a unified German cultural history, to symbolize political unity, to rally anti-French sentiments, and to claim superior German ‘national characteristics.’ ‘The German Forest’ was presented as the first and last line of defence of an unrefined, yet ‘close-to-nature’ Germanic identity against both foreign domination and the temptations of softening ‘civilization’: it had become a *völkisch* forest. As such, the forest was seen not only as a symbol of Germany and as an analogy of the German state and people, the German landscape, and even the quality of Germanness, but the superiority of all of these over their non-German equivalents. Strikingly, though, all of this had been effected by artists, writers, and intellectuals. Where were the foresters?

— CHAPTER 4 —  
FROM OBSCURITY TO RESPECTABILITY:  
FORESTRY, FORESTERS, AND THE FOREST IN 19<sup>TH</sup>-CENTURY GERMANY

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The damned drinking of those foresters must stop henceforth.

Frederick the Great

#### 4.1 Introduction

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the forests of Germany had been idealized and nationalized into ‘The German Forest.’ Yet, for most of the century, German foresters had remained silent amidst the chorus of poets, painters, and politicians praising the national and political importance of the German forest. This leaves us with several intriguing questions: why did it take foresters almost a century to add their voice to the cultural and political discourses about ‘their’ forest? In other words, why did foresters, as the experts on the forest, leave these discourses to the uninitiated? What enabled them to participate when they did? Finally, what caused them to participate in the way they ultimately did?

In this chapter I address those questions by looking at the changes German forestry, foresters, and forests experienced – and effected – over the 19<sup>th</sup> century. I discuss how forestry emerged belatedly both as a discipline and as a profession, how the forest became ecologically impoverished while its importance within the expanding German economy grew, and how foresters were socialized as members of both a distinct corps and the German *Bildungsbürgertum* or educated middle-class in general.<sup>1</sup> Together, these discussions will

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<sup>1</sup> I understand a discipline to exist where periodicals, conventions, or other venues for communication amongst, as well as between, theorists and practitioners create a common field of conceptualization of the research subject. In addition, the emergence of a profession depends on the following: the various teaching institutions agree upon a unified curriculum, thus establishing nationwide mobility of its graduates; interests are advocated jointly by means of an association; finally, boundaries of expertise are acknowledged by other

explain the position and perspective from which foresters adopted the cultural Germanization of the forest examined in Chapter 3, and incorporated it into the *völkisch* analogies of forest and *Volk* that form the focus of Chapter 5.

#### 4.2 Forestry Emerges from the Woods

The first and most obvious reason for the apparent absence of foresters' voices from 19<sup>th</sup>-century discussions about the supposed cultural and political merits of the German forest is that foresters did not become members of the cultural bourgeoisie until the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This meant that they rarely formulated their views in books for the general audience or participated in literary exchanges outside of their domain. Up to the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, forestry was less an occupation than a position: any (noble-)man could become a 'forester' simply by being appointed to that position by the territorial prince.<sup>2</sup> There was no formalized training, and the position was a perquisite that routinely passed from father to son.<sup>3</sup> Foresters received little or no salary and were expected to collect most

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professions and accredited by the state through licencing.

<sup>2</sup> Higher positions (*Forstmeister*) were the reserve of noblemen who were rewarded for their services to the territorial prince with such a position (cf. Appendix I). Even with the formalization and professionalization of forestry in the 1800s, the upper (academically trained) echelon of Prussian foresters were recruited from the nobility. As late as 1842, the 'classical' forester Wilhelm Leopold Pfeil (see footnote 34) quipped in his "*Kritische Blätter*" that "to this day, no commoner has been admitted to the position of *Forstmeister*; evidently, the necessary knowledge is connected to a string of noble ancestors" *In Sachsen hat sich noch kein bürgerlicher Forstmann die Befähigung zum Forstmeister erwerben können, und die erforderlichen Kenntnisse hierzu scheinen an eine Anzahl adliger Vorfahren gebunden zu sein.* (quoted in Borkenhagen 1977, p. 45). As late as 1921, 8 out of 35 forestry students at the Prussian forestry academy at Eberswalde were of noble birth.

<sup>3</sup> At the lower levels of the forest administration (*Förster*), it was also customary that, if the incumbent died without a male heir, the position was transferred to the widow with the stipulation that she find a new husband who would take on the responsibilities.

of their income from the people whose uses of the forest they were to supervise and tax. Not surprisingly, this dependency on fees and fines led to widespread corruption.

Peasants, burghers, and entrepreneurs who acted in cahoots with corrupt foresters, or in plain disregard of the law, plundered the forest. Wherever the forest was accessible, it was cut over for timber of all sizes. The largest logs were floated downriver to German and Dutch shipbuilding yards, while medium dimensions were sawed into construction timber and shorter sections were made into pitprops for use in mines. The remaining segments left the clearcut after being burnt into charcoal for smelters and forges, or into potash for glass and porcelain manufactures. Even where the forest was not cleared, its composition deteriorated as it was taxed beyond its regenerative capacity: peasants coppiced the trees for fuelwood, let their livestock graze foliage and acorns, and removed the litter as fertilizer and straw substitute. The extent and quality of the forest suffered to the point of regional devastation, and fears of a general *Holznot* (timber famine) spread.<sup>4</sup> By the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the situation had become intolerable to the princes – prompting Frederick the Great, for one, to step in and reform his forest service.<sup>5</sup>

It had become evident that the forest was needed to supply both emerging industry and the burgeoning population not only with timber, fuelwood and charcoal, but with numerous

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<sup>4</sup> The overall forest area of Germany shrank by a fifth over the 18<sup>th</sup> century, yet that average masked great regional differences. In reality, some districts already had as little as 1.4 % forest cover left while other areas contained large tracts of timber that were either inaccessible or too remote from the markets. With only little exchange possible, regional timber famines ensued. The decline was worst in northwestern Germany, where the cuts exposed sandy top soil, which subsequently was blown into sand dunes that wandered across the lowlands and buried entire villages. (Cf. Hasel 1985a, p. 55).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Appendix I, particularly footnote 10.

other indispensable commodities.<sup>6</sup> Securing sufficient forest resources was clearly not an option, it was a must.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, to the degree that the extent and quality of the forest declined, the price of wood rose – which meant that the territorial princes who owned much of the forest faced the destruction of an important source of income just when it was becoming increasingly profitable.<sup>8</sup> The princes responded by imposing unified and restrictive forest policies on all public and private forests on their territory and by establishing forest services to enforce those laws.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, by the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, forestry had become a public affair, an issue of good government whose practice required trained and committed foresters. To instruct the necessary personnel, some principalities accredited forestry schools which were run by a

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<sup>6</sup> Between 1700 and 1800, the population of Germany rose by an unprecedented 50 %, to a total of 23 million. (Cf. Rubner 1967, p. 105). Until coal became available in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, all urban households, however distant from the forest they might be, depended on fuelwood for heating and cooking. Moreover, the combined value of forest ‘by-products’ (e.g., resin for tar, bark for tanning, acorns for pigfeed, or foliage for livestock fodder and stall litter) even exceeded the timber value of the forest. For example, apiaries in the forest yielded honey for sweetening and wax for candles, which were prized so highly that the returns from beekeeping alone could exceed those from all timber sales. (Cf. Hasel 1985a, pp. 152-159).

<sup>7</sup> This was particularly true for a country without colonies. Between 1700 and 1800, Germany’s forest cover fell from 33 % to 25 %. While this still compared favourably with France (10 %) and Great Britain (less than 5 %) (Struss 1986, p. 213), the situation in these countries was not as critical because they could exploit their colonies for food and timber (Cf. Rubner 1967, pp. 77-103).

<sup>8</sup> After remaining virtually constant for centuries, prices began to increase steadily around 1730, doubling and tripling for some grades of wood within the next 50 years. In comparison, grain prices, which had fluctuated wildly all through the wars of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, remained stable during that period, if at a comparatively high level. (Cf. Rubner 1967, p. 59).

<sup>9</sup> This development took different forms across Germany. In Prussia, which was still in the process of clearing the forest for settlement, only mild restrictions were issued. In the southern and western parts of Germany, by contrast, the exhaustion of the forest had progressed over many centuries of constant settlement, necessitating severe restrictions on the freedom of forest owners. For example, as early as 1720 the forest service of the Elector of Trier (Palatinate) reserved the right to sanction all timber allotments. Frequently, the territorial princes’ desire to control all aspects of timber use led to extreme outcomes: in the principality of Ansbach (Bavaria) a decree of 1789 required the use of softwood for coffins so as to preserve oak. (Cf. Hasel 1985a, pp. 113 and 115).

practicing forester but which usually vanished with the death of the master.<sup>10</sup> Other principalities decided to have forestry taught as an academic subject at their universities.<sup>11</sup> By the 1820s, however, the shortcomings of both the masters' schools and the universities had become obvious: while one was too applied, the other was too theoretical. Between 1820 and 1850, all masters' schools were closed.<sup>12</sup> In their stead, the northern German states founded academies which combined practical and theoretical training.<sup>13</sup> The southern states and Austria, by contrast, decided to balance foresters' training by reforming the university curriculum.

Whether taught at the academy or university, by the 1850s forestry had finally secured academic status. Several important changes flowed from this institutionalization of forestry that helped turn forestry into a discipline. First, as part of their teaching obligations, professors published ever-increasing numbers of forestry textbooks which codified and

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<sup>10</sup> The first master's school was founded in 1763 in the Harz mountains, followed by schools in Bohemia (1773) and Thuringia (1786).

<sup>11</sup> Forestry was first taught at Jena, Saxony-Weimar (forestry lectures as of 1734); Freiburg, Baden, then part of the Habsburg Empire (1787); Göttingen, Hanover (1780); Tübingen, Württemberg (1820); Giessen, Hesse (1825); and Munich, Bavaria (1878). At Tharandt, Freiburg, Göttingen, and Munich forestry continues to be taught to this day.

<sup>12</sup> (Cf. Borkenhagen 1977, p. 25). Again we may look to Pfeil (cf. footnotes 2 and 34) for a frank assessment of the situation. Pfeil scathed that a forester "whose stupidity exceeded all measure and who could not even sign a diploma, apprenticed no less than 18 young men as foresters." *Ein Fall kann nachgewiesen werden, wo ein Holzknecht auf einem adligen Gut, welcher keinen Beschuß der Jagd hatte und dessen Dummheit alle Begriffe übersteigt, der nicht einen Lehrbrief unterschreiben konnte, in wenigen Jahren 18, sage und schreibe achtzehn junge Menschen als Jäger entlassen hat.* (quoted in Borkenhagen, 1977, p. 45).

<sup>13</sup> The Royal Saxon Forest Academy at Tharandt was established in 1811, followed by the Royal Prussian Forestry Academies at Eberswalde (1830) and Hann.-Münden (1869). The very first academy had been founded in 1770 by Frederick the Great in Berlin for his *Feldjäger*. (Cf. Appendix I).

disseminated current knowledge.<sup>14</sup> Second, academic journals were founded which facilitated the exchange of ideas between foresters.<sup>15</sup> Third, those books and journals led to the establishment of disciplinary standards and terminology which delineated the turf claimed by forestry. Fourth, the formalization of forestry training allowed for the mobility of graduates between different regions and states of Germany.

Over time, these developments led to a cohesion amongst foresters that enabled them to think of themselves as members of a discipline who shared common traits, terms, and interests. More and more journals were founded, in which foresters discussed not only issues of silviculture, but began to consider the larger political and economic questions that forestry in particular and Germany in general were facing. By the 1920s, some journals had assumed almost the dimensions of newspapers and appeared twice a week, offering a topical and responsive forum for disciplinary discussion.<sup>16</sup>

With the academization of forestry, foresters also began to write books in which they presented their profession to the reading public. They gave “popular-aesthetic descriptions” of the beauty and secrets of the German forest as they knew it,<sup>17</sup> introduced “the educated

<sup>14</sup> This development began as soon as the first forestry lectures were offered. By 1800, more than ten encyclopaedic works on forestry had already appeared. (Cf. Rubner 1967, p. 118). For comprehensive bibliographies of the forestry literature from the 14<sup>th</sup> century to the 1960s, see Mantel and Botter 1958; Mantel 1972; Mantel and Pacher 1976; Mantel 1990.

<sup>15</sup> The first academic forestry journal was the *Allgemeines Ökonomisches Forst-Magazin* of 1763, followed by the “Forstarchiv” of 1788 and the *Journal für das Forst- und Jagdwesen* of 1790. The oldest journal still in publication is the *Allgemeine Forst- und Jagdzeitung* of 1825.

<sup>16</sup> For example, the *Deutsche Forstzeitung* and the *Deutscher Forstwirt und Holzanzeiger*. Even today, some German academic forestry journals (e.g., the *Allgemeine Forstzeitung*) are published once every fortnight.

<sup>17</sup> *Deutsche Bäume und Wälder. Populär-ästhetische Darstellungen aus der Natur und Naturgeschichte und Geographie der Baumwelt. Für ein allgemeines gebildetes Publikum, in Sonderheit für Maler, Dichter, Forstbeamte und Waldbesitzer, Landschaftsgärtner und höhere Schulen.* (German Trees and Forests. Popular-aesthetic Descriptions of the Nature, Natural History, and Geography of the World of Trees. For a General Educated Audience, in Particular Painters, Foresters and Forest Owners, Landscape Gardeners and Secondary

from all estates” to “contemporary issues in forestry,”<sup>18</sup> and argued the necessity of protecting the forest “to experts and laymen alike.”<sup>19</sup> Between 1862 and 1879 alone, foresters mused on the role of “The Forest in Ecology and Economy” in no less than four books:<sup>20</sup> forestry was emerging from the twilight of the forest and into the light of reading lamps.

While the development of forestry into a discipline progressed, its organization into a profession lagged behind as foresters were primarily employed in the public service of the individual states (which had replaced the principalities over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>21</sup> As civil servants occupying one of the highly coveted positions in German society, foresters were socialized into thinking of themselves as privileged representatives of the state.<sup>22</sup> Obversely, the state expected foresters to identify with the interests of the state and thus

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Schools, 1877) by Hermann Jäger).

<sup>18</sup> *Forstliche Zeitfragen. 4 zeitgemäße Aufsätze für Gebildete aller Stände* (Contemporary Issues in Forestry: Four Topical Essays for the Educated from all Estates, 1872) by Heinrich Contzen.

<sup>19</sup> *Für Baum und Wald. Eine Schutzschrift an Fachmänner und Laien gerichtet* (For Tree and Forest: A Defense Addressed to Experts and Laymen alike, 1870) by M. J. Schleiden.

<sup>20</sup> *Der Wald im Haushalt der Natur und Volkswirtschaft* (The Forest in Ecology and Economy) by Heinrich Contzen (1862). In the same year, Heinrich Hermann Rentzsch published a book by the same title. In 1874, Rudolf Weber published *Der Wald im Haushalte der Natur und des Menschen* (The Forest in Ecology and Human Affairs). The already mentioned book by Philipp Geyer on “The forest in the national economy” (*Der Wald im nationalen Wirtschaftsleben*, 1879, cf. Chapter 3, footnote 139) also belongs in this category. For a year-by-year bibliography of 19<sup>th</sup>-century forestry writings, see the extensive *Sylvanische Bibliographie* (Sylvan Bibliography) by Glasmeier (1987). A note on the translation: I have translated the original German ‘household of nature’ with ‘ecology’ although the term was not coined until 1866.

<sup>21</sup> Forestry in Germany has always been a *Länder* (provincial) jurisdiction. Only from 1934 to 1945 did the *Reich* assume jurisdiction over forestry matters.

<sup>22</sup> Until the reform of district self-government in 1928, Prussian state foresters were often the first instance of local authority in rural districts. Similarly, privately employed foresters frequently represented their *Junker* (landowning nobility in the East Elbian Provinces) in bodies of local government. (Borkenhagen 1977, p. 25).

refused to acknowledge any need on the part of foresters to organize.<sup>23</sup> Pressure from public and private employers thus kept foresters from forming professional organizations until the early 1890s, when they finally formed their first state associations<sup>24</sup> and, in 1899, two national umbrella associations.<sup>25</sup> With professional organizations behind them, foresters now were also able to make their voices heard in the economic and political realms.<sup>26</sup>

The recognition of forestry and foresters during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was also helped along by the fact that forestry became an ever more important sector of the expanding German economy. Despite the substitution of coal for firewood around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, overall demand on the forest rose as many new uses of wood were found: wood changed from an energy source to a resource.<sup>27</sup> Railroad ties, timber for the construction boom, and pulpwood for the expanding print industry put new demands on the

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<sup>23</sup> This situation extended to privately employed foresters, too, as they followed exactly the same training and thus were socialized into the same *esprit de corps*. Even today, private forest owners in Germany will consider only those for employment who have completed the state forest service examination (which follows a two-year internship with a state forest service that must be completed after the completion of the Master's degree).

<sup>24</sup> The first regional organization of state foresters was actually founded in 1852 in Bohemia, but it took forty years for the next to follow: 1891 in Bavaria and 1892 in Prussia. The first organization of privately employed foresters was founded in 1903. (Borkenhagen 1977, p. 20).

<sup>25</sup> The purpose of the *Deutsche Forstverein* (German Society of Foresters) was to further disciplinary exchange, while that of the *Deutscher Forstwirtschaftsrat* (German Forestry Council) was to improve professional education and development of foresters and to heighten the political profile of forestry.

<sup>26</sup> The 1890s were a decade when many other middle-class professions organized their interests and entered political life, for example the peasantry, craftsmen, shopkeepers, petty entrepreneurs, and white collar-workers (*Angestellte*) (Cf. Confino 1997, p. 99).

<sup>27</sup> In 1850, 75 % of all ore smelters in Germany were fired with charcoal, ten years later the number had dropped to 30 %. (Cf. Rubner 1967, p. 138). On the other hand, the mining of coal for coking required vast amounts of wood for pitprops and ties.

forest.<sup>28</sup> Improved technology<sup>29</sup> and new methods of silviculture which were pioneered by German forestry in the first half of the century helped meet the increased demand in the second half,<sup>30</sup> but wood prices rose nonetheless as the market tightened with the construction boom of the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>31</sup> Despite the increased productivity and profitability of German forestry, Germany could no longer supply all of its own timber, and became increasingly dependent on timber imports.<sup>32</sup> All of this meant that foresters found themselves responsible for increasingly valuable assets, which in turn boosted their social standing.

Finally, German forestry also acquired a world-wide reputation during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For a variety of reasons, forestry in Germany was several decades ahead of other countries.<sup>33</sup> In the early decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a generation of so-called

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<sup>28</sup> Railroad track more than tripled between 1870 and 1914.

<sup>29</sup> By 1846, there were already as many as 227 different tools and implements used in tree nurseries alone. (Borkenhagen 1977, p. 36).

<sup>30</sup> For example, the principle of high grade thinning, which helped provide the mining and pulp markets with a steady supply of wood of smaller dimensions. The new techniques also helped increase the overall annual increment from 2 m<sup>3</sup>/ha in 1800 to 3 m<sup>3</sup>/ha in 1900. This increase in wood volume led to an even greater increase in wood value as the additional increment accumulated disproportionately on trunks of larger dimensions which could be sold as saw wood. Between 1850 and 1870 alone, the production and gross value of larger-dimension saw wood doubled while the production of firewood tripled in volume but remained at the same gross value. (Cf. Rubner 1967, p. 148).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Rubner 1967, pp. 155-157.

<sup>32</sup> Germany boosted its timber production from 6 million m<sup>3</sup> in 1865 to 30 million m<sup>3</sup> in 1900 (Borkenhagen 1977, p. 37) but nonetheless was forced to raise its imports from 2.3 to 9.9 million m<sup>3</sup> (König 1921, p. 163).

<sup>33</sup> Rubner suggests that the blossoming of German idealism between 1785 and 1806 with its ideal of harmony fostered interest in the forest as a purposeful element in the canvas of life. (Rubner 1981) In an earlier work, Rubner also argues that the mosaic of climates and site conditions in Central Europe demanded intense and organized study; that the political regionalism led to competing centres of research and teaching; that the traditional state focus of German forestry allowed for the expenditure of public funds; and that the politically

*forstliche Klassiker* ('classical' forestry scholars) developed the scientific principles and general rules of forest management of what is still called 'classical' forestry.<sup>34</sup> All through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, German universities and academies were training both German and foreign foresters who went on to found or influence the forest services of many countries.<sup>35</sup> In addition, several German state forest services established research institutes in the 1870s, which complemented university institutes and greatly boosted the understanding of the scientific underpinnings of forestry.<sup>36</sup> Not surprisingly, then, much of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century forestry literature was first published in German.<sup>37</sup> The resulting international prestige of

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stifled atmosphere in early 19<sup>th</sup>-century made the educated classes in Germany develop an intellectual rather than political ideal of humanity, which fostered academic development (Cf. Rubner 1967, pp. 104, 119, and 127). For comparisons between French and German forestries during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, see Badré 1977 and Pardé 1977.

<sup>34</sup> These *Klassiker* are usually held to comprise Georg Ludwig Hartig (1764-1837), Johann Heinrich Cotta (1763-1844), Friedrich Wilhelm Leopold Pfeil (1783-1859), Johann Christian Hundeshagen (1783-1834), and Carl Gustav Heyer (1797-1856). They pioneered the calculations of growth, yield, and sustainability necessary for perpetual management of forest stands.

<sup>35</sup> For example, until the founding of a forestry department at Zurich University in 1855, most Swiss foresters were trained in Germany (Hagen 1974, p. 12). Between c. 1820 and 1860, the higher ranks of the Russian forest service were educated at the academy at Tharandt, (and Eberswalde after 1843 (cf. Rubner 1967, p. 124)), where 52 German students were joined by 32 foreign students. (Even in 1933, 10 % of all students enrolled in German forestry programs were of foreign birth. (Weiger 1933)). Until c. 1850, Russian forestry was conducted more or less in German (cf. Buchholz 1932, p. 516), Slovak forestry was taught in German until 1867 (cf. Caslavsky, 1942, p. 112). In 1856, German-born Dietrich Brandis was entrusted with organizing the Indian Forest Service, the main training ground for the foresters of the British Empire (James 1981, p. 195). In 1876, Bernhard Fernow left Germany to help establish the American and Canadian forest services and forestry schools. (cf. Ebner 1938). As well, the forest services of various Asian and African countries were founded or influenced by German foresters during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. (cf. Mammen 1964). As late as 1935, the German forester Reinhold received a call to reorganize the forest administration of Eire. (cf. *Der Deutsche Forstwirt* 1935).

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Rubner 1967, p. 155.

<sup>37</sup> In his "History of English Forestry," James lists only one French forestry text as having been translated into English between 1880 and 1900, while the corresponding number for German books is seventeen. (James 1981, p. 195). The preeminence of German forest science lasted well into this century: as late as 1935, one third of the works cited in the chapter on thinning methods in an American forestry text were in German. (Hawley 1935, p. 175).

German forestry greatly boosted the disciplinary pride of German foresters at home<sup>38</sup> and placed them on par with the other academic disciplines that founded the reputation of German learning in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the situation of German forestry and foresters thus had greatly changed. Foresters had become academically-trained, higher civil servants who were participating in the literary exchanges both within their discipline and within society. Journals, books, conventions, public lectures and speeches provided fora for foresters to air and debate their views not just on forestry matters, but on issues of general social or political interest. At the same time, the voice of foresters also carried more weight as their discipline had become recognized as of academic, economic, and political significance. As academically-trained professionals and higher civil servants, foresters had found entrance to the educated classes and mingled with doctors, lawyers, and other *Honoratioren* (local notables) who determined politics in Wilhelmine Germany. By 1900, foresters thus commanded status, prestige, and influence – and they were eager to end their absence from public discourses about the forest and to make their voices heard. At last, foresters began to write and talk about the forest and its importance to Germany's historical development, its economic wellbeing, its cultural uniqueness, its political integrity. But more often than not, foresters' writings bespoke a reactionary, *völkisch*, and even anti-Semitic attitude, using the forest as a natural-science argument for the superiority of German character. What could

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<sup>38</sup> One professor of forest economics at the Eberswalde academy even insisted that there was no need to consider 19<sup>th</sup>-century developments in forestry outside of Germany because “actually, there exists only a German forest science.” (*weil es eigentlich nur eine deutsche Forstwissenschaft gibt* (Lorey 1935, p. 277)).

inform such an attitude? Were there peculiarities in the professional socialization of foresters that made them prone to reactionary views?

#### 4.3. The Socialization of Foresters as Foresters

The most striking difference between the professional socialization of 19<sup>th</sup>-century German foresters and that of other professionals was their close affiliation with the military. While military service was generally compulsory in the *Kaiserreich*,<sup>39</sup> the overlap between foresters and soldiers was particularly extensive as the state forest services were highly integrated with the army and maintained a military-like structure with a chain of command, rank insignia, and uniforms. In 1740 already, Frederick II (the Great) of Prussia had combined forestry and military careers by founding the *Reitende Feldjägercorps*, an elite ‘Mounted Rangers Corps’ drawn exclusively from royal forestry officials. For the next 179 years, until the Treaty of Versailles demanded its dissolution, this unit formed the core of Prussian forestry training and one of the most highly regarded detachments first in the Prussian and then in the German army.<sup>40</sup> Until 1919, admission to the Prussian forest service (which offered 2 out of 3 forest

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<sup>39</sup> For the graduate of the *Gymnasium* (secondary schools preparing pupils for university and administering the *Abitur* or university entrance examinations), military service was not compulsory. Instead, it was ‘a matter of course’ in ‘good society’ that the aspiring university student would serve as a volunteer for one year as a so-called *Einjährig-Freiwilliger*, during which time he would be trained as a officer of the reserve. Not to have chosen this option or to be declared unfit for service was a stigma that lowered career chances and social acceptability considerably. In 1905, more than half of the reserve officers in the German army were academics or higher public servants. (Cf. Nipperdey 1993, pp. 230-231).

<sup>40</sup> This begs the question why the elite *Jäger* status was conferred on a volunteer militia unit such as the Lützow Rangers. (Cf. Chapter 3). The apparent contradiction is easily explained: the militia units were intentionally named *Jäger* so as to attract the sons of the bourgeoisie. General Scharnhorst knew that the title *Jäger* (as well as the fact that the *Jäger* were freed from the drill exercises because their units did not form part of the line troops, but were roaming raiding parties) would appeal to the patriotic urban youth. (Cf. Münter 1988, p. 42).

service positions in the *Reich*) was virtually dependent on having served in the ranks of the *Feldjäger*, later also called *Jägerbataillon*. (For a detailed history of the affiliation of military and forestry in Prussia see Appendix I). Through this overlap between military and forestry training, military diction, traditions, and *esprit de corps* found entrance into German forestry, a fact celebrated by the foresters themselves. Consider the following description of a *Feldjäger* by one of their veterans:

His duty in the lonely and mysterious forest, in harsh weather, wind, and cold, often posted all by himself to guard and care for the valuable and vulnerable assets which are entrusted to him, demands much of him: iron health, a proven sense of duty, willingness to take responsibility, a keen eye, decisiveness, strict discipline, and the ability to obey and command.<sup>41</sup>

Were these words meant to describe a soldier? A forester? The answer is both, as the author ends this passage by saying that “soldiers, too, must possess all these characteristics.”

As this passage indicates, foresters welcomed their association with the military and its reputation as a mark of distinction. Foresters saw themselves as an elite, and this feeling was further reinforced by their affiliation with one of the most prestigious units in the German army that embodied the “fortunate union between forester and soldier.”<sup>42</sup> This sense of a special military obligation and ability was more than a fancy.<sup>43</sup> Together with their obligatory elite military training, it moved and enabled foresters to turn soldier at a moment’s

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<sup>41</sup> *Dessen Dienst im einsamen und undurchsichtigen Wald, in Wetter, Wind und Kälte, zumeist auf vereinzelterm Posten zu Schutz und Pflege ihm anvertrauter, wertvoller, leicht angreifbarer Güter erfordert neben gestählter Gesundheit erprobtes Pflichtgefühl, Verantwortungsfreudigkeit, offenen Blick, rasche Entscheidungskraft, in straffer Disziplin angezogene Selbstzucht, Fähigkeit zu gehorchen und zu befehlen. Alles das sind Eigenschaften, die auch der Soldat besitzen muß.* (Jentsch 1939, p. 210, quoting a 1890 manuscript).

<sup>42</sup> . . . *der glücklichen Verbindung Forstmann-Soldat* . . . (Koehler 1986, p. 7).

<sup>43</sup> During the Third *Reich*, foresters also prided themselves on the fact that the forest service demanded higher standards of physical fitness of aspiring forestry students than the *Wehrmacht* applied to its recruits. (cf. Orth 1938, p. 285).

notice. In May 1921, for example, many students from the two Prussian forestry academies in Eberswalde and Hann.-Münden joined the *Freikorps*<sup>44</sup> to fight against Polish units in Upper Silesia.<sup>45</sup> At Hann.-Münden, almost the entire student body volunteered, forming their own 105 strong company.<sup>46</sup>

The elite military status of foresters demanded a high price, though. As foresters were assigned to “particularly death-defying missions,” they sustained disproportionately high losses: in World War I, more than 20 % of all foresters died on the battlefield, more than four times the average of other professions. In World War II, that overall number rose to 23 % while assuming a disastrously high magnitude among academically trained foresters of the youngest age group: only 4 out of 188 Bavarian foresters-in-training returned from the battlefield.<sup>47</sup>

In summary, while 19<sup>th</sup>-century German forestry may not have been ‘the entrenched command-economy-paramilitary complex’ of one recent critic, the integration of forestry and

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<sup>44</sup> The *Freikorps* were c. 100 right-wing paramilitary units founded and manned by World War I officers and frequently payrolled by industry. They were used to suppress left-wing uprisings and later were absorbed into the army. The largest *Freikorps* was the *Stahlhelm*, whose members were absorbed into the SA after 1933.

<sup>45</sup> Upper Silesia was an area contested between German and Poland. The Treaty of Versailles first gave the area to Poland, but later stipulated that a referendum should decide the issue. Before and after the vote on March 20, 1921, in which 59.6 % voted in favour of remaining with Germany, Germans and Poles clashed in armed confrontations. On October 20, 1921, the League of Nations convinced the Allies to divide Upper Silesia into Polish and German parts.

<sup>46</sup> Koehler 1986, p. 81.

<sup>47</sup> (Borkenhagen 1977, p. 175). Numbers for World War II are for the state forest service of Bavaria. Immediately after the attack on Poland in September 1939, all but two faculty and academic staff from the Department of Forestry at Freiburg University were called up. During the winter term 1939/40, six of fifteen students were also drafted. (cf. Zentgraf 1940b, p. 508).

military was certainly intense and continued right through the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>48</sup> This must also be taken into account when considering individual foresters' freedom of choice: foresters at all levels were ordered, posted, detached, seconded, recalled, decorated and demoted – they were links in a chain of command.

The second peculiarity of German foresters' professional socialization was their membership in specialized foresters' student fraternities of conservative bent. The student fraternity movement had been founded as a progressive and liberal movement during the War of Liberation to propagate Germanic culture and German unity.<sup>49</sup> During the *Kaiserreich*, however, fraternities shifted toward the political right.<sup>50</sup> By the late 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, fraternities were an integral part of most German universities, where they formed the only recognized representation of student interests. More than half of all students were fraternity members, yet membership among foresters was “rarely below 80 %” and foresters also maintained their own exclusive fraternities.<sup>51</sup>

Fraternity life taught aspiring foresters adherence to ‘German’ and ‘manly’ virtues: snappy and brisk comportment, formalized drinking, witty quipping, brotherly loyalty, and

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<sup>48</sup> *Die neuen Ideen Gayers und Möllers waren an einem System gescheitert, das sich im 19. Jahrhundert als kommandowirtschaftlicher, paramilitärischer Komplex etabliert hatte.* (Sperber 1994, p. 52).

<sup>49</sup> Besides in the erstwhile liberal *Burschenschaften*, the fraternity movement also had roots in the so-called *Landsmannschaften* and *Corps*, whose orientation was monarchist and conservative from the beginning.

<sup>50</sup> On the role of fraternities in academic illiberalism and anti-modernism, see Jaraus 1982.

<sup>51</sup> (Schleifenbaum 1987, p. 264). To this day, at the University of Freiburg, there are two fraternities that consist entirely (*Jägercorps*) or mostly (*Corps Hubertia*) of foresters.

readiness to defend one's honour in a duel, amongst others.<sup>52</sup> In the case of foresters' fraternities, this catalogue was enlarged by an insistence on the virtues forming the "*esprit de corps* of the Prussian state forest service" as exemplified by the motto of the *Feldjäger*: "Diligence and Loyalty, Duty and Integrity."<sup>53</sup> This was the exact opposite of the situation at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the forces of restoration had been so suspicious of fraternities and their (then) liberal and democratic aspirations that they required the candidate for the forestry curriculum to produce a letter of reference from his local authorities "stating clearly that he did not belong to any secret fraternity or society."<sup>54</sup> Yet within the space of a few decades, fraternities had become of the most solid pillars of the *esprit de corps* of the Prussian civil service. To inculcate the young forestry students with this spirit was now one of the premier aims of the fraternities and they did so by providing a male bonding experience that continued where the military had left off.

Finally, fraternities also represented a life-long network of connections which were crucial to career advancement in Wilhelmine Germany. Frequently, membership in the one

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<sup>52</sup> On the importance of fraternities in Wilhelmine 'good society,' see Chapter I B in Elias 1996. In the words of Norbert Elias: "The universities educated the mind, the fraternities formed the character." *Die Universitäten unterrichteten, die Verbindungen erzogen*. (Elias 1996, p. 126).

<sup>53</sup> *Solange Preußen bestand, zeichnete sich diese [preußische Staatsforstverwaltung] durch einen ausgeprägten Korpsgeist aus, der durchaus mit dem die Haltung der Feldjäger prägenden Grundsatz: "Tüchtigkeit und Treue. Pflichterfüllung und gute Sitte" charakterisiert werden darf – eine Kurzformel für das was wir unter "Preußen" zu verstehen haben.* (quoted in Koehler 1986, p. 12).

<sup>54</sup> ... ausdrücklich bemerkt, daß solcher zu keiner geheimen Verbindung oder Gesellschaft gehört habe. (*Allgemeine Forst- und Jagdzeitung* 1825, p.1).

of the more 'noble' *Corps* (or, in the foresters' case, the Academic *Feldjäger* Societies) was even a prerequisite for achieving a position in the higher civil service.<sup>55</sup>

Similarly to the army, then, foresters' fraternities represented a proving ground where the hopeful candidates had to prove their mettle in the 'non-academic subjects' of formalized duelling, camaraderie, subordination, and consumption. At the same time, they were casino- and club-like arenas where foresters formed many life-long connections with other foresters. Across the generations, these connections facilitated entry to the forest service and career advancement; among the foresters of a generation, they greased the wheels of the administration.

Fraternities were by definition highly selective, imposing barriers with respect to noble birth, religion, wealth (not to mention the total exclusion of women), yet most were open to students of all faculties. Each German forestry faculty, though, was also home to one or two fraternities which were restricted to foresters. Those fraternities that comprised the *Feldjäger* posted to 'classroom duty' were even more selective as they favoured descendants of *Feldjäger* officers or at least descendants of forestry officials.<sup>56</sup> In the membership lists of some forestry fraternities, the last names of many members thus appear with Roman

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<sup>55</sup> There are no specific studies on this phenomenon in the forest service. A study by Morsey, however, gives us a glance at the situation in the diplomatic and consular services of the *Kaiserreich*. According to Morsey, membership in one of the following *Corps* was indispensable for entry into the diplomatic service: Borussia in Bonn, Saxo-Borussia in Heidelberg, or Saxonia in Göttingen (in addition to noble birth and a commission in a Guard regiment). (Morsey, Rudolf (1957). "Die oberste Reichsverwaltung unter Bismarck 1867-1890." Cited after Röhl 1976, p. 134).

<sup>56</sup> The 1919 constitution of the Academic *Feldjäger* Society even guaranteed the acceptance of the descendants of former *Feldjäger* officers. ("Richtlinien für die Satzung der Feldjäger-Gesellschaft vom 10.9.1919, Abschnitt 12. c): *Auf Abkömmlinge ehemaliger Offiziere des R.F.C. finden Bestimmungen über Aufnahme in die A.F.G. [. . .] keine Anwendung. Sie werden vielmehr durch ihre Anmeldung Mitglieder der Gesellschaft.*" (quoted in Koehler 1986, p. 17))

numerals to indicate for how many generations that particular family had been represented in the fraternity.<sup>57</sup>

The continuity of names in the membership lists also suggests the third peculiarity of foresters' socialization, namely, the high degree of self-recruitment and the emphasis on tradition. As the membership lists suggest, forestry often 'ran in the family.' In a 1936 article, one East Prussian forester traced the forestry profession in his family back to the year 1598, spanning ten generations. Similarly, over the period of three centuries, the "*Forstfamilie*" Mantel from Bavaria contributed more than 50 foresters to the Bavarian forest service.<sup>58</sup> While this is a rather rare occurrence, many foresters could (and can) look back on at least two or three generations of ancestors in the forest service.<sup>59</sup> In general, occupational status was an important aspect of civic life in Germany and was printed in address and telephone book listings, for example. Moreover, the father's occupational status was required information on documents such as birth certificates, but also in the registration files at educational institutions, which hence provide detailed information on foresters' self-

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<sup>57</sup> Some more common names (for example, Weber) have numerals as high as VII, which could be interpreted as a simple coincidence of family names. Yet there also appear suffixes such as II and III behind rare family names, where the probability of pure coincidence is much lower. Finally, in the case of noble family names with the suffixes II and III, such coincidence can be ruled out entirely.

<sup>58</sup> (Cf. Roeckner 1936 and *Der Deutsche Forstwirt* 1944, p. 172). For other genealogies of 'forester families' reaching back 300 years, see Borkenhagen 1977, pp. 191-193.

<sup>59</sup> Lorenz Wappes, the chairman of the *Deutscher Forstverein* from 1919 to 1933, was a fifth-generation forester. (Wappes 1950, p. 7).

recruitment.<sup>60</sup> For two forest academies in Silesia and Hesse, Borkenhagen has analyzed those registration files and found that about half of the students were sons of foresters.<sup>61</sup>

During the Third *Reich* with its emphasis on 'genetic heritage,' the strong paternal tradition of foresters was even advanced to the status of a "genetic predisposition": the 1938 reform of the regulations for admission the higher civil service in forestry stipulated that foresters's sons were to receive preferential consideration.<sup>62</sup>

Apart from the family tradition, there was and remains a strong emphasis on professional tradition and continuity. Foresters conceived and still conceive of their profession as marked by a very long time frame, changing only slowly and gradually. Trees take longer than a human lifetime to mature and it would be impossible to predict market conditions so far into the future.<sup>63</sup> Thus foresters have no means of knowing whether their decisions of today will be opportune for tomorrow's world. Consequently, they have a tendency to orient their

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<sup>60</sup> See Childers (1990) on the importance of occupational status in Weimar Germany and how the Nazis in particular aimed their propaganda specifically at occupational estates.

<sup>61</sup> (Borkenhagen 1977, pp. 60-61). The paternal tradition of foresters was still important enough in 1958 to form an essential part of biographical articles, for example in Hilf's 1958 series of articles dedicated to the memory of young academic foresters killed in World War II. (Hilf 1958).

<sup>62</sup> (Orth 1938, pp. 285-286). Similarly, in a literary debate on the desirable qualifications of forester candidates one year earlier, Hermann Gusovius had argued that "in our time, it should be self-evident that genetic heritage, particularly if the propensity for the forestry profession has expressed itself over the course of several generations, should play a prominent, even deciding, part in the evaluation process." *Daß der Erbmasse dann, wenn sich die Berufsneigung Generationen hindurch erhalten hat, bei der Bewertung hohe, wenn nicht ausschlaggebende Bedeutung zukommt, dürfte heute selbstverständlich sein.* (Gusovius 1937, p. 79).

<sup>63</sup> With the advent of acid rain, global climate change and ozone depletion, it has also become impossible to predict future ecological conditions for trees planted today.

decisions along the lines of received, traditional thinking and to eschew change.<sup>64</sup> In other words, there is a tendency in German forestry to look backwards rather than forwards and keep to ‘traditional’ approaches rather than ‘rushing’ into experiments.

With reference to modern-day German foresters, Pleschberger calls this a “forestry ideology,” or a way of thinking that lends itself to an “ideological exploitation of the forest for regressive bourgeois thinking determined by a passion for order.”<sup>65</sup> Looking back, we can certainly discern this conservative bent in earlier generations. For example, Borkenhagen lists the party affiliation of all foresters who were members of the Prussian Diet, the *Reichstag*, and the *Bundestag* of the Federal Republic between 1918 and 1976. Of 21 foresters, 5 were Social Democrats, 3 were Liberals, while 13 belonged to conservative or right wing parties.<sup>66</sup>

Similarly, among the students at the academy in Hann.-Münden during the Weimar period, Schleifenbaum detects a “monarchistic, nationalistic conviction” which expressed itself in a level of resistance against liberal reform initiatives that was “unsurpassed by any

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<sup>64</sup> (Seling 1997, p. iv). This uneasiness about the fickle market is not a product of the recent past, but unsettled foresters more than century ago: in 1886, Munich professor of silviculture Karl Gayer championed the mixed forest as an insurance against “changing market desires” (*zeitlichen Marktbegehrens*). (Gayer 1886, pp. 7-8).

<sup>65</sup> *ideologische Ausbeutung des Waldes für rückwärts gerichtetes bürgerliches Ordnungsdenken* (Pleschberger 1981, p. 44). For further elaborations on this argument, see Glück and Pleschberger 1982; and Glück and Pleschberger 1983.

<sup>66</sup> Borkenhagen 1977, p. 175.

other Prussian university.”<sup>67</sup> Foresters, then, belonged and still belong to the more politically conservative elements of German society.<sup>68</sup>

In summary, the typical socialization of a late 19<sup>th</sup>-century German foresters would thus have proceeded like this: possibly raised as the son of a forester, the young man<sup>69</sup> would almost certainly spend a minimum of one year in the army before proceeding to university and joining a fraternity. In these institutions, the aspiring forester would learn not just the technical knowledge necessary for his future position but also the professional, social, and political codes of conduct that behoved a proper German forester. The following quote illustrates just how senior foresters expected the interlacing of these institutions to mould the “young blood.” The passage is taken from the dinner address Privy Councillor Schmaltz gave to his fellow fraternity brothers at the 1920 *Feldjäger* homecoming in Berlin. Schmaltz exhorted his fellow *Feldjäger* not to despair after the forced disbanding of the *Feldjäger* as a military unit – but his words suggest that he is also talking about the situation of Germany as a whole, particularly the end of the monarchy, and the feared loss of Prussian virtues in the new German republic:

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<sup>67</sup> Schleifenbaum 1987, p. 33.

<sup>68</sup> As the fight against acid rain in the 1980s has shown, this does not necessarily mean that foresters cannot hold environmentally progressive convictions at the same time.

<sup>69</sup> And a man it would be without fail. It was not until the year 1939 that the first female forest official was installed – at the lowest, non-academic career level of *Forstschutzgehilfin* or ‘forester assistant’ (cf. Eschment *et al.* 1994, p. 212). During the war years, the increasing conscription of foresters into the army caused personnel shortages. To free up able-bodied men for outdoor duties, women were increasingly assigned to do the administrative work in forest offices. (Cf. Eißfeldt 1943, p. 26). The discrimination against women continued in the democratic Federal Republic after 1945. To graduate from second to third year, female candidates needed to achieve a grade of ‘excellent’ (or 1 on a scale of 1 to 6) in their final examinations, while their male colleagues advanced with a ‘sufficient’ (or 4). (Cf. Benett 1987, p. 34).

Our teeth clenched, we must tear ourselves away from the grieving because grief is sterile. Better is the wrath that drives us and teaches us to achieve. And wrath can accomplish a great deal if it is tempered by cold calmness. Never forget! Never mention it! Act and work! Hold out! He who truly nourishes the hope to regain what we have lost . . . , must not be bent on reaching the goal himself. Instead, he must strive to pass on his aspiration. That has also been the goal of the Association of Former *Feldjäger* when it created the Academic *Feldjäger* Societies [at the forestry academies in Eberswalde and Hann.-Münden, M.I.] to avail itself of young blood. Those who care for and propagate the forest, who never reap what they sow, are accustomed to working and preserving for the benefit of future generations . . . . The Mounted *Feldjäger* Corps must not lapse. Its spirit and its name shall live on. An old Prussian, truly conservative way of thinking inspires the founding of the Academic *Feldjäger* Societies, a determination to retain that which has proven its worth – even more so in times of despair. We have been uprooted in the army but, by virtue of the special connection between army service and forest service, we, before all other units, have the opportunity to continue to grow in the forest.<sup>70</sup>

Through Schmalz's words, we can catch a glimpse of the self-image of Prussian foresters at the beginning of the Weimar period: conservative, authoritarian, *staatstreu* (state-minded), traditional, and exclusive. After almost a century of internalizing the demands of the state as their employer, the exhortations of their peers in fraternities, the commands of their army superiors, the teaching of their fathers in the home forest district, foresters were a breed apart indeed. In the words of the chairman of the Society of German Foresters, Lorenz Wappes, spoken at the 1926 annual meeting, the German forester emerged from his education as a

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<sup>70</sup> *Mit zusammengebissenen Zähnen müssen wir uns losreißen von der Trauer, denn die Trauer bleibt unfruchtbar. Da ist schon besser die Wut, die treibt und lehrt uns schaffen. Und sie kann Großes vollbringen, wenn ihr zur Seite steht die kalte Besonnenheit. Niemals vergessen! Nicht davon reden! Handeln und arbeiten! Warten können!*

*Wer die Hoffnung wirklich hegt, wiederzugewinnen, was uns verloren gegangen . . . , dem darf es nicht darauf ankommen, selbst das Ziel zu erreichen; er muß trachten, sein Streben auf Nachkommen zu vererben. Dieses Ziel hat auch dem Verein ehemaliger Feldjäger vor Augen gestanden, als er sich jungen Nachwuchs schuf in den Akademischen Feldjäger-Gesellschaften. Denen, die den Wald pflegen und fortpflanzen, die niemals ernten, was sie säen, ist der Gedanke ja vertraut, für kommende Geschlechter zu arbeiten und zu erhalten . . . . Das Reitende Feldjägerkorps darf nicht aufhören. Sein Geist soll leben und sein alter Name. Ein altpreußischer, echt konservativer Gedanke liegt in dieser Begründung der Akademischen Feldjäger-Gesellschaften, ein zähes Festhalten am Bewährten, gerade in der Zeit der Not. Durch die eigentümliche Verbindung zwischen Heeres- und Forstdienst haben wir vor anderen Truppenteilen die Möglichkeit voraus [sic], obzwar im Heer entwurzelt, im Walde weiter zu wachsen. (Quoted in Koehler 1986, pp. 77-78, paragraph break in the original).*

“*homo foresticus*”, a highly specialized generalist who felt strong “green cohesion.”<sup>71</sup> Yet at the same time foresters were without question members of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, the German educated middle-class, which meant that they shared in the upward social mobility of this stratum of German society – as well as in its decline towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

#### 4.4 The Socialization of German Foresters as Members of the *Bildungsbürgertum*

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Germany developed a unique social structure with a functional elite distinguished not by birthright or wealth, but by education. This elite was the *Bildungsbürgertum* (intellectual and cultural bourgeoisie) into which German foresters had ascended with their academization and incorporation into the higher civil service. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, the *Bildungsbürgertum* found itself politically marginalized and responded with a flight into reactionary cultural critiques. The cultural-pessimist slant of many foresters’ writings in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was part of this response to their losing ground both politically and socially.<sup>72</sup> What, then, was the experience of the *Bildungsbürgertum* and what caused their radicalization?

Toward the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the German principalities had begun to form comprehensive state administrations. To obtain the most efficient and well-trained administration, the territorial princes opened up the administrative careers to commoners

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<sup>71</sup> . . . beneiden uns um unsern grüner Zusammenhalt . . . gewisser fachmännischer Einheitstyp (Wappes 1926, p. 480).

<sup>72</sup> This section follows the argument in Seling 1997. For a general account of the German middle class in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, see Blackbourn and Evans 1989.

who were trained at the newly founded cameralist academies.<sup>73</sup> The emerging meritocracy made official positions accessible to the sons of bourgeois families, which not only provided a new career path, but also created a new social stratum: the *Bildungsbürger* (intellectual bourgeois) was of common birth, possessed an academic education, was employed in a salaried position, most often in the civil service, and was socially mobile.<sup>74</sup>

The new class was exemplified by some of the patriots we met in Friedrich's studio, for example, Kersting, Körner, Schubert, and Friedrich himself.<sup>75</sup> We also saw that these men were demanding democratic and republican reforms. Indeed, for most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the *Bildungsbürgertum* was seen as progressive and open to other groups in society. Also, with its leanings towards liberal nationalism, the *Bildungsbürgertum* found itself in opposition to the particularist German authorities for most of the time between 1815 and 1871.<sup>76</sup> When Bismarck unified the *Reich*, the hour of the *Bildungsbürgertum* seemed to have come. Their dreams of unity and nationhood fulfilled and their demands for democracy at least partly met, the *Bildungsbürger* seemed poised to become one of the pillars of the new state. Yet the *Bildungsbürgertum* found itself out of step with the radical transformation that

<sup>73</sup> Since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the absolutist princes had established either *Kameralschulen* (cameralist academies) or cameralist chairs at the universities to train the bureaucratic cadres necessary for overseeing the finances and administration of the mercantilist state. *Kameralismus*, also *Kameralwissenschaft*, translates as cameralistics or 'science of finance' and was a German variation of mercantilist political economy. While French or English mercantilism aimed at achieving a positive trade balance through exports, German cameralistics focussed more on the development of sound administrative structures and the expansion of productive capacity to boost internal consumption.

<sup>74</sup> This was the main difference with regard to the *Wirtschaftsbürgertum* (economic haute bourgeoisie) who were economically self-reliant.

<sup>75</sup> The Grimm brothers also belong in this category.

<sup>76</sup> This was particularly the case during the 1830 and 1848 revolutions, which were mostly the work of the *Bildungsbürger*. For that reason, the short-lived National Assembly in Frankfurt after the 1848 revolution was nicknamed the "Professors' Parliament."

changed an essentially agricultural Germany “so late, so swiftly, and so thoroughly” into a modern industrial economy at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>77</sup>

In the four short decades between the founding of the *Kaiserreich* in 1871 and the beginning of the First World War in 1914, Germany grew from a regional player to a world power. Its economy awash with capital from reparation payments after the French defeat in 1871, the new German *Reich* began to vastly expand its industrial capacity, quintupling its output by 1914.<sup>78</sup> The railway boom of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century spurred the erection of as many iron and steel works within the five years between 1871 and 1876 as had been constructed in the entire preceding century. Coal production in the Ruhr industrial area (which accounted from roughly a third of German coal and iron output) rose from 11.5 million tons in 1870 to 60 million in 1900, while iron production soared from 0.36 million tons to 2.7 million tons. By 1885, Germany was making well over half of the world’s steel, surpassing Britain as the ‘workshop of the world.’<sup>79</sup>

The expanding mining industry in particular bled the countryside for urgently needed unskilled labour: between 1850 and 1900, the average number of miners per coal mine rose from 64 to 1,400, most of whom were former farm hands. Consequently, the primary

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<sup>77</sup> Dahrendorf 1965, p. 46.

<sup>78</sup> The economy was also helped by a liberal credit policy on the part of the banks and a general construction boom in the rapidly growing cities: the economy of the *Gründerjahre* (the years following the founding of the *Reich*) saw an annual growth rate of 5 %, while the 1880s averaged 2.5 %.

<sup>79</sup> Mellor 1978, p. 55.

sector's employment share dropped from half to little more than a quarter.<sup>80</sup> At first, the natural population increase masked the effects of rural outmigration, but after 1885 almost half of all rural districts began to decline in population. Yet while the countryside emptied, Germany's overall population jumped from 41 million to 67 million, making it Europe's most populous country.<sup>81</sup> The combination of industrialization and population growth led to rapid urbanization which brought with it a plethora of challenges for the newly industrializing and democratizing German society such as the need for housing, social insurance schemes, and the question of electoral representation as electoral politics became increasingly geared towards the urban 'working masses.'<sup>82</sup>

The first decades of the *Kaiserreich* thus cast Germany into a "social chaos of industrialization and urbanization"<sup>83</sup> in which the *Bildungsbürger* lost political ground to the

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., pp. 59 and 105.

<sup>81</sup> Although the young empire acquired colonies five times the size of the motherland, these were not suitable for large-scale emigration. As a result, millions of Germans emigrated to America instead, particularly between 1880 and 1893.

<sup>82</sup> Urbanization was driven by the growth of industries in cities. In 1871, only 4.8 % of the population lived in cities of more than 100,000 inhabitants. By 1890, the number was 12.1 %, by 1910 it was 21.3 %. It is worth keeping in mind that most provinces (with the exception of Prussia) had at most one or two cities of such magnitude. In 1870, Germany had 10 cities over 100,000 inhabitants (5 in Prussia, 2 in Saxony, 1 each in Bavaria, Hamburg, and Württemberg). By 1910, the number had risen to 35 (10 of which were located in the industrialized Ruhr area alone). The growth of individual cities was equally dramatic: of the 10 cities over 100,000 inhabitants, 8 had doubled or even tripled their population by 1900. Again, the industrial Ruhr area was outstanding in its pace of growth with some cities (e.g., Bottrop, Herne, and Recklinghausen) growing tenfold between the years 1871 and 1910. By the beginning of the First World War, Germany had as many large cities as the rest of continental Europe combined.

<sup>83</sup> (Mosse 1964, p. 14). Politically, the founding of the Empire had realized the common goal of emancipatory nationalism; now, the state set out to consolidate its power within. Bismarck tried to keep Social Democrats from gaining influence among the growing ranks of the working class, while at the same time trying to curtail the influence of the Catholic church. The gag laws against Socialists and Catholics stifled political life during the 1870s and 1880s. Economically, the Vienna stock market crash of 1873 and the depression that followed it (*Gründerkrach*), combined with the stiff British industrial competition, eroded the trust in liberal economics and free trade and caused the *Kaiserreich* to embark on a policy of protective tariffs. For forest

rising working class on the one side and economic ground to the increasingly influential *Wirtschaftsbürgertum* (economic haute bourgeoisie) on the other,<sup>84</sup> squeezed between the classes 'above' and 'below' in their struggle for influence.<sup>85</sup> To worsen matters, the value of the liberal education of the *Bildungsbürger* was put in question by the dramatic rise of the natural sciences and technology.<sup>86</sup> Reduced to an anachronistic class whose values and education were out of step with the demands of industrial society, the *Bildungsbürger* retreated into a conservative milieu of their own creation and aggrandized their pure humanist education into an exclusionary mark of distinction, self-identification, and self-legitimization. *Bildung* or liberal arts education was what distinguished the pure inner realm from the mundane world of *Wissen* or knowledge. It became the hallmark of a self-styled

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owners, for example, the *Gründerkrach* depression meant a drop in revenues from timber sales by more than a third between 1873 and 1880. (Rubner 1967, p. 152).

<sup>84</sup> With the dismissal of Bismarck in 1890, the repression of Socialists and Catholics eased and they were able to organize their interests more effectively in parties. The Social Democrats promptly became the strongest party with 19.7 % of the popular vote in 1890 (27.2 % in 1898, 31.7 % in 1903). The Social Democrats in particular also benefited from the steadily growing political involvement of Germans: participation in the *Reichstag* elections rose from 50-60 % in the 1870s to 70-80 % in the 1890s and 85 % in 1912 (Confino 1997, p. 99).

<sup>85</sup> For example, the Liberals as the erstwhile voice of the bourgeoisie declined from 128 deputies (out of 397) in the 1871 *Reichstag* to 42 in 1890. This was partly due to the increasing voter turnout among the workers that strengthened the Social Democrats. Another reason, however, was the withdrawal of support for the Liberals by the *Bildungsbürger* themselves who no longer saw their interests represented. For example, the Liberals had argued for Jewish emancipation and free trade, which threatened the economic standing of the *Bildungsbürger* at once from within and outside the nation.

<sup>86</sup> Following the neo-humanist idea that education should elevate the 'humanity' of the pupil rather than teach mundane practical skills, the German *Gymnasium* (secondary school preparing pupils for university) stressed a liberal arts curriculum in which Latin and Greek were the most important subjects. For the graduates of these schools, proficiency in the classical languages and familiarity with the arts and literature meant a life-long common ground of *Bildung* (liberal arts education) on which their 'cultured' interactions with one another were based, and which they used to set themselves apart from the those classes who obtained an *Ausbildung* (practical training) that was geared towards earning a livelihood. As we will see shortly, this juxtaposition of *Bildung* (education for the sake of knowing) and *Handlungswissen* (education for the sake of being able to act) formed the basis for the later dichotomy of *Kultur* (Culture) and *Zivilisation* (Civilization).

elite that claimed to obtain its education not for a specific purpose, but in order to defend the *höheren Werte* (higher values) of German culture that *Bildungsbürger* saw threatened by modernization and materialism.

The *Bildungsbürgertum* reacted to the perceived intellectual inflation and the very real social strains of modernization<sup>87</sup> with the creation of a reactionary counterculture that expressed itself in *Reformbewegungen* (reform movements) which in turn propagated *Weltanschauungen* (world views) rather than political or social platforms:<sup>88</sup> anthroposophy, organic farming, vegetarianism and health food, nudism, homeopathy, temperance, *Heimatschutz* (protection of the homeland), agrarian Romanticism, and the youth movement were all born of the disenchanting *Bidungsbürgertum*.<sup>89</sup> Common to these reform movements was their anti-materialistic cultural pessimism: they portrayed urbanization, technological

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<sup>87</sup> In the eyes of the *Bildungsbürger*, they comprised a host of 'ills': urbanization with its 'cultural decadence' as expressed in modernist art, the capitalist concentration of the economy, the disintegration of traditional family life and women's emancipation, among others.

<sup>88</sup> Reform movements are characterized by their roots in the disenchantment with current conditions and by the absence of a firm organizational structure. They derive their cohesion from the missionary awareness of their members who want to actively change the political and social conditions they perceive as deficient. Their attempts at expanding by convincing outsiders are borne by publications and public activities. (Ashworth (1998, p. 265) sees the "crusading characteristics of a 'movement' [as] including righteous zeal in an unquestionably just cause, a lack of introspection and an impatience with opposition.") Reform movements can meet one of two fates: if successful, they solidify into parties or other organizations (for example, the environmental movement forming a Green party); if unsuccessful or made obsolete, they dissolve.

<sup>89</sup> Rollins (1993, p. 160 (in English also quoted in Confino 1997, p. 131)) speaks of an *eindeutig* (unambiguous) domination by bourgeois members of most reform movements. For the *Heimatschutz*, he gives the following numbers for occupations of members: 25 % higher civil servants (among whom we may count foresters), 20 % educators, 5 % physicians, artists, and journalists: "The tone of the organization was set by members of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, who comprised fully half of the membership." (Rollins 1996, pp. 92-93 and note 14).

progress, liberal economics, and the secularization of society as causing what they saw as the cultural disintegration of the German nation.<sup>90</sup>

The reform movements tried to stem this perceived decline by trying to re-educate Germans about their endangered national cultural values – of which the *Bildungsbürger* appointed themselves guardians as a new *Geistesaristokratie* (intellectual aristocracy). The forces necessary to stem the tide and which this education aimed at re-awakening were those that every German presumably possessed without necessarily being aware of them: the forces innate to the *bodenständige Volk* ('the *Volk* rooted in the soil'). Many, but by no means all, reform movements were underlain by a claim of German national superiority with racial undertones that was based on this supposed 'rootedness' of the German people and the proximity to 'naturalness' and 'genuineness' that those roots implied. The claim has become known under the German adjective *völkisch*, which conferred an aura of German superiority.<sup>91</sup>

The emergence of *völkisch* thinking as a "Germanic faith"<sup>92</sup> among the *Bildungsbürgertum* polarized the issues confronting the modernizing German society into crude, essentializing dualisms between a 'good' German pole and a 'bad' foreign pole. For

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<sup>90</sup> On the phenomenon of German cultural pessimism, see Dahrendorf (1967) and Lees (1979). For a discussion of cultural pessimism, particularly anti-urbanism, in Ratzel's writings, see Kost (1988, p. 162). It bears mentioning that this development was not restricted to Germany. For a description of a similar "anti-urban bias" and "'racial' worries about the quality of the national stock" in Great Britain, see Taylor 1991, particularly p. 153.

<sup>91</sup> See Chapter 1, footnote 10.

<sup>92</sup> The term is Mosse's (1964, p. 31).

example, an organic and stratified, stable German ‘community’ vs. a mechanistic and homogenized, and unstable Western ‘society’; a rooted, agrarian German *Volk* vs. uprooted, urbanized, and cosmopolitan ‘masses’; a humane, soulful and morally sound German ‘culture’ vs. an industrial, rational, and superficial ‘civilization’; and, finally, a German, *völkisch* forest vs. a *welsch* shrub or a Slavic steppe.<sup>93</sup>

Within these polarizations, the ‘Other’ was sketched in increasingly bold lines to provide a *Feindbild* (foe image) that was easily recognized and transferred: the industrialist, the financier, the journalist, the urban intellectual. As anti-Semitism spread in the 1880s, the role of the essentialized, personified and vilified ‘Other’ fell to ‘the Semite.’<sup>94</sup> Now Jews were painted to embody materialism and greed, uprootedness and un-German values. Not surprisingly, such a caricature of the Other served primarily to elevate ‘the German’ into a rooted, genuine, moral, and loyal being.<sup>95</sup> The most succinct image of this juxtaposition was

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<sup>93</sup> *Gemeinschaft vs. Gesellschaft, Volk vs. Masse, Kultur vs. Zivilisation, Wald vs. Busch & Steppe*. One telling precis of these perceived polarities is the remark in the biography of a renowned forest owner: “Culture smells of the stables, civilisation of chemical fertilizer.” *Kultur ist Stalldung, Zivilisation ist Kundung*. (August Bier, quoted in Selig 1997, p. 49).

<sup>94</sup> Several reasons have been suggested in the literature, among them the prominence of Jewish traders in the stockmarket crash of 1873, and the illegal Jewish immigration from Russia after the start of pogroms in 1881/82. Whatever its roots, the *Feindbild* quickly established itself in politics. In its first *Reichstag* election in 1887, the newly founded anti-Semitic party garnered 11,500 votes; in 1890, it had quadrupled its votes to 47,500.

<sup>95</sup> Binde summarizes the emergence of this juxtaposition of German rootedness and Jewish uprootedness as follows: “It was thought that, over time, the rootedness of Germans in their natural habitat had formed them into a distinct ‘race’. The Jewish ‘race’ had also been formed by its environment, which consisted of sterile desert tracts very different from the German landscape. Therefore, it was maintained that Jews could never adapt to the German habitat where their presence was intrinsically unnatural and disharmonious. Furthermore, the Jewish people had long since been uprooted from their native land. Consequently, they were seen as the epitome of the moral degeneration caused by urban life and alienation from the soil.” (Binde 1999, p. 771).

the depiction of 'the Jew' "as the snake at the root of the [German] tree, seeking to destroy it."<sup>96</sup>

Two writers were particularly instrumental in popularizing *völkisch* thought into a Germanic ideology: the "founder" of the *völkisch* movement Paul de Lagarde (1827-1891) and his "prophet" Julius Langbehn (1851-1907).<sup>97</sup> Since their works not only helped crystallize the *völkisch* disenchantment into a program but also resurfaced in foresters' contributions to the public debates about the forest, their writings warrant a brief treatment particularly in regard to their depiction of the German forest.

Both Lagarde and Langbehn wrote only one book of consequence yet in both cases the impact of that one work is hard to overestimate. While Lagarde's collection of *Deutsche Schriften* (German Writings, 1878) influenced the theoretical development of *völkisch* ideology up to and including the Third *Reich*, Langbehn's ecstatic *Rembrandt als Erzieher* (Rembrandt as Educator, 1890) was an immediate vehicle for the simplification and popularization of the *völkisch* idea: within a mere two years, Langbehn's book went through forty editions, becoming "practically required reading among the young" until the First World War.<sup>98</sup> One of those devouring the book was Richard Walther Darré, who later

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<sup>96</sup> Mosse 1964, p. 27.

<sup>97</sup> The terms are Mosse's. For a discussion of Lagarde and Langbehn in the context of the *völkisch* movement, see Mosse 1964, Ch. 2. A more in-depth treatment of their cultural criticism and its extension by Arthur Moeller van den Bruck in his *Das Dritte Reich* (The Third *Reich*, 1922) can be found in Stern 1961.

<sup>98</sup> Mosse 1964, p. 40.

worked aspects of *völkisch* thinking into the idea of Blood and Soil, the backbone of National Socialist ideology.<sup>99</sup>

Lagarde and Langbehn shared with Riehl an emphasis on the role of the landscape in the formation of the ‘character’ of the *Volk*. Lagarde, in a section entitled “The roots of German being,” exhorted Germans to heed the voices of their past emanating from the forest: Germans “should head into the future by heeding the past,” a past when they could “hear the voices of pristine nature in the quiet growth of the trees and the harvest on the fields.” To hear “the beeches and oaks speak . . . of the German faith” once again, Germans had to find their way back to the forest and the land,<sup>100</sup> because it is there that “the manliness of the nation grows quietly like the beech in the forest.”<sup>101</sup> In other essays with titles such as *Deutscher Charakter* (German Character) and *Das “neue” Deutschland und das deutsche Wesen* (The New Germany and German Being), Lagarde demanded a new German state to adequately nourish and protect the innate *Wesen* or ‘being’ of the German people. The sole purpose of this new German state was to preserve and vitalize the essential life force of the *Volk* before it was too late: “I will not tire of preaching that we are at the threshold of either a new era or of our doom.”<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Cf. Chapter 7, footnote 24.

<sup>100</sup> *Zielpunkt eines Spazierganges, auf dem die Buchen und Eichen den Schlendernden von deutschem Glauben . . . erzählen.* (Lagarde 1878, p. 239).

<sup>101</sup> *Die Wurzeln des deutschen Wesens: Die Deutschen sollten in die Zukunft streben und in eine Vergangenheit zurückgehen, in welcher es weder ein Buch gab noch eine Zeitung noch einen irgendwie geartete Schriftgelehrsamkeit, nur stilles Horchen auf die Stimme ursprünglicher Natur, leises Wachsen mit den Bäumen des Waldes und der Saat der Felder . . . die Mannhaftigkeit der Nation wächst in der Stille wie die Buche im Walde.* (Lagarde 1878, pp. 321-322 and 391).

<sup>102</sup> *Deutscher Charakter: Ich werde nicht müde werden zu predigen, daß wir entweder vor einer neuen Zeit oder vor dem Untergange stehen.* (Lagarde 1878, p. 367).

Langbehn continued Lagarde's lament in his own chapter on the "Internal Decay after 1870," blaming the decline on the "soullessness" of contemporary education against which he held up Rembrandt as an exemplar of "healthy German strength of soul" that was "anchored in a strong sense of rootedness and soulfulness."<sup>103</sup> To counter the decay and to lead Germany back on the path to greatness, Langbehn demanded a re-education of Germans in the spirit of Rembrandt, as well as a "return to the land" and to an "aristocratic structuring of the Germanic body of the *Volk*."<sup>104</sup>

Neither Lagarde nor Langbehn saw the recently unified *Kaiserreich* as the *völkisch* state in which their ideals could be realized. Instead, they envisaged a 'new Germany' that served the transcendent Volk. This state was different from the Romantic notion of the ideal German state in that it aimed not at restoring some medieval harmony, but at establishing a new order in which the community stood above the individual, the *Volk* above the state, and the nation above humankind: "The German must serve Germandom."<sup>105</sup> Moreover, both saw *Kultur* as rooted in the soil and as superior to a dislocated, 'cosmopolitan' *Zivilisation*. Lagarde and Langbehn's works thus epitomized the cultural pessimism of the late-19<sup>th</sup>-century German *Bildungsbürgertum* in its fight against political and social obsolescence in the face of rapid modernization. Foresters were not insulated from the changes sweeping late 19<sup>th</sup>-century German society and soon the dualist rift that was developing between modernist

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<sup>103</sup> *Seelenkälte . . . Rembrandt als . . . Muster gesunder deutscher Seelenkraft, verankert . . . in Heimatgeist und Seelengröße.* (Langbehn 1890, p. 37).

<sup>104</sup> *Verbauerung . . . aristokratische Durchgliederung des germanischen Volkskörpers* (Langbehn 1890, pp. 191 and 38).

<sup>105</sup> *Der Deutsche soll dem Deutschtum dienen.* (Langbehn 1890, pp. 50-51).

and traditionalist forces in German society began to cleave German forestry as well. It did so, however, in a way that reflected the unique modernization occurring within 19<sup>th</sup>-century forests and forestry and its accompanying problems.<sup>106</sup>

Around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, just as German foresters were beginning to enjoy their heightened social standing, an ecological and economic crisis that had its roots in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century was growing in the German forest – in the literal sense of the word. The vast areas reforested by the ‘classical’ foresters around 1800 had matured into even-aged, pure coniferous forests which were mostly managed on the basis of short-rotation clear cuts.<sup>107</sup> The result were ecologically and structurally unsound stands which now suffered heavy damage from insects, snow, and windstorms. The large-scale collapse of stands not only threatened the continuity of forest cover in the affected regions, it also flooded the market with low-grade timber and so depressed prices. In addition, many among both foresters and the general population resented the uniform appearance of the expansive monocultures of spruce and pine which were interrupted only by the voids of frequent clear

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<sup>106</sup> One indication of the rapid changes to which German forestry responded in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century is the reversal of the shares of fuel wood and industrial timber: in 1850, more than three quarters of all wood was used for fuel and only one quarter for industrial use; by 1914, that ratio was reversed.

<sup>107</sup> The goal of the ‘classical’ German foresters charged with rebuilding the devastated German forest around 1800 was to reestablish forest cover on the exposed soils as quickly as possible, and to avert an impending ‘timber famine.’ Both goals were easiest to achieve by planting stands of fast-growing conifers. Moreover, the soils on which this reforestation had to take place frequently were so exhausted (or of at best marginal fertility to begin with) that only two species would take hold: Scots pine in the drier regions and the continental Northeast; and Norway spruce in the more oceanic regions of the South and West. At the same time, these species also reseeded themselves freely as well as being easy to propagate and tend. The result of these strictures was the creation of large tracts of pure pine or spruce stands, which were vulnerable to insect, fire, and wind damage. The result of the new preferences was a reversal of previous coniferous/deciduous proportions as conifers tripled from 25 % to 75 % of the total forest cover.

cuts.<sup>108</sup> The reputation of German forestry, so recently earned and highly cherished, was at stake.

In a protest directed just as much against the uninspiring aesthetics of the uniform *Balkenfelder* ('timber rows') of modern forestry as against their inherent vulnerability, foresters began to suggest alternative 'traditional' models of forestry<sup>109</sup> which were based not on maximum soil rent, but on maximum forest rent;<sup>110</sup> not on even-aged and pure stands, but on uneven-aged and mixed stands; not on exigencies of production, but on aesthetic and ecological considerations. While a variety of models emerged from this critique, they all

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<sup>108</sup> This resentment was based mostly on aesthetic considerations, but sometimes there were other components as well. In 'Rheinpreußen' (the territories on both banks of the lower Rhine and in Westphalia which had been given to Prussia at the Congress of Vienna in 1815) the Norway spruce was denounced as the 'Prussians' tree' (*Preußenbaum*). The local farmers resented the conversion of their traditional beech and oak coppicewoods (which provided fuel wood, stall litter, and pig feed) into spruce forests (which yielded only industrial timber) as the imposition of a foreign culture and often resorted to uprooting the seedlings at nighttime – in response to which the Prussian authorities had the army guard the young trees. (Cf. Hasel 1985a, p. 209).

<sup>109</sup> 'Traditional' forestry should not be misunderstood as wanting to revert to the rampant forest exploitation of previous centuries. While 'traditional' forestry did want to return to mixed, uneven-aged selection forests, it also wanted to subject those forests to planned management based on 19<sup>th</sup>-century forest science. 'Traditional' motives were mostly inherent to forestry, for example the superior economic and ecological stability of mixed and uneven-aged stands over the long term. In this sense, traditional can be taken to refer both to pre-liberal economics and early nature conservation. (Hasel, for example, uses the terms 'economic' and ecological' schools of thought (cf. Hasel 1985a, p. 210)). But there were intangible aspects such as aesthetics and, as this section shows, ideological motives, too. 'Traditional' forestry concepts reemerged in various forestry reform movements in Germany, e.g., *Mischwald* (mixed forest), *Dauerwald* (continuous forest), *Waldbau auf natürlicher Grundlage*, *naturnaher Wald* or *naturgemäße Waldwirtschaft* (which I collectively call 'natural forest management'). In today's diction, 'traditional' forestry would be labelled 'alternative' or 'ecological' and be represented in the 'natural forest management' which through the 1980s and 1990s has become the declared policy goal of almost all German state forest services.

<sup>110</sup> Soil rent theory started from the assumption that a parcel of land was afforested in order to gain income from it. The trees thus assumed the status of a capital investment which had to yield a minimum annualized interest to make such use of the land financially worthwhile. Only pure coniferous stands in the first half of their life-cycle grow fast enough to come close to yielding 3 % annual interest; hence, stands managed for maximum soil rent were often harvested after only 60 years. By contrast, forest rent theory started from the assumption that the land was already forested (which was factually correct in the case of Germany). The financial goal then was to draw the maximum sustainable net revenue from the forest, measured in absolute amounts rather than annualized rates. Since the value of timber grows with its dimensions, the forest was allowed to grow for up to 120 years, resulting in very different forest types.

were united in their insistence that clear cuts had to be avoided at all costs, which represented a radical departure from the contemporary forestry dogma. Only selected trees were to be cut in frequent thinnings, while the forest as a whole was to remain and cover the ground permanently. This *Dauerwald* or ‘continuous forest’ of mixed age and type of trees became the ‘traditional’ counterpart to the clear-cutting policy of ‘modern’ forestry.

The lines were drawn for a debate between modernist and traditional forces in German forestry. Superficially, the subject matter of the debate was the ideal structure of the forest and how it should be managed, yet some foresters soon extended the discussion to the question of what sort of larger world view was informing ‘modern’ forestry on the one hand and ‘traditional’ forestry on the other. In the spirit of liberal economics, the ‘modern’ foresters bluntly insisted that “the purpose of the forest is primarily to provide income to its owner . . . . Everything else is incidental.”<sup>111</sup> Appalled by such a ‘materialistic’ dictum, ‘traditional’ foresters were championing ‘idealistic’ goals such as aesthetics, harmony, organicism, and continuity, all of which were connected with notions prevalent among the various reform movements of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. The idea of an harmonious and organic *Mischwald* or mixed, permanent, and uneven-aged forest without clearcuts became a clarion call for those disaffected with the “non-nature” (*Unnatur*) of the modern German forest monocultures.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> *Der Wald hat in erster Reihe die Aufgabe, seinem Besitzer Geld einzubringen und wirtschaftlich ausgenützt zu werden. Alles andere ist Nebensache.* (Professor of Forest Economics Max Endres at the 7th Annual Meeting of the German Society of Foresters in Danzig in 1906, quoted in Sperber 1994, p. 49).

<sup>112</sup> Duesberg 1893, p. 605.

Some traditional foresters were also beginning to draw parallels between the structure of the forest and that of German society: Emil Adolf Roßmähler, one of the founding fathers of the traditional forest movement, wrote that:

The forest in particular is a manifestation of social organization in the plant kingdom which is more pronounced in Germany than in the warmer countries of Europe. Not only do the proud trees withdraw from the company of lower classes of plants by gathering and huddling in the forest. They also segregate from one another as conifers remain separate from deciduous trees. Why, spruce even stays away from pine, beech from oak.<sup>113</sup>

Detecting in this a “distinct simile” of human society, Roßmähler continued:

It would provide us with surprising entertainment if we were to compare the mutually exclusive social associations of Germans with those of German plant life. I will leave it to my readers, however, to find among the various human congregations the respective counterparts of the self-sufficient beech forest, the noble oak forest shielding its inferiors, or the plebeian willow thicket by the banks of the river.<sup>114</sup>

While Roßmähler did not spell out his analogies, it is evident that he was alluding to the bourgeois, noble, and working classes here. More than that, the very fact that he did not have to spell them out also suggests that the popular cultural connotations of the respective forest types were already clear to his readers, a result of the Romantic popularization of the German forest. Hence, Roßmähler was able to evoke certain class associations simply by referring to certain types of forests.

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<sup>113</sup> *Gerade der Wald ist eine gesellschaftliche Erscheinungsform der Pflanzenwelt, die sich in Deutschland schärfer ausprägt als in wärmeren Ländern Europas. Nicht nur, daß die stolzen Bäume sich aus der Gesellschaft der niedrigen Pflanzengeschlechter zurückziehen und im Walde sich dicht und eng zusammenscharen, auch unter sich beobachten sie das System der Ausschließlichkeit. Der Nadelwald trennt sich vom Laubwalde, ja, die Fichte trennt sich von der Kiefer, die Buche von der Eiche.* (Roßmähler 1871 (1860), p. 101).

<sup>114</sup> *Ungesucht bietet sich, und zwar in einer eigentümlich ausgeprägten Bestimmtheit, das Gleichnis unserer Pflanzenwelt dar. . . . Denn wahrlich, es würde eine überraschende Unterhaltung bieten, die einander ausschließenden geselligen Vereinigungen des Deutschen mit denen der deutschen Pflanzenwelt in Parallele zu stellen. Ich überlasse es aber meinen Lesern, zu dem sich selbst genügenden Buchenwalde, dem niederes Volk schirmenden aristokratischen Eichenwalde oder dem plebejischen Weidendickicht des Flußufers sich unter den Kasinos oder Réunions der Menschen die passenden Seitenstücke selbst auszusuchen.* (Roßmähler 1871 (1860), p. 102).

Yet, in the eyes of some traditionalists, the distinct forest types of traditional forestry not only passively reflected the class structure of German society, but also exerted a “furthering influence on consciousness and character of the *Volk*.”<sup>115</sup> Because of this proactive and “hygienically beneficial influence of the natural forest on body and soul,” the traditionalists argued, “the preservation of the German forest has arisen as a question of national importance.”<sup>116</sup> It was only the ‘natural’ forest, though, that could act as such a counterforce to the ‘*Vermassung*’ or loss of identity in German society. This meant that the German forest needed to be preserved not as a carpet of spruce or pine, but in all its variety. On the other hand, the “motley” of recently introduced “foreign” species did not form part of the ‘natural’ variety, but in its “shrill internationalism” was “a mirror of our times so replete with dross.”<sup>117</sup> The task of foresters, then, was to maintain or restore the natural state of the forest not just for the forest’s sake, but for the good of the country: the German forest had to become a forest for Germany once again.

In these statements we can sense the rising political awareness of foresters. First concerned only with the forest as a reflection of human society, foresters soon assigned to the forest a proactive capacity that they saw as increasingly important to the social health of Germany as the country went through the convulsions of modernization. While there were

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<sup>115</sup> ... daß Waldbilder hergestellt werden, die wirklich durch großartige Schönheit zu imponiren [sic] und auf Sinn und Character eines Volkes fördernden Einfluß zu üben vermögen. (Werneburg 1875, p. 441).

<sup>116</sup> ... gewährt der Naturwald seelische Erfrischung und Aufrichtung, übt er einen hygienisch vorteilhaften Eindruck auf Körper und Geist. Auf diese Weise ist die Erhaltung des deutschen Waldes eine Frage von nationaler Bedeutung geworden. (von Mammen 1909, pp. 49-50).

<sup>117</sup> Die Anlagen bei Waldortschaften enthalten meist eine bunte Reihe ausländischer Pflanzen. Dieser Internationalismus wirkt oft sehr grell, aber er ist eben ein Spiegel unserer von buntem Krimskrams erfüllten Zeit. (Grottewitz, 1907, p. 7).

some foresters who saw the strains of modernization and the ‘failure’ of modern forestry as corroborating the virtues of socialism,<sup>118</sup> most publishing foresters took a conservative or even reactionary stance towards modernization.

#### 4.5 Conclusion

During the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, writers, artists, and intellectuals had ‘Germanized’ the forest without aid – or criticism – from foresters who for the most part had remained practice-oriented and politically unreflective. Only once they had gained entry to the academies and universities around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were foresters in a position to form a ‘literate’ discipline and an organized profession that allowed them to participate in literary and political discourses.

More importantly, their academic education also gained foresters acceptance into fraternity networks, the higher civil service, and other constituting institutions of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. From this new position of prominence and respect, foresters in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century began to contribute to the public debates about the cultural and political importance of the German forest. Yet the rapid modernization of German society rendered the *Bildungsbürgertum* increasingly anachronistic and pushed it to the political margins. As a result, many foresters’ writings took on the form an anti-modernist cultural critique.

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<sup>118</sup> For example: Schäffle (1879). It should also be noted that not all uses of the organic analogy or aesthetic musings were necessarily driven by reactionary world views. Schäffle, too, employed the organicist analogy in his book *Bau und Leben des sozialen Körpers* (Form and Function of the Social Body, 1881).

This means that when foresters became involved in the public discourses about the forest around the year 1900, they did so from a position that combined a forestry-specific perspective with a broader *Bildungsbürgertum* perspective. From the forestry-specific perspective, foresters were responding to the late-19<sup>th</sup>-century impoverishment in the ecological structure of the forest wrought by ‘modern’ forestry, and to changes in the market position of forestry in the modernizing German economy. From the *Bildungsbürgertum* perspective, foresters adopted the cultural pessimism of the emerging *völkisch* movement which sought to elevate ‘the German’ by juxtaposing it with a negatively charged ‘Other.’ After 1880, the characterization of the ‘Other’ focussed on the defamatory portrayal of Jews as nomadic and greedy individuals with no attachment to a native country or concern for the community. By assigning to ‘the Semite’ qualities such as ‘artificial’, ‘materialistic’, and ‘dislocated/uprooted/nomadic’, ‘the German’ could assume the polar opposites such as ‘natural’, ‘idealistic’, and ‘rooted.’

By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, foresters were thus ready to join the public discourses, adapt the polarization of ‘Germanic vs. Semite’ to the realm of forestry – and reflect a variation of this polarization back as their specific contribution to the *völkisch* discontent of the 1910s and 1920s: Forestopia or the normative analogy of forest and *Volk*.

— CHAPTER 5 —  
NATURALIZING THE NATION:  
THE VISION OF FORESTOPIA AS FORESTERS' CONTRIBUTION  
TO THE RISE OF THE *VÖLKISCH* IDEA IN THE EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

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The social order of the forest . . . will form a model for those institutions necessary for the strengthening of Germanness. In this manner, the forest can become the educator of the German *Volk*.  
*Forstmeister Rudolf Düesberg 1910*<sup>1</sup>

### 5.1 Introduction

By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, German foresters joined the public discourses about the cultural and political importance of the German forest. Yet, rather than demystifying the Romanticization of the forest or questioning its nationalist appropriation, foresters enthusiastically adopted the established connotations of the forest in their own rhetoric. They mixed established *völkisch* dogma of the superiority of the 'German race' with their own socio-biologicistic tenets gleaned from forestry, warning that idealist Germany was infiltrated by agents of materialism and degeneration such as 'urban intellectuals', 'cosmopolitan journalists', and, most dangerous of all, 'Jews and their capital.'<sup>2</sup> To protect Germany from the corroding effects of 'individualism,' 'egalitarianism,' and 'greed,' foresters suggested a return to the principles exemplified by the German forest: 'community,' 'social stratification,' and 'sacrifice.' The forest thus was to serve as a model for an utopian German society. This analogy I call Forestopia.

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<sup>1</sup> Düesberg 1919, pp. iv-v.

<sup>2</sup> *Asphaltliteratentum . . . das jüdische Kapital*

Forestopia was the unique contribution of foresters to the *völkisch* discourses of the 1910s and 1920s, and in this chapter I analyze the rise, and the increasing shrillness, of this concept between its first appearance around 1900 and the Nazi-takeover in 1933. I place Forestopian writings in the context of their time, showing how foresters adapted the concept of Forestopia to the deteriorating political, social, and economic circumstances of the *Kaiserreich* and Weimar Germany.

As I analyze these writings, it will become evident that foresters were already adopting many of the *völkisch*, racist, and anti-Semitic attitudes that marked the official or semi-official Forestopian writings of the Nazi period. Thus this chapter will show that the *völkisch* Forestopia was not a controlled invention of the totalitarian state, but an historical concept that was appropriated, rather than initiated, by the Nazis. This will complete the probing, begun in Chapters 3 and 4, of the *völkisch* foundations of the National Socialist analogies of forest and *Volk*, *Rasse*, and *Lebensraum*.

## **5.2. From Cultural Pessimism to Normative *Völkisch* Vision:**

### **The Formulation of Forestopia in Duesberg's *Der Wald als Erzieher***

Clearly, there was not just one type of "late-19<sup>th</sup>-century German forester" that emerged from the socializing institutions of the Wilhelmine forestry discipline and the *Bildungsbürgertum* or cultural bourgeoisie in general. The writings of foresters suggest, however, that many, if not the majority of publicly active German foresters, were of bourgeois or petty-noble background, held conservative or reactionary political views, were deeply patriotic, and espoused *völkisch* convictions. Most of these characteristics would have applied equally to

other Wilhelmine *Bildungsbürger* in academic and civil service positions who were feeling increasingly disenfranchised and retreated into cultural critiques ranging from irrational cultural pessimism to progressive social movements.

From their distinct perspective and position, German foresters made a unique contribution to the swelling current of conservative cultural criticism. They developed what I call Forestopia, or the vision of a new German society styled after the model of the German forest developed by forest science. In Forestopia, a romanticized, idealized forest served as both the alleged source of, and projection screen for, biologicistic and organicist ideas of political, social, and economic order – and German superiority over neighbouring ‘races.’ Forestopia was thus a concept that lent itself to *völkisch* propaganda. The central axiom of Forestopia was that the forest and its trees could serve as an analogy of the German state and its people, respectively. Foresters constructed the concept by building on the established cultural signification of the forest as ‘German’ and combining it with natural scientific insights into the growth and interdependencies of trees in a forest stand.

From their study of plant sociology in the forest, foresters derived a pattern of social organization that was supposed to be unique to the German forest. Emphasizing the positive natural and national connotation of the forest established by the Romantics, and responding to the current of cultural pessimism, they transferred this pattern to the human sphere as a suitable ‘natural’ blueprint for an equally unique German form of society and governance. If German politicians understood and managed human society like a forest, the argument went, they would be able to create a Germany that was just like the German forest: strong in its unity, resilient in its diversity, and productive in its cooperative structure.

In promulgating the concept of Forestopia, foresters thus suggested to the public and to politicians that their discipline could offer solutions to some of the economic and social problems Germany was facing at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and particularly after the defeat in the First World War. Underlying that claim was the conviction of foresters that, since they were widely recognized as the leading force in the world of forestry, German politicians could learn much from foresters. German foresters had created the best forests in the world – could German politicians not do the same for the German state?

The first to formulate the analogy of forest and German society in detail was the Prussian forester Rudolf Duesberg (1856-1926) and I will use the example of his work to discuss the principal tenets of Forestopia. In 1910, Duesberg published *Der Wald als Erzieher* (The Forest as Educator),<sup>3</sup> a book which took its title and tone from Langbehn's *Rembrandt als Erzieher*. Like Langbehn, Duesberg advocated a re-education of Germans. Instead of Rembrandt's art, however, Duesberg presented the German forest as the 'educator' after whom the spirit of the new German people should be modelled. Duesberg's book consisted of a silvicultural and a political-economy part, each shot through with a sizable strain of plain anti-semitism. Duesberg was the first to combine these three aspects into an integrated normative argument.<sup>4</sup> On the basis of his observations from forest ecology, Duesberg

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<sup>3</sup> The title of Duesberg's book is a bow to Langbehn's *Rembrandt als Erzieher*. Previously, Duesberg had published journal articles on the changes in 19<sup>th</sup>-century German forestry (cf. Duesberg 1893).

<sup>4</sup> Anti-Semitism was already present in 19<sup>th</sup>-century forestry writings. As early as 1844, Frömbling in his book on the 'forest fortification' of Germany (cf. Chapter 3, footnote 138) had railed against the "corrosive and all-devouring mind of the German Jews" which he saw poised to "reduce the German fatherland to beggarmdom." Frömbling's solution: ship all Jews and, for good measure, all the inmates of poorhouses and institutions to Morocco, where – "under the necessary precautions" – they could make themselves "useful" in the creation of a badly needed German colony. *In Marocko [sic] ist der ätzende und fressende Verstand der deutschen Juden vorweg für den Germanismus vielleicht irgend unter der nöthigen Vorsicht brauchbar; im deutschen Vaterland bringt das Judentum vermöge seiner gesetzlichen Indulgentien die für sie arbeitende Christenheit an den Bettelstab.* (Frömbling 1844, p. 134). In 1878, Borggreve attacked modern forestry by invoking anti-Semitism:

generalized management principles not only for Germany's forest, but for its economy and its people. According to Duesberg, all three could, and should, be managed according to the same *völkisch* principles.

Duesberg argued that German tree species, companies, and citizens should be fostered, their foreign counterparts removed. Next, the thus rarefied collectives should be reorganized in the image of the traditional German cooperative system (*Genossenschaftswesen*): an uneven-aged, mixed, selection forest based on biocoenotic principles (*Gruppen-Plenterwald*);<sup>5</sup> a corporatist state based on occupational estates (*berufsständischer Staat*); and an ethnically pure 'national community' (*Volksgemeinschaft*). Finally, this cooperative restructuring would help Germany achieve not only political sovereignty and economic self-sufficiency but also domination. For, once so organized, the forest would not only be healthier and more aesthetic, but would also yield an inexhaustible supply of timber and other resources. Likewise, the corporatist German state not only could keep Social-Democratic anarchy at bay, but its economy also would become strong enough to have Germany's neighbours do its bidding. Finally, the collective will of the German *Volksgemeinschaft* would push Germany's borders to the East, ultimately leading to the

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"Let us leave the exploitation to the Jews, [for] it is shameful to exploit the forest soil at the expense of future generations." *Man überlasse das Raubsystem den Juden; Aufgabe des Staates ist eine nachhaltige Nutzung: eine Ausbeutung des Forstbodens auf Kosten kommender Geschlechter ist unwürdig.* (quoted in Köstler 1943, p. 354; also in Vogel 1989, p. 25).

<sup>5</sup> A biocoenosis is a community of organisms occupying a uniform habitat. A *Gruppen-Plenterwald* is a mixed, uneven-aged forest in which the trees are managed in clusters rather than as individuals.

expulsion of the Polish people to a reservation in “one of the bastard states of South America.”<sup>6</sup>

Seen from nearly a century later, Duesberg’s visions may appear ludicrous, even surreal. Yet, as we well know (if only by the grace of historical hindsight), ideas such as Duesberg’s did their part in preparing the ground for the fascist realization of *völkisch* ideology to the last bitter consequence. As such, Duesberg’s ideas need to be examined in the context of their time and with reference to their origins, their propagandistic inflection by the *völkisch* movement during the Weimar Republic, and their merciless implementation during the National Socialist regime.

The first question then concerns the specific context in which Duesberg wrote his book and the perceived problems he aimed to address. Duesberg’s biography suggests that he went through the socialization of a typical German forester of that time: born into a landed family, he received a humanistic education, served as an officer in a *Jägerbataillon* (Rangers Battalion)<sup>7</sup> with fellow foresters, and held a lifelong position in the Prussian Forest Service.<sup>8</sup> As a member of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, Duesberg is also likely to have gone through the experience of the ‘bourgeois distemper’ and, as his choice of title suggests, he certainly came to share the misgivings of Langbehn and other cultural critics about the development of

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<sup>6</sup> . . . in *Südamerika von einem der Mischlingsstaaten freies Land zu kaufen*. (Duesberg 1910, p. 192).

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix I.

<sup>8</sup> For a biographical sketch of Duesberg, see the Appendix in Seling 1997.

German society. Finally, as a 'traditional' forester, Duesberg was at odds with the changing forestry context of his time, a fact he already had been declaring for almost 20 years.<sup>9</sup>

While other foresters might have felt similarly, Duesberg, was the first forester to turn his discontent into a programme and publish it as a book. Previously, foresters had been satisfied with studying how society, represented by the forestry profession, could control tree growth processes to raise the best possible forest stand. Duesberg reversed the direction of the argument and argued from forest to people, suggesting that "the laws governing the structure of the forest apply equally to a rationally-ordered human society."<sup>10</sup> In particular, he argued that German forest trees and the German people were a product of the same *Heimat* (homeland): "deeply rooted, sedentary, risen to greatness in the struggle with rough climate and through hard work on poor soil. Hence, the social order of the forest . . . forms a model for those institutions necessary for the strengthening of Germanness. In this manner, the forest can become the educator of the German *Volk*."<sup>11</sup>

But why did the German people need to be educated, and why did Germanness need to be strengthened at a time when the *Kaiserreich* was growing by leaps and bounds both economically and politically? Because, Duesberg argued, this growth was fueled by the

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<sup>9</sup> In a 1893 article, Duesberg had already defended the tenets of the 'traditional' *Dauerwald* idea. (Cf. Duesberg 1893).

<sup>10</sup> *Die den Aufbau des Waldes beherrschenden Gesetze gelten ebenso für vernünftig geordnete menschliche Gemeinschaft, so wird eben der Wald zum Erzieher.* (Duesberg 1910, p. 139).

<sup>11</sup> *Gar vieles haben die Bäume des deutschen Waldes mit dem deutschen Volke gemein, sind sie doch beide in ihrer Eigenart ein Erzeugnis derselben Heimat, bodenständig, seßhaft, groß geworden im Kampf gegen ein rauhes Klima und in harter Arbeit auf wenig fruchtbarem Boden. Die Gesellschaftsordnung des deutschen Waldes in dem von Menschenhand noch nicht vollständig geänderten Zustande freier und doch gesetzmäßiger Entwicklung nach dem Plan weiser Schöpfungsordnung wird darum vorbildlich für die Einrichtungen, die dazu dienen sollen, die Wohlfahrt deutscher Art zu stärken. So kann der Wald dem deutschen Volke zum Erzieher werden.* (Duesberg 1910, pp. iv-v).

wrong *Weltanschauung* and thus was headed in the wrong direction. Instead of traditional German cooperative idealism, reckless individualistic materialism ruled German life. The consequences were grave:

Greed has no regard for the common good, nor for the happiness of others. In the name of money-making the health of the people is sacrificed, clean air is polluted, water is poisoned, and resources are squandered as though the Germans were to leave their homeland presently.<sup>12</sup>

Obviously, in Duesberg's eyes the effects of Germany's industrialization were grave indeed. He attributed the industrialization to the "capitalist *Weltanschauung*" that had pushed aside the "fundamentally different *Weltanschauung* of Germans rooted in the soil" and had "devastated German life."<sup>13</sup> Yet to Duesberg that capitalist *Weltanschauung* was just one manifestation of an even bigger threat – a Jewish conspiracy:

The foundations of today's state and public institutions are neither Christian nor Germanic. Rather, they correspond to a nomadic, Jewish *Weltanschauung*. For millennia, Jewish and Roman influences have been pursuing the destruction of Germanic identity and the dissolution of those institutions which express German being and exemplify German notions of law and custom.<sup>14</sup>

With this argumentation, Duesberg placed himself in the company of late-19<sup>th</sup>-century and early-20<sup>th</sup>-century *völkisch* authors who cast Jews in the role of the scapegoat for the

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<sup>12</sup> *Selbstsucht kennt keine Rücksichten auf das Gemeinwohl und fremdes Glück. Wenn es gilt Geld zu machen, wird gesunde Volkskraft geopfert, die reine Luft verstäktert, das fließende Wasser vergiftet, werden die Bodenschätze ausgeraubt, als wenn die Deutschen in kurzer Zeit ihre Heimat verlassen wollten.* (Duesberg 1910, p. 155).

<sup>13</sup> *Im zweiten Teil dieses Buches sind die Verwüstungen klargelegt, die diese kapitalistische Weltanschauung im deutschen Volksleben angerichtet hat; es sollen dort auch Mittel und Wege gezeigt werden, wie sich die grundsätzlich andere Weltanschauung seßhafter Bodenbauer durchsetzen kann.* (Duesberg 1910, p. 72).

<sup>14</sup> *Die Grundlagen des heutigen Staatswesens und die Einrichtungen des öffentlichen Lebens sind weder christlich noch germanisch, sie entsprechen nomadischer, jüdischer Weltanschauung. Jüdische und römische Beeinflussungen haben seit Jahrtausenden an der Zerstörung germanischer Eigenart, an der Auflösung der Einrichtungen gearbeitet, die als Ausdruck deutschen Wesens die Auffassungen von Recht und Sitte verkörpert.* (Duesberg 1910, p. 147). In the copy of the book held by the library at Freiburg University, the word *jüdischer* (Jewish) is underscored in coloured pencil and in the margins appears a swastika flanked by exclamation marks.

perceived woes of Germany. For Duesberg, then, the larger problem was that the German people were in danger of becoming assimilated by the Jews, and *Der Wald als Erzieher* was a treatise on how they could avoid such a fate. Having described what he saw as the malaise Germany was headed for, Duesberg used the Germanic forest past to suggest a future Forestopia as the only way out: if Germans were to organize their state after the cooperative model still embodied in the German forest, they could arrest the *völkisch* decay and begin a new era for Germany. The German forest as a normative model for the German people – with this suggestion Duesberg created the first Forestopia.

Though, as Duesberg cautioned, not every kind of forest was equally suitable as a model. In the argument between the ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’ forest paradigms described in Chapter 4, Duesberg came down very much on the ‘traditional’ side and it was only the ‘traditional’ German forest that could instruct Germans as to their new social order.<sup>15</sup> In fact, he used the difference between the paradigms to illustrate his point:

Just as the perspective of modern forestry is incompatible with the nature of the forest, and just as its methods are neither suitable for allowing the characteristics of the trees to unfold to highest perfection, nor for transforming the dormant energies of the soil into rich life, the *Weltanschauung* which dominates the economic and social life of Germans is irreconcilable with German being.<sup>16</sup>

Duesberg argued that modern forestry violated ‘the nature of the forest’ because it no longer grew trees of all kinds and ages on the same plot, but separated them into pure stands of distinct age-classes. The outcome of this separation was the destruction of the cooperative

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Chapter 4, footnote 109.

<sup>16</sup> *So wenig die Anschauungen in der neuzeitlichen Forstwirtschaft dem Wesen des Waldes entsprechen, und ihre Mittel nicht geeignet sind, die Arteigenschaften der Bäume zu höchster Vollkommenheit sich entfalten zu lassen, oder die im Boden schlummernden Kräfte zu reichem Leben zu wecken, ebensowenig deckt sich die das wirtschaftliche und gesellige Leben der Deutschen beherrschende Weltanschauung mit dem Wesen deutscher Art.* (Duesberg 1910, p. 138).

structure of the natural forest, as the resulting stands could not make complete and efficient use of the incoming sunlight and thus were less productive. Nor did they enjoy the formative phenological influence the different members of a mixed collective had on one another: instead of becoming a differentiated community, they grew into a homogenized mass. Here Duesberg detected a “desperate similarity” between the formative conditions obtaining in modern, even-aged forest stands and those in an “utopian social-democratic state,” where “louts always flourish at the expense of nobler characters.”<sup>17</sup>

Why was modern forestry practiced then? Because, Duesberg held, modern foresters had allowed themselves to be misguided by the way of thinking of “homeless nomads” – the Jewish conspiracy was sweeping German forest offices, too, causing righteous German foresters to stray from the path.<sup>18</sup> By contrast, Duesberg saw traditional forestry methods as based on the “rootedness of the German race in the soil” which “ran in their blood” and conferred upon Germans a “special appreciation for land and soil, for *Heimat* and Fatherland.”<sup>19</sup> This attitude was completely foreign to the “nomadic” Jews, Duesberg argued. Instead, they just roamed the land, took whatever resources they needed for their cattle, and moved on with fattened herds – read: money. Yet the “myopic German” did not

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<sup>17</sup> *Die Erziehungsmaßregeln im Schluß gleichaltriger Bestände haben eine verzweifelte Ähnlichkeit mit denen des sozialdemokratischen Zukunftsstaates: Werden Rüpel mit gut gearteten Jungen zusammengesperrt zu gegenseitiger Erziehung, so macht sich immer der Rüpel breit auf Kosten der edleren Artung.* (Duesberg 1910, p. 57).

<sup>18</sup> *Ihre eigene Anschauung haben sie, sich selbst unbewußt, leiten lassen nach der Denkweise heimatloser Nomaden.* (Duesberg 1910, p. 73). Baptized Jews could become officers and civil servants and thus embark on a career as foresters. There were several prominent German foresters of Jewish belief but, contrary to Duesberg’s accusation, they were not all proponents of modern forestry.

<sup>19</sup> *Germanischer Rasse eignet nun die Neigung zu seßhafter Bodenwirtschaft. Diese Lebensrichtung liegt im Blute, ihr entspricht darum eine besondere Bewertung von Grund und Boden, Heimat und Vaterland.* (Duesberg 1910, p. 182).

realize the detrimental effect this “golden herd” (presumably of idolatrous golden calves) had on the soil as the sole basis of his own, sedentary way of life.<sup>20</sup> In ignorance, Germans allowed the application of ‘modern’ methods derived from Semitic husbandry to their precious forests. Even worse, the same held true for the economy in general, for society, for the state – Germany was delivering itself into the hands of the Jews. To Duesberg, then, Germany and its forests were losing their cooperative Germanic character and becoming dominated by the “foreign *Weltanschauung* of the nomad.”<sup>21</sup>

Duesberg’s credo of redemption was succinct. If Germany wanted to find its way back to its old ways, it had better observe the example of the natural forest championed by traditional forestry: “The social order of the forest must become a model for the economic and social institutions of the German people.”<sup>22</sup> Duesberg devoted the first half of his book to illustrating this social order as he saw it embodied in the natural forest and how it could be recreated in a mixed, uneven-aged selection forest (*Plenterwald*). The first lesson Germans could learn from the forest was that the individual was nothing, the collective was everything:

The short life span of the individual is nothing compared with that of the species. Therefore, all individual life is oriented towards the preservation and development of the species; the individual must

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<sup>20</sup> *Der Jude hat das mit scharfem Blick sogleich erkannt; deshalb schlachtet er sobald wie möglich die entarteten älteren Jahrgänge und läßt den Erlös in Form von goldenem Weidevieh über das ganze Erdenrund die besten Weideplätze abgrasen. Und der kurzsichtige Deutsche erkennt nicht, daß für seine ganz andere Lebensgrundlage auch die goldene Herde ganz andere Bedeutung hat.* (Duesberg 1910, p. 74).

<sup>21</sup> *Kurzsichtig ist der Deutsche aber erst geworden, seit ihm an Stelle seiner im Blute liegenden Art, die Dinge anzusehen, ihre Zusammenhänge zu erkennen, ihre Bedeutung zu werten, eine fremde Weltanschauung und wieder die des Nomaden beigebracht ist.* (Duesberg 1910, p. 74).

<sup>22</sup> *Die Gesellschaftsordnung des deutschen Waldes muß vorbildlich werden für die Einrichtungen im Wirtschafts- und Gesellschaftsleben des deutschen Volkes.* (Duesberg 1910, p. 138).

sacrifice itself for the common good, it can only flourish as long as the welfare of the whole is flourishing.<sup>23</sup>

In the case of the forest, each dying tree exemplified this sacrifice when it released the nutrients stored in its biomass and thus improved the soil for the next generation. To Düesberg, German peasants were similarly rooted in the soil and had improved their land through millennia of hard labour, knowing that many generations of their descendants would depend on it for their livelihood.<sup>24</sup> With this comparison, Düesberg encouraged the German people to realize the intergenerational benefits to be had from successively improving the land. But, he continued, not all efforts paid off only in the distant future as there were immediate, intragenerational benefits, too. Most notably, Düesberg argued, individuals who shared the same living space at any given time imparted positive formative effects to each other. Again, the forest served as an example:

In an uneven-aged, purposefully ordered forest, the influences of the environment ensure that every tree will grow up tall, slender, and narrow-crowned; while the same innate characteristics would produce a wolf tree [*an upstart tree with wide spreading branches, M.I.*] out in the open field, or a laggard in an overcrowded age-class stand. Similarly, the influences of the collective guarantee that each tree will at all times encounter optimal working and living conditions, which is not only to its own individual advantage, but also to that of the whole. In the life of the people we need similar institutions which, not by way of prohibition, but through beneficial coercion, prevent the individual from acting in a way that is disadvantageous to himself or the collective.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> *Die kurze Lebenszeit des Einzelwesens bedeutet nichts gegen die Lebensdauer der Art. Auf deren Erhaltung und Entwicklung drängt darum alles Einzelleben hin; das Einzelwesen muß sich opfern für die Wohlfahrt der Gesamtheit, es kann selbst nur gedeihen, wenn die Wohlfahrt des Ganzen gedeiht.* (Düesberg 1910, p. 41). Once again, the copy of the book at the library at Freiburg University is marked with personal annotations by a reader. With the same pencil used for drawing swastikas in the margin (cf. footnote 14), everything following the semicolon is underlined and continued in the following sentence: "May every future German civil servant take this to heart." (*Möge dies jeder werdende deutsche Beamte beherzigen*). The Sütterlin script used suggests that the author of these annotations was educated before 1941, after which it was no longer taught.

<sup>24</sup> Düesberg 1910, p. 138.

<sup>25</sup> *Wie im ungleichaltrigen, planvoll geordneten Walde durch die Einflüsse der Umwelt es erzwungen wird, daß jeder Baum schlank und schmalkronig in die Höhe strebt, der bei denselben Arteigenschaften auf Freiland zum Sperrwuchs, im zu eng stehenden gleichaltrigen Bestande ein Kümmerer geworden wäre, wie ihm aber auch jederzeit durch die Einwirkungen der Gemeinschaft die besten Arbeits- und Lebensbedingungen geboten*

Düesberg added an example of human ‘laggards’ to demonstrate the dangers of ignoring this lesson from the forest. In a table he showed that young males raised in the ‘overcrowded stands’ of big city tenements were overproportionally unfit for military service. At the same time, because of migration from the country to the city, the numbers of such laggards hailing from homogenized urban masses were rising in relation to the more vigorous youth raised in the differentiated rural communities. If this continued unchecked, Germany’s military would soon be faced with a shortage of able-bodied soldiers.<sup>26</sup>

In the forest, then, Düesberg saw it as most important to find the right balance between granting the individual tree enough room to grow up healthy, and limiting the “innate striving of all life to further its own advantage.”<sup>27</sup> Transferring this tenet to human sphere, however, Düesberg had to justify why individual human rights and freedoms should be curtailed, just as the rights of the individual were becoming increasingly recognized as the cornerstone of social organization. He did so by shifting from the forest-ecological level of reasoning to the standpoint of ‘race’:

The pursuit of individual advantage must give precedence to the higher demands of the permanent community. In terms of longevity and importance, the individual is nothing but a drop in the river of German blood which must run its strong and mighty course from the inscrutable depths of its source to the sea of eternity. . . .

As a member of a civilized people, the individual must claim only so much personal freedom as is reconcilable with equally justified claims of others.

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*werden zu seinem eigensten Vorteil und doch zugleich für die Wohlfahrt des Ganzen, so sind im Volksleben in gleicher Weise Einrichtungen notwendig, die als wohltätiger Zwang, nicht durch Verbotsgesetz, es dem Einzelnen unmöglich machen, sich in einer für ihn selbst und die Gesamtheit unvorteilhaften Richtung zu betätigen. (Düesberg 1910, p. 139).*

<sup>26</sup> (Düesberg 1910, p. 153). Between 1871 and 1914, the percentage of Germans living in cities over 100,000 inhabitants jumped from under 5 % to over 20 %, while the rural population living in settlements under 2,000 inhabitants sank from over 60 % to 40 %.

<sup>27</sup> . . . *das allen Lebewesen innewohnende Streben nach dem eigenen Vorteil. . . (Düesberg 1910, p. 73).*

As long as the individual is granted the freedom to fully develop the racial characteristics which run in the blood, the universal human rights have been satisfied. The essence of those rights is the expression of the racial characteristics. For that reason, there are no universal and eternally valid ideas of law and custom, just as there can be no people without racial characteristics, even though it has not been fathomed yet when or where such characteristics have originated.<sup>28</sup>

Here Duesberg completes the naturalistic move from a supposed factual 'is' (which is argued *ex nihilo*: race simply exists because 'we can see that it does') to a normative 'ought' in a circular argument. Firstly, people were different because of their race. And, because they were different, they should remain so – after all, that was 'natural.' Secondly, people's race determined their rights, too: different race, different rights. As we will see, this gave Duesberg the necessary leeway not only to claim that Germans were racially superior, but also to make demands on supposedly 'inferior' nations on the basis of that claim.

With this form of argument, Duesberg abandoned the forest as the foundation of his analogy and came to rely fully on the notion of race. The forest had served its purpose, having allowed Duesberg to exemplify the idea that the community, not the individual, was the basic unit of life. Now he transferred that idea to the human sphere and declared the community of the people, that is, the racially homogenous *Volksgemeinschaft*, to be the inspiration and goal of German politics. From here on, his argument became one of pure

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<sup>28</sup> *Das Streben nach dem eigenen Vorteil muß zurücktreten hinter den höheren Forderungen der dauernden Gemeinschaft. Der einzelne ist zeitlich und nach seiner Bedeutung nur ein Tropfen in dem Strom deutschen Blutes, der, aus dunklen Tiefen entsprungen, voll und stark dem Meere der Ewigkeit zuströmen soll.*

...  
*Als Glied eines Kulturvolkes hat der einzelne an Rechten persönlicher Freiheit nur so viel zu fordern, wie sich mit der Erfüllung gleichberechtigter Forderungen anderer verträgt.*

*Mit der Freiheit, die im Blute liegenden Rasseneigenschaften voll entwickeln zu können, sind die allgemeinen Menschenrechte erfüllt. Der Inbegriff dieser Rechte ist der Ausdruck der Rasseneigenschaften. Daher gibt es keine allgemein und zu allen Zeiten gleichmäßig gültigen Begriffe von Recht und Sitte, so wenig wie es Völker ohne Rasseneigenschaften geben kann, wenn auch noch nicht ergründet worden ist, wann und wo diese Eigenschaften entstanden sind. (Duesberg 1910, p. 182, paragraph breaks in the original).*

power politics as he outlined his vision for a Greater Germany rebuilt on the basis of Germanic race and all its supposed characteristics.

To Duesberg, the most important of those qualities was the cooperative attitude which German peasants had developed over the course of their history, just as German trees had developed the cooperative forest structure as the best response to their environment.

Duesberg noted that some Germans had already realized this:

The remedy . . . is taking form in cooperative institutions and associations. Only cooperative union can unite, arm, and lead to victory those forces which are determined to preserve their German ways against foreign, hostile ways.<sup>29</sup>

Yet Duesberg admonished that all of Germany had to be reorganized according to the cooperative principle, and that land and soil had to replace money and interest as the guiding principles of German law and life, because “only then the German people will stand free. united and strong, for all time the stronghold of humanity’s highest form.”<sup>30</sup>

Once the ‘highest form of humanity’ was so enlightened, Germany would finally be in a position to cast off the “golden shackles” of money and interest.<sup>31</sup> On the basis of the strength of its people and the eternal productivity of its soil, Germany would then embark on a course of economic self-sufficiency that would soon allow it to amass enough gold to turn from prisoner to warder:

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<sup>29</sup> *Das Heilmittel . . . bereitet sich vor in genossenschaftlichen Einrichtungen und Vereinigungen. Genossenschaftlicher Zusammenschluß kann allein die Kräfte sammeln, rüsten und zum Siege führen, die ihre deutsche Art durchsetzen wollen gegen fremdes, feindliches Wesen.* (Duesberg 1910, p. 158).

<sup>30</sup> *Erst wenn zur Beschaffung und Verbesserung der Arbeitsgrundlagen nicht mehr der Bezug von Leihgeld gegen Zinszahlung nötig ist, wenn die Bedeutung von Grund und Boden als wichtigster Arbeitsgrundlage und der Erzeugungstätte aller Rohstoffe im Recht anerkannt ist, wenn Vorräte aller überhaupt lagerfähigen Waren vom unvermeidlichen Wechsel der Umstände unabhängig machen, erst dann steht das deutsche Volk frei, einig und stark da, für alle Zukunft der Hort höchsten Menschentums.* (Duesberg 1910, p. 158).

<sup>31</sup> . . . *von der goldenen Fessel freimachen . . .* (Duesberg 1910, p. 193).

Once the ethnic strength of the German people and the necessary hoards of commodities and resources are rounded off with a large gold treasure, all other peoples will have to work themselves into the ground in obedience to perverted capitalist slavery.<sup>32</sup>

What purpose did this gold have?

Cast into bullets, it shall lay ready until that time when the necessity to conquer free land will deliver it into the cartridge pouches of a young troop, to use in their fight for a new homeland (*Heimat*).<sup>33</sup>

And Düesberg was not coy about spelling out where this new *Heimat* would be:

Once the German land, after exhausting all possibilities of optimizing its ownership distribution and maxizing its productivity, can no longer supply sufficient opportunity to work and live, the territory of the *Reich* must be expanded. This is not to be done by subjecting other peoples, though, but by seizing lands from which the population has been removed. Such lands must have a climate that will ensure the preservation of German racial characteristics. Thus, life points us to the East and to the North, to the vast northern diluvial plains whence the hooded crow heads westward in the fall.

Time after time, the sunny South has spelt ruin for German ambition. By contrast, we were always successful in advancing to the East, towards the rising sun, and in Germanizing the conquered land.

Expanding the Prussian sphere of influence by partitioning Poland has proven a curse. Where we should have acquired empty lands, we incorporated a foreign people into the German people.

The desire of the Poles to preserve their national traditions and language must be recognized, but it cannot be granted within the framework of the German *Reich*.

Hence, there is no other solution but to give the Polish people a new homeland with a similar climate, far away from the borders of the *Reich* (which will have to be extended again anyway as time passes), and also far away from the Russians, with whom the Poles do not get along.

Unfortunately, the *Reich* does not possess colonies which would be climatically suited for such a New Poland, but an opportunity might come up sometime in the future to buy free land from one of the bastard states in South America.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> *Kommt zur starken deutschen Volkskraft und zum Besitz reicher Lagervorräte noch ein großer Reichsgoldschatz, so müssen alle anderen Völker sich aufreiben in harter Sklavenarbeit verkehrter kapitalistischer Einrichtungen.* (Düesberg 1910, p. 193).

<sup>33</sup> *Zu Gewehrgeschossen gepreßt möge es lagern, bis die Notwendigkeit, freies Land zu erobern, es in die Patronentaschen der jungen Mannschaft liefert, sich damit eine neue Heimat zu erkämpfen.* (Düesberg 1910, p. 193).

<sup>34</sup> *Wenn mit allen ertragsteigernden Verbesserungen der deutsche Grund und Boden in angemessener Besitzverteilung nicht mehr genügende Arbeitsgelegenheit und Lebensmöglichkeit bietet, dann muß das Reichsgebiet erweitert werden, aber nicht durch die Unterwerfung anderer Völker, sondern durch menschenleer gemachtes Land. Und dieses Land muß ein Klima haben, das die Erhaltung deutscher Rasseneigenschaften verbürgt. Also nach Osten und Norden weist die Lebensrichtung den Weg, in die weiten Gebiete des nördlichen Diluviums, von woher die graue Krähe im Herbst westwärts zieht.*

*Der sonnige Süden ist immer ums Verderben das Ziel germanischer Wanderungen gewesen; dagegen ging es stets aufwärts beim Vordringen nach Osten, der aufgehenden Sonne entgegen und beim Eindeutschen des erkämpften Landes.*

*Die Erweiterung des preußischen Machtgebietes durch die Teilungen Polens hat sich als ein Unsegen erwiesen, weil nicht menschenleeres Land erworben, sondern ein fremdes Volk dem deutschen einverleibt worden ist.*

This, then, is the essence of Duesberg's *völkisch* vision, the goal to which all of his exhortations are ultimately oriented: a Greater Germany, looking to the East. The first half of *Der Wald als Erzieher* still masquerades as a treatise on silviculture, reasoning from ecology as to why and how to recreate a 'traditional' type of mixed forest in the place of a 'modern' monoculture of conifers. In the second part of the book, however, the forest is reduced to playing an instrumental role in an ideological argument that rests squarely on the concept of race. At the individual level, trees serve as placeholders in which Germans are to recognize themselves. At the collective level, the forest community becomes a simile of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Finally, at the political-economical level, the dichotomy of 'Germanic' forestry vs. 'Semitic' husbandry is the base line for drawing racial boundaries between 'us' and 'them': idealistic Germans who are rooted in the soil and live in cooperatives so as to further the common good; vs. materialist Semitic nomads who roam the land in their capitalist pursuit of personal profit. Meanwhile, Duesberg regarded the Slavic peoples as so inconsequential that he reduced them to an object: without further justification, they could simply be removed to make room for the Germans.

With *Der Wald als Erzieher*, Duesberg formulated a Forestopia that introduced foresters to the *völkisch* analogy between forest and people, an entire generation before 1933. He also anticipated many of the other concepts that later were to become hallmarks of German

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*Das Verlangen der Polen nach Erhaltung ihres Volkstums und ihrer Sprache muß als berechtigt anerkannt werden, aber es läßt sich im Rahmen des Deutschen Reiches nicht erfüllen.*

*Da bleibt keine andere Lösung, als dem polnischen Volke eine neue Heimat unter gleichem Klima zu geben, fern von den Reichsgrenzen, die nach Osten doch im Laufe der Jahrhunderte wieder zu eng werden, und auch fern von den Russen, mit denen die Polen sich nicht vertragen.*

*Leider besitzt das Reich keine klimatisch geeignete Kolonie für ein solches Neupolen, aber vielleicht bietet sich in der Zukunft einmal Gelegenheit, etwa in Südamerika, von einem der Mischlingsstaaten freies Land zu kaufen. (Duesberg 1910, p. 192, paragraph breaks in the original).*

fascism: anti-Semitism, racial superiority, *Volksgemeinschaft*, eastward expansion, *Blut und Boden*, the *Führer* principle. How did Düesberg's contemporaries respond to his use of such concepts in a forestry book? Were they appalled, enthused, amused, puzzled? Their reactions provide a gauge of the currency of such concepts among German foresters of the 1910s and 1920s.

*Der Wald als Erzieher* received an overall warm welcome in the forestry literature as an "interesting and original" book.<sup>35</sup> Agreement was especially broad among those foresters who, like Düesberg, were critical of 'modern' forestry. Alfred Möller, for example, immediately reviewed the book kindly, if cryptically: "I recommend that all colleagues read this book. . . . The spirit which fills this book . . . does not belong to the darkness, but emanates from soaring heights."<sup>36</sup> Ten years later, Möller became the doyen of the *Dauerwald* or 'continuous forest' movement which for a good part of the 1920s was the dominating doctrine in German forestry – and in September 1933 was declared the official forest policy of the Third Reich.<sup>37</sup> Düesberg's thinking lived on in the integration of his work by Möller and others in their publications on the *Dauerwald*.<sup>38</sup> When Düesberg died

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<sup>35</sup> . . . *interessant und originell*. (von Fürst 1912, p. 520).

<sup>36</sup> *Allen Fachgenossen sei die Lektüre diese Buches empfohlen. . . . Der Geist aber, der dies Buch durchweht, gehört der Finsternis nicht an, er stammt aus lichten Höhen.* (Möller 1910, p. 825).

<sup>37</sup> The *Dauerwald* is marked by the following characteristics: no definite rotation age is fixed and all efforts are concentrated on tending the individual trees, on improving site conditions and on providing a continuous cover without ever exposing the soil. The individual trees are given ample room for growth and are harvested whenever their individual increment slows to below a certain rate or when they interfere with the growth of better trees.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Selig 1997, pp. 75-76.

in 1926, just after the movement had passed its zenith, the author of one obituary praised him as an “early champion of the *Dauerwald*,” while another was more ambivalent: “A book full of superb observations and thoughts, at times admittedly unrealizable and overzealous, but stimulating and of lasting value.”<sup>39</sup>

Even the more critical voices generally focussed on some aspect of the book without challenging its general thrust. For example, in his book *Der Wald und Wir* (The Forest and Us, 1924) Otto Feucht cautioned that the forest could not be the only cause of Germanness because “other peoples with other attitudes” were found in similarly forested environments. On this objection, though, Feucht built an even more essentialist view of the cause of Germanness: if it were not the forest alone that made Germans who they were, there obviously had to be another cause. Feucht saw this cause in the

inherently German sense of a common bond between man and environment which stands in contrast to the views of other (e.g., Romance) peoples, which see man and environment as standing in sharp opposition to one another and regard man as the obvious centre of the world. “To be German means to do a thing for its own sake.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> *Vorkämpfer für den Dauerwaldgedanken*. (Anonymous 1926, ‘Obituary,’ p. 128.) *Ein Buch, voll von trefflichen Beobachtungen und Gedanken, freilich auch unerfüllbaren Schwärmereien, aber anregend und von dauerndem Wert*. (Bertog 1926, p. 715). Just how long this value lasted is exemplified by a 1979 review of the foundations of the ‘natural forestry’ movement in which Duesberg is still counted among its “many spiritual forefathers.” . . . *Vielzahl der geistigen Vorväter*. (Wobst 1979, p. 27). Nowhere in the review did Wobst mention the political character of Duesberg’s book, yet he was cautious enough not to include the title in his bibliography. This is not to suggest that Duesberg is still as a rule uncritically received by German foresters. In an article published the same year, another forester pointed out that Wobst’s genealogy of the natural forestry movement needed “a thorough reworking.” (Röhrig 1979, p. 121).

<sup>40</sup> *Diese Zusammenhänge sind freilich, das darf nicht übersehen werden, wohl kaum durch den Wald, durch die äußere Umgebung allein bedingt (auch andere Völker mit anderer Einstellung haben ähnliche Verteilung von Wald und Nichtwald vorgefunden!), wie ja auch die ganze für unsere Kulturauffassung so wichtige Frage des genannten Gegensatzes sehr viel tiefer liegt, als die heute allgemein übliche Art ihrer Erörterung erkennen läßt. Daß der Gedanke der geregelten Forstwirtschaft, der Nachhaltigkeit, in Deutschland entstanden ist, daß die deutsche (oder besser gesagt die germanische) Forstwirtschaft führend für alle Völker geworden ist und heute noch ist, das ist sicher kein Zufall, sondern erscheint wesentlich in dem dem Deutschen eigentümlichen allgemeinen Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl von Mensch und Umwelt begründet, im Unterschied zu der Mensch und Natur in scharfen Gegensatz stellenden Auffassung anderer. (z. B. romanischer) Völker, die den Menschen als selbstverständliche Hauptsache und Mittelpunkt der Welt empfindet. “Deutsch sein, heißt, eine Sache um ihrer selbst willen tun.” (Feucht 1924, p. 34, emphasis and*

To Feucht, then, Duesberg had erred by ascribing too much influence to the environment, and too little to innate, 'racial' traits: the environment of the German forest had only brought out what was already predetermined by the characteristics of German 'race.'

Can these assessments of Duesberg's contribution by his contemporaries give us an authentic picture of the level of acceptance his ideas enjoyed? After all, it could be argued that praising a book in a review or counting an author among the precursors of an idea is done easily enough (and sometimes for the wrong reasons, such as flattery or careless reading), in which case it would be easy to draw unfounded conclusions. This objection is somewhat blunted, though, when the work in question is referred to in a way which presupposes a certain familiarity with its tenets. Again Alfred Möller provides an example. In the first book-length treatment of the *Dauerwald* doctrine published by Möller in 1922, the title of Duesberg's book is used as part of an admonishment to foresters to overcome the acrimony between 'modern' and 'traditional' forestries and achieve a "healthy body of foresters:"

We must seek to maintain and strengthen the old spirit of the green uniform [*a metaphor of German foresters, M.I.*] with its love for the forest, loyalty, self-sacrifice, integrity, and reliability, . . . so foresters of all ranks once again become a united family which is strong by virtue of the common education which the living 'Forest as Educator' affords them.<sup>41</sup>

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quotation marks in the original).

<sup>41</sup> *die Stetigkeit des gesunden Forstbeamtenkörpers. . . daß wir den alten Geist der grünen Farbe mit seiner Waldliebe, Treue, Opferwilligkeit, Gradheit und Zuverlässigkeit in allen ihren Gliedern zu erhalten und zu starken suchen, daß wir den Stolz auf das grüne Ehrenkleid unserem jungen Nachwuchs überliefern, ihn in ihm lebendig erhalten, daß die Forstleute aller Grade wieder einig zu einer Familie zusammenwachsen, die stark ist durch gemeinsame Erziehung, welche ihnen der lebendige 'Wald als Erzieher' spendet.* (Möller 1922, p. 63, quotation marks in the original).

Evidently, Duesberg's book was so commonly known among foresters that Möller could use its title in such a cursory way and still have his readers understand the point he was trying to make.

Whatever the general stance of the forestry profession towards Duesberg's thesis might have been, there were individual foresters and non-foresters who, from positions of varying influence and importance (as measured in readership of their works or professional standing), fully embraced Duesberg's views and incorporated them into their own work. In the next section, I discuss four such individuals. All four adapted Duesberg's *völkisch* analogy to the changed political and socio-economic circumstances of a defeated Germany after 1918, but they did so from different positions and with different aims. All four, however, contributed to the successful dissemination of the concept of Forestopia among foresters and among the general public.

### **5.3 The Adaptation of Forestopia to the Circumstances of the Weimar Republic: Eduard Zentgraf's *Wald und Volk* and the Nadir of 1923**

In 1923, a 20-page booklet entitled *Wald und Volk* (Forest and People) appeared in a series of 'Documents for Political Education' issued by the anti-republican *Gesellschaft Deutscher Staat* (German State Society).<sup>42</sup> In it, Duesberg's *völkisch* analogy of forest and people was applied to the situation of the Weimar Republic and reworded to reflect the wide-spread anti-

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<sup>42</sup> *Wald und Volk. Schriften zur politischen Bildung, hrsg. von der Gesellschaft "Deutscher Staat", Heft 10 (gleichzeitig Heft 966 von Friedrich Manns Pädagogisches Magazin)*. The subtitle identified it as # 966 in a line of "Essays from the Field of Pedagogy and its Auxiliary Sciences." Other titles in that series included: 'The Preservation of Historical Memory' and 'Motives and Character of French Continental Politics since Richelieu' by general of the infantry Freiherr von Freytag-Loringhoven, or 'The New Semi-Official (*parteiämliche*) Conception of History' by university professor Georg von Below.

Republican mood. The author of the booklet was Doctor of Forestry Eduard Zentgraf, a strident supporter of the *Dauerwald* movement and representative of the zeitgeist of German forestry in the 1920s.

Like Duesberg's, Zentgraf's biography up to 1923 shows all the elements of a typical forester's socialization: born into a middle-class family, humanistic education, military service in the *Jägerbataillon*, administrative position, dissertation, front line duty as an officer. From 1912 to 1922, Zentgraf was employed as a forestry extension official in Saxony, by the time *Wald und Volk* appeared he was employed as a private forester on the estate of Freiherr (baron) von Riedesel in Hesse.<sup>43</sup> From 1939 to his retirement in 1952, Zentgraf was professor of silviculture at Freiburg. On 15 November 1945, in the course of the proceedings "concerning the cleansing of the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics," his appointment was reconfirmed by the French military government and, on 6 June 1946, he was issued a 'clean' *Persilschein* or denazification certificate.<sup>44</sup> After the war, Zentgraf served in highly visible positions within the university and the discipline and, in 1957, was nominated by the university for the *Bundesverdienstkreuz* (equivalent of the British Order of the Empire).<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. the biographical sketch in Appendix II of Seling 1997.

<sup>44</sup> *Persilschein* was a jocular name for the certificates issued by the allied denazification commissions after 1945. As soon as a person held a *Persilschein*, the inquiry into their involvement in the Nazi hierarchy was officially ended. Named after the premier German brand of detergent, Persil™, a 'clean' *Persilschein* could thus wash its bearer of past sins and open the door to positions in the new administration set up by the military governments.

<sup>45</sup> He was Dean of the Faculty, Chair of the Freiburg Society for the Natural Sciences, editor of the eminent journal *Allgemeine Forst- und Jagdzeitung* until 1960, and President of the German Dendrological Society until 1961. (Zentgraf personal file at Freiburg University Archives, B 24 / 4260).

The high esteem in which Zentgraf was held after 1945 is worth keeping in mind when reading *Wald und Volk*. It serves to remind us that an author who propagated the *völkisch* analogy in clearly anti-Semitic and racist terms during the Weimar Republic could still pass for merely ‘mised’ or a ‘time-server’ after 1945. Zentgraf himself was quick to adjust his rhetoric to the new circumstances: in his *Einführung in die Forstwissenschaft* (Introduction to Forestry, manuscript completed on June 2, 1946, but not published until 1950), Zentgraf still writes of the German forest having taught Germans to work harder than other peoples,<sup>46</sup> or of the German forest as having formed the German soul – and of foresters’ special responsibility for this national treasure:

German poetry, German painting, German cathedrals, and German piety are the mirror of this experience [of the great forest].

Young forester, never forget that forestry means service to your nation!<sup>47</sup>

Purged, however, are the openly racist and anti-Semitic terms which Zentgraf used to express these same ideas in his 1923 *Wald und Volk*, to which I turn now.

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<sup>46</sup> *So hat der deutsche Wald und sein Boden den deutschen Menschen zur Arbeit erzogen, und wenn heute auch die Menschen bei uns, deren Beruf nichts mehr mit dem Boden zu tun hat, mehr arbeiten als unter günstigeren Verhältnissen lebende Völker, so kommt dies daher, weil ein Tropfen Bauernblut in ihren Adern rinnt und das Bewußtsein in ihnen lebt, daß unserem Volk noch nichts geschenkt wurde, ohne Einsatz seiner ganzen Kraft. (Zentgraf 1950, p. 24).*

<sup>47</sup> *Aber die Darstellung des Erziehungswerkes des deutschen Waldes an unserem Volke wäre nicht vollständig, gedächten wir nicht der Wirkung eines so ausgesprochenen Waldlandes auf die deutsche Seele. Man nennt uns ja so gerne im Auslande 'Das Volk der Dichter und Denker' und will damit andeuten, daß beim Deutschen das Gemütsleben (das Ausland hat kein Wort, diesen Ausdruck sinngemäß zu übersetzen) die Kräfte des Verstandes beherrsche. Sicher ist, daß ein waldverbundenes Volk, beeindruckt vom Wechsel der Jahreszeiten, diesem sich ständigen Wiederholen des Sterbens und Wiedererwachens in der Natur, dem Vernichten des scheinbar Ewigen durch Naturgewalten und dem Geheimnisvollen, das zum Wesen großer Walder gehört, und wo gibt es noch solche außer in Nordeuropa, gelernt hat, andachtsvoll und ehrfürchtig diesem Geschehen gegenüber zu stehen, und zu wissen, daß ein Schöpferwille über ihm waltet. Deutsche Dichtung, deutsche Malerei, deutsche Dome und deutsche Religiösität sind der Spiegel dieses Erlebens. Forstwirtschaft ist Dienst an Deinem Volke – junger Forstmann, vergiß es nie! (Zentgraf 1950, p. 24).*

Zentgraf left no doubt about on whose shoulders he stood: he opened *Wald und Volk* by crediting the “forest philosopher” Duesberg for inspiring his thinking on the subject of forest and people.<sup>48</sup> Hence, Zentgraf’s work allows us to glance, from a forester’s standpoint, at the status of the *völkisch* forest analogy thirteen years after its elaboration in *Der Wald als Erzieher*. More importantly, as the context of its publication shows, the purpose of Zentgraf’s piece was to comment on the political state of affairs in 1923 Germany. The fact that Zentgraf chose the *völkisch* analogy as the rhetorical tool for his commentary is indicative of the persuasiveness he assigned to it when speaking to non-foresters, which in turn suggests that it was not an unfamiliar concept to his audience.

Zentgraf took as his starting point Duesberg’s claim that the German forest and the German people were rooted in the same soil and thus could be compared. And, like Duesberg, he argued from the forest to the people in this analogy. But whereas Duesberg’s intent was to present the forest as an exemplar of his vision of a cooperative social order for Germany, Zentgraf tried to show how the German forest had formed the ‘national character’ of the German people. In other words, Zentgraf tried to naturalize the nation where Duesberg had tried to naturalize the state. The reasons for this difference lay in the decline the German state had experienced between 1910 and 1923.

At the time of Duesberg’s writing, the German state was at its most powerful; now it was virtually helpless against inner unrest, economic crisis, and foreign pressure. Germany had lost one seventh of its territory under the Versailles Treaty, along with all colonies and most

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<sup>48</sup> *Diese Worte des Forstphilosophen Duesberg sind mir in den Sinn gekommen, als ich über das Thema Wald und Volk begann nachzudenken.* (Zentgraf 1923, p. 5).

export markets. Unable to raise taxes from a devastated economy, the government inflated the currency, effectively defrauding holders of war bonds and other liquid assets of their savings. The largely petit-bourgeois victims of this policy were joined by others: career officers made redundant by the imposed reduction of the army, civil servants with shrinking incomes. On the other side were those whom the losers of the peace called the *Kriegsgewinnler* or war profiteers: those who possessed real estate or had profited from wartime armament contracts. The grievances of the dispossessed and disillusioned losers created “a constituency of hostility and opposition to the republic from the outset” in 1919.<sup>49</sup>

Many Germans in the early 1920s hence felt no allegiance to the new republican state. With the state as a source of national pride all but gone, Zentgraf focussed on the *Volk* instead, skilfully adapting the *völkisch* argument of Duesberg’s Forestopia to the mood of an audience which was wary of the weak Republic and its continual crises. Zentgraf used the forest analogy to represent to Germans their glorious and proud past as a *Volk*, and to remind them not to let go of it, no matter how inadequate the present German state appeared to them.

The characteristics the German people had developed in a long-time co-evolution with the forest: loyalty, emotional depth, idealism, love of homeland, and perseverance were the mainstay of Zentgraf’s argument. If the German people lived those qualities once again, Zentgraf hoped, they could become strong enough to once again wrest the German state from the hands of those who wanted to see it weakened: the ‘Semites,’ the ‘democrats,’ the ‘bolshevists,’ and all the other ‘enemies’ who undermined both state and forest with their

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<sup>49</sup> Kirk 1995, pp. 3-8, quote on p. 6.

revolutions because they “saw the forest as the bastion of eternal order, and rightly so.”<sup>50</sup> Forest and state thus were under attack from forces foreign to ‘German being’ and it now was up to the people to salvage and reconstruct forest and state. And it was evident to Zentgraf that, just as that forest could only be the truly German *Dauerwald*, the state could only be a *völkisch* state built on the foundations of inherently German national characteristics. Zentgraf’s task which he set for himself in *Wald und Volk* was to awaken the *völkisch* pride of the German people by pointing to their forest past and mobilize it for a renewal of the *Volksgemeinschaft* whose collective will would then bring about a renewed German state.

Like Düesberg, Zentgraf argued backwards from the *a priori* existence of national characteristics and he too began with a negative definition of Germanness by pointing to “the Semites,” those “children of the treeless steppe” as the people who “still today stand in the most pronounced *völkisch* opposition to Germandom.”<sup>51</sup> His dichotomy was simple: ‘the Semites’ were “work-shy” because their wealth never depended on the “amount or quality of work” they did, but only “on the size of the pasture which they secured for themselves by ruthlessly displacing all competitors.”<sup>52</sup> Meanwhile, the Germans had to fight the formidable forest for every inch of land on which to grow their food “and the better the work, the higher

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<sup>50</sup> *Jede Revolution ist waldfeindlich, weil sie im Walde mit Recht den starken Hort ewiger Ordnung erblickt.* (Zentgraf 1923, p. 20).

<sup>51</sup> *Wie stark eine solche Anfangsentwicklung ein Volk beeinflusst, sehen Sie, wenn Sie ihre Blicke auf ein Volkstum schweifen lassen, das auch heute noch in schärfstem völkischen Gegensatz zum Deutschtum steht. Ich meine die Semiten. Die semitischen Volksstämme sind die Kinder der waldlosen Steppe.* (Zentgraf 1923, p. 6).

<sup>52</sup> *Nicht körperliche Arbeit bestimmte den Wohlstand der semitischen Hirtenvölker. Ihr Wohlergehen war abhängig von der Größe der Weidefläche, die sie sich durch rücksichtsloses Verdrängen aller Konkurrenten sicherten. Auf diesen vermehrte sich die Kopfzahl ihres Viehstands mühelos und ohne körperliche Arbeit seitens des Besitzers. Diese Scheu vor körperlicher Arbeit und der Kultus der Zahl ist auch heute noch dasjenige, was dem Deutschen am stärksten an dieser anderen Rasse auffällt.* (Zentgraf 1923, p. 7).

the yield of the land. Thus the German forest taught the German peasant to work."<sup>53</sup> This was a change from Duesberg's argument in *Der Wald als Erzieher*, where he had simply claimed the existence of racial characteristics and had not attempted to explain their origins as that was not relevant to his argument which centred on the still powerful German state. All Duesberg had been concerned about was the possibility of decline.

By the time Zentgraf wrote *Wald und Volk*, though, that decline had become reality to a degree once unimaginable. The cause of the decline, Zentgraf explained, was that the German *Volk* had forgotten the racial heritage of its forest past. In his "Forest and *Volk*," Zentgraf tried to explain every possible aspect of 'Germanness' as derived from the hard work the German forest demanded from the German peasant. Still, the deeper purpose of Zentgraf's book went beyond merely praising the forest's formative influence on the German people – it was a highly political piece. With *Wald und Volk*, Zentgraf told Germans not to lose heart over the hard times they found themselves in: by looking to the forest, Germans could learn how to reverse the decline.

1923, the year of the publication of *Wald und Volk*, was the nadir of Germany's crisis after the First World War and many of Zentgraf's thoughts on the connections between forest and the people were thinly veiled judgements on who was to blame for Germany's dire

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<sup>53</sup> *Auf diesem Rodeland galt es unter klimatisch schwierigen Verhältnissen das zu erzeugen, was zur Ernährung der Familie und des bescheidenen Viehstandes notwendig war. Allein körperliche Arbeit konnte hier zum Erfolge führen, und je besser die Arbeit war, desto höher war der Ertrag des Landes. So hat der Wald den deutschen Bauern zur Arbeit erzogen, . . .* (Zentgraf 1923, p. 6). Note the continuity of this thought in Zentgraf's 1950 *Einführung in die Forstwissenschaft* as described in footnote 46.

situation.<sup>54</sup> With each use of the forest in his musings on the great history of the Germans, Zentgraf reminded his reader of an institution which had prevailed for centuries, pointing a finger at those whom he held responsible for abandoning this institution in the chaos following Germany's defeat in the First World War – as well as for losing the war in the first place.

Zentgraf began by 'explaining' from the forest the institution of monarchy and the peculiar *völkisch* foundations on which it had rested in Germany until recently. Here Zentgraf argued that wrestling one's livelihood from the forest required not only hard work, but also promptness and coordination, all of which were best achieved in a division of labour which arose in the family, "the primordial cell of ethnicity (*Volkstum*), from which developed the clan and finally the people (*Volk*), all structured, like the German family, in an aristocratic hierarchy with a monarchic head."<sup>55</sup> And the forest also helped in determining who belonged where in this 'aristocratic hierarchy.' Hunting in the forest, Zentgraf wrote, "mobilized and formed those qualities which made the German the terror of his enemies: a bold, skilful and invincible opponent in all battles." Although not everyone was toughened to the same degree: only the "most noble of the *Volk*," those in whom the hunt had honed all skills and senses to their sharpest, would be chosen as leaders "by their own

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<sup>54</sup> In January of 1923, after Germany was unable to meet its reparation obligations, French troops occupied the Ruhr area, deeply insulting German pride and triggering a campaign of passive resistance which soon flared into violence on both sides. In November, inflation reached its peak at 4.2 trillion marks to a U.S. dollar. Also in November, Hitler attempted to overthrow the Bavarian government in Munich.

<sup>55</sup> *Aus der so gegliederten Familie, der Urzelle des Volkstums, entwickelt sich später die Sippe und endlich das Volk, aufgebaut, wie die deutsche Familie, in aristokratischer Gliederung mit einer monarchischen Spitze.* (Zentgraf 1923, p. 7).

*Volksgemeinschaft*.<sup>56</sup> Thus the hunt helped in selecting “the leading ranks of the *Volk*,” while also affirming them on a daily basis by keeping them alert and nimble. But what about those who did not advance to leadership positions, those who remained common peasants? Zentgraf saw them as being ennobled by the forest in another way: wintertime logging work in the forest ensured that the German peasant did not fall prey to sloth after the harvest was reaped, and that he remained physically and mentally robust.<sup>57</sup>

In this manner, the forest moulded the individual members of the German people into the hardy race which Zentgraf saw them as. Moreover, whether nobleman or commoner, leader or follower, each German was placed in his proper station in society by the selective influence of the forest. This was the Romantic idea of the beautiful hierarchy revisited: family, corporatist state, monarchy, and church together in a harmony of being until rationalism, this time personified by the victorious Western Allies, tore the fabric apart and imposed its un-German ideas. But Zentgraf was hopeful: after all, both the *Weltanschauung* which hard forest work had engendered, and the hierarchic constitution of the state which was built on it, were part of ‘German being,’ they “run in the blood of the German and

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<sup>56</sup> *Besonders die Jagd ist für die weitere Entwicklung unseres Volkes von weitgehendster Bedeutung geworden. Sie hat in dem deutschen Manne die Eigenschaften erweckt und erzogen, die ihn zum Schrecken seiner Feinde, zum kühnen, gewandten und unbezwingbaren Gegner in allen Kämpfen machte. . . . daß die Edelsten des Volkes nicht weichlichen [sic] Wohlleben verfielen, sondern jederzeit gestählten Körpers und im Waffenhandwerk geübt, zu Führern ihres Volkes befähigt waren. . . . und wenn er es nicht lernte, dann ging er zugrunde oder wurde doch wenigstens von der eigenen Volksgemeinschaft mangels augenfälliger Erfolge von jeder Führerstellung ausgeschlossen.* (Zentgraf 1923, pp. 8-9).

<sup>57</sup> *Sorgte so die Jagd dafür, daß die führende Schicht des Volkes nicht rostete, so bot die Arbeit im Wald dem deutschen Bauern eine wertvolle Ergänzung zu seinem Hauptberufe auf dem Felde. Sobald die Ernte eingebracht ist, greift wie zu Urväter Zeiten auch heute noch der Waldbauer zur Axt, um seinen Holzbedarf für das ganze Jahr zu werben. Keinen Monat des Jahres gibt es daher, in dem der Waldbauer trägem Genusse einer reichen Ernte sich hingeben könnte. Eine entnervende Winterruhe kennt er nicht und darum erwächst auch heute noch in Deutschlands Waldgebirgen ein hartes und arbeitsgewohntes Geschlecht.* (Zentgraf 1923, p. 9).

cannot be taken away from him by external events.”<sup>58</sup> Hence, Zentgraf concluded, the monarchy could not be suppressed for long by the victors and their republican accomplices, the “*Novembermänner*,”<sup>59</sup> simply because monarchy was the ‘natural’ form of government for Germans.

Returning to Zentgraf’s depiction of the German warrior as ‘invincible’ for a moment, we might wonder how Zentgraf could claim such a nimbus a mere five years after Germany’s capitulation. What Zentgraf alluded to here, in fact, was the *Dolchstoßlegende* (‘stab-in-the-back myth’) with which Germans rationalized their defeat in the First World War.<sup>60</sup> This myth maintained that the German army had returned from the battlefields unvanquished: the German soldier had kept the fighting on foreign soil during the entire war but was sold out by Socialists and Jews at home – the *Novembermänner*. Zentgraf reinforced this myth by making the invincibility of the German soldier an inescapable consequence of his ancestor’s forest past which continued to ‘run in his blood,’ regardless of whether he had spent his entire life in a big city.

In a similar manner, Zentgraf claimed Gothic architecture with its soaring lines as the derivative of a unique and deeply spiritual Germanic consciousness. Following the

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<sup>58</sup> *So sehen Sie, daß eine Staatsverfassung, die heute der Geschichte angehört, und eine Weltanschauung, die unserem deutschen Volke von jeher eigen war, in ihren letzten Wurzeln begründet ist in den ersten Anfängen unseres Volkslebens. Sie ist etwas Naturgewordenes und deswegen liegt sie dem Deutschen im Blute und kann ihm nicht durch äußere Ereignisse genommen werden.* (Zentgraf 1923, p. 7).

<sup>59</sup> (Zentgraf 1923, p. 17.) *Novembermänner* or ‘November men’ refers to the Social Democrats who, on November 9, 1918, formed the government, declared Germany a republic, and signed the armistice.

<sup>60</sup> This myth originated with the publication of the memoirs of former chief of staff field marshal Paul von Hindenburg in 1920. Hindenburg went on to become Reich President from 1925 to 1934.

Romantics, he ignored the French origins of Gothic architecture and roundly declared it a German style:

The pious artist, taking his inspiration directly from the German forest, created temples of worship for his people. The pillars of our German cathedrals remind us of towering beech trunks, and the ceilings of the *Münster* at Strasburg and the *Dom* at Cologne copy the lines formed by the interlacing branches of a closed beech canopy.<sup>61</sup>

To make his point, Zentgraf resorted to syllogistic reasoning: the ornamental characteristics of the Gothic style resembled forest elements, the forest was a 'German' domain, therefore the Gothic style was inherently German. Zentgraf pursued two goals by making such a claim. Firstly, if the 'Gothic mind' with its impressive creations in art and particularly in architecture were found to be German, it could be a model for 20<sup>th</sup>-century Germans to aspire to. Look to the Gothic age to see German culture at its greatest and noblest, Zentgraf suggested to his contemporaries, and realize that you bear the same spirituality and emotional depth in yourself that enabled your Gothic forebears to achieve such greatness. Which means that you are capable of the same, should you decide to put your collective mind to it.

Secondly, if the Gothic style were German, then the architecture built in that style could be taken to indicate the extent of German territory: Strasburg, along with the rest of Alsace and Lorraine, had been annexed in the war of 1870/71, but was returned to France in the Treaty of Versailles. By calling its cathedral exemplary of 'German' Gothic architecture,

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<sup>61</sup> *Die schönste Blüte dieser aus dem engsten Verkehr mit der Natur hervorgewachsenen Religiosität sind die Bauwerke gotischen Stils, die uns heute noch Zeugnis davon ablegen, wie der fromme Künstler unmittelbar aus dem deutschen Walde seine Vorbilder entnehmend, Stätten der Verehrung seinem Volke schuf. Wie die hochragenden Buchenstämme muten uns die Säulen unserer deutschen Dome an und in derselben Linienführung wie die Äste eines geschlossenen Buchenbestandes ineinandergreifen, wölben sich die Decken in einem Münster zu Straßburg und einem Dome zu Köln. (Zentgraf 1923, p. 10).*

Zentgraf left no doubt to whom he thought Alsace-Lorraine truly belonged.<sup>62</sup> Similarly, Cologne lay in that part of Germany occupied by foreign troops to ensure that Germany would comply with the Treaty of Versailles. Here Zentgraf reminded his readers not to abandon these cities with their German heritage as evidenced by their Gothic cathedrals but to stand by them through foreign occupation.

A third 'characteristic' Zentgraf deduced from the forest was "German idealism and the work ethic that resulted from it." Germans, Zentgraf wrote, did not work for "immediate gratification, but for the sake of work itself, even if the worker realizes that success lies far off in the future."<sup>63</sup> In 1923 terms, this was an admonishment to Germans not to relent in their hard work, even if everything seemed to go to paying reparations, rather than to rebuilding the stalled German economy. Success, Zentgraf maintained, will come because working hard is inherently good and will be rewarded, even if not in your lifetime, but certainly in that of your children and grandchildren. Have trust in the justness of what you are doing, Zentgraf urged, be patient and look to the forest and their guardians, the foresters, for inspiration:

We don't harvest what we sow, nor do we personally know whether the work we do will yield practical results in the centuries to come. Nonetheless we work in our forest and I am not exaggerating if I

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<sup>62</sup> One rather quixotic variation of this argument was developed by popular author Raoul Heinrich Francé (see Section 5.5), who obliquely suggested that the islands of the Bismarck Archipelago (now part of Papua New Guinea) should be reinstated as a German colony: did not the pointed arches and ornamentations on the longhouses of the forest-dwelling natives represent a "Gothic style . . . identical to that of the Gothic man of Europe"? (Francé 1927, pp. 12-13).

<sup>63</sup> *Zunächst der deutsche Idealismus und die aus diesem hervorgehende Einstellung des Deutschen zur Arbeit. Diese wird nicht um des unmittelbaren Erfolges willen, sondern um ihrer selbst willen geleistet. Auch dann, wenn der Arbeitende weiß, daß der Erfolg in weiter Ferne liegt.* (Zentgraf 1923, p. 10).

claim that it was this work ethic which has preserved us our German forest in its magnitude and beauty, in contrast to all other nations of Europe.<sup>64</sup>

So, just as the magnificent German forest was the result of foresters putting their trust in the future, Germany would one day stand tall again if its people believed in it and worked hard for it. As for those fault-finders who would consider the expansive forests of Eastern Europe a contradiction in his argument, Zentgraf had a simple rebuttal:

I am not talking about the Russians and the people of the Balkans here. Their forests exist only because of a backward agriculture and because they are at a cultural stage at which the boundaries between forest and field have not been consciously fixed yet.<sup>65</sup>

With this paragraph, Zentgraf constructed the forest as a cultural indicator that was as flexible as a weather-vane. When measuring itself against the West, Germany's 'superior cultural achievement' was 'proven' by its comparative abundance of forests; upon looking eastward, though, that same German 'superiority' was reflected by its comparatively lower forest cover. With such a 'one-size-fits-all' argument, Zentgraf clearly exposed the ideological character of his writing.

On the same page, however, Zentgraf abandoned all subtlety and began an open propaganda assault when he stylized the forest into a 'natural bulwark' of Germandom against the evils of bolshevism:

I believe it is no coincidence that the doctrine of bolshevism made the farthest and fastest inroads in those parts of our fatherland where the German forest is missing or where a one-sided forestry dogma has stripped the forest of its natural appeal and turned it into a timber yard. The destruction of the

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<sup>64</sup> *Was wir säen, das ernten wir nicht, und wir wissen auch nicht, ob die geleistete Arbeit nach Jahrhunderten einmal praktische Erfolge zeitigen wird. Trotzdem arbeiten wir an unserem Walde und es ist wohl nicht zuviel gesagt, wenn ich behaupte, daß diese Einstellung zur Arbeit uns den deutschen Wald erhalten hat in seiner Größe und Schönheit im Gegensatz zu allen anderen Völkern Europas.* (Zentgraf 1923, pp. 10-11).

<sup>65</sup> *Von den Russen und Balkanvölkern spreche ich nicht, denn die dortigen Waldungen verdanken ihre Existenz einer rückständigen Bodenwirtschaft und einem Kulturzustand, in dem die Grenzen zwischen Wald und Feld noch nicht klar bewußt festgelegt worden sind.* (Zentgraf 1923, p. 11).

works of humans which bolshevism preaches becomes conceivable precisely where nothing attaches the human being to an unattractive homeland, where God's eternal creation of the German forest does not stand as a warning before the eyes of the deluded.<sup>66</sup>

Here Zentgraf made a very topical reference to the political crisis of 1923 Germany. The mention of the devastated or impoverished forest areas of Germany pointed to Saxony, the only German state where the 'modern' forestry doctrine of maximum soil rent had ever been made the official forest policy, namely from 1867-1920.<sup>67</sup> Partly as a result of that, a full 80 % of Saxony's forests were spruce, making for a very monotonous forest indeed, and thus greatly insulting the eyes of the *Dauerwald* protagonist Zentgraf. But Saxony also was the place where Communists had joined the Social Democrats in what they called a "government of republican and proletarian defence" in October of 1923, which for Zentgraf was tantamount to an invasion of bolshevism.<sup>68</sup> Now all Zentgraf had to do was resolve the equation for the greatest common denominator and out came the forest. The argument was simple enough: first the Saxon forest had been impoverished by Jewish capitalism, leaving

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<sup>66</sup> *Ich glaube, es ist kein Zufall, daß die Lehren des Bolschewismus dort in unserem deutschen Vaterlande am stärksten und am raschesten Eingang gefunden haben, wo der deutsche Wald entweder ganz fehlt oder doch, seiner natürlichen Reize völlig bar, unter den Einflüssen einer einseitigen Forstwirtschaft zu einer Holzfabrik geworden ist. Dort fesselt eben nichts den Menschen an eine reizlose Heimat und die Zerstörung der Gebilde aus Menschenhand, wie sie der Bolschewismus predigt, wird für möglich gehalten, wo das ewige Gebilde aus Gotteshand, der deutsche Wald, nicht warnend vor den Augen der Verblendeten steht.* (Zentgraf 1923, pp. 11-12).

<sup>67</sup> The reason for this lay in a combination of natural and economic factors. Over the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Saxony, one of the early industrial heartlands of Germany, had fed its forest into the smelters and forges of its manufactures. The clearings were reforested mostly with Norway spruce, which is frugal in its demands on the soil and quickly reaches exploitable dimensions. Spruce also was ideally suited for pit props in the numerous Saxon coal mines as it creaks and groans under increasing pressure well before reaching its bearing capacity. High industrial demand and high prices because of unrestricted clearing of forest land for agriculture (which was restricted in most other states) led to strong prices for the spruce wood and made forestry economically viable even if a return on the investment of 3% was required. (Cf. Rubner 1967, pp. 137-146).

<sup>68</sup> The military dictatorship under General von Seeckt which ruled the *Reich* since the proclamation of martial law on September 27 obviously came to the same conclusion: it sent in the army and deposed the state government on October 28.

the state without a natural defence against foreign influence; and now Jewish bolshevism came to claim the defenceless prize.<sup>69</sup> Zentgraf threw in some ‘occident vs. orient’ resonance by declaring the German forest a truly Christian symbol under attack from the heathen materialists from the Eastern plains. Finally, he rounded it all off with a dash of Spenglerian doomsaying: only the forest with its inherent constancy and the characteristic steadiness and loyalty it engendered in the German people stemmed the decay of traditional values. Without the forest and its influence, Zentgraf concluded, “the decline of the West would have become a fact long ago.”<sup>70</sup>

In the fashion suggested by these examples, Zentgraf deduced from the forest everything that was German and, by extension, good; while foreign influences from East and West were bent on destroying both Germandom and the forest as the latter’s well-spring. Yet the question Zentgraf was ultimately faced with in his adaptation of *Forestopia* to the *völkisch* argumentation of the Weimar period was how the German state could safeguard the German forest so that it would continue to exert its beneficial influence on the German people, particularly in this time of decline. Moreover, how could the educative potential of the forest be directed so that it generated the ‘right,’ that is, reactionary political outcome? On the last

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<sup>69</sup> The equation of Semitism, Nomadism, and Bolshevism was a common rhetorical device in the years after 1918. Alfred Rosenberg, for example, held that “Bolshevism is the indignation of the Mongolids against Nordic culture, the desire for the steppe, the hatred of the nomad against the rootedness of character – it represents an attempt to cast off Europe as such.” *Der Bolschewismus bedeutet die Empörung des Mongoliden gegen nordische Kulturformen, ist der Wunsch nach der Steppe, ist der Haß des Nomaden gegen Persönlichkeitswurzel, bedeutet den Versuch, Europa überhaupt abzuwerfen.* (Rosenberg 1930, p. 113).

<sup>70</sup> *In diesem Sinne beeinflusst auch heute noch der deutsche Wald unser Volksleben und unseren Volkscharakter und Riehl hat nicht zuviel gesagt, wenn er behauptet, daß unsere Walddörfer die Jungbrunnen sind, aus denen gesundes Volkstum einer von Materialismus zersetzten Gesellschaft ständig zufließt und ohne die der Untergang des Abendlandes längst zur Tatsache geworden wäre.* (Zentgraf 1923, p. 12). By 1923, Oswald Spengler’s highly successful ‘Decline of the West’ was already in its second edition, the second volume having appeared only in the previous year.

few pages of *Wald und Volk*, Zentgraf suggested answers to those questions. He began by cautioning that it would not be easy:

Two weeks' vacation or regular Sunday walks in the forest will not suffice to heal our decayed society, just as Sunday church does not make a Christian.<sup>71</sup>

Rather, success depended on a concerted effort:

What we need is the strengthening of the influence of those healthy elements in all classes of our people who are still rooted in the soil.<sup>72</sup>

And the forest was of paramount importance to this strengthening. While the Germans of the 20<sup>th</sup> century might not be able to live in forest villages anymore, they could still maintain their rootedness in the soil by coming to the forest. Or, as Zentgraf put it, they could return to "the mother's breast that once suckled Germania's lost children."<sup>73</sup> Quoting the already-mentioned cultural anthropologist Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl for support, Zentgraf argued that the forest presented a source of healthy Germandom for a society being corroded by materialism.<sup>74</sup> The key to maintaining that intermittent yet indispensable influence was to guarantee all Germans free access to that source, the forest, which in turn required the retention of a strong role for the state in both practicing and regulating forestry. For, as long as the state was a forest owner itself, it could provide free access to state forests. Likewise,

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<sup>71</sup> *Freilich, eine mehrwöchige Sommerfrische, ein regelmäßiger Sonntagsspaziergang in unsere Wälder, wird ebensowenig unserer zersetzten Gesellschaft Heilung bringen, wie der sonntägliche Kirchgang denjenigen zum Christen macht, der nachher wieder in den Geschäften des Alltags untertaucht und nicht den ewigen Sonntag in seinem Herzen zu erhalten weiß.* (Zentgraf 1923, pp. 14-15).

<sup>72</sup> *Was wir brauchen ist die Stärkung des Einflusses der gesunden Teile unseres Volkes in allen Schichten der Bevölkerung, derjenigen Teile, die heute noch bodenständig sind . . .* (Zentgraf 1923, p. 15).

<sup>73</sup> . . . *ein kindliches Sehnen nach der Mutterbrust, an der auch die verlorenen Kinder Germanias einst gelegen.* (Zentgraf 1923, p. 14).

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Chapter 3, footnote 133.

if the state reserved the right to regulate private forest property and submit it to certain public duties, it could ensure some form of access to private forests, too.

Both state practice and regulation formed part of the German forestry tradition and Zentgraf cautioned that this should remain so even in the Republic with its calls for privatization (from the Right) and socialization (from the Left) of forests and forestry:

Forestry as the task of the state – that is what Riehl is demanding here in complete recognition of the importance of the forest as educator of the people.<sup>75</sup>

In the terms of 1920s Germany, that meant that the state should defend its historical prerogative to regulate and legislate in forestry matters (*Forsthoheit*) because ultimately it presented the only way to ensure the people's inherent right to the forest:

The *Forsthoheit* of the state is acknowledged and founded in the necessity to protect the right of the entirety of the people (*Volksgesamtheit*) to a carefully managed forest.<sup>76</sup>

In the final analysis, Zentgraf thus stipulated a right of the German people *as a whole* to a well-managed and accessible forest. It was not the individual German as the bearer of personal rights who was of concern here. Instead, he or she was only the material on which the forces that shaped the entirety of the *Volk* happened to act.

In his *Wald und Volk*, Zentgraf tried to show that the forest was indispensable for making Germans 'German.' Collectively, Germans constituted a people who then formed and maintained a state. If the German state was to be strong and lasting again, it could only do so on the basis of a healthy German people, who in turn could not remain German without

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<sup>75</sup> *Waldwirtschaft als Staatsaufgabe, das ist es, was Riehl hier fordert in klarer Erkenntnis der Bedeutung des Waldes als Erzieher des Volkes. Aus ihr heraus ist der Begriff der Forsthoheit des Staates im deutschen Staatsrecht entstanden, das Recht des Staates die Waldwirtschaft des gesamten Staatsgebietes einer Oberaufsicht zu unterstellen.* (Zentgraf 1923, p. 15).

<sup>76</sup> *Die Forsthoheit des Staates wird anerkannt und begründet durch die Vertretung der Rechte, die die Volksgesamtheit auf einen pfleglich behandelten Wald hat.* (Zentgraf 1923, p. 18).

the formative influence of the German forest on the individual. It was in the state's best interest, then, to reserve a strong role in forestry, particularly in this time of decline. Because, if the state ever allowed its connection with forestry to be severed, it would deprive itself of an important mechanism to fight off the domestic and foreign influences that threatened the 'Germanness' of its constituting people – and thus the very basis for the existence of the German state.

From Zentgraf's rather heavy-handed argument one should of course not conclude that all foresters who used the *völkisch* Forestopia in their writing did so in explicitly racist terms or with openly political ends. In fact, the *völkisch* analogy was mundane enough to appear in all kinds of forms.<sup>77</sup> Some foresters simply waxed lyrical about "idealism in forestry":

Is this silent yet tough fight in the forest not exactly like the fight among individuals and among nations? Here as there cruel, merciless natural law; there as here struggle for survival, life in the light or death in the dark!<sup>78</sup>

or ended their *deutsches Waldbuch* (German Forest Book) matter-of-factly with:

It is the way to the *Volksgemeinschaft* which the forest shows to those who are willing to look.<sup>79</sup>

At other times, foresters would simply "remind" their listeners and readers

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<sup>77</sup> And it appeared in other disciplines, too. See Herb (1997) for an analysis of the *völkisch* argument in German cartography during the Weimar Republic.

<sup>78</sup> *Gleicht dieser stille, aber harte Kampf im Walde nicht aufs Haar dem Kampfe der Menschen und Völker? Hier wie dort grausames, unerbittliches Naturgesetz; dort wir hier Kampfums Dasein, Leben im Licht oder Sterben im Dunkel!* (Müller 1930, p. 33).

<sup>79</sup> *Und der Weg zur Volksgemeinschaft ist es doch, den der Wald dem zeigen kann, der zu schauen willens ist.* (Schoenichen 1926, p. 205).

of the parallels, e.g., mixed stands—ecumene of confessions, canopy layers—social stratification, care of the forest skirt—*Grenzlanddeutschum*,<sup>80</sup> natural reseeding—eugenics, . . . forest organism—*Volksorganism*.<sup>81</sup>

We can conclude from its frequent and allusive use that the *völkisch* Forestopia was an established concept. As well, the venues at which, and the occasions during which, the *völkisch* Forestopia was used by foresters suggest that the concept was not foreign to the general population. Frequently, foresters would use the *völkisch* analogy when addressing an audience of non-foresters, such as during a rector's inaugural address. The following are examples from 1927:

Looking at a forest stand, you will find a structure reminiscent of that of a social community. . . .  
Despite the constant struggle for survival that is raging among the trees of the forest, they stand united to protect the whole against the devastating windstorm, they collectively protect the soil from the desiccating effect of the sun and from the mechanical force of the ground from which their offspring shall sprout and grow towards the sun. Each tree is allotted its place by fate and works to its best abilities for the good of the whole.

Students! There is no need to continue this comparison. The lesson is obvious!<sup>82</sup>

and from 1931:

In a biological sense, the forest can serve as the educator of the people. On the one hand, the struggle for survival is undeniably evident in the forest. Yet on the other hand, the social idea of the

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<sup>80</sup> This term cannot be translated into a single word. Literally it means "the Germandom of ethnic Germans living in neighbouring regions just outside the borders of Germany."

<sup>81</sup> *Ich erinnere z. B. an die Parallelen: Mischwuchspflege—Zusammenwirken der Konfessionen, Stufenschluß—soziale Schichtung, Randschutz—Grenzlanddeutschum, Naturverjüngung—Zuchtwahl, Bestandspflege—Förderung der Wertsarbeit, gesunder Waldaufbau—natürliche Vorbeugung, Waldorganismus—Volksorganismus.* (Künkele 1926a, p. 413).

<sup>82</sup> *Wenn Sie einen Bestand betrachten, so finden Sie in demselben einen Aufbau, der an eine soziale Gemeinschaft erinnert. . . .*

*Trotz des ständigen Kampfes ums Dasein, der unter den Bäumen des Bestandes herrscht, halten sie einig zusammen zum Schutz des Ganzen gegen den waldverheerenden Sturm, schützen sie zusammen die Mutter Erde gegen die austrocknende Wirkung der Sonne, gegen die mechanische Gewalt des Bodens, dem ihre Nachkommenschaft entsproßen und der Sonne entgegenwachsen soll. Jeder ist an seinem ihm vom Geschick zugewiesenen Platze und arbeitet nach seinen Kräften zum Wohle des Ganzen.*

*Kommilitonen! Ich brauche den Vergleich nicht weiter zu führen. Die Lehre hieraus ergibt sich von selbst!* (Schüpfer 1928, pp. 29-30).

cooperative thought which rules the entire realm of life is also most developed in the permanent community of long-lived forest trees.<sup>83</sup>

It appears that, whether in its openly racist, technical, or rhapsodic form, the *völkisch* Forestopia was a common element in the writings of foresters during the 1920s. Building on the example provided by Duesberg, foresters carefully adapted the *völkisch* analogy of forest and people to the circumstances of the weak Weimar Republic and the mood of its people. They used it to give expression to their ideas for the future of the German state and to exhort the German people not to succumb to resignation and ‘foreign’ cultural influences.

Yet, while sometimes successful at promoting the *völkisch* analogy beyond the boundaries of their profession, foresters’ publications usually did not reach large audiences outside forestry. For example, while Zentgraf was influential within the discipline and certainly wrote from the heart of it, he was nonetheless situated on the margins with regard to the attention of the larger public simply because forestry as a whole was a relatively isolated field.<sup>84</sup> Still, Zentgraf and other foresters were successful at suggesting the usefulness of the *völkisch* Forestopia to scholars in other fields who then incorporated it into their works and gave the concept a more widespread circulation among the general

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<sup>83</sup> *Der Wald kann im biologischen Sinne zum Volkserzieher werden. Der Kampfs Dasein zeigt sich zwar im Walde in augenfälligster Weise, aber viel deutlicher und klarer als in der Volksgemeinschaft tritt andererseits auch der die ganze Lebewelt beherrschende Genossenschaftsgedanke, die soziale Idee, in der Dauergemeinschaft der langlebigen Waldbäume hervor.* (Weber 1931, p. 26).

In this paragraph, Weber was paraphrasing Duesberg: *Klarer als im verworrenen Menschengetriebe tritt der die ganze Welt der Lebewesen beherrschende Genossenschaftsgedanke hervor in tierischer und pflanzlicher Gemeinschaft. Am höchsten ausgebildet erscheint die gesellige Ordnung in der dauernden Gemeinschaft der langlebigen Waldbäume.* (Duesberg 1910, p. iv).

<sup>84</sup> Zentgraf was certainly successful at planting his thoughts in the mind of foresters: during the 1930s, whole sections of *Wald und Volk* were ‘recycled’ in speeches and articles by other foresters who simply inserted the words ‘National Socialism’ here and there to make the passages fit the new realities of the Third Reich. See, for example, Schmidt (1938, p. 660), who effortlessly connected the “aristocratic hierarchy” of the Germanic tribes to the “Führer-principle” and the *Volksgemeinschaft* of National Socialism.

population. Who, then, were the ‘popularizers’ of the *völkisch* analogy of forest and *Volk*? What was their disciplinary background? At what levels did they work, and what audiences did they reach?

#### 5.4 The Voice of the Rank and File: Konrad Guenther’s *Heimatlehre*

Konrad Guenther was a *völkisch* writer whose limited personal influence and power within the discipline and academia stood in contrast to his prominence as a local dignitary, and, more importantly, his public effectiveness as a popular author.<sup>85</sup> In this respect, he is the opposite of Zentgraf. His popularity enabled Guenther to do what Zentgraf could not: spread the idea of Forestopia to a general readership via the popular genre of nature writing. For example, Guenther’s reputation as an author prompted foresters to have their own books prefaced by him and so expand their reach.<sup>86</sup>

Guenther was a zoologist by training but wrote widely on natural history into which he wove Forestopian ideas about a special historical relationship between the forest and the German *Volk*. He is an example of an author who was part of the German mainstream in terms of language and conviction. Although his characterizations of foreign peoples seem offensive today, they must be regarded as having been within the limits of ‘proper’ thinking and writing as many, if not most, of the bourgeois intellectuals of the Weimar Republic would have defined them.

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<sup>85</sup> Konrad Guenther should not be confused with Hans F. K. Günther, also called *Rasse-Günther* or ‘race-Günther,’ who was born in Freiburg in 1891 but was no relation to Konrad Guenther. *Rasse-Günther* became professor in Jena in 1930 and was the author of the influential ‘Racial Science of the German People’ (Günther, Hans F. K. (1933). *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes* (14th ed.). Munich: J. F. Lehmann’s Verlag).

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Chapter 6.

Guenther worked at the university of Freiburg, home to one of the four German forestry programs. He was born in 1874 to German parents in Riga (Latvia) but stayed in Freiburg after his studies in zoology as a *Privatdozent* or adjunct professor in 1902. For many years, Guenther taught, gave public lectures, published, and directed the Freiburg Museum of Natural History. After 1933, Guenther maintained the minimum level of Nazi party membership required to retain the right to teach and publish. It would be incorrect to portray him as a rabid Nazi or a spineless opportunist. Neither did party membership gain Guenther any privileges or perquisites. In fact, Guenther never achieved financial security for himself and his family as he never received tenure and had to support his family by offering fee-for-service lectures, seminars, and excursions in various departments of the university, including the faculty of forestry. This also meant that Guenther had no clout within the university establishment other than the respect afforded him on the basis of his reputation as an author – which was considerable. In fact, as the files in the Freiburg University Archives show, it was that respect which year after year swayed officials at the university and the provincial government to grant bursaries to Guenther and, after his death in 1954, to his widow.<sup>87</sup>

Like Zentgraf, Guenther enjoyed an unblemished reputation after 1945.<sup>88</sup> In his denazification questionnaire, he declared that he had joined the NSDAP only to remain eligible to receive the annually renewable stipends on which he and his family depended. As proof of this Guenther pointed out his Christian conviction and his work for international

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<sup>87</sup> Files B 15 / 101 (Konrad Guenther, a.o. Professor) and B 24 / 1114 (Personalakte Konrad Guenther).

<sup>88</sup> In Freiburg, a city park still bears his name. Cf. the report on the dedication in the *Badische Zeitung* on May 22, 1954: “Konrad-Guenther-Park im Möslle.”

understanding.<sup>89</sup> In 1949, Guenther was made an honorary member of the National Geographic Society “in recognition of his many works, particularly about Brazil.”<sup>90</sup> In this section, though, I look at some of Guenther’s writings on his long-time project of *Deutsche Heimatlehre* or ‘the study of the German homeland.’ It is doubtful whether those works would have won him the same distinction in the eyes of the American adjudicators.

In 1936, Guenther secured a special appointment to teach *Deutsche Heimatlehre*, which he characterized as developing the foundations for a “rejuvenation of our people through blood and soil.”<sup>91</sup> That this was not a new field for Guenther is evident from the title of the books he published in the years prior to his appointment: *Die Sprache der Natur seit der Vorzeit unseres Volkes* (The Language of Nature since the Prehistoric Times of Our People, 1930), *Die Heimatlehre vom Deutschtum und seiner Natur* (The Study of Germandom and its Nature, 1932), *Rasse und Heimat* (Race and Homeland, 1934), and *Deutsches Naturerleben* (The German Experience of Nature, 1935).

The goal of Guenther’s *Heimatlehre* was

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<sup>89</sup> On 1 May, 1933, the Nazi party froze its membership admission, forcing hopefuls to prove their convictions by joining affiliated organizations. In his denazification questionnaire, Guenther stated that in 1933 he had joined the *Opferring* (‘sacrificial circle’) an organization for candidates for party membership that ‘allowed’ them to nonetheless contribute their party dues in an organized fashion. (Guenther personal file at Freiburg University Archives, B 24 / 1114). As well, he had been “a long-time member of the *NS-Volkswohlfahrt*” (‘people’s welfare’), a party-organisation overseeing all social and welfare work in Germany. (Guenther’s vita in Freiburg University Archives, B 15 / 101). Guenther joined the party on 1 May, 1937, the day the moratorium was lifted, and held the membership number 5 054 660 (Freiburg University Archives, B 133 / 133).

<sup>90</sup> Freiburg University Archives B 15 / 101.

<sup>91</sup> Guenther on 11 January 1937 in a letter to the Dean Hermann Staudinger, the 1953 Nobel laureate in chemistry. (Freiburg University Archives, B 15 / 101).

to reawaken the inherited, currently slumbering sense of nature of the German and thus achieve the re-rooting of the German in the nature of his homeland (*Heimatsnatur*). . . . Those who witnessed the rising of our people in our day will recognize in this *Heimatlehre*, as well as in its concomitant holistic view of nature with both mind and heart, a pioneer and collaborator of the new Germany<sup>92</sup>

Like Zentgraf, Guenther used the *völkisch* analogy of forest and *Volk* to comment on the political situation of Germany. Yet, while Zentgraf lamented the state of affairs during the Weimar period, Guenther in this 1936 preface could look back at the first three years of the “new Germany” and the role of *Heimatlehre* in bringing about “the rising of the people.” Not surprising, Guenther credited the forest with a major role both in having formed the erstwhile ‘sense of nature’ inherited from Germanic times, and in the re-education of the ‘new German’ towards reawakening this sense. Once again, the forest served as a mirror to the German people, as a source of national pride, and as a political admonition.

Yet Guenther tried to explain not just the positive characteristics Germans had retained from their forest past, but also how some of the past and current problems Germans had with statehood were the consequence of their ‘forest mentality.’ First and foremost among those problems was the dissension among the German tribes which had kept Germany from uniting, strengthening, and growing. Because of the limited horizon of the forest environment, Guenther argued, the German tribes had never realized the true extent of their kinship and wasted their strength in fratricidal warfare:

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<sup>92</sup> . . . der ererbte und jetzt nur schlummernde Natursinn sollte geweckt und dadurch die lebendige Wiederverwurzelung des Deutschen in seiner Heimatsnatur erreicht werden. . . . Wer den Aufbruch unseres Volkes in unserer Zeit mitgelebt hat, wird in dieser *Heimatlehre* und in der mit ihr verbundenen Ganzschau der Natur mit Kopf und Herz eine Vor- und Mitarbeiterin des neuen Deutschland erkennen. (Preface by Guenther to Keller 1936a, p. v).

From this [forest mentality] arose the disunity that makes German history an endless tragedy. Again and again statehood eluded the German . . . because, though superior to other nations, he was vanquished by his own kind.<sup>93</sup>

And even now that most Germans were united in one state, the lingering effects of their forest heritage caused them to squabble amongst themselves:

Even today, the historical influence of isolating forests and impassable wilderness surfaces in the habit of segregating into parties and associations.<sup>94</sup>

This was a dismissal! of the Weimar Republic with its political culture of special-interest parties that lost sight of the overarching problems – and the parallel retreat of Germans into the private sphere. But how could Germans break this habit and finally find inner and outer unity? Guenther suggested that they take their inspiration from the Romantic use of the forest in refashioning Germany after the Napoleonic catastrophe:

More than a hundred years ago, when it went through a similar collapse, our *Volk* remembered the roots of its strength. It sought to reconnect with nature, with its legends and tales, and arose in new youthful splendour. May we, too, realize that internal renewal must precede external growth and that everyone must start by doing his own share.<sup>95</sup>

And Guenther wanted to do his own share in bringing such a renewal about once again, specifically by developing a ‘German experience of nature’ which would ultimately supplant the Christian belief to become the spiritual foundation of the new Germany. Though Guenther himself did not acknowledge the connection explicitly, this German renaissance

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<sup>93</sup> *Daraus entsprang die Uneinigkeit, die die deutsche Geschichte zur fortlaufenden Tragödie macht. Wie oft war der Germane, wie später der Deutsche, den anderen Völkern überlegen, aber immer wieder ließ er sich durch seinesgleichen besiegen, und der staatliche Zusammenschluß ging ihm stets wieder verloren.* (Guenther 1930, pp. 143-144).

<sup>94</sup> *Der einstige Einfluß der trennenden Bäume und unwegsamen Wildnisse wirkt sich noch heute in der Sucht aus, sich in Parteien und Vereinen zu sondern.* (Guenther 1932, p. 8).

<sup>95</sup> *Als unser Volk vor mehr als 100 Jahren einen ähnlichen Zusammenbruch durchmachte, besann es sich auf die Wurzeln seiner Kraft, suchte die Verbindung mit der Natur, mit seinen alten Sagen und Märchen und erstand in neuer Jugendkraft. Mögen wir auch heute einsehen, daß der äußeren Kraftentfaltung die innere Erneuerung vorausgehen muß und jeder bei sich selbst damit anzufangen hat.* (Guenther 1932, p. 28).

from nature would have been nothing more the realization of the 'Germanic faith' advocated by *völkisch* activists like Lagarde and Langbehn.

By 1936, when Guenther wrote the preface welcoming the "new Germany," the New Order had dealt with the negative side effects of German 'forest mentality' he had condemned in his 1930 and 1932 books: 'parties and associations' were abolished, 'disunity' was eliminated through National Socialist 'coordination,' German 'statehood' was stronger and bolder than at any time since 1918. Guenther evidently liked what he saw, comparing the "strong *Reich* with a tree that extends its branches protectively over the *Volk*."<sup>96</sup> And he hoped that the German people would return the favour to the forest as the source of their *völkisch* inspiration for "it is the hallmark of a master race to protect its trees with their proud stature for it is to them that they feel as equals."<sup>97</sup> In his books on *Heimatlehre*, Guenther thus not only effectively popularized *völkisch* Forestopia among the readers of general nature and natural history writing, he also transferred the concept into the Third Reich and adapted it to the new diction of 'master race' and 'blood and soil.'

This continuity of Guenther's writing from Weimar to the Third Reich demonstrates that 'propaganda' was not necessarily ordered or driven by 'the Nazis' or 'the state.' Instead, individuals, and sometimes even individuals who were utterly powerless politically and economically such as Guenther, chose to air their *völkisch* views in their own personal

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<sup>96</sup> *Es liegt nahe, ein starkes Reich mit einem Baum zu vergleichen, der seine Äste schützend über das Volk breitet.* (Guenther 1935, p. 138).

<sup>97</sup> *Es ist das Kennzeichen eines Herrenvolkes, seine Bäume zu schützen, deren stolzem Wuchs es sich ebenbürtig fühlt.* (Guenther 1935, p. 136).

campaign. Guenther's *Heimatlehre* was not invented nor demanded by the Nazis; they did, however, incorporate it in the university curriculum once they could do so.

Guenther's example also serves to remind us that what seems like propaganda to today's reader was not necessarily considered such in the 1920s and 1930s. A strong *völkisch* undercurrent, nourished by the increasing political and economic pressures on large portions of the middle-class, had radicalized large portions of the public and heightened their acceptance of concepts and terms such as those Guenther used in his books. In many ways, Guenther expressed what a goodly share of his readers thought – which also goes a long way toward explaining the success of his books. Yet while Guenther was certainly successful as an author, his popularity pales in comparison with that of another conservative nature writer who emphasized the *völkisch* analogy of forest and people: Raoul Heinrich Francé.

### 5.5 Forestopia on the Coffee Table: The Success of Raoul Heinrich Francé

Judging by the number of both publications and editions, Raoul Heinrich Francé was probably one of the most effective popularizers of the *völkisch* analogy of forest and people in German nature writing.<sup>98</sup> Born in Vienna in 1874, Francé was trained as a biologist and in 1921 became chair of the biological institute at the university of Munich. Increasingly, however, his natural science training provided the background for his philosophical musings on humanity and nature and about Germans and 'their' forest in particular. Francé began publishing on the forest in 1909 with *Bilder aus dem Leben des Waldes* (Impressions of

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<sup>98</sup> Seling, quoting Gugenberger and Schweidlenka, calls Francé "the probably most important pioneer and champion of the ecological thought on the far political right." (Seling 1997, p. 57, footnote 33).

Forest Life), but it was in the 1920s that his books took on a seriously political tenor and he began incorporating the *völkisch* analogy of forest and people. Throughout his writing career, Francé was motivated by the realization that environmental destruction threatened the livelihood of future generations. To the German people he assigned a particular role in the task of halting and reversing this dangerous trend because he saw them as possessing a special love for nature unequalled by other nations and expressed most vividly in their love of the forest. In the books he wrote during the 1920s, Francé framed this love of the forest in highly political terms and developed the *völkisch* analogy into his own model for a German state built on inner harmony and outer strength.

It was through Francé's work that the *völkisch* analogy reached a greater lay audience.<sup>99</sup> Partly published in book circles such as the *Deutsche Buchgemeinschaft* which operated on a subscription basis (similar to Reader's Digest), Francé's works arrived by mail in a great many German households where, before the age of radio and television, their purpose was as much to entertain as to educate. Written in a conversational and highly readable style, and lavishly illustrated with photographic plates, Francé's books were deceptively innocent vehicles for the deeper political messages woven into the effusive descriptions of forest life and the numerous similes between forest, *Volk*, and state.

The most successful of Francé's books incorporating the analogy of forest and people was *Ewiger Wald* (Eternal Forest, 1922). It went through five editions in the first year alone

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<sup>99</sup> For example, his *Bilder aus dem Leben des Waldes* (Impressions of Forest Life) of 1909 was in its 22nd edition by the year 1930.

and reached ten editions by 1930.<sup>100</sup> In *Ewiger Wald*, Francé argued that the forest could teach Germans two things. The first was to live in harmony with one another, the second was to be on guard against outsiders who were out to disturb that harmony. Francé used the forest as a simile for the violent and inequitable state of contemporary German social and economic life and he left scarcely a doubt on whom the blame should fall:

Once there were strangers that immigrated to a well-ordered state. They were of a foreign race, shrewd, and given to a life without work. They were neither enough of a warrior-people, nor numerous enough to be able to conquer; but they were gifted and always on the lookout for an opportunity to appropriate for themselves what others had produced. With qualities like that, they had no choice but to become parasites.

And so the strangers became parasites in the greater states. While the others worked the soil, created assets and practiced the ancient trades in customary harmony, the newcomers effortlessly feathered their own nests. They secured a foothold, began to sap, and grew ample and rich. Everything about them was foreign: their livelihood, their morals, their garb, their customs. So foreign, indeed, that they did not seem to be from this world. God Himself had chosen them, people said, and reserved a special fate for them.

But the old established inhabitants who were rooted firmly in the soil defended themselves against the strangers. An unprecedented time of suffering began with a thousand persecutions and just as many counter-ruses, and it continues to this day.

One spoiled life for the other. But what's the use of continuing this yarn – by now everyone has guessed what is meant here. Who would not be thinking of mistletoe and forest trees? . . .<sup>101</sup>

Once again, the Jewish conspiracy was portrayed as threatening harmonious German social life just as the harmonious forest was strangled by parasites. Francé's tongue-in-cheek

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<sup>100</sup> A typical print run for that time and type of book would have been 10,000.

<sup>101</sup> *In einen wohlgeordneten Staat wanderten Fremdlinge ein, von fremder Rasse, klug, einem Leben ohne Arbeit zugetan, kein Kriegervolk, und auch nicht zahlreich genug, um erobern zu können, aber begabt und stets auf der Lauer, wie man sich das von anderen Erarbeitete zu eigen machen könne. Wer so ist, dem bleibt kaum etwas anderes übrig, als zum Parasiten zu werden.*

*Und so wurden die Fremdlinge Parasiten in den größeren Staaten. Wenn die anderen den Boden ausnützten, Werte schufen und die uralten Handwerke trieben in vererbter Harmonie, so waren die Neuen die sich mühelos Bereichernden. Sie setzten sich fest und sogen und wurden selber üppig und reich. Und alles an ihnen war fremd. Ihre Erwerbsart, ihre Sitten, ihre Tracht, ihre Bräuche. So fremd, daß man gar nicht an ihren irdischen Ursprung glaubte. Gott selbst habe sie auserwählt, sagte man, und ihnen ein besonderes Schicksal verliehen.*

*Aber die Eingesessenen, fest im Heimatboden Wurzelnden wehrten sich gegen die Fremden. Und eine unerhörte Leidenszeit begann mit tausend Verfolgungen und Gegenlisten und dauert noch heute an.*

*Die einen vergifteten das Leben der anderen. Aber wozu das ausspinnen: es hat jeder schon erraten, was hier gemeint ist. Denn wer denkt nicht an die Mistel und die Waldbäume? . . . (Francé 1922, p. 61, ellipsis marks in the original).*

suggestion that “everyone has guessed what is meant here” throws into stark relief the strength of the *völkisch* and even outright anti-Semitic current among his educated readership. At the same time, however, it also shows the familiarity of his readers with the workings of the forest. In fact, his entire point in this passage rests on the ready transferrability of one into the other by means of the analogy of forest and people. We can thus gauge from Francé’s writing how established the *völkisch* analogy of forest and *Volk* already was by the early 1920s.

Francé built on this familiarity with the *völkisch* analogy and employed it in outlining his own Forestopia: a Germany of inner harmony and outer strength. From the dangers posed by “parasites,” Francé concluded that inner harmony could only survive if it was able to defend itself from dissonant influences. Again the forest could teach Germans how to reach that goal:

It is possible to reach harmony and, ultimately, permanence. That is the lesson the eternal forest can teach us. It comes at a dear price, though, namely the surrender of the freedom to do what one *wants* to do, and the willingness of everyone to do what one *must* do. Even the forest reaches harmony only through strict rule, through the elimination of everything that goes against it.<sup>102</sup>

This meant that harmony depended on two things: the willingness of the members of society to place the common good before their own interests; and the determination of the resulting harmonious society to defend itself aggressively not only against “neighbours” outside, but “varmints” within:

In the final analysis, harmony encompasses war, too. To strike in the last possible moment and snuff out the life of those who do evil; not to simply love one’s neighbour but to weigh whether he deserves

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<sup>102</sup> *Möglich ist es, zur Harmonie zu gelangen und dadurch zur Dauer. Das lehrt uns der ewige Wald. Gewiß, auch er nur um teuern Preis. Durch die Preisgabe der Freiheit, das zu tun, was man will, durch die Bereitwilligkeit eines jeden, das zu tun, was er muß. Die Harmonie erreicht auch er nur durch unerbittlich strenges Regiment, durch die Ausmerzungen alles dessen, was ihr widerspricht.* (Francé 1922, p. 62, emphasis in the original).

to be loved; to determine rationally whether pity is appropriate when it comes to taking care of varmints, all that is part of harmony, too. The challenge is to find them out.<sup>103</sup>

In the forest, that was easily done: in Francé's allegoric 'forest state,' the trees ruled supreme, while grasses and flowers remained "vagrants" because the trees "leave no room for immigrants." If herbs, shrubs, and mosses wanted the "right of residence," they had to "acquire it by prescription," that is, they had to prove that they were willing and able to live in the permanent twilight imposed on them by the dominant trees. Finally, as in every community there were the plebs: the "shady fungi" and the "beggars" such as lichens and epiphytes.<sup>104</sup> While necessary for the 'great harmony' to function, they had to be kept in check by the rule of the trees, just as the state was responsible for controlling the elements of human society in their variety:

In order for a multitude to coexist as they do in the miraculous organization of the forest, each and every one must be *different*. That sentence, mind you, is a slap in the face of those who worship the new, erroneous doctrine that all who bear a human visage are equal – which is precisely the flawed reasoning on which everyone in the Marxist state bases their claim to equal rights! The forest has a different kind of law. Only those who are able to fulfil the same duties are afforded the same rights – the forest pervades its space only by means of a mosaic of lifeforms.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> *Zur Harmonie gehört schließlich auch der Krieg. Im richtigen letzten Moment zuschlagen, denen, die Böses tun, das Lebenslicht ausblasen, seinen Nächsten nicht lieben, sondern prüfen, ob er verdient, geliebt zu werden, Mitleid von dem Verstand abhängig machen, um einen Schädling unschädlich zu machen; alles das gehört auch zur Harmonie. Die Kunst ist nur, die Richtigen herauszufinden.* (Francé 1922, p. 105).

<sup>104</sup> *Gräser und Blumen sind "Wandergesellen"; Wald "läßt keinen Platz übrig für Neuansiedler"; Kräuter, Sträucher und Moose ersitzen sich das "Bürgerrecht" wenn es ihnen gelingt, sich an die Dämmerung anzupassen; "die lichtscheuen Pilze"; Astmoose und Flechten sind "Bettler."* (Francé 1922, p. 56). 'Acquire by prescription' refers to the legal concept of acquiring some form of right over another's land by uninterrupted use over a long period.

<sup>105</sup> *Damit aber viele nebeneinander bestehen können, wie dies im Wunderwerk der Organisation eines Waldes der Fall ist, muß jeder anders sein. Das ist freilich ein Satz, der dem geradenwegs [sic] ins Gesicht schlägt, was die Menschen jetzt oft anbeten; er widerspricht der falschen Lehre, daß alles, was ein Menschenantlitz trägt, im Grunde gleich sei, weshalb eben im marxistischen Staate alles fälschlicherweise auch gleiche Rechte begehrt! Der Wald hat ein anderes Gesetz, nämlich gleiche Rechte haben nur die, die auch gleiche Pflichten erfüllen können; er erfüllt seine Welt nur durch ein Mosaik von Lebensformen.* (Francé 1922, p. 37, emphasis in the original). Francé's remark concerning the 'human visage' resurfaced twelve years later in a speech by forester Eberhard Bütow, a Member of the Reichstag for the NSDAP. (Cf. Bütow 1934, p. 987).

In this paragraph, Francé leapt from forest to human society without any transition at all, revealing how easily transferable the lessons from one to the other were in his mind. In the forest as in the state, Francé rejected the notion of a community based on the indiscriminate granting of equal rights. Instead, he called for a hierarchy based on merits, not on birth, power, or chance. And it was here that the forest could offer the greatest lesson to Germans:

The forest has implemented the third way, the one which you could not find in your social existence. To the forest, community of life means neither socialism nor autocracy. Instead of compassion, the forest knows mutual aid and conformity. And its justice is called selection.<sup>106</sup>

This was Duesberg's cooperative state revisited, but with a new, social-Darwinist twist to it. The new forest-state Francé envisaged had a will and a personality of its own which formed its members so they would comply with the greater end to which the forest-state was oriented: "conformity" ensured eternal permanence of the community and maximum pervasion of its living space. The "third way" Francé saw realized in the forest was not an allusion to the medium ground between absolutist monarchy and soviet republic that could be seen in the compromise of the Weimar Republic.<sup>107</sup> Rather, the "third way" expressed the rejection of traditional categories and the desire for a 'new' way of organizing German society – it was an expression of the dissatisfaction that should eventually prepare the way

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<sup>106</sup> *Der Wald macht es anders. Er hat den dritten Fall verwirklicht, den ihr im Zusammenleben nicht finden konntet. Für ihn bedeutet Lebensgemeinschaft weder Sozialismus noch Herrschaft. Und Nächstenliebe kennt er nicht. Wohl aber – gegenseitige Hilfe und Anpassung. Und seine Gerechtigkeit heißt Auslese.* (Francé 1922, p. 28).

<sup>107</sup> On April 6, 1919, a *Räterepublik* or soviet republic had been declared in Bavaria, Francé's adopted home. It was suppressed less than a month later, on May 2, 1919.

for the “Third Reich,” a concept popularized during the time of Francé’s writing by Artur Moeller van den Bruck (1876-1925) in his book by the same title.<sup>108</sup>

Francé’s (and Zentgraf’s) use of the forest as a vehicle of political nostalgia and social romanticism supports the claim by Glück and Pleschberger that foresters have traditionally subscribed to a “forestry ideology” that, while strongly anchored in conservative thought, “opposes both capitalism and socialism and presents the forest as a model for the ‘third way.’”<sup>109</sup> In the final sentence of his 1927 book *Vom deutschen Walde* (On the German Forest), Francé summed up the function of the forest not only as such a model, but as a physical prerequisite for Germany’s resurgence:

In the future, the forest as “*Dauerwald*” will be what it formerly was for the German soul: its fountain of youth, preserver, and faithful paladin, but also its eternal spring of purity, profundity, naturalness, and of the genius that will vanquish the world...<sup>110</sup>

Francé’s sentences trails off in a hopeful and suggestive three dots, symbolizing the hope of German *völkisch* activists that they would soon witness the “renaissance of the German spirit.”<sup>111</sup> Francé also stresses in this passage the paramount role of the forest in this ‘renaissance’ and that importance was indeed a good part of the public message his books disseminated so widely. Other activists, however, combined the public message of the

<sup>108</sup> Moeller van den Bruck was a direct heir to Lagarde and Langbehn’s “Germanic faith” and provided the National Socialists with the name for their new order. After the annexation of Austria in 1938, it was replaced by *Großdeutschland* or ‘Greater Germany.’ (Cf. Stern 1961).

<sup>109</sup> *Forstliche Ideologie ist deutlich im konservativen Denken verankert.* (Glück and Pleschberger 1982, p. 651, emphasis in the original). *Man kann forstliche Ideologie daher als Konzeption des ‘dritten Weges’ charakterisieren.* (Pleschberger 1981, pp. 52-53). See also Chapter 4, footnote 65.

<sup>110</sup> *Der Wald als “Dauerwald” wird wieder das werden, was er einst für die deutsche Seele war: ihr Jungborn, ihr Erhalter, ihr getreuer Ekkehard, der nie versiegende Quell für ihre Reinheit, ihren Tiefsinn, ihre Natürlichkeit und ihre weltbezwingende Schöpferkraft...* (Francé 1927, pp. 260-261, punctuation in the original).

<sup>111</sup> *Wiederaufblühen des deutschen Geistes* (Francé 1927, p. 13).

concept of Forestopia with a lobbying campaign that used covert, misleading, and even illegal means to bring about the ‘renaissance.’

### 5.6 Lobbying “The Cause of the Forest”: Willi Ludewig and the *Bund Deutscher Wald*

Forestopia was almost by definition a concept that ‘worked’ only in the public sphere. It rested on connotations of ‘The German Forest’ that had been established, disseminated, and challenged by writers and artists in cultural media such as books and paintings. After all, its very purpose was to influence the (reading) public to conceive of itself as a nation rooted in the forest. In this section, though, we will catch a rare glimpse of the personal and political motivations that underlay the public formulation of Forestopia. Through the preservation of a ream of correspondence in the Federal Archives in Berlin, we have a first-person account of one particularly active lobbyist’s campaign to place the *völkisch* German forest on the political agenda of the conservative parties of the Weimar Republic.

Willi Ludewig was a Hamburg-based teacher who in 1923 founded a league called *Deutscher Wald, Bund zur Wehr und Weihe des Waldes unter der Schutzherrschaft des Generalfeldmarschalls von Hindenburg* (The German Forest, League for the Defence and Glory of the Forest under the Auspices of Field-Marshal von Hindenburg).<sup>112</sup> The reference

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<sup>112</sup> Ludewig’s lobbying coincided with the interests of the *Reichsverband deutscher Waldbesitzerverbände* (Reich Association of German Associations of Forest Owners) and he received logistical and financial support from them. The *Reichsverband* represented the interests of private forest owners, particularly those of the larger forest estates of the nobility. I have reconstructed the work of Ludewig from the extant documents of the Reich Association on *Allgemeine Propaganda (Film, Radio, Verein “Deutscher Wald”)* (General Propaganda (Film, Radio, “German Forest League”) which cover the period between April 1922 and November 1932 and are gathered in a sizable loose-leaf file in the German Federal Archives in Berlin under the signatory BA R 8089 44. Unless indicated otherwise, the material in this section is from that unpaginated file.

to Hindenburg left no doubt that the *Bund Deutscher Wald*<sup>113</sup> was a conservative nationalist organization.<sup>114</sup> Hindenburg himself had described the rationale for the league in 1924:

The forest is a treasure of immeasurable value. Anyone who neglects or, worse, abandons the forest because he does not recognize its eminent and varied importance for the life of our people commits a grave sin against our German fatherland.<sup>115</sup>

Hindenburg stopped short of using the word treason, but he might as well have. To the reader this statement made clear that it was a national duty to protect and tend the forest and that one could not be a 'true' German if one neglected one's duty to the forest. The mission of the *Bund Deutscher Wald* thus was to enlighten Germans about their duty, which meant to "fight in word and deed for the education of Germans about the economic, intellectual, and spiritual importance of the forest to their life as a people."<sup>116</sup>

The league's primary weapon in this fight was a monthly periodical entitled *Deutscher Wald* which was distributed not only to its members, but as an insert in daily newspapers and in forestry journals such as *Der Deutsche Forstwirt*. As well, the periodical was mailed to

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<sup>113</sup> To avoid confusion between the league and its namesake publication, I will refer to the league as *Bund Deutscher Wald* and to the periodical as *Deutscher Wald*.

<sup>114</sup> As victor of the Russians in 1914 and 1915, Hindenburg became a national hero, was promoted to chief of general staff in August 1916 and, during 1917/18, *de facto* ruled Germany as a military dictator (together with his quartermaster general, Erich von Ludendorff, who later joined Hitler in his 1923 putsch). Hindenburg's reputation survived the military defeat intact and in 1925 gained him the presidency of the German Republic as the candidate of a conservative nationalist alliance against a candidate backed by Catholics, Liberals, and Socialists. With his *Dolchstoßlegende* ('stab-in-the-back myth,' cf. footnote 60) Hindenburg stood for the military traditions of the 'unvanquished army,' one of the few sources of German pride after 1918, and exerted a great integrative effect on the German people in the second half of the 1920s. In 1932, he won the presidency for a second term, this time beating out Hitler. Since he became patron of the league before his presidency, we can surmise that he did so not by virtue of his state office, but as a conservative icon.

<sup>115</sup> *Ein Schatz von unendlich großem Wert ist der Wald. Wer ihn in Verkennung seiner hohen und vielseitigen Bedeutung für unser Volksleben vernachlässigt oder gar preisgibt, versündigt sich schwer am deutschen Vaterland.* (quoted in Ludewig 1927, p. 2).

<sup>116</sup> . . . *kampft in Wort und Tat für die Aufklärung über die wirtschaftliche, geistige und seelische Bedeutung des Waldes für das deutsche Volksleben.* (From the masthead of the league's periodical *Deutscher Wald*).

all forest service administrations in the Reich and to thousands of schools.<sup>117</sup> The substantial cost of this ambitious distribution scheme was born by the numerous sponsors backing the league, which as of 1927 comprised the Reich Association of German Associations of Forest Owners as well as several state associations and two Austrian state associations; the German Society of Foresters; all forestry academies and university departments with the exception of the department in Munich; the Prussian and Bavarian ministries of forestry as the two biggest forest owners in Germany; most government agencies and private associations for nature conservancy; the major hunting associations; as well as numerous nationalist and *völkisch* associations for “German” language, script, youth, education, etc.

The masthead of the periodical was an accomplished political statement in itself, replete with symbols of Germanness and permanence. It displayed an acorn and two flanking oak leaves that sprouted from a gently arched horizon towards the sun rising in the background. The entire arrangement was overlain by a Nordic rune. The two oak leaves symbolized the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation and the Empire of 1871, while the acorn represented the promise of a new Germany that carried into the future the heritage of its two predecessors. All three were rooted in a slightly rounded surface signifying the Mother Earth, and were poised to grow forth into the dawn of a new age exemplified by the rising sun behind them. That this age would be a German one was connoted by the Nordic rune that bracketed the triad of leaves and acorn. The rune also suggested that this era would be a long one for it was the rune of the yew tree which stood for longevity. From the masthead

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<sup>117</sup> The numbers varied between two thousand and five thousand at different times. Given a total of 52,800 primary schools, 1,600 middle schools, and 2,600 senior schools in all of Germany in the year 1926/27 (Kirk 1995, pp. 104-105), *Deutscher Wald* would have reached between 4 and 10 % of all schools in the Reich.

alone it was clear that *Deutscher Wald* interwove the idea of the *völkisch* superiority of Nordic peoples with that of the forest being German.

Ludewig edited the periodical and contributed many pieces, but he also took the activities of the league beyond this venue and even beyond the printed word. He organized 'Forest Soirées' during which odes to the forest would be sung to music, both specially penned for the occasion.<sup>118</sup> He made presentations to the annual meetings of the Reich and state associations of forest owners, he spoke at meetings of groups for nature conservancy (*Naturschutz*) and 'homeland conservancy' (*Heimatschutz*). In all, his work for the league took so much of Ludewig's time that in 1927 he appealed to the Reich Interior Minister, Walter von Keudell, to intercede with the Education Minister and obtain complete or at least partial relief from his teaching duties.<sup>119</sup>

The periodical *Deutscher Wald* arguably was Ludewig's most visible undertaking. Among the authors who wrote for *Deutscher Wald* were Feucht, Guenther, and Francé, as well as many others whom we will meet in Part II. Many non-foresters contributed as well: artists, clergymen, social workers, teachers, hunters. Forester or not, most authors celebrated the forest as a tool for the education of the people in religious, moral, physical, and other

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<sup>118</sup> Recounted in Ludewig 1923, *Der deutsche Wald*. In this pamphlet, "dedicated to Hindenburg, the German man," Ludewig also tells German history as a constant "hard struggle" of heroic "pure German being" against "*welsche*" influences in form of Roman legions, Catholicism, Roman law, and the money economy. In this fight, salvation always came from those who had "forest peasant blood running in their veins": Hermann, Luther, Bismarck.

<sup>119</sup> Letter of Ludewig to Graf von der Asseburg of 2 June 1927 (BA R 8089 44). As with all his correspondence, Ludewig signed "*mit deutschem Waldesgruß*" or 'with German forest salute.' Ludewig knew von Keudell as the owner of a large forest estate managed according to the *Dauerwald* ideal which to Ludewig was the only truly German forest management. In 1933, Göring made von Keudell head of the newly 'coordinated' German Society of Foresters, a position which after the nation-wide centralization of forestry affairs in 1934 became the third-highest position in German forestry.

ways. Explicitly or implicitly, they used the analogy of forest and people in their articles to admonish the reader to heed the example of the forest. The result was that *Deutscher Wald* was a peculiar blend of forest writings that ranged from effusive poetry and artwork to calls for respect for the religious solemnity of the forest and demands for higher productivity, and from silvicultural exposés about the *Dauerwald* to pleas by foresters for higher salaries.<sup>120</sup> All authors, however, were united in placing at least as much emphasis on ‘*Deutscher*’ as on ‘*Wald*,’ which at times led to rather unconventional perspectives:

Last year, the German and Austrian Alpine Club decided to use Gothic script exclusively on its more than 30,000 trail signs [because] the peculiar forms of the Gothic script blend better into the German landscape than the rigid, dull forms of the Latin letters. Just as the capital letters of the German script with their curved flourishes resemble the German broadleaf forest, the small letters with their points reflect the German evergreen forest; meanwhile, the Latin letters can only be compared to the Italian landscape with its groves of geometric pines.<sup>121</sup>

To today’s reader, such argumentation may seem quixotic and too ethereal to be taken seriously. Yet German readers of the 1920s were quite familiar with the claim that the spiritual development of an entire people could be traced to its natural and aesthetic environment.<sup>122</sup> In one of the most successful books of the decade, *Der Untergang des*

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<sup>120</sup> Cf. Ludewig 1928; Ulrich 1930; Früchtenicht 1929; Müller 1929; Rechtern 1929.

<sup>121</sup> *Der Deutsche und Oesterreichische Alpenverein hat im letzten Jahre beschlossen, für die von ihm und seinen Sektionen aufgestellten Wegetafeln – es sind über 30 000 – nur noch deutsche Schrift zu verwenden. Diese Maßnahme ist einerseits dem berechtigten Gefühl entsprungen, daß wir Deutschen uns, wie dies leider heutzutage so viele tun, unserer Eigenschaft nicht zu schämen brauchen, . . . Andererseits aber hat wohl dabei auch die Empfindung mitgesprochen, daß die eigenwilligen Formen der deutschen Schrift sich besser in die deutsche Landschaft einfügen als die starren, langweiligen Gebilde der lateinischen Buchstaben. Wie die deutschen Großbuchstaben in ihrer geschweiften Durchbildung dem deutschen Laubwald ähneln, so spiegeln die Kleinbuchstaben mit ihren Spitzen den deutschen Nadelwald wieder, während die Lateinbuchstaben nur mit der italienischen Landschaft und ihren steifen Pinienhainen verglichen werden können.* (Kleph 1930, p. 4).

<sup>122</sup> Another example that seems ludicrous today comes from the book *Der Dauerwald* (The Continuous Forest) by Forstmeister Kautz: “When we [Germans] are furious, we want to smash the opponent’s head with a club, i.e., we think in wood; meanwhile the Romance type thinks of poison and dagger.” *Man braucht nur eine richtige Wut über jemanden zu haben, da kommt der Drang, dem Gegner mit einem gediegenen Knüppel über den Schädel zu schlagen, d. h. man denkt in Holz; der Romane denkt in solchem Falle an Gift und Dolch.* (Kautz. 1924. *Der Dauerwald*. Hamburg: Paul Parey. Cited after von Mammen 1934, p. 18; see also Seling

*Abendlandes* (The Decline of the West, 1918-1922), self-styled historian Oskar Spengler had already claimed that the “euclidian geometry” of pines and cypress trees betrayed the superficiality of the “Southern” culture, while the “dissolved habitus” of oaks, beeches, and linden trees symbolized the restless striving nature of the “Nordic” character.<sup>123</sup> Spengler summed up: “One word contains the whole of the Nordic culture: the sough of the forest (*Waldesrauschen*).”<sup>124</sup> Yet, as we have seen, Spengler merely condensed the result of a century-long cultural construction of the forest as German into this sentence. The pithiness of Spengler’s dictum also once again demonstrates how received the Germanization of the forest had become by that time: it was a commonplace. In turn, Spengler’s widely-read book did do its part in strengthening that notion even more. Thus, what may seem too absurd to be taken seriously today, namely the notion that the shapes of scripts and trees are interrelated through the essence of a culture, actually was a popular point of view at the time.

Indeed, the very fact that Ludewig’s *Deutscher Wald* frequently seemed so amateurish in its poetic, musical, and artistic accolades of the forest made it a very innocent and thus effective vehicle for the political message. Sometimes, the message was not concealed at all but appeared as an explicit political statement woven into the apparent cultural fabric of *Deutscher Wald*. For example, at the end of a review of a silvicultural treatise on the

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1997, p. 93).

<sup>123</sup> Foresters continued to claim a typical “character” for the various tree species all through the 1920s, ‘30s, and ‘40s. Krça, for example, spoke of “strict and dutiful conifers” (Krça 1937, p. 186), Rebel praised the “through and through Faustian forest” of “our Romanesque-Gothic development” that stood in contrast to the “gregarious Southern antiquity.” (Rebel 1934, pp. 1 and 3).

<sup>124</sup> *Waldesrauschen: in dem einen Wort liegt die ganze nordische Kultur* (Spengler 1923, pp. 506-507). Spengler also was one of the first to combine the terms *Blut* (blood) and *Boden* (soil) (cf. Eidenbenz 1993, p. 2). For an examination of the ideology of *Blut und Boden*, see below, Chapter 6.

*Dauerwald*, the reviewer concluded: “Yet to everyone [whether they be adherents of modern or traditional forestry, M.I.], the forest shall be a symbol of reconstruction, of resurrection, and of defiant, unbroken strength.”<sup>125</sup> Ludewig himself was often more forceful in his editorials:

In innumerable hearts and minds the German people carry thoughts which are waiting to unfold; in its trunk are gathered forces beyond measure; and in the dark womb of the German soil there slumber seeds and kernels which need preserving until that great German morning of creation dawns, that German day arrives. . . . For that moment each German must be prepared and ready, like the flower inside the bud, like the germ inside the seed, listening still and strong for the hour of unfolding and becoming. Everyone at his place and in his time must adapt and submit to the great goal of life: self-preservation and survival of the race. But that means that everyone . . . must become aware of his duty to himself and to his people. Everyone must do his part so that the German people will rise again in German ways (*Art*) and gain their power and strength and permanence from German land and German forest!<sup>126</sup>

There was no mistaking the direction of this analogy of forest and people. The forest *cum* people Ludewig described here no longer was a mere crutch for a hurt national pride to lean on, nor a revisionist reassurance that the Versailles ‘Dictate of Infamy’ would be cast off. This forest analogy emerged from a seething revanchism spoiling for a new fight. Germany would set the record straight when it was ready. Until then, it would seem dormant, almost

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<sup>125</sup> *Allen aber sei der Wald ein Sinnbild des Wiederaufbaues, der Wiedererstarkung und der trutzig unebrochenen Kraft.* (Rechtern 1929, p. 4). After 1933, Rechtern rose to the rank of *Landforstmeister* or provincial forest chief and published articles on the “proper” training of National Socialist foresters. He signed his articles with “Party Comrade Rechtern.”

<sup>126</sup> *Trägt doch auch das deutsche Volk in ungezählten Hirnen und Herzen Gedanken, die der Gestaltung harren, ruhen in des Volkes Stamm noch unermessbare Kräfte, die der Entfaltung warten, schlummern im dunklen Schoß der deutschen Erde noch Keime und Kerne, die der Erhaltung bedürfen, bis der große deutsche Schöpfermorgen, der deutsche Tag nach dem Willen des weisen Weltenlenkers – durch das Licht von oben – dämmt und kommt. Das aber verlangt von jedem Deutschen, gleich der Blüte in der Knospe, gleich dem Samen in dem Korn, bereit und fertig zu sein für die Stunde der Entfaltung und Gestaltung, in Stille und Stärke zu hören, und jeder an seinem Ort und zu seiner Zeit sich dem großen Ziele des Lebens: der Selbsterhaltung und der Arterhaltung, anzupassen und einzuordnen. Das aber will heißen, daß jeder mit ganzem Willen und großer Kraft und heiligem Glauben: ob Jung ob Alt, ob Mann ob Weib, ob Vater ob Mutter, ob Arbeiter ob Bauer, ob Handwerker ob Beamter, ob Künstler ob Gelehrter, ob Wehrmann ob Staatsmann – jeder an seinem Ort und zu seiner Zeit sich seiner Pflicht gegen sich selbst und sein Volk bewußt werde und mitwirke, daß deutsches Volk in deutscher Art wiedererstehe und Kraft und Stärke und Dauer dem deutschen Volk und seiner Jugend aus deutschem Land und deutschem Walde werde!* (Ludewig 1930, p. 1, emphasis in the original).

dead, like the leafless forest in the cold of its winter, but ready to push new growth at the first sign of spring

These instances of openly political pieces show only the surface of Ludewig's activities and that of the *Bund Deutscher Wald*. His correspondence, however, reveals the political lobbying and plotting behind the scenes, as Ludewig tried to convince conservative circles of the political opportunity the 'right' use of the forest could present to the *völkisch* cause. The particular example I treat in detail here is based on a seven-page letter from Ludewig to the chairman of the Reich Association of Associations of German Forest Owners, Graf von der Asseburg, dated 29 April 1927. In this letter Ludewig argued that his league could positively influence the behaviour of youth in the forest (which for the forest owners would presumably translate into less vandalism and more free labour for 'plant-a-tree days' etc.). Ludewig then pleaded with Asseburg that it was high time to broaden the mandate of the league and get involved in the politics of nature conservancy:

A good many who become active in this field hail from the left wing youth movement. They know how to take over the leadership (as in the Berlin Circle for Nature Conservancy) and, this is the crux, they know how to distort the German idea of homeland into a pacifist-cosmic one and thus deliver the large forest properties into the hands of the covetous socializers. . . . In the light of such experiences you will understand that, in the interest of our cause, which can only be called utterly German, I am trying to introduce our special issue *Der Väter Erbe* into the press and the radio as quickly as possible. Of course, and I must insist on this, one must take great care to keep absolutely silent about our final motives for doing so.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> *Es schliessen sich dieser Arbeit auffallend viele der Jugendbewegung von links an, wissen bald die Führung zu übernehmen (Berliner Naturschutzring) und dann – da liegt der Kern – den deutschen Heimatgedanken in einen pazifistisch-kosmischen umzubiegen und so den grossen Privatbesitz dem allgemeinen Volksbesitz als Volksbegehre zuzuführen. . . . Aus diesen Erfahrungen und Unterredungen heraus ist nun wohl zu verstehen, dass ich um unserer Sache – die wohl restlos deutsch genannt werden kann – willen bemüht bin, unser Sonderblatt "Der Väter Erbe" schnellstens in Presse und Rundfunk einzuführen. Man muss – und ich bitte sehr darum – natürlich die uns treibenden letzten Ursachen strengstens verschweigen.* (Letter from Ludewig to Asseburg, BA R 8089 44, emphasis in the original).

Ludewig made reference here to his new project, a publication called *Der Väter Erbe* (Our Forefathers' Heritage) of which he wanted to print five thousand copies "for dissemination to all newspapers" and "an equal number for sending to schools and government offices."<sup>128</sup> In Ludewig's eyes, this publication was essential to spreading his conservative forest message and thus keeping the 'left wing' from taking over the agenda. Ludewig asked the forest owners to join in this campaign and to help defray the printing costs (trying to shame Asseburg into generosity by insinuating that the Reichsminister of the Interior von Keudell had already received the same request). To convince Asseburg that participating would be in the very own interest of forest owners, Ludewig continued:

Finally, to point out the dangers lurking in the further distortion of current nature conservancy thought, I draw your attention to the Sunday paper *Grüne Post* [Green Post, M.I.] published by Ullstein – a terrible, confusing Sunday paper – and another paper called *Das Wochenende* [The Weekend, M.I.] which soon will be on sale in Berlin as well. On special trains and through hiking, paddling and sports of all sorts, humanity is purposely led out into the unspoilt, quiet outdoors, with the result that both are polluted. What will be the consequences?<sup>129</sup>

Ludewig's intention in this seemingly disjointed paragraph was to frighten forest owners by suggesting that city dwellers could come to their serene forests. But why was this a frightful possibility? Had not Ludewig (just as Zentgraf, Guenther, and Francé) advocated just that in his propaganda: to lead Germans back to the forest so they could learn from it? The difference was that this time it was advocated by the wrong people and for the wrong reasons. Ludewig came from the right end of the political spectrum in his forest writing,

<sup>128</sup> . . . Versand zur Werbung an alle Zeitungen . . . Versand in gleicher Weise und Zahl an Schulen, Behörden, Kulturämter usw. (ibid., emphasis in the original).

<sup>129</sup> Um zum Schluss noch einmal ganz kurz auf die Gefahr der Auswirkung bzw. Verbiegung der zur Zeit lebendigen Naturgedanken hinzuweisen, mache ich auf die von Ullstein herausgebrachte "Grüne Post" – eine furchtbare verwirrende Sonntagszeitung – und die demnächst auch in Berlin erscheinende Zeitung "Das Wochenende" aufmerksam. Bewusst führt man durch Sonderzüge, Wandern, Paddeln und Sport aller Art die Menschheit in die reine stille Natur und verseucht Beides: Mensch und Natur, und welches sind weitere Folgen? (ibid., emphasis in the original).

seeing the forest as a communally-owned property only in the sense that all Germans should have access to their ideal share of the forest. Hence German workers were supposed to be well-behaved Sunday guests, picking up litter as they passed through a forest still materially owned by those who had always owned them. In the paragraph quoted above, Ludewig warned that this forest-owners' idyll could crumble if the left wing were successful at spreading their message among the pliant masses. If the left wing were allowed to tell German workers that the forest was also materially theirs to romp and roam in, hordes of ill-behaved city rabble might descend on the forest and vandalize, litter, even scare the shy game animals that the forest owners prized so much for the noble pursuit of the hunt. Ludewig's underscoring of the name of the publisher Ullstein served to remind Asseburg of who it was who provided those left demagogues with a soap box to stand on: it was the Jewish press. With such understanding of the references and their purpose, the paragraph appears not disjointed but carefully aimed. What Ludewig did here was to slander the left wing nature conservancy as an anti-forest people's front of left wing agitators and Jewish wire-pullers – a prospect which he hoped would alarm forest owners to the point perhaps of opening their pocket books. The point of Ludewig's scenario, then, was to obtain money from the forest owners to spread the 'right' forest message, and to suggest his organization as the proper, because innocuous, mouthpiece.

Ludewig then apprised Asseburg of his own humble plan for thwarting this people's front from gaining ground in the nature conservancy movement of his own region. It involved expanding his lecture circuit to cover nature conservancy groups in the province of Hanover. He hoped to gain their confidence with the help of inside sympathizers, at which point he

would offer his services as editor of the provincial nature conservancy newsletter “so that we of the league assume control of the newsletter according to our wishes.”<sup>130</sup> Ludewig’s goal then was to take over their public relations and surreptitiously to ‘coordinate’ the nature conservancy movement with his league.

Finally, Ludewig tried to prove to Asseburg that forest owners’ money would be well spent if they were to step up their support for the *Bund Deutscher Wald*. The league, he argued, could stem the tide of ‘un-German’ uses of the forest analogy by left wing agitators. To prove that “the seeds of our spirit and idea bear better fruit,” Ludewig pointed to his former pupil Hans Heesch who, after learning his ‘trade’ of public speaking and organization in the league, had given lectures at the recent Hamburg academic week and the Bremen colonial week, and was about to do so again at the upcoming German student’s weeks in Munich and Weimar, “thus carrying our German spirit into great circles.”<sup>131</sup> Ludewig closed his letter by expressing his hope that his thoughts did not offend Asseburg and reassuring that all he wanted to do was to “prove that to us [*the league, M.I.*] the cause of the German forest and the German people for a German future is a serious and holy one.”<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> . . . damit wir vom Bund aus und in unserem Sinne die Leitung der Korrespondenz übernehmen. (ibid., emphasis in the original).

<sup>131</sup> Dass aber auch in unserem Geist und Sinn Saatkörner bessere Früchte tragen, möge endlich das beiliegende “Süddeutsche Monatsheft” beweisen. Die Vorträge der Hochschulwoche in Hamburg sind, wie die der Kolonial-Woche in Bremen und der noch im Mai zu haltenden Wochen in München und Weimar für die deutsche Studentenschaft, – alles das Werk des jungen Studenten Hans Heesch von hier, der einst mein Schüler und in meinen Bünden, vor allem dem Waldbund, Organisation und Vortragsarbeit gelernt hat und so unseren deutschen Geist in grossen Kreisen mit zur Auswirkung bringt. (ibid., emphasis in the original).

<sup>132</sup> Hoffentlich sind alle diese Gedanken nicht unangenehm aufgefallen. Sie sollen und wollen nur beweisen, dass uns die Sache des deutschen Waldes und deutschen Volkes für deutsche Zukunft eine heilige und ernste ist. (ibid).

## 5.7 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that Forestopia, the *völkisch* analogy of forest and people, was developed well before the National Socialists began to use it in their propaganda in 1933. The concept was made possible by the Romantic Germanization of the forest in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, its development was fuelled by the disenchantment of the *Bildungsbürgertum* in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and it became radicalized by *völkisch* foresters as Germany's situation worsened in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The formulation of the concept began in 1910 with Duesberg's *Der Wald als Erzieher*. Other authors elaborated on Duesberg's formulation and adapted Forestopia to the respective political conditions of their time of writing. Zentgraf, a forester, took the analogy outside the disciplinary audience proper and used it to show Germans what a great source of pride they still had in their forest heritage, even in the midst of the worst crisis Germany had ever experienced. The non-foresters Guenther and Francé popularized the concept outside the discipline of forestry and established it in the genre of nature writing so popular in the Weimar Republic. Finally, there was the outright ideological use of the analogy for partisan politics, as illustrated by Ludewig's writings and activities. It was only a small step from Ludewig's way of using Forestopia to its appropriation by official Nazi propaganda. In Part Two of the study, I analyze this propaganda over the twelve years that the 'Thousand Year Reich' was to last.

**PART TWO**

**FORESTOPIA: THE FOREST AS A BLUEPRINT FOR THE "NEW ORDER,"  
1933-1945**

— CHAPTER 6 —

VOLK AND FORESTOPIA:

THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST APPROPRIATION OF FORESTOPIA AS AN  
INTEGRATIVE ANALOGY OF THE *VOLKSGEMEINSCHAFT*, 1933-1936

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Ask the trees, they will teach you how to become National Socialists!

*Forstmeister* A. W. Modersohn 1939

Forest and people are much akin in the doctrines of National Socialism. The people is [*sic*] also a living community, a great, organic, eternal body whose members are the individual citizens. Only by the complete subjection of the individual to the service of the whole can the perpetuity of the community be assured. *Eternal forest and eternal nation are ideas that are indissolubly linked.*

*Reichsforstmeister* Hermann Göring 1936<sup>1</sup>

### 6.1 Introduction

On January 30, 1933, *Reich* President von Hindenburg appointed Adolf Hitler chancellor of the German *Reich*.<sup>2</sup> Within a matter of weeks, Germany was transformed into a dictatorship in which opportunities for public criticism were all but eliminated (See Appendix II for a

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<sup>1</sup> *Wald und Volk in nationalsozialistischer Auffassung haben viel Wesensverwandtes. Auch das Volk ist eine Lebensgemeinschaft, ein großes organisches ewiges Wesen, dessen letzte Glieder die einzelnen Volksgenossen sind. Nur die völlige Einstellung des Einzelnen in den Dienst des Ganzen verbürgt die ewige Dauer der Gemeinschaft. Ewiger Wald und ewiges Volk gehören zusammen.* (Göring 1935/1936 p. 653 (German), p. 656 (English), *emphasis in the original*). The quotation is part of a programmatic speech Göring made in his capacity as the country's Minister of Forestry at the annual meeting of the German Society of Foresters in 1935. Apart from this international trilingual publication, it was reprinted numerous times in the forestry journals (cf. Göring 1935) and in newspapers, for example in the *Hannoverscher Kurier* on September 9, 1935: "Göring über deutsche Forstwirtschaft." Göring also 'recycled' large parts of this speech for his opening remarks at the annual meeting 1936 in Breslau (cf. Göring 1936).

<sup>2</sup> It was the 21st cabinet of the Weimar Republic in only 14 years and the 7<sup>th</sup> chancellor in as many years. The election results for the *Reichstag* (in % of vote) were as follows:

	1928	1930	1932	1932	1933
National Socialists	2.6	18.3	37.3	33.1	43.9
Social Democrats	29.8	24.5	21.6	20.4	18.2

The Nazis thus did not attract many voters before the Great Depression. Their strongholds were middle-class ridings rather than industrial districts; small towns and the countryside rather than large cities; and Protestant regions rather than Catholic ones. (For a socio-political analysis of voting patterns, see Caplan 1992). The 1933 elections were already marked by intimidation and repression tactics by the Stormtroopers, but failed to produce an absolute majority for the National Socialists. With 88.5 % participation, the 1933 elections had the highest voter turn out ever, with more than 17 million Germans voting for Hitler. (Kirk 1995, p. 22; Frei 1993, p. 38).

chronology of the takeover and the *Gleichschaltung* or co-ordination of public life).<sup>3</sup> In the totalitarian ‘New Order,’ the public sphere was to be controlled by the state and by the state alone.<sup>4</sup> In the words of Nazi chief ideologue Robert Ley, in Germany only sleep remained a private matter.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, in the official announcement of its ‘Enabling Law,’ the new regime insisted that “theatre, film, literature, press, and radio all have to serve the preservation of the eternal values that form the essence of our Germandom.”<sup>6</sup> The emphasis on vague “eternal values” was meant to disguise Hitler’s true goals, which he revealed to the commanders-in-chief of the army and navy a mere four days after taking office:

My aim is to regain political strength as the precondition for the conquest of new *Lebensraum* in the East and its ruthless Germanization.<sup>7</sup>

To achieve this goal, Hitler intended to

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<sup>3</sup> Strictly speaking, democracy had already been dismantled on July 16, 1930, when the Brüning administration invoked Article 48 of the Weimar constitution to govern by presidential decree rather than by parliamentary majority. The Social Democrats had left the coalition government in a disagreement over unemployment benefits, leaving Brüning without a parliamentary majority. The takeover thus was not the beginning of the end of the Weimar Republic, but the final blow. I use the word ‘takeover’ in this study without wanting to suggest that the National Socialists came to power through a coup. It is important to keep in mind that the Nazis were voted into government.

<sup>4</sup> The state itself was to meld with the Nazi party: by July 1933, Germany was effectively a one-party state with all other parties suppressed or self-dissolved. On December 1, 1933, the ‘Law to Secure the Unity of Party and State’ officially made the NSDAP the “representative of the German state idea”: party and state had become one.

<sup>5</sup> (Quoted after Frei 1993, p. 92). Robert Ley (1890-1945) was the Chief of Staff of the Political Organization of the NSDAP after 1932, and, after his *Gleichschaltung* of the trade unions on May 2, 1933, ‘Leader’ of the monolithic German Labour Front.

<sup>6</sup> *Theater, Film, Literatur, Presse, Rundfunk, sie haben alle der Erhaltung der im Wesen unseres Volkstums liegenden Ewigkeitswerte zu dienen.* (quoted in Albrecht 1979, p. 10).

<sup>7</sup> *Ziel meiner Politik ist die Wiedergewinnung politischer Macht als Voraussetzung für die Eroberung neuen Lebensraums im Osten und dessen rücksichtslose Germanisierung.* (from the meeting notes of General Liebermann, quoted in Sywottek 1976, p. 22; see also Hermand 1988, p. 316). As early as 1920s, the *Reichswehr* had developed plans that called for the mental and ideological mobilization of the German people for war. When Hitler presented the generals with his plans, they simply exchanged the goal of re-establishing the monarchy for the new National Socialist framework. (cf. Sywottek 1976, p. 23).

excise the tumour of democracy, . . . to strengthen the *Wehrwillen* [mental preparedness and willingness to wage war, M.I.] with all means possible, and to attune the youth and the *Volk* as a whole to that one idea which must take precedence over everything else: the idea that only a fight can redeem us.<sup>8</sup>

In Part Two of this study, I show how the National Socialists used the forest to represent those elusive “eternal values” in their propaganda towards the conquest of “*Lebensraum* in the East.” In Part One, I disproved the view that this use of the German forest was invented by the National Socialists specifically to meet their propaganda needs. Rather, as I showed in Chapter 3, the construction of the forest as a cultural analogy of Germany and Germanness was essentially accomplished during the Romantic period. In Chapters 4 and 5, I further demonstrated that the *völkisch* radicalization of the forest into a political analogy was neither developed during the Third *Reich* proper, nor imposed centrally by ‘the Nazis’ or ‘the state.’ I showed that it was individual foresters and non-foresters writing during the *Kaiserreich* and the Weimar period who turned the descriptive cultural analogy into a prescriptive political vision: the concept of Forestopia, or the idea that the forest could – and should – serve as a model for the new Germany.

In Part Two, I turn to the years of National Socialist rule, proposing that the National Socialists used the concept of Forestopia in three distinct ways which correspond to three periods marked by different political goals and governed by different analogies: the early years of internal coordination according to the organicist analogy between *Volk* and forest (1933-1936, Chapter 6); the middle years of peripheral consolidation governed by the

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<sup>8</sup> *Beseitigung des Krebschadens der Demokratie, . . . Stärkung des Wehrwillens mit allen Mitteln, . . . Einstellung der Jugend und des ganzen Volkes auf den Gedanken, daß nur der Kampf uns retten kann und diesem Gedanken gegenüber alles zurückzutreten hat.* (from the meeting notes of General Liebermann, quoted in Sywottek 1976, p. 22).

concept of *Rasse* or race (1935-1940, Chapter 7); and the war years of external expansion under the *Lebensraum* paradigm (1939-1945, Chapter 8). (See Figure 6.1).

	1933-1936	1935-1940	1939-1945
<b>Policy Goal</b>	Internal Coordination: Consolidation of Power	Peripheral Consolidation: Creation of Greater Germany	External Expansion: Conquest of <i>Lebensraum</i>
<b>Policy Actions</b>	Creation of <i>Volksgemeinschaft</i>	Annexation of "Ethnic German Regions"	War, Occupation
<b>Role of the Forest in Propaganda</b>	Organicist Analogy of the <i>Volksgemeinschaft</i>	Indicator of the Spatial Extent of German "Race"	Means of "Germanizing" Occupied <i>Lebensraum</i>
<b>Integration of Goals, Actions, and Propaganda</b>	Recruitment of Foresters as Propagandists, Articles, Books	Films, Radio, Exhibitions, Articles, Books, School Curricula	Landscape Planning Policies, Administrative Directives

*Figure 6.1: The Forest Analogy in the Shifting Policy Frameworks of the Third Reich*

## 6.2 Nazi Propaganda as Sources? A Note on the *Gleichschaltung*

In this chapter, I examine a variety of textual sources from the early years of National Socialist rule to show how the Nazis adopted the concept of Forestopia to promote their vision of the new German state as a classless, organicist *Volksgemeinschaft* or ethnically pure national community. Early on, foresters were quite clear about the intentions of the new regime and how radically different it was from previous governments. Immediately after the takeover, Erich Koennecke, a former Social Democrat turned Nazi, explained “The New Marching Orders for the German Forest” in an article by that title:

In the long run, it will be impossible for any special interests or party-politics to exist besides Hitler’s will. . . . German foresters belong to the cadre of arm-bearing state officials, hence there can, and must, be no dualism. If a forester becomes politically active, he must do so only within the NSDAP, and he must serve only as a member of the SA or SS.<sup>9</sup>

The number two in the Nazi hierarchy, Herman Göring himself, took immediate control of the entire forestry sector and in 1934 united all forestry affairs at the national level in the *Reichsforstamt* or *Reich* Forest Office, a *de facto* ministry. Yet foresters were not just receiving orders from their new masters in Berlin, they also welcomed the changes. As the chairman of the *Reich* Forestry Association von Arnswaldt declared on April 29, 1933:

particularly higher forestry officials are doubtlessly happy about this Government of the National Uprising. . . . but we must be absolutely clear about the fact that this is an authoritarian government, equipped with almost unlimited power, that wants to bring about the renewal of the *Reich* of its own accord, without parliamentary majorities. The task is to achieve the unity of the *Reich* while safeguarding the identities of the different German tribes – the task is to build the *Volksgemeinschaft* on a corporatist foundation.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Auf die Dauer ist es ein unmöglicher Zustand, daß es neben Hitlers Willen irgend welchen Sonderwillen parteipolitischer Art gibt. . . . Die deutsche Forstbeamten-schaft gehört zum bewaffneten Beamtenkörper, deshalb kann und darf es keinen Dualismus geben. Betätigt sich ein Forstbeamter politisch, so soll er dies nur in der NSDAP tun, für ihn darf nur ein Dienst in der SA oder SS in Frage kommen.* (Koennecke, 1933, p. 52: *Die neue Marschrichtung im deutschen Walde*). On Koennecke, see Borkenhagen 1977.

<sup>10</sup> *An und für sich bestand ja gerade bei der höheren Forstbeamten-schaft kein Zweifel über ihre freudig bejahende Einstellung gegenüber der Regierung der nationalen Erhebung. . . . wir müssen uns aber ganz klar darüber sein, daß es eine autoritäre, mit fast unbeschränkten Machtmitteln ausgerüstete Regierung ist, die von sich aus, nicht gestützt durch parlamentarische Mehrheiten, das Werk der Erneuerung des Reiches zur*

Foresters thus were quite aware that they were expected to help build the vision of the *Volksgemeinschaft* – and what that involved. They became involved in promoting this vision by creating cultural works as diverse as popular books, school text books, newspaper articles, radio broadcasts, films, exhibitions, and public speeches, which celebrated that vision. Deconstructing several types of sources for their portrayal of the forest, I focus on how those authors used the forest to educate German men and women about their new role as *Volksgenossen* or national comrades in the *Volksgemeinschaft*, for example by likening individuals to the trees and the *Volk* to the meta-organism of the forest.

Yet, as in all other areas of public life, the swift *Gleichschaltung* or ‘co-ordination’ of German forestry muzzled public discourse.<sup>11</sup> As dissenting foresters were forced into internal exile, they abandoned the public fora to foresters of National Socialist, conformist, or at least acquiescent disposition – which leaves us with a greatly atrophied variety of sources. Since this study is mostly concerned with the public voice of foresters in the media, we need to understand the options and restrictions that influenced foresters’ writing and how that in turn affected the availability, reliability, representativeness, and completeness of the extant sources. In turn, this requires appreciating how swiftly and extensively the Nazis brought radio, press, and film under control.

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*Durchführung bringen will. Es handelt sich darum, die Einheit des Reiches zu schaffen bei Erhaltung der berechtigten Eigenart der deutschen Stämme und es handelt sich darum, die Volksgemeinschaft auf berufständischer Grundlage aufzubauen. . . .* (von Arnswaldt 1933, p. 213). The Reichsforstverband was an association that represented the professional interests of state forest service officials.

<sup>11</sup> On the coordination in forestry, see the contemporary accounts in *Jahresbericht des Deutschen Forstvereins* 1933 (for the ‘transition’ at the annual meeting in Breslau); Künkele 1933 and *Mitteilungen vom Verein der höheren Forstbeamten Bayerns* 1933 (for the absorption of the Association of higher Bavarian forestry officials into the coordinated German Society of Foresters); and Hilf 1933. As well, see the historical analyses in Rubner 1985, pp. 55-68 (with institutional focus); and in Borkenhagen 1977 (with eyewitness accounts).

To implement the *Gleichschaltung* in the ‘consciousness industry’ and carefully administer information and disinformation to the German people, Hitler established a *Reich* Ministry of Propaganda on March 13, 1933. The new portfolio fell to 35-year old Joseph Goebbels, who publicly declared that “the task of the ministry is to execute the mental mobilization of Germany.” To that end, Goebbels set out to bring the media under the knout of the party as quickly as possible.<sup>12</sup>

In the field of broadcasting, which the Nazis considered “the one medium of exceptional salience among the means of influencing the public,” the co-ordination was particularly swift.<sup>13</sup> In 1932, the German broadcasting reform had brought all regional radio corporations (which were already overseen by the *Reich* Postal Ministry) under direct state ownership. Ironically, this close structural alignment with the state, which served to keep Nazis off the air during the Weimar Republic, only facilitated their instantaneous takeover of this medium. Within only six hours of Hitler’s appointment, most German radio frequencies were in the hands of Nazi *Funkwarte* (‘radio wardens’) who ensured the countrywide transmission of a live report from the Stormtroopers’ midnight torchlight procession in Berlin. On March 13, 1933, the takeover of the radio was formalized when the jurisdiction over broadcasting was transferred from the *Reich* Interior Ministry to the new *Reich* Propaganda Ministry. Recognizing “the enormous political importance of this technical instrument,” the new regime set out to double the number of radio listeners as quickly as possible by producing

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<sup>12</sup> *Das Ministerium hat die Aufgabe, in Deutschland eine geistige Mobilmachung zu vollziehen.* Reich Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels on March 25, 1933 in a speech on the future of German broadcasting (*Die zukünftige Arbeit und Gestaltung des deutschen Rundfunks*, quoted in Sywotek 1976, p. 23).

<sup>13</sup> *Der Rundfunk wurde für das neugebildete Ministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda zu einem der ersten und vornehmsten Aufgabengebiete. Dies hat seine Ursache darin, daß der Rundfunk unter allen Mitteln der öffentlichen Beeinflussung eine hervorragende Ausnahmestellung einnimmt.* (Rühle 1934, p. 72).

*Volksempfänger* (popular receivers) and instituting semi-obligatory *Gemeinschaftsempfang* (communal reception) via loudspeakers on public squares and in village inns.<sup>14</sup> The technical specifications of the *Volksempfänger* already betrayed the long-term strategy of the new regime, as their limited reception precluded listening to foreign stations.

In the print media, the *Schriftleitergesetz* (Editors Law) made editors personally accountable for the content of articles appearing in their publications and bound them in duty to the state.<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, Nazi cover firms were clandestinely buying up many of the newspapers and publishing houses.<sup>16</sup> Finally, the new regime simply shut down or expropriated Jewish publishers, merged periodicals, or outright banned publications unfavourable to its position, reducing the number of newspapers and their circulation by as much as 40 %.<sup>17</sup>

The third medium of mass communication, film, was simply nationalized. Ten days after the takeover, Goebbels proclaimed that:

We are of the conviction that film is one of the most modern and far-reaching means to influence the masses. A government thus must not leave the film industry to its own devices.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Goebbels in his opening speech at the Tenth German Radio Exhibition (*Deutsche Funkausstellung*) in Berlin on August 18, 1933. (quoted in Rühle 1934, pp. 71 and 327). For an account of the coordination of broadcasting, see Frei 1993, pp. 57-69. By 1941, two thirds of all Germans listened to the radio at home, while in some cities that share went as high as four fifths (Kirk 1995, pp. 89-90).

<sup>15</sup> The 'Editors Law' was announced on April 6, 1933, but not formally promulgated until October 4, 1933.

<sup>16</sup> For an account of the alignment of the media in the Third Reich, see Sywottek 1976.

<sup>17</sup> The total number of German newspaper titles dropped from 3426 in 1930 to 2488 in 1935, while the circulation of the non-Nazi press dropped by as much as 40 % in some regions. (Kirk 1995, pp. 111-112). An example for the merging of journals in the forestry sector is the absorption of the *Deutsche Forst-Zeitung* into the *Der Deutsche Forstwirt* in November 1933.

<sup>18</sup> *Wir sind der Überzeugung, daß der Film eines der modernsten und weitreichendsten Mittel zur Beeinflussung der Massen ist, die es überhaupt gibt.* (Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels in a speech on February 9, 1934, quoted in Albrecht 1979, p. 267). How far-reaching the influence of films was can be gleaned from attendance figures. For commercially successful entertainment movies (which included such rabidly anti-Semitic films as *Jud Süß* (The Jew Süß, 1940)) Albrecht puts the total audience at commercial

Censorship boards (*Filmprüfstellen*) had already existed during the Weimar Republic, but the Nazis were not content with prohibiting films after their production: as of February 1, 1934, all film scripts had to be submitted to the new central censorship office (*Reichsfilmdramaturg*) beforehand. Also in 1934, the newly-founded Nazi-controlled *Filmkreditbank* already bankrolled half of all films made in Germany, usually covering more than half the production costs. In 1936, any inopportune interpretations of the state-produced films were preempted by the “abolition” of film criticism as a field of journalism. By 1937, Goebbels had completed the outright nationalization of the film industry, ensuring total control over all aspects of film production in Germany, which by 1943 had become the fourth largest industry in Germany.<sup>19</sup>

All media in the National Socialist state were controlled by the *Reichskulturkammer* (*Reich Culture Chamber*), a corporation under public law with Goebbels at the head that was designed to shackle cultural production in all its facets. It comprised seven individual *Kulturkammern* for the various cultural professions and only members of the chambers were permitted to work in their respective professions. Moreover, individuals who were denied membership or were expelled because of their Jewish faith or oppositional views were criminalized as that fact was entered into their police record.<sup>20</sup>

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theatres between 20 and 30 million. Films produced and screened purely for propaganda purposes do not lag far behind, however. For the years after 1935, Albrecht estimates the annual attendance at school screenings, adult education shows, and political events to have been upwards of 10 million per film. With the onset of troop entertainment after the start of the war, those numbers jumped to over 25 million per year. (Albrecht 1979, p. 25) In 1942, one billion cinema tickets were sold in Germany (four times as many as in 1933), averaging to one cinema visit per person per month. (Frei 1993, p. 92).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Albrecht 1969, pp. 12-33; and Petley 1979, p. 86.

<sup>20</sup> Frei 1993, pp. 64-65.

What implications does the *Gleichschaltung* of mass communications hold for the sources available to us? Obviously, the National Socialist state controlled broadcasting, film production, and the publishing industry. Moreover, because all cultural works had to pass censorship, their contents must be regarded as at least sanctioned by the state, even if they were not propaganda pieces in the sense that they were commissioned by the authorities. In fact, so many authors proffered their personal interpretations of National Socialism that the regime feared that such publications “are liable to present to the people an entirely wrong picture of the development and aims of the movement.”<sup>21</sup> Thus, on April 16, 1934, the Deputy of the *Führer*, Rudolf Heß, installed a Censorship Commission for the Protection of National Socialist Publications (*Prüfungskommission zum Schutze des nationalsozialistischen Schrifttums*). Henceforth, even publications patently sympathetic to National Socialism had to bear the censorship commission’s stamp of approval on their frontispiece.

This means that the public sources which we may use to examine the Third *Reich* can be regarded as conforming to, or at least not in conflict with, the official party line. What was published, screened, or aired invariably had passed the censorship of the new masters. That said, we can nonetheless infer from these semi-official writings something about possible civil disobedience or dissent within Germany. For example, if the forestry journals repeatedly chided a certain practice among foresters, we can assume that this behaviour occurred frequently enough to raise the ire of the authorities. Conversely, a repeated praise of National Socialist forestry dogma in the disciplinary journals could have been underlain

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<sup>21</sup> *Sie sind damit geeignet, ein gänzlich falsches Bild von der Entwicklung und Zielsetzung der Bewegung dem Volke zu vermitteln.* (from the decree, reprinted in Rühle 1935, p. 181).

by one of several motivations: the genuine effort of National Socialist foresters to convert their colleagues; the attempt of otherwise disinclined foresters to ingratiate themselves with the new regime; mere lip service; or it could have been orchestrated propaganda. Clearly, problems arise when we try to ascertain which of those possible intentions prevailed. Realistically, only intensive biographical studies can hope to reconstruct the intentions of the individual author of an article, book, or film.

In this study, however, I am less concerned with the intentions of the individual author than with the public effect the cultural works achieved collectively. No matter what the intention of the individual author might have been at the time of writing, the simple fact that the new credo appeared, and appeared over and over again, in the press or on the screen, by itself had an effect on the audience. In that sense, an article or film that paid lip service or was penned to pay the bills was just as effective as one that expressed the convictions of an author who was a dyed-in-the-wool Nazi.

For an example of such potentially inadvertent propaganda, we may look to some of the writings of Viktor Dieterich, professor of forestry at Munich. According to a forthcoming dissertation by Gundolf Vogel, Dieterich himself suffered from persecution during the Third *Reich* and only reluctantly published works which could be seen as supportive of the regime. In 1936, Dieterich published an article on “Forest – Forestry – Regional Planning.” In this article, Dieterich wrote the following sentence:

If it is the goal of regional planning to connect the German national comrades with their soil once again, to re-root them once again where they are in danger of being uprooted, then the forest has an important role to play in regional planning.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *Wenn es Ziel der Landesplanung ist, die deutschen Volksgenossen wieder mehr mit dem heimischen Boden zu verbinden; wo sie zu entwurzeln drohen, wieder anzuwurzeln, dann erfüllt der heimische Wald noch eine besondere Landesplanungsaufgabe.* (Dieterich 1936, p. 297).

When fellow-professor Josef Nikolaus Köstler used this statement later that year in a speech and an article, he quoted Dieterich verbatim.<sup>23</sup> But when another forester reviewed the article for the journal *Forstarchiv*, he omitted the introductory “if” which had designated Dieterich’s statement as conditional. Instead, he reframed the quotation as the essence of the article:

At the end of his piece, [ . . . ] Dieterich emphasizes as a particular task of the domestic forest in regional planning “to connect the German national comrades with their soil once again.”<sup>24</sup>

This example suggests that the public, whether they were movie goers or foresters reading their colleague’s articles in disciplinary journals, more often than not received the message intended by the authorities – but not necessarily that intended by the author. The key to this dominance of ‘public’ over ‘private’ intention lay in propagandistic repetition.

As Germans listened to the voice of the ‘New Order,’ they were exposed to endlessly repeated exaltations of ‘German this’ and ‘German that.’ For some, the effect was intimidating, causing them to conform or fall quiet.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, those who for years had been opposed to the Republic now found more opportunities than ever to publish their *völkisch* viewpoints. With the placet of the new regime, more books were published, more exhibitions were organized, and more films were made which stressed the importance of the forest to the *völkisch* rebirth of Germany.

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<sup>23</sup> Köstler 1936, p. 1306.

<sup>24</sup> *Besonders unterstreicht Dieterich am Ende seiner Arbeit [ . . . ] als besondere Landesplanungsaufgabe des heimischen Waldes jene: “Die deutschen Volksgenossen wieder mehr mit dem heimischen Boden zu verbinden.”* (Gusovius 1936, p. 367).

<sup>25</sup> Sometimes the hint was subtle, at other times less so. In the case of the already mentioned merger between the *Deutsche Forst-Zeitung* and the *Der Deutsche Forstwirt*, for example, the outgoing editors ended their farewell to the readers with the forestry-specific *Weidmannsheil* (loosely translatable as: ‘Good Hunting’), while the incoming editors saluted their readers with *Heil Hitler!* (*DFZ-Verlag und Schriftleitung der “Deutschen Forst-Zeitung”* 1933; and *DFZ-Verlag und Schriftleitung des “Deutschen Forstwirt”* 1933).

In this study, then, I am not trying to tease out the degree to which individual authors were committed to the cause, which would require an entirely different approach and would serve a very different goal of understanding National Socialism.<sup>26</sup> Rather, I am interested in the ideas expressed in the sources and what they say about the declared intentions of Nazi ideology, however far-fetched and over-the-top they might have seemed even to the contemporaries. This means that I take the sources at face value with respect to what they were trying to convey to a 1930s reader, rather than examining them for the degree to which they reflect their author's views.

Still, I am aware of the multitude of potential meanings shrouded in the endless incantations of the ostensible. The gradations of critique and resistance in public writing during the Third *Reich* were much finer than we generally can appreciate from half a century's distance and without the benefit of the contemporary's perspective. For example, if an article reporting on an official function billed the event as a 'manifestation' rather than a 'meeting,' this implied to the careful reader that discussion had not been welcomed; if it spoke of 'those who turned out,' it also implied that there were absentees; if it mentioned that 'the party comrades' began to sing the party hymn while the assembly rose to their feet, a fine distinction was made between those who led and those who followed.

What, then, is the benefit of ignoring such fine shades of implied meaning and concentrating solely on the professed message? The point is that the professed message is what the regime wanted the public to see because it represented the Nazis' goals. Whether those goals were frequently at cross purposes with one another, whether they were the

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<sup>26</sup> For one such biographically oriented study, see the already mentioned forthcoming dissertation by Gundolf Vogel, Department of Forestry, Freiburg University.

subject of quarrels between different branches of party or state, or whether they were ever realized, is another question altogether and must await another study. The important question in this context is how the declared goals of the regime changed over the twelve years of the Third *Reich* and how this change is reflected in the use of the concept of Forestopia by German foresters. In other words, what can such diverse sources as films, books, and exhibitions tell us, through the changing use of forest imagery, about the ideology and practical politics of landscape in the Third *Reich*? To what purposes was the concept of Forestopia put over the duration of the regime and how are those purposes connected with the larger political agenda of the Nazis? In the first instance, the forest and Forestopia served to turn individuals into mere members of the *Volk* – a precondition for all other goals on the Nazi agenda.

### 6.3 Turning Citizens into *Volksgenossen*

With the rise of National Socialism to the official *Staatsidee* (state idea) of Germany, the *Volk* became the highest standard against which everything else was measured. In the National Socialist diction, *Volk* took on a meaning that was different from that of earlier times:

*Volk*: The entirety of the German nation as a political, racial, cultural and fateful community of blood that is separate from neighbouring peoples. Membership in the *Volk* is permanently acquired through parentage and cannot be chosen.<sup>27</sup>

This contemporary dictionary definition attempts the impossible task of solidifying an emotive concept into rational categories. The task is impossible because the notion of the *Volk* as presented by the Nazis was precisely not a definable and delineable entity, but a

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<sup>27</sup> Brockhaus 1936-42.

primal, natural, and transcendent category that neither required justification nor tolerated relativization. The aggregation of individuals into the *Volk* was seen as prior and superior to the artificial system of society with its class, religious, and political divisions. In fact, it was the permanent *Volk* that created the conditions for the existence of the ephemeral individual, who conversely was nothing without his or her *Volk*.<sup>28</sup> To the National Socialists, the attraction of this *Volk* concept was that it inscribed the absolute dominance of the collective over the individual into all social exchanges: “You are nothing, your *Volk* is everything!”<sup>29</sup>

This denial of the individual already points to the political manifestation of the *Volk* sought by the Nazis: the *Volksgemeinschaft* or racially pure, ethnic national community. The *Volksgemeinschaft* was described as the “community of fate” of all Germans, arising from a “community of defence” and an underlying “community of blood.” The very character of this ‘community’ meant that “differences of class and estate” were “alien to its nature” (*wesensfremd*).<sup>30</sup> Every German, regardless of sex, occupation, education, or wealth was an equal member of the *Volksgemeinschaft* as a *Volksgenosse* or national comrade. To qualify for membership, however, the 1935 Citizenship Laws (known as the ‘Nuremberg Laws’) stipulated that one had to be recognized as German in the first place, which meant being of “German or related blood” and being “willing and able to loyally serve the German *Volk* and

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<sup>28</sup> *Die Volksgemeinschaft steht an erster Stelle und ist die Voraussetzung für den Bestand des Einzelnen.* (Stuckart, von Rosen-von Hoewel, and Schiedermaier, 1943, p. 32).

<sup>29</sup> *Du bist nichts, Dein Volk ist alles!* was a oft-repeated mantra of National Socialist propaganda. For example, an editorial in the newspaper *Bremer Zeitung* on 12 September 1935 warned that “in the New Order, the German Forest is a national treasure which must serve exclusively the interests of the whole. In the future, any exploitation of the forest for private profit will thus be inconceivable. *Im neuen Staat ist der deutsche Wald Volksgut und hat nur dem Interesse des Ganzen zu dienen. Es wird daher in Zukunft auch ausgeschlossen sein, daß der Wald durch eigennützige Ausbeutung geschädigt wird.* (emphasis in the original).

<sup>30</sup> Brockhaus 1936-42.

*Reich*.”<sup>31</sup> Besides excluding Jews from citizenship, this regulation also meant that “the traitor to the fatherland can at any time be divested of this honour,”<sup>32</sup> a convenient way of ridding the *Reich* of critical authors or emigrés.

Two other manifestations of the *Volk* were *Volkstum* and *Volkskörper*. *Volkstum* was the unique cultural character of the German *Volk* or “the entirety of all the characteristic forms in which a *Volk* expresses its being alive (*Lebensäußerungen*) and its being distinct.”<sup>33</sup> The *Volkskörper* or ‘collective body of the people,’ by contrast, was an organicist racial concept that served to allow the Nazis to employ terms such as health, vigour, and resilience when referring to their goal of a racially pure *Volk*; and varmits, parasites, and excision when attacking the Jews.

The basis in space and time for the health, purity, continuity, and strength of the *Volk* was the *Blut* (blood) that its members shared and the *Boden* (soil) in which they were rooted. Only together as one could *Volk*, *Blut*, and *Boden* guarantee the continued existence and purity of Germandom.<sup>34</sup> Finally, all the variations of the *Volk* concept converged in the claim of the permanence and superiority of Germandom:

A German *Volk* that is hardened in its *Volkstum* and united in a mighty *Volksgemeinschaft* must by definition be unconquerable and eternal.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Rühle 1936, p. 279.

<sup>32</sup> Hitler 1943 (1925), p. 440.

<sup>33</sup> *die Gesamtheit aller Lebensäußerungen eines Volkes, die seine volkliche Eigenart, seinen Volkscharakter kennzeichnen.* (Brockhaus 1936-42).

<sup>34</sup> On the ideology of *Blut und Boden*, see Bramwell 1985 and Eidenbenz 1993. Bramwell (1985, p. 55) gives a most poignant translation of the connotations of *Blut und Boden*: “the unity of race and land.”

<sup>35</sup> *Ein im deutschen Volkstum gefestigtes und in der Volksgemeinschaft zu einer mächtigen Einheit zusammengeschlossenes deutsches Volk muß unüberwindlich und ewig sein.* (Stuckart, von Rosen-von Hoewel, and Schiedermaier, 1943, p. 24).

The purpose of such a cult of the *Volk* was the legitimization of National Socialist regime. With their emphasis on the *Volk* as the basis for their rule, the National Socialists placed a thin veneer over their constant violations of the law: if a measure furthered the cause of the *Volk*, it was legitimate – who was to insist upon the letter of the law when the survival of the *Volk* was at stake?

How did the *Volk* become such an important concept to the National Socialists? The answer is that, since they rejected much of the political tradition of Germany as ill-conceived or foreign-dominated, the National Socialists had to find other traditions to construct continuity and legitimacy. Hitler decided to tie the National Socialist ideology to the *völkisch* movement. In his *Mein Kampf* of 1925, he verbosely claimed the *völkisch* movement for National Socialism:

From the basic ideas of a general *völkisch* world conception the NSDAP takes over the essential fundamental traits, and from them, with due consideration of practical reality, the times, and the available human material as well as its weaknesses, forms a political creed which, in turn, by the strict organizational integration of large human masses thus made possible, creates the precondition for the victorious struggle of this world view.<sup>36</sup>

In a later section, he swept away the obfuscation and simply declared:

To the same degree as the basic ideas of the National Socialist movement are *völkisch*, the *völkisch* ideas are National Socialist.<sup>37</sup>

National Socialism, then, mounted itself on the *völkisch* movement. And the new regime was ready to use the *völkisch*-inflected concept of Forestopia in its propaganda to educate Germans about their role in the new state.

The forest was particularly useful in this because of its established patriotic connotation, its common-sense appeal as an everyday experience, and its ready symbolization of the

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<sup>36</sup> Hitler 1943 (1925), p. 385 (p. 424 in the first German edition).

<sup>37</sup> Hitler 1943 (1925), p. 461 (p. 514 in the first German edition).

mutual dependency of the individual and the collective. The Nazis thus strapped the symbolic cultural content of the forest and its expression of social organization contained in the concept of Forestopia onto the vehicle of propaganda. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler had clarified the means and the objective of propaganda:

Propaganda must be adjusted to the broad masses in content and in form, and its soundness is to be measure exclusively by its effective result. . . . For propaganda is not intended to provide entertainment for people who are national-minded to begin with, but to win the enemies of our nationality, in so far as they are of our blood.<sup>38</sup>

In the remainder of this chapter, I show how the National Socialists put this theory into practice by producing a veritable deluge of film, press, and radio propaganda in which they pitched their message to the German public by piggy-backing it on the concept of Forestopia. Across all media and all areas of public life, the message was the same: whether in films, radio broadcasts, speeches, art exhibitions, trade shows, school text books or coffee table books, individual Germans of all ages and stations were shown their new place as equal – and equally small – *Volksgenossen* in a *Volksgemeinschaft* that was built in the image of the forest.

#### 6.4 Eternal Forest – Eternal People: The Film *Ewiger Wald*

Two weeks after taking office, the new *Reich* Propaganda Minister, Dr. Joseph Goebbels, demanded of representatives of the film industry that German films assume “*völkisch* contours.”<sup>39</sup> The Nazis immediately used their new sway over the industry to produce such propaganda films as *Hitlerjunge Quex* (Quex, Member of the Hitler Youth, 1933) and *SA-Mann Brand* (Stormtrooper Brand, 1933). Soon, however, Hitler and Goebbels realized that

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<sup>38</sup> Hitler 1943 (1925), pp. 342 and 343.

<sup>39</sup> Quoted in Albrecht 1979, p. 256.

most Germans in the Third *Reich* went to a movie theatre to unwind and flee the day's problems – and that they would stay away from the theatres if they could not find that escape in the movies. Consequently, the Nazis eased their direct involvement in film-making.<sup>40</sup> Seen over the duration of their rule, the Nazis thus nationalized film production not so much to produce straight propaganda films as to control this important “intellectual safety valve or buffer zone.”<sup>41</sup> The goal was to provide light, escapist entertainment fare that did not threaten National Socialist aims while still being “a vehicle for ideas,” that is, carrying some mild, almost subliminal propaganda message.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Frei maintains that the number of “blatant propaganda films always represented only a fraction of the annual production of approximately 100 films.” (Frei 1993, p. 93), while Leiser puts the share at about one sixth of the 1150 total films shot during the Third *Reich* (Leiser 1976, p. 12). In Albrecht's foundational work on Nazi film politics, however, 153 (14%) of all films are classified as ‘political.’ Albrecht's attempt to define ‘political’ films takes up several pages and represents a working compromise: films were political if the public understood them as expressly sanctioned by National Socialism. (Albrecht 1969, pp. 107-108).

<sup>41</sup> Frei 1993, p. 91

<sup>42</sup> This also explains why many films of this period still enjoy great popularity on German television. Veit Harlan, with 18 films one of the most prolific directors between 1933 and 1945, explained in 1942 that “classic works” are those “which constitute a vehicle for ideas and at the same time for the healthiest kind of relaxation.” (from the publicity material for the film *Die Goldene Stadt* (The Golden City) cited after Petley 1979, p. 133). An example of this integration can be found in the still popular *Die Feuerzangenbowle* (The Rum Punch, 1944), in which an established writer decides to relive a year of student life at the *Gymnasium* (humanistic high school) of a late-19<sup>th</sup>-century small town. At a staff meeting at this school, a young, dynamic, wholesomely dressed teacher, symbolizing the new National Socialist movement, reminds his affable but ossified colleagues that young boys are like young trees: they are eager to grow and when they do, they sometimes sprout in the wrong direction. All that is needed to set them straight is some firm guidance and the occasional pruning.

By contrast, the film I present here was one of the explicit propaganda films.<sup>43</sup> In this film, the *völkisch* importance of the forest has been reduced to its most elemental and thus most instructive components, allowing us to see the concepts of Forestopia and *Volksgemeinschaft* in their most elementary form. At the same time, we can use this film to catch a glimpse not only of the new state-sanctioned version of German history but also of how the forest formed an important underpinning of that history. The film is thus a primer on the self-image of National Socialism as heir to the Germanic cause. To allow the reader to appreciate that sense of continuity and the methods by which it was fostered, I follow the chronological order of the film sequences in my analysis while connecting individual segments to the larger contexts of National Socialist propaganda where appropriate.

On August 28, 1936, *Ewiger Wald* (Eternal Forest) made its debut in German movie theatres as one of 109 films premiered in 1936, of which 9 others are classified as manifestly

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<sup>43</sup> It was not the first time that the forest played the lead in a feature film. In 1923 already, the Brandenburg Association of Forest Owners had produced a *Kulturfilm* or documentary on the German forest. In two parts of 90 minutes and 150 minutes, respectively, the film addressed questions the German public and German foresters might have had about the reasons for the poor state of the forest in the German Northeast. The film was produced during the nadir of Germany's economic slide and it was not shy about laying the blame for both the economic decline and the decline of the forest at the same doorstep: "Then [1807, after Napoleon's victory over Prussia, M.I.] as now, the *Volk* grew poor under the French yoke." *Auch damals, wie heute, war das Volk durch französische Knechtschaft arm geworden.* (From the accompanying text booklet: Brandenburgischer Waldbesitzerverband e. V. 1924. *Der Deutsche Wald - Ein Kulturfilm (Erläuternder Text zum 1. Teil: "Der deutsche Wald, von seiner Schönheit und Bedeutung für die Volkswirtschaft")*). (The German Forest - A Culture Film (Explanatory Notes to Part I: The German Forest, of its Beauty and its Importance to the National Economy)). Berlin: Brandenburgischer Waldbesitzerverband e. V. A copy of this booklet can be found in the Bundesarchiv in Berlin, file signatory BA R 8089.

Another forest propaganda film was also produced in 1936, this time depicting the work of the *Volksgenossen* in the forest. *Arbeit am Walde* (Working on the Forest, 1936) was a short documentary screened in tandem with the feature film *Herbstmanöver* (Fall Manoeuvres). The forestry journals rejoiced that "the attention paid by the newspapers proves that path of forest propaganda entered with this film is not only correct but effective." *Von den Tageszeitungen wird der Film freudig begrüßt. Diese Anteilnahme beweist, daß der mit dem Bildstreifen eingeschlagene Wege der Wald-Propaganda richtig und zugkräftig ist.* (*Deutsche Forstbeamtenzeitung* 1936a, p. 90).

political by Albrecht.<sup>44</sup> It was what contemporaries jestingly called a “*Blubo-Film*,” a pun on the phrase *Blut und Boden*. *Blubo-Films* served as vehicles for the representation of the *Volk* as tied to the soil and had titles such as *Blut und Boden* (Blood and Soil, 1933), *Das Alte Recht* (The Old Law, 1934), and *Walddrausch* (Forest Rapture, 1940).<sup>45</sup>

*Ewiger Wald* conjoined the *Volk* with the German forest in a history of co-evolution. As indicated by its subtitle, *Allegorie über die Geschichte und das Leben* (An Allegory of History and Life), the film used the changing fate of the German forest as an allegory of the German *Volk* and its struggle for nationhood. A compilation film, *Ewiger Wald* presented a sequence of vignettes on the 2000-year history of the *Volk* with images of historical figures and events fading in and before the backdrop of the ‘eternal’ forest.

Film historians Courtade and Cadars call *Ewiger Wald*

at once a monument of nationalism and a delirious hymn to nature symbolised by the forest, that is, the German forest. . . . The reconstruction of the German past alternates with images of the forest, while the lyrical commentary underlines at every moment the ingredients of this comparison.<sup>46</sup>

Similarly, Petley sees the film as presenting

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<sup>44</sup> (Albrecht 1969, pp. 101 and 107). The film passed censorship on August 20, 1936. It was written and produced by Albert Graf von Pestalozza and financed by the *Nationalsozialistische Kulturgemeinde* (National Socialist Cultural Community), one of the many semi-official cultural institutions of the Nazis. The directors were Hans Springer and Rolf von Sonjevski-Jamrowski, neither of whom was a prominent director (it was Springer’s only film, while von Sonjevski-Jamrowski had directed the 1933 propaganda film *Unter der schwarzen Sturmflagge* (Under the Black Storm [SS] Banner) (Albrecht 1969, Anlage 4b, pp. 371-395)). The film was awarded the second-highest predicate of *volksbildend* (‘popularly improving’ or ‘educating the people’), which, besides official praise, also meant a substantial reduction in entertainment tax payable (4 % instead of 12 % of all receipts). According to Albrecht (1969, p. 115), political films were twice as likely to receive predicates as were non-political films. Out of the 8 political films rated in 1936, only 4 received the *volksbildend* predicate (Albrecht 1969, p. 111).

<sup>45</sup> The “Old Law” referred to the Germanic heredity laws which prohibited the splitting of family farms and kept the land in the family indefinitely. On September 29, 1933, the National Socialists reinstated such rules in their Heredity Farm Law (*Erbhofgesetz*) which stipulated that farm estates had to be passed on to the son and could not be sold. For a discussion of *Blubo-Films*, see Petley 1979, pp. 130-138.

<sup>46</sup> Courtade and Cadars 1972, pp. 56-58, cited after Petley 1979, p. 132.

the nationalist struggle in essentially mythological images, a mythology which has its cultural and social roots deep in German Romanticism.<sup>47</sup>

Yet, as I have shown in Part One of this study, besides the “cultural and social roots” of the nationalist forest mythology there also is an extensive system of political roots that reaches as far back as the Renaissance period. *Ewiger Wald* is nourished by those political roots more than by the cultural or social ones – that is what makes it manifestly a propaganda film rather than merely “a vehicle for ideas.” Hence, more than just being an example of the naturalization of history and politics through art, *Ewiger Wald* illustrates the deliberate and overt politicization of nature that builds on already established cultural notions of the forest as ‘German.’ *Ewiger Wald* did not try to establish the forest as German – in any case, that had been achieved in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Rather, it reversed the thrust and tried to ground future Germandom in the forest past.

By taking contemporary Germans back into their forest past, the film suggested to them how rooted they were in the soil, much like the forest. It admonished them that only together, and together with the soil in which they were rooted, could Germans be and remain a true *Volk*, much like the trees could not survive without soil, nor as individuals without the fellow-trees of the forest. It showed Germans how they themselves were but a transient tree in that eternal forest of Germandom: ‘the tree is nothing, the forest is everything.’ Finally, by linking the Germanic forest past with the Germanic revival of the contemporary New Germany, it reminded viewers that National Socialists, as the sole protectors of that uniquely German rootedness, were the logical and legitimate rulers of a future Germany that would

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<sup>47</sup> Petley 1979, p. 132.

once again draw its strength from those soil bound roots. How did *Ewiger Wald* convey all those political messages with forest imagery?

The film begins by addressing its audience in the informal ‘*du*,’ taking “you, *Volk*” to the depths of the “Eternal Forest” to “see a parable.”<sup>48</sup> Lest the *Volk* misunderstand what they are to take home from their visit to the forest past, a text panel explains:

*Euch die ihr kamt,  
im Bilde das Gleichnis zu schauen,  
das die Natur euch lehrt  
im “Stirb” und im “Werde,”  
Volk, dir,  
das sucht, kämpft und ringt,  
das unvergängliche Reich zu bauen,  
ist gewidmet dieses Lied.*

To you, who came  
to see the parable  
that nature teaches you  
through death and becoming,  
To you, *Volk*,  
searching, fighting and struggling  
to erect the everlasting *Reich*,  
to you is dedicated this song.

Within minutes of the film’s beginning, the ‘parable’ takes on clear outlines, ‘teaching’ the *Volk* that the ‘everlasting’ *Reich* has always been in the ‘eternal’ forest. As forest scenes depicting the four seasons traverse the screen, the voice of a chorus rises to accompany the audience on its journey through German history and to interpret the images of the ‘parable’ for them:

*Ewiger Wald – Ewiges Volk  
Es lebt der Baum wie du und ich  
Er strebt zum Raum wie du und ich  
Sein Stirb und Werde webt die Zeit  
Volk steht wie Wald in Ewigkeit!*

Eternal forest – eternal *Volk*  
The tree lives like you and me  
It aspires to space like you and me  
Its dying and becoming is woven by time  
*Volk*, like the forest, stands for all eternity!

The role of the forest throughout the film is to represent the continuation and importance of the community beyond the life of the individual. The individual Germans, their costumes and concerns are different from one vignette to the other and so are the individual trees we see being planted, tended, cut, sawn, carved and burnt in every scene. Yet the meta-

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<sup>48</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the German quotations are from a film transcription in manuscript form, complemented by my own notes from a viewing of a video version of the film. The manuscript was made available to me by Gundolf Vogel. I gratefully acknowledge his generosity in sharing this and other rare sources in his collection. Quotes from the film are also discussed in Courtade and Cadars 1972, esp. pp. 56-58.

organism of the forest remains intact, even if its constituting elements have changed: it is “eternal.” Likewise, the higher entity of the *Volk* is eternal because it lives on beyond the lives of the individuals who lived and died for it: the forest manifests the doctrine ‘You are nothing, your *Volk* is everything.’

Most vignettes are between one and two minutes but those depicting the defining eras according to the new National Socialist version of history are substantially longer.<sup>49</sup> Consequently, the plot opens with 11 minutes devoted to Germanic antiquity, ostensibly the cradle of German *Welt-* and *Waldanschauung*. Strapping men in Germanic dress are shown building their wooden cabins from logs - but the dimension of the structure and the dynamic upward angle of the camera perspective suggests that these Germans are building more than a house, they are erecting a home for their people in their *Waldreich* (forest empire).<sup>50</sup> Here the notions of *Volk*, *Blut*, *Boden*, and *Heimat* all come together in a conjuration of the ideal *Volksgemeinschaft*: the ancient Germans are still united in their shared and pure blood, they are nourished by their communal soil and protected by their dense forest. Together, as a *Volksgemeinschaft*, they fashion space into place. The chorus explains:

*Aus dem Walde kommen wir  
Wie der Wald leben wir  
aus dem Wald formen wir  
Heimat und Raum.*

From the forest we hail  
Like the forest we live  
Out of the forest we carve  
Homeland and space.

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<sup>49</sup> It may appear odd at first that the Prussian and Napoleonic eras as the epitomes of German glory and defeat, respectively, are not treated in more detail. The reason is that these eras were the subject of numerous films made during the Third *Reich* and thus were considered sufficiently covered. For a discussion of those films see Petley (1979), who lists and discusses them under the categories of “Great Prussian Models” and “Rebels,” respectively. (Petley 1979, pp. 106-123).

<sup>50</sup> *Waldreich* is a tellingly ambiguous term. In forestry terminology, *Waldreich* is used in the sense of ‘forest realm’ synonymous with the modern ‘ecosystem.’ In the language of *völkisch* propaganda, however, *Waldreich* stood for the – naturally German – ‘empire of or in the forest,’ i.e., it served to define the German political entity through its typical forest landscape.

The forest as *Heimat* and *Raum*, as home and realm of these early Germans is the place where they live peacefully and self-sufficiently, suggested by the film's idyllic depiction of village life complete with communal roof raising, and with women weaving and drawing water.<sup>51</sup> Generation after generation rolls past, symbolized by the alteration of scenes depicting an old man's burial in a hollowed-out tree with those showing cheerful maids dancing around a maypole, the symbol of fertility. Everything suggests that this is a complete and whole life without need for outside inputs or inspirations. In fact, it is only trouble that comes from outside the bounds of the forest: we see men inspecting their new spears at the village forge, a scene that indicates their awareness of the Roman threat beyond their *Waldreich*. Soon, forest and men suffer the invasion:

*Ihr Zeichen der Fremde  
Standarten der Römer  
Was sucht ihr im Lande  
Was sucht ihr im Wald  
Wer fremd deinem Boden, Wald, Art  
Dem bleibt nicht erspart unsagbares Leid  
Volk in Gefahr!*

*Waldvolk  
kämpfe mit dem Boden um dein Sein  
scheu keinen Krieg  
tief im Walde wird geboren  
Volk, dein Wissen, Volk, dein Sieg.*

(underlain by threatening music:)

You foreign icons  
Roman standards  
What business do you have in this land  
What business do you have in this forest  
He who is foreign to your soil, forest, being  
must suffer unspeakable woes

(call:) Volk in danger!

(speech-song at melodramatic pitch:)

Forest-Volk  
fight on your soil for your existence  
shun no war  
deep in the forest is born  
Volk, your wisdom, Volk, your victory.

In this, the second-longest scene of the film (only the Peasants' War segment is longer), the struggle between Roman hubris and Germanic fury is fought in a darkening forest whipped by storms and slashed by bolts of lightning. Side by side, dark forest and blond Germans fight to expel those "foreign" to "soil, forest, being." Trees sacrifice themselves to crush the

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<sup>51</sup> No mention is made of the intense infighting among the numerous Germanic tribes, on which Tacitus had reported in detail.

trespassing legionaries under their falling weight, the swamps swallow the standards of the invaders, and peace in the German forest is restored.

With such reductionist imagery taken straight from Tacitus and his reinterpretations by generations of German patriots, this segment of *Ewiger Wald* sets up a contrast between Germanic virtue and Roman malice. This dichotomy is then extended all through the film as the endless conflict between the eternal, unchanging ‘German’ on the one hand and the ‘Other’ appearing in ever-changing disguises: Roman Catholic, French, *welsch*, foreign, Western, Black, or capitalist otherness are all depicted as attempting to uproot the tree of Germandom from its life-granting soil and take over the land. In this dichotomy, the forest is the ally of the German against the forces of otherness as individual trees and warriors sacrifice their individual lives for the survival of the transcendent communities of forest and *Volk*. In its rootedness and in its enmeshedness, the forest symbolizes both the bond between Germans and their soil and their strength as a community, a theme that continues through the film as we leave the Germanic era.

After a few brief vignettes depicting the role of the forest in Viking shipbuilding, in the Christianization of Europe, and in the minnesong of the early Middle Ages, the *Lebensraum* concept makes a brief appearance when we – the *Volk* – are invited to follow the Teutonic Knights in their drive to colonize Eastern Europe:

*“Nach Osten” schallt der Ruf durchs Land  
Deutschritter nehmt das Schwert zur Hand  
Vermehrt das Land, vermehrt den Wald  
Schafft Raum der Heimat  
Raum den Erben.*

“Eastward” it echoes across the land  
Teutonic Knights seize your swords  
Augment the land, augment the forest  
Provide space for the homeland  
Space for the heirs.

Here the Nazis turn to the Teutonic Knights as the great trail blazers of eastward expansion. The portrayal of the ‘Other’ in this segment presents a stark contrast to that of all other

sequences. While the Roman or Western Other is painted as a powerful threat to German being, the Slavic or Eastern Other is denigrated as vastly inferior. There is no culture to be reckoned with, as the chorus insinuates that the land is vacant and unimproved, wasting away under the indolence of its Slavic inhabitants. Meanwhile, the accompanying images show to what ennobling uses German ingenuity and spirituality could put these wasted riches, suggesting that Germans should take what is theirs by right of their greater cultural strength – and thus equip their heirs with the power and land base necessary for the showdown between German ‘culture’ and Western ‘civilization.’ Should not the timber of the colonized lands help build the prospering German lands of the ‘Wooden Age’ with their half-timbered houses?

*Volkes Blüte,  
Waldes Kraft  
Formt deutscher Städte Ruhm und Macht.*

The flourishing of the *Volk*,  
The strength of the forest  
Are the glory and power of German towns.

Or erect the towering Gothic cathedrals with their exquisite basswood carvings?

*Aus Meisterwerken grüßt und spricht  
Der Wald als deutsches Angesicht*

From artists' masterpieces greets and speaks  
the forest as the face of Germany

As the camera scans a Gothic cathedral, the architecture fades in and out of a forest background that closely coincides with the contours of the dome: pillars fade into tree trunks, windows filter the sun like a beech bough, and while our gaze scales the imposing spire, the steeple dissolves into the top of a towering spruce tree.

With such sequences, *Ewiger Wald* pioneered the technique of fading and superimposition in German film making that found its most malicious use in Fritz Hippler's *Der Ewige Jude* (The Eternal Jew, 1940), when groups of Jews were visually equated with packs of scurrying rats. Similarly, in Veit Harlan's *Jud Süß* (The Jew Süß, 1940), a violently anti-Semitic film seen by more than a third of the German population, the image of a

traditionally-dressed Jew with beard and temple-locks fades into the clean-shaven face of a courtly financier: capitalism is ‘unmasked’ as the expression of a world-dominating Jewry.<sup>52</sup>

In *Ewiger Wald*, the constant fading of the erstwhile heathen forest and the sacred architecture reminds the *Volk* that the Gothic mind was considered the continuation of the Germanic culture. This reflects the Nazis’ attempt to cast the German *Wesen* or mind as the best of both worlds: the virile and indomitable physicality of the rooted Nordic race combined with the cultivation of Christian learning.<sup>53</sup>

Yet only too soon is the harmony of Germanic and Christian cultures disrupted: it is the time of the Peasants’ War and the disenfranchised peasants demand that the clergy and the nobility ease their grip on the land and particularly the forest.<sup>54</sup> The images suggest that it was the greed of the ‘Roman’ church that caused the clergy to elevate themselves over the ‘Germanic’ peasants and so break the Gothic bond.<sup>55</sup> With a tree for a ram, the peasants try

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<sup>52</sup> For a discussion of *Ewiger Wald* and its technical importance to later German films, see Jacobsen *et al.* 1993, pp. 128 and 150-154.

<sup>53</sup> In the words of one forester: “Only the Nordic strength of the German, joined with the culture of the Mediterranean, could create the all-encompassing empires.” *Des Germanen nordische Kraft, verbunden mit der Kultur des Mittelmeeres allein, konnten die allumfassenden Kaiserreiche schaffen.* (Holle 1935a, p. 786; Holle 1935b, p. 455).

<sup>54</sup> *Ihr Ritter, Pfaffen, mit Gewalt  
Bracht ihr das Bauernrecht  
Baum auf Baum wird sinnlos gefällt  
Wald geht verloren, dem Ritter brings Geld.*

<sup>55</sup> *Was die Kirche nahm der Kirche gehört  
Verbannt wird wer ihren Frieden stört  
Nach altem Papst- und Kirchenrecht  
Das Fordern steht dem Bauern schlecht  
Das Holz im Wald bringt Dom auf Dom  
Das ist Gesetz so alt wie Rom*

In his *Ewiger Wald*, Francé had idealized the tension between ‘German’ Gothic mind and ‘Roman/Latin’ Church thus: the “great secret of being” spoke with “a thousand voices” in the “living cathedral of the forest,” while in the “forest of stone” of the church it found but one mouth to express itself “and that mouth mumbled the words of a foreign idiom of priests.” *Die raunende Dämmerung der alten Dome, . . . da lauter redeten alle inneren Stimmen und die Seele wach war für das große Geheimnis des Seins. Das freilich im lebenden Dom mit tausend Zungen sprach, im versteinerten Wald dagegen nur einen Mund fand. Und der murmelte – die*

to break down the door of the castle gate to end the knights' hold over them and to regain "the ownership over the German forest."<sup>56</sup> But the peasants lose the fierce struggle that ensues and the chorus laments the turn that German history is to take:

*Der Bauer tot  
Das Volk in Not  
Zerstörte Felder und Wälder  
sind Klagen der Heimat im Wind.*

The peasant dead  
The *Volk* in distress  
Fields and forests destroyed –  
these are the homeland's laments on the wind.

The final failure of the peasants' revolt in 1525 eliminated the German peasantry as a political factor for centuries to come, essentially until the Nazis realized that they could harness the disenchantment of this neglected part of the population for their own goals. The demands of the peasants perfectly overlapped with the ideology of Blood and Soil and so the peasants' struggle was stylized into the *pièce de résistance* of Nazi propaganda.<sup>57</sup> Eyeing the votes of the rural population, the National Socialists promised to restore the German peasantry to their rightful position in German public and political life – but not merely for the peasants' sake: an uprooted *Volk* without a healthy peasant substructure, the Nazis argued, was doomed. Thus the peasantry suddenly enjoyed not only the attention of a major party – and, after 1933, the government – but a sharply increased public esteem too, at least

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*Worte einer fremden Priestersprache.* (Francé 1922, p. 22).

<sup>56</sup> *Das Eigentum am deutschen Wald  
Das blieb in Bauernhand.*

<sup>57</sup> For example, in the program of the new cabinet announced on February 1, 1933: "Point d): Reorganization of the economy through protection of the German peasant in order to secure the food supply and thus livelihood of the nation." *Reorganisation der Wirtschaft durch Rettung des deutschen Bauern zur Erhaltung der Ernährungs- und damit der Lebensgrundlage der Nation* (quoted in Stuckart and Schiedemair 1941a, p. 7). After the takeover, the National Socialists claimed that "with one stroke of a quill and without spilling any blood" they had victoriously completed "fully four hundred years of struggle of the German peasant." Apparently, all it took for the peasants to free themselves was to vote National Socialist! *Volle 400 Jahre dauerte dieser Kampf des Bauern, der est jetzt, im Dritten Reich, ohne Blutvergießen zum Siege führte. . . . Der Reichsnährstand hat – gewissermaßen mit einem Federstrich – die ihm gebührende Stellung erhalten.* (Fuchs 1934, p. 345). Indeed, the agricultural regions in northern and eastern Germany had been a particular stronghold of electoral support for the Nazis. In the rural ridings, the National Socialists received roughly 25 % more votes than averaged over the entire *Reich*. Between 1919 and 1932, German farmers saw their incomes drop by 40 %, every year more than 5,000 farmers went bankrupt. (Corni and Gies 1994, p. 24).

as expressed in the propaganda idolizing the ‘free peasant farmer’ as the backbone of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. This scene of the film was a part of this recognition of the increased ideological value of the peasantry.

Having ‘covered’ this important moment in German history – at least as the Nazis saw it – , the film continued straight on to the reforestation of the Frederician period without paying any attention to the German Reformation or the Thirty Years’ War. Thus, quite inaccurately, Frederick the Great is cast in the role of the saviour whose far-sighted policies finally put an end to the devastation of the land left behind by the Peasants’ War. Once again, it is the forest that symbolizes Frederick’s historical feat of saving and elevating Prussia (symbolizing all of Germany), yet this time it is not a primeval but a planned and planted forest. Stressing Frederick’s conjoining of forestry and military administrations, the film depicts Frederick’s forester-soldiers supervising the planting of the “new forest.”<sup>58</sup>

*Hört her – ihr Leute  
Der König, Seine Majestät  
Will, daß der neue Wald  
dasteht akkurat  
Wie Soldat an Soldat!*

*You people, listen!  
His Majesty the King  
wishes the new forest  
to line up  
like soldier next to soldier!*

And soon the work of both forest service and army yields ample results: as the image fades in and out and alternates between trees and soldiers, the seedlings stretch into taller and taller trees while the rows of lined-up soldiers grow longer and deeper. At first we see only the soldiers’ legs, but soon we see both the forest and the army from bottom to top: Germany’s integrity and strength are restored in the emerging Prussian kingdom.<sup>59</sup> On the basis of the

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<sup>58</sup> Cf. Appendix I.

<sup>59</sup> This suggestive similarity between soldiers in formation and the rows of planted trees of classical German forestry has prompted many comparisons, but none more succinct than that by Nobel Prize laureate Elias Canetti in his essay *Masse und Macht* (Crowds and Power, 1960): “The symbol of the German masses was the army. Yet the army was more: it was the marching forest.” *Das Massensymbol der Deutschen war das Heer. Aber das Heer war mehr: der marschierende Wald.*

unified and expanded realm (represented by the “new forest”) and the army that Frederick built, Prussia becomes the master of its fate and an example for all the Germanies. For it is not just the forest that is being rescued and reformed, it is the German spirit, too, as the chorus suggests:

*Ruhelos sehnt neue Saat  
sich nach der neuen Tat.*

Restlessly, the new crop  
aches for new deeds.

For a while, the *Volk* is allowed to revel in this new-found security. Ignoring the Napoleonic humiliation, the film proceeds straight to the Romantic movement and beyond, as the image of lovers in a secluded forest fades into a *Biedermeier* (restoration period) painting. Yet by placing a guard next to a border barrier at the edge of the forest, the film reminds the audience that it is only military strength that allows for such bliss. Only as long as a strong army guards the borders of the realm (represented by the forest edge) against outsiders can the citizens enjoy the peaceful setting in which nature and art blend into a higher, aestheticized form of German landscape which, as we saw in Chapter 3, quite accurately describes the process of the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century Romanticization of the forest.

But soon the forest’s Romantic honeymoon is over as the voracious demands of industrialization set in: railroads, saw mills, exports all devour more and more wood. Here the tension that characterized so much of Nazi ideology is blatantly obvious: whether in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century or in the 1930s, Germany had to industrialize, modernize, produce, and consume to keep up with the threatening Western ‘civilizations,’ but that modernization came at the price of uprooting German ‘culture’ from the rural landscape with its agrarian structure. As an ideology, National Socialism tried to reconcile the irreconcilable, conflating progress and tradition in a backward-looking modernism. This orientation towards the past

is exemplified not only in the images in *Ewiger Wald*, but in the constant use of the fading technique to return to the past for inspiration and to anchor the present and the future.

In the political reality of the Third *Reich*, the tension was 'resolved' by proceeding with the modernization while rhapsodizing about the virtues of tradition, or, in the words of Hitler at the 1934 party rally in Nuremberg, "restoring the synthesis of utility and beauty."<sup>60</sup> Similarly, in *Ewiger Wald*, Wilhelmine citizens are oblivious to the modernization process around them. Even as their precious forest is plundered, they gather in a forest park and enjoy the 'higher values of life' at a *Waldfest* (forest festival). Ironically, the film exposes the fatal flaw of this Romanticizing self-deception of the forest-revellers: into their summer idyll erupts the beginning of the First World War, tearing the land and the forest apart in explosion upon explosion.

Once again, like their Germanic ancestors, the German soldiers fight alongside their forest ally, they take cover behind fallen trees, and they celebrate Christmas in the trenches around a single bough of evergreen. Yet the cross of Christmas soon becomes the cross on a soldier's grave and, as the camera opens the angle, uncounted crosses fill the screen, an endless cemetery of crosses which in turn fades into an endless field of tree stumps. As the camera swings over the stumps, we enter the Weimar period: black French soldiers are seen lounging in the foreground, leaning on their guns while two blond Germans are labouring in the background: they cut trees for reparation shipments.<sup>61</sup> The trees, linked with chains

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<sup>60</sup> *wieder eine Synthese von Zweckmäßigkeit und Schönheit hineingebracht werden.* (quoted in Göring 1934, p. 989).

<sup>61</sup> The reparation shipments of wood amounted to 50 million cubic metres, of which one million were due in 1921 alone (cf. Borkenhagen 1977, p. 153; König 1921, p. 163). In fact, it was Germany's defaulting on a shipment to France of 53,000 cubic metres of sawn wood and 200,000 telegraph poles that provided the legal basis for the occupation of the Ruhr area by French, Italian, and Belgian troops in January 1923. (see Chapter 5, footnote 54). How intensely German foresters resented the presence of occupation soldiers in their forests

of steel, are split by iron wedges and fed into an automated saw mill: Germany's forest, its soul, is uprooted, shackled and fed into the mills of the mechanized Western world. To the muted tune of the *Deutschlandlied* (the German national anthem) in minor, the camera surveys a devastated land: mutilated, shelled trees (which is historically incorrect since no fighting took place on German soil), a shredded banner under dark skies. The chorus is full of gloom:

*Verrottet, verkommen  
Von fremder Rasse durchsetzt  
Wie trägst du, Volk  
Wie trägst du, Wald  
die undenkbbare Last?*

Rotten, depraved,  
polluted with foreign race,  
how, *Volk*, do you bear,  
how, forest, do you bear  
the unspeakable burden?

Yet the tone quickly changes as the camera focusses on an old farmer's furrowed face with downcast eyes who slowly looks up to his blond son whose silhouette fades into a blossoming young tree:

*Wir beugen uns nicht  
Wir, die den Tod überwunden  
künden die Wiedergeburt  
tragen die Fahne ins Licht.*

We will not yield –  
We, who overcame death,  
will herald the rebirth,  
will carry the banner to the light

A fanfare sounds and the blossoming tree in turn becomes a maypole adorned with Nazi banners. As the camera swings, columns of people are seen marching past the tree, waving

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is reflected in a speech by the head of the Department of Silviculture in the Bavarian forest administration, Karl Rebel, on May 20, 1924: "For years to come, and with almost superhuman restraint, we must endure foreign riff-raff in the German lands. By God, that is enough! There is no need to suffer the same fate in the German forest. Let us cast them out and slam the door behind them!" *Wir müssen auf Jahre hinaus in deutschen Landen mit fast übermenschlicher Zurückhaltung ausländisches Gesindel ertragen. Das langt, bei Gott! Im deutschen Wald brauchen wir solches nicht zu dulden. Werfen wir wenigstens dieses hinaus und machen wir da den Riegel zu!* (Rebel 1924, p. 725). Where would Rebel draw the line between trees and humans?

The accusation that the French were committing a "sin against the blood" by mixing with Blacks was a common element of German hate propaganda. The articles by Hans zur Megede, which appeared regularly in forestry journals after 1933, were examples of the most rabid form of such propaganda. In 1940, zur Megede wrote that the behaviour of "the Frenchman shows that he . . . has sunk to the cultural level of the negro with whom he interbreeds indiscriminately." *Aber der Franzose zeigt, daß er nicht nur auf die Kulturstufe des Negers, mit dem er sich wahllos vermischt, herabgesunken ist. . . .* (zur Megede 1940, p. 175).

**Stengefunde,  
kraftvolle  
Stämme  
nur aus  
tafferinnn und  
standortgerechten  
Jungpflanzen!**

**Pein & Pein**  
G.M.B.H.  
FORSTRAUMSCHULEN  
Halstenbek i. Holst.  
Für nördliche und südliche Baumarten:  
Bamberg i. Mitt.  
Für mitteldeutsche Laubbäume:  
Königssee i. Thür.

*Figure 6.2: Advertisement for the Pein & Pein nurseries in Halstenbek (from *Der Deutsche Forstwirt* 1938, 20(44/45), p. 576). An example of the symbolic transference of the imagery of 'rootedness in the soil' and 'racial heritage' from the forest to the resident population. The text reads: "Healthy, strong trunks only grow from racially pure, site-adapted seedlings!"*

more banners. We have reached the New Germany to which all of this history was progressing: the resurrection of the *Waldreich* last enjoyed by the Germanic tribes. The camera returns to the forest for a last time, showing the tasks that lie ahead for the young Third *Reich*.

As farmers plough the soil among exceedingly tall trees, the chorus exhorts them to “break the waiting soil”<sup>62</sup> and bring about the new era in which the fertility of the German soil and *Volk*, fallow for such a long time but suggested by the tallness of the trees, will finally bear fruit. This will be a time when forest and farming coexist in harmony – when the peasants are rehabilitated and the *Volk* returns to tilling the soil as the first step towards purifying its blood from the foreign influences of ‘civilization.’

The mood of this sequence is captured by a nurseries advertisement that appeared in the forestry journals around the same time (see Figure 6.2): among the tall and straight trees works the *Waldbauer* or forest farmer with his hulking horses, reaping the bounty of the soil – while in the background the next generation of trees eagerly pushes towards the light. The advertisement warns: “Healthy, strong trunks only grow from racially pure, site-adapted seedlings!”<sup>63</sup>

The next scene of *Ewiger Wald* illustrates this connection of blood and soil through race: while the camera shows an axe in close-up, the chorus reminds the audience of its purpose: “Excise what is of foreign race and sick.”<sup>64</sup> In the next shot, the axe is hewing into the dead

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<sup>62</sup> *Brecht auf den wartenden Boden*

<sup>63</sup> *Kerngesunde, kraftvolle Stämme nur aus rassereinen und standortgerechten Jungpflanzen!* From an advertisement by the Pein & Pein nurseries in Halstenbek (in *Der Deutsche Forstwirt* 1938, 20(44/45), p. 576).

<sup>64</sup> *Schlagt aus, was rassefremd und krank*

wood of a dry tree. Before the tree crashes to the ground, the axe appears once more close up and the chorus spells out the mission of the new Germany:

*Aus der Vielfalt der Arten schafft  
Des ewigen Waldes neue Gemeinschaft  
Der neuen Gemeinschaft ewigen Wald.*

From the multitude of species  
Create the new community of the eternal forest  
Create the eternal forest of the new community.

With these words, the chorus closes the circle of history and the circle of forest and *Volk*. Just as the German forest is eternal and unconquerable, so is the German *Volk*. As long as the forest remains as their *völkisch* refuge, the German people might be humiliated but ultimately will rebound from whatever adversity their enemies might contrive.

In the final scene, we once again see blond youngsters dancing around a maypole, just as their Germanic ancestors did.<sup>65</sup> Was it an hour ago, or two thousand years? It does not matter, for these Germans are offshoots of the same *Volk*, rooted in the same soil, just as the trees around them are still part of the same 'eternal' German forest. In the final shot, the camera leaves the dancers and ascends the maypole from its base rooted in Germanic tradition to the tip adorned by the swastika banners representing the pinnacle of German history: we have arrived at the new National Socialist Germany, the fulfilment of German aspirations.

*Ewiger Wald* aimed to enlighten the audience, "you, *Volk*," about its glorious Germanic history and the roots of that history in the German forest. At the same time, by equating the individual German with the trees of the forest and the *Volk* with the forest as a whole, the film suggested to Germans that they were *Volksgenossen* in the *Volksgemeinschaft* of the New Germany and that they were just as rooted in the soil of their *Heimat* as were the trees. In its peculiar choice of spotlights on particular events of German history, the film also

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<sup>65</sup> The maypole also connects the supposed Germanic rites with the Nazi Labour Day festival on May 1st.

allows us to gain a sense of the cult of selective continuity on which the National Socialists placed so much emphasis. In their desire to represent their movement as the logical apex of a uniquely Germanic history, the National Socialists had to appropriate figures and events of the German past as their legitimating predecessors while excising or vilifying others. *Ewiger Wald* thus throws many of the idiosyncrasies of general National Socialist historiography into relief, while also refracting that history through the prism of ‘The German Forest.’ As we proceed to other media of propaganda, we will encounter the same individual components and overall pattern of Nazi uses of Forestopia. Firstly, whether on the screen, airwaves, or paper, the National Socialists invariably conjured up a unique *völkisch* history by glorifying ancient Germanic and Gothic times and connecting them with the present via the Peasants’ Revolt and Frederician Prussia.<sup>66</sup> In contradistinction to this stood the second commonality, namely the slandering of foreigners, capitalism, and the Church as un-German. Thirdly, the individual German was rooted in the soil as a symbolic tree in the forest of the *Volksgemeinschaft* – even if, as in the case of broadcasting, those roots were stretched across the ether.

### **6.5 The Forest on the Radio: Imaginary Ramblings in the Schorfheide Forest**

With its ability to speak at once to ear and eye, film certainly was the most suggestive mass medium. Yet films were expensive to produce and were limited by the number of prints, theatres, and screenings. Radio programs, by contrast, were relatively cheap to produce, and reached more Germans both immediately and simultaneously. The radio was thus a prime

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<sup>66</sup> The Nazis also staged popular festivals with Teutonic pageants celebrating “2,000 Years of German Culture” – hence the title of a spectacle held in Munich in the summer of 1937.

medium for the National Socialists to engender an instant feeling of community and simultaneity: all Germans, “whether in the forester’s home or the endless sea of tenements,” were supposedly united in front of their *Volksempfänger* and public speakers, intently listening to “the words of the *Führer* with grateful hearts and glowing eyes.”<sup>67</sup> Yet, as the forest was a predominantly visual experience, would it not be difficult to convey the ‘feel’ of the forest via the radio so it could serve in creating a feeling of community? Not if the program was designed to build on notions and emotions that were present in the minds of the listeners in the first place.

In October of 1934, *Reichsforstmeister* Göring ordered that a 90-minute program be transmitted on the national network of the *Deutschlandsender* in which seven microphones and a portable transmitter relayed the sounds of the nature reserve Schorfheide one hour north of Berlin:

Last Sunday, at the behest of the *Reichsforstmeister*, this unique program led the listeners into this wonderful German forest. On that sunny day, the forest proudly wore its best autumnal colours and the *Deutschlandsender* rambled through its 40,000 hectares to capture for its listeners with seven microphones the beauty and life of the forest. The experiment, during parts of which the game was stalked with a portable short wave transmitter, may be called a complete success.<sup>68</sup>

What was the purpose of this “experiment”? Why take listeners to a forest they could not see but only imagine? The idea was precisely to conjure up the forest that the audience already had in their minds, building on preconceived notions while at the same time reinforcing them. The program was to make the audience feel that they knew this forest, that

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<sup>67</sup> Bachmann 1935, p. 29.

<sup>68</sup> *Am Sonntag führte auf Veranlassung des Reichsforstmeisters der Rundfunk seine Hörer in einer einzigartigen Sendung in diesen wundervollen deutschen Wald. Der Deutschlandsender durchwanderte an dem sonnigen Tage die in buntem Herbstkleid prangenden Wälder der 160 000 Morgen großen Schorfheide, in der sieben Mikrophone aufgebaut waren, um die Schönheit und das Leben des Waldes für die Hörer einzufangen. Der Versuch, bei dem zum Teil mit einem tragbaren Kurzwellensender das Wild beschlichen wurde, kann als äußerst gelungen bezeichnet werden.* (Göring 1934, p. 989).

they naturally belonged there. The familiar sounds of hunting horns opened the ramble through the forest, the audience met the game of the forest and even came along on a stalk for deer. The obligatory connection with their Germanic past was made through visiting the preserve of the *deutsches Urwild* (primeval German game species: wild ox, moose, forest horses), which had been opened with great fanfare a few months earlier (see Figure 6.3). In a speech concluding the program, Göring himself explained why the listeners were visiting their forest:

It is part of the National Socialist mission to reconnect our people with the soil, to bring them closer to nature, so they may draw renewed strength to create and shape their lives. Only those who live in nature, who feel connected with nature, who live in nature with all their soul, recognize and comprehend what we call fatherland. . . . Such is the purpose of the work being done here: to contribute to the reconstruction of Germany.<sup>69</sup>

The listeners thus were to renew their bond with the soil if only at a distance. In fact, for the purposes of National Socialism, the imaginary forest walk was absolutely sufficient. Germans did not need to individually reestablish their rootedness by spending time in the Schorfheide, as long as they *felt* they were reconnecting with the forest as “the eternal nature whence we all hail and whither we will all return.”<sup>70</sup> Indeed, spending too much time in the solitude of the forest would have removed the *Volksgenossen* beyond the reach of the innumerable ‘voluntary’ National Socialist measures of mass mobilization that ensured their leisure time was spent ‘properly’ (one of which we will encounter presently). It was enough

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<sup>69</sup> *Es gehört zum nationalsozialistischen Wirken und Gestalten, die Menschen wieder erdverbunden zu machen, sie der Natur näherzubringen, damit sie aus ihr wieder die Kraft schöpfen, das Leben gestalten und formen zu können. Nur wer in der Natur lebt, wer sich ihr verbunden fühlt, wer mit ganzer Seele in der Natur lebt, erkennt und erfährt das, was wir Vaterland nennen. . . . So entsteht hier eine Arbeit, die mit dazu beitragen soll, den Neubau Deutschlands zu vollziehen.* (Göring 1934, p. 990).

<sup>70</sup> *die ewige Natur, aus der wir alle geboren wurden, zu der wir alle wiederkehren.* (Bachmann 1935, p. 29).

# Der Deutsche Forstbeamte

Verkündungsblatt des Bundes Deutscher Forstbeamten

Eröffnung des Wisentgeheges in der Schorfheide



**Figure 6.3:** Göring inspecting a front of uniformed forestry officials at the occasion of the opening of the bison preserve at Schorfheide (front page of *Der Deutsche Forstbeamte* on June 16, 1934 (2(24), p. 443). Next to Göring is the Prussian Head Forester Hausendorff, behind him the Head of the German Forest Administration, Generalforstmeister von Keudell.

to let the imagination of the *Volk*, nicely contained in a 90-minute time slot, wander through the ideational German forest – hence the radio ramble through the Schorfheide.<sup>71</sup>

To reinforce the Germanness of the forest in the minds of the listeners, tribute was paid at the log cabin dedicated to the memory of *Reich* President von Hindenburg who had died in August of 1934. At Göring's estate of Karinhall it was stressed that the *Reichsforstmeister* had chosen the Schorfheide as the location for his country retreat because of its national importance as a wildlife refuge. Finally, during a stop at the new Labour Service camp, the audience was reminded of the paramount role of the forest in the *Arbeitschlacht* ('battle for jobs') against unemployment and dependency on foreign resources.

The program was thus designed to give the audience a feeling of connectedness with the soil through a celebration of their 'natural' German longing for the forest, a feeling of Germanness by stressing the German character and national importance of the visited forest, and a feeling of community as members of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Göring took it upon himself to further stress this last goal in an address "from his log cabin" that concluded the program. The *Reichsforstmeister* exhorted German hunters to remember the "poorest *Volksgenossen*" and donate their takings of one week to the *Winterhilfswerk* (winter aid collection):

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<sup>71</sup> In later years, the *Reich* Forest Office under Göring was also contemplating a broadcast service that dealt exclusively with forestry issues. Modelled on the farmers' programs on the radio, this service was to discuss issues of importance to forest owners living in remote forest regions – and presumably provide them with the appropriate dose of forest propaganda at the same time. The deliberations on this project are documented in the Federal Archives Berlin (BA R 18 1544, Bl. 251-252: Letter by Wilhelm Münker, chair of the 'Committee for Salvaging the Deciduous Forest,' to the *Reich* Forest Office, October 6, 1943).

Remember that your enjoyment obligates you to help further the general well being of the Volk. . . . I am certain that the German hunters feel this connection with the poorest of our people. This will allow you to enjoy the enjoyment that Hubertus [the patron saint of hunters, M.I.] grants you.<sup>72</sup>

The word “certain” clearly expressed that it was expected that “your hunting holidays” would be timed so as to contribute to the prescribed “sweeping success of this appeal.”<sup>73</sup> The material modesty that was expected from the privileged hunters was to bear witness to the national solidarity of Germans: the message was that the *Volksgemeinschaft* truly existed. Here was Germany’s second-in-command in his humble “log cabin” in the midst of the German forest, admonishing his *Volksgenossen*: you, too, must live frugally for the benefit of the *Volk*. Göring’s “log cabin” was far from simple, though. In fact, it was a massive structure complete with brickwork and bronze sculptures, representative enough for the ‘first paladin’ to host his *Führer* (see Figure 6.4).

Göring’s legendary penchant for opulence and his obvious corpulence made a farce of his words – but neither his sincerity nor his personal example were the issue here. What those addressed needed to hear in order to align their own behaviour was provided in the ominous character of his exhortations. Along with the guidelines for behaviour, in this case donating venison, they contained the sanction in case of disobedience: the revocation of the prized hunting privilege. This very public coercion was not an accident, but a calculated

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<sup>72</sup> *Ich wende mich auch in dieser Stunde eindringlich an die deutschen Jäger und wiederhole, was ich bereits in meinem heutigen Aufruf gesagt habe: Wenn Sie draußen die herrliche Freude der Jagd genießen, dann denken Sie auch an diejenigen, die das nicht haben können. Denken Sie an die ärmsten Volksgenossen. Denken Sie daran, daß diese Freude Sie verpflichtet, zu helfen am allgemeinen Volkswohl. Ich habe Sie aufgefordert, in der Woche vom 9. bis 16. Dezember alles Wild, das Sie zur Strecke bringen, dem Winterhilfswerk abzuliefern, damit in manche arme Hütte zu Weihnachten ein Braten kommt. Legen Sie Ihren Urlaub, Ihren Pirschgang, Ihre Treibjagd auch in diese Tage, damit der Aufruf von durchschlagender Wirkung wird. Ich bin sicher, daß die deutsche Jägerschaft diese Verbundenheit mit den Ärmsten unseres Volkes fühlt. Dann können Sie auch berechtigt die Freude empfinden, die Ihnen Hubertus verschafft.* (Göring 1934, p. 990).

<sup>73</sup> In the opening speech to the Grüne Woche 1935 in January of 1935, Göring announced that the German hunters had indeed donated over 200,000 animals worth more than one million Reichsmark (*Der Deutsche Forstwirt* 1935b, p. 106).



Der Führer als Gast des Reichsforstmeisters in Karinbau.

**Figure 6.4:** “The *Führer* as the Guest of *Reichsforstmeister Göring* at Karinbau” (from *Deutsche Forstbeamtenzeitung* 1936 2(1), p. 24). Göring is dressed in one of his self-designed buckskin hunter’s outfits. A strict vegetarian, Hitler was openly critical of Göring’s penchant for hunting. This image, carefully staged by his personal photographer Heinrich Hoffmann, is a rare instance of Hitler allowing himself to be associated with hunting.

commonplace in Nazi Germany. The *Volksgenossen* at all times knew what was expected of them – after all, that was the very purpose of the propaganda.

As officials of the state, foresters were expected to align themselves with their *Reichsforstmeister* and to interpret, disseminate, and defend his propaganda in their districts. It is important to note that party membership among foresters was exceedingly high. In 1937, 92 % of all Prussian foresters were *Parteigenossen* (party comrades), compared to 86 % of all Prussian civil servants. For the other *Länder*, the average numbers were 85 % and 63 %, respectively.<sup>74</sup>

Yet the high membership numbers alone do not necessarily indicate a high degree of activism: no forester ever achieved a position of political prominence, not even that of *Gauleiter* or ‘district leader’ of the NSDAP.<sup>75</sup> Why, then, did foresters join the party in disproportionate numbers? For one, as state officials in uniform, foresters were under high pressure to join the party.<sup>76</sup> That the Nazis were well aware of the importance of forest officials as local opinion-makers is reflected in the statement of the head of the German forest administration, Friedrich Alpers, that “as the forester thinks in his isolated forest office, so will the forest labourer, so will the people in his own small settlement, and so will

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<sup>74</sup> Cf. Borkenhagen 1977, p. 98, for membership among foresters; and Frei 1993, p. 90, for membership among civil servants.

<sup>75</sup> (Rubner 1985, p. 113). On the other hand, with the exception of Kurt von Plettenberg, no forester was active in the German resistance movement either. (cf. Appendix in Koehler 1986).

<sup>76</sup> Cf. W. [sic] 1946 for an attempt to explain the “deplorably high” membership rate with “pressure from above.” It is interesting to note that the author of this article felt it necessary to withhold his name. Was he afraid of reprisals from ‘die-hards’ who had survived the political cleansing of the forest administration after 1945?

the surrounding villages.”<sup>77</sup> The forestry administration was also comparatively small, which made ‘standing aside’ even more difficult and increased pressure on the individual.<sup>78</sup> By 1940, only party members were admitted to all career levels in forestry. Once admitted into the career, the aspiring foresters could advance only if their behaviour “warrants that the candidate at all times and without reservation represents the National Socialist state.”<sup>79</sup> Every decision concerning the careers of foresters was subject to political assessment by the party authorities at all levels. For example, all promotions of academically trained foresters had to be processed centrally in the party headquarters in Munich. If the forester in question held a higher administrative position or was part of the *Reich* Forest Office in Berlin (*Reichsforstamt*), the promotion even had to receive the placet of the Deputy of the *Führer*.<sup>80</sup> Again, the institutional reasons for joining the party obscure definitive insights into the motives of individuals. We are left, nonetheless, with an appreciation of the hegemonic effect that such a high membership must have had among young foresters in pursuit of a career in the public forest service (which, after all, offered more than 85 % of all available

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<sup>77</sup> *Wie der Forstbeamte in seinem einsamen Forsthaus denkt, so denkt der Waldarbeiter, so denkt der Mann in der kleinen Siedlung und in den umliegenden Dörfern.* (Alpers to a meeting of foresters in Brunswick on January 14, 1943, commemorating the tenth anniversary of the seizure of power, cited in Borath 1943, p. 16).

<sup>78</sup> (Rubner 1985, p. 113). Rubner further suggests that the long time frame of forestry made foresters relatively more susceptible to the promises of the Nazis to “clean up for a 1,000 years to come.”

<sup>79</sup> *Voraussetzung für die Einberufung ist, daß der Bewerber auf Grund der von den beauftragten Hoheitsträgern der Partei auf Ansuchen des Reichsforstmeisters ausgestellten politischen Begutachtung (§ 26 DBG und dazu gehörige Durchführungsverordnung) die Gewähr dafür bietet, daß er jederzeit rückhaltlos für den nationalsozialistischen Staat eintritt.* (Reichsforstmeister 1940, section 6. (1)).

<sup>80</sup> As of 1934, aspiring students had to serve 10 weeks (later 6 months) with the ‘voluntary’ Labour Service and become mandatory members of the Stormtroopers upon registration. At the same time, staff and faculty at the forestry academies were required to participate in party events to be considered for promotion or tenure. (Schleifenbaum 1987, p. 75). For the degree of party involvement in the promotion of forestry officials, see Rubner 1985, pp. 111-112.

positions). The message was clear: party membership was a *sine qua non* for foresters – and there was pressure to be publicly active in the service of state and party.

## 6.6 Foresters Speaking on Forestopia

### 6.6.1 Preparing Foresters for their Task

During the Weimar period, foresters had begun to discuss and recognize that their education and salient position within rural society bestowed “extra-professional tasks” on them that amounted to an “inner mission” and obligated them to be politically active.<sup>81</sup> At the 1926 annual meeting of the German Society of Foresters, the chairman Lorenz Wappes had ended his appeal to German foresters to embrace their public duties with the ominous words: “Whoever serves the present with all his devotion will rule the future.”<sup>82</sup> In 1933, that ‘future’ was rapidly taking shape, and foresters were indeed called upon to share in the ruling of Germany – as instruments and mouthpieces. In National Socialist Germany, foresters were plainly drafted into public duty as “leaders.” To prepare them for this task, foresters were called up into *Weltanschauliche Schulungslager* or ‘ideology camps’ to receive “ideological and physical training.”<sup>83</sup> The fact that foresters shared this ‘honour’ with relatively few other professions such as teachers and university lecturers indicates how

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<sup>81</sup> See for example the articles by Künkele: “The Extra-Professional Tasks of the Forester” *Die außerfachlichen Aufgaben des Forstbeamten*, (Künkele 1926a) and “The ‘Inner Mission’ of the Forester” *Die “innere Mission” des Forstmannes*, in which he calls foresters “modern-day leaders of the village” (*neuzeitliche Dorfführer*) in an “unchallenged position of leadership” while still being “one among the Volksgenossen” (*unbestrittene Führerstellung: Beamter im Volksstaat unter Volksgenossen*) (Künkele 1926b, p. 54).

<sup>82</sup> *Wer der Gegenwart mit Hingabe dient, wird einst die Zukunft beherrschen.* (Wappes 1926, p. 483).

<sup>83</sup> *weltanschaulich und körperlich geschult* (Loetsch 1935, p. 311).

important the National Socialists deemed the function of foresters as public role models and multipliers in the rural districts to be.<sup>84</sup>

For example, in 1935, all Saxon state foresters under the age of 55 had to spend one week in the *NS-Gauleiterschule* (National Socialist District Leader Training School) at Augustusburg castle. At this ‘boot camp,’ foresters of all ranks (even full professors!) had to eat, sleep, and wash in common quarters with bunk beds, they exercised in “forest runs” and “battle games,” they formed “potato-peeling kitchen detachments,” and they had to pass spot inspections of their quarters while standing at attention in their pyjamas. Yet the “strict regime of military and athletic duties” was only meant to provide the “framework” for “ideological presentations as the core of the entire training.”<sup>85</sup>

The invited party speakers began by inveighing against the “ideological enemies”: the “Jewry” as “the counter-race” and its “back-up army, the Freemasons and political Catholicism.”<sup>86</sup> Other speeches dealt with the “racial problem” and – in an instance of early sabre-rattling – the “question of Czechoslovakia.”<sup>87</sup> Finally, the *Reichsstatthalter* (Reich Governor) of Saxony himself spelled out the purpose of this training camp:

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<sup>84</sup> (Frei 1993, p. 88). Foresters’ organizations also praised “young, field-tested foresters” as “doubtless the best leaders” for the *Reichsarbeitsdienst* (Reich Labour Service) and offered to function as a clearing house for project assignments, matching up projects with interested foresters. See the public notice in *Der Deutsche Forstwirt* 1934, (16)50, p. 503). Foresters were apparently keen to embrace the opportunity this new ‘career path’ offered. According to a notice in *Deutsche Forst-Zeitung* (1933), more than 400 foresters had applied to be trained as ‘camp leaders’ for the Labour Service – more than 8 times the number of available positions. It is likely that the reason for the high interest was the high unemployment rate among young foresters. (cf. the warning by the Reich Forestry Association not to embark on studies in forestry (Reichsforstverband 1932)).

<sup>85</sup> *Im Rahmen eines straffen militärischen und sportlichen Dienstes waren ganz vorzügliche weltanschauliche Vorträge der Kernpunkt der Schulung.* (Loetsch 1935, p. 311, emphasis in the original).

<sup>86</sup> Loetsch 1935, p. 311.

<sup>87</sup> *Der Deutsche Forstwirt* 1935a, p. 831.

Apply and carry through in the outside world everything you hear and experience here. Do so as the loyal soldiers of the *Führer* – soldiers who can march and shoot if need be.<sup>88</sup>

This ominous reference, in combination with the glances at the Czechoslovakian neighbour and the “battle games,” left not doubt about the aggressive agenda which, as one participant reported glowingly, “was hammered into us.“ The idea was to enable foresters to pass on “the motto of the *Führer*” – “The fight continues!” – to their subordinates at work and their fellow *Volksgenossen* in the district. To this end, they were taught how to school their forest labourers about camaraderie and physical training, and about the ‘proper’ German attitude.<sup>89</sup>

Indeed, foresters did pass on the message. At conventions and meetings, they tried to win over other foresters:

Tomorrow you will return to your own sphere of activity, work in and for the German forest. Maybe not all with the necessary faith and confidence in our times. But I want to ask one thing of you: try and comprehend the nature of the forest that surrounds you daily, and apply the spirit of its community of life to the German people.<sup>90</sup>

Another forester was more forthright about what that would entail:

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<sup>88</sup> *und all das, was Sie hier hören und erleben, draußen als treue Soldaten des Führers anwenden und durchsetzen, – Soldaten, die, wenn es nottut, auch marschieren und schießen können. (Der Deutsche Forstwirt 1935a, p. 831).*

<sup>89</sup> *hat in packenden Worten die Losung des Führers in uns hineingehämmert: Der Kampf geht weiter! (Loetsch 1935, p. 312).*

<sup>90</sup> *Nach Abschluß des morgigen Tages kehren Sie in Ihren Wirkungskreis zurück, zur Arbeit in and am deutschen Walde. Vielleicht nicht alle mit dem Glauben und der Zuversicht an die Dinge unserer Zeit, wie es nötig wäre. Aber um eins möchte ich sie bitten, versuchen Sie das Wesen des Waldes, in dem Sie doch täglich weilen, zu erkennen und übertragen Sie den Sinn der dort herrschenden Lebensgemeinschaft auf den deutschen Menschen. (Holle 1935a, p. 787). Apparently, the censors had second thoughts about Holle’s admission that there were foresters who had doubts about National Socialism. In the version of his speech printed in another journal, the passage simply reads: “Let us try to comprehend the nature of the forest that surrounds us daily, and to apply the spirit of its community of life to the German people.” *Wir wollen versuchen, daheim das Wesen des Waldes, in dem wir täglich weilen, zu erkennen und den Sinn der dort herrschenden Lebensgemeinschaften auf den deutschen Menschen zu übertragen. (Holle 1935b, p. 455).**

the character of our profession ensures that we bring with us the necessary requirements for understanding the idea of National Socialism. The forester who witnesses daily the silent but merciless struggle for existence by necessity rejects the unnatural idea of pacifism. Thus the forester fully welcomes the racial question, the importance of heredity, and the extermination of all those mentally or physically inferior.<sup>91</sup>

This forester did not even attempt to camouflage the ultimate thrust of the “racial question” as he saw it: the killing of “mentally inferior” humans.<sup>92</sup> As we will see shortly, whatever foresters learnt from “genetically improving” forest stands was indeed quickly transferred to the human sphere. A mere five years later, the issues of racial purity in forest and human populations had become so interchangeable that the author of a highly praised book on the ‘breeding’ potential of Prussian foresters could speak of “weeding and thinning Jews and the hereditary ill” as a means of negative selection similar to cutting the worst trees or to culling the least promising game specimen. The author, a professor of forestry at the Prussian forestry academy at Hann.-Münden (who continued to teach there through the 1950s), argued that this negative selection of humans needed to be complemented by methods of positive selection, i.e., ensuring that foresters as bearers of the best hereditary traits have more children than the average *Volksgenosse* – a minimum of four per forester.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> *Brachte es die äußere Lage der Forstwirtschaft mit sich, daß die Lehre des Nationalsozialismus auf fruchtbaren Boden fallen mußte, so waren durch die Eigenart unseres Berufes auch die inneren Voraussetzungen für ein Verständnis des nationalsozialistischen Gedankengutes gegeben. Den naturfremden Pazifismus muß der Forstmann, der täglich Gelegenheit hat, den stummen aber erbitterten Kampf ums Dasein zu beobachten, ablehnen. Die Rassenfrage, die Bedeutung der Erbmasse, die Ausmerzungen alles geistig oder körperlich Minderwertigen müssen bei dem Forstmann auf volles Verständnis stoßen.* (Fuchs 1934, p. 345).

<sup>92</sup> The systematic killing of mentally handicapped and mentally ill was ordered by Hitler in October of 1939, but preparations for the so-called ‘euthanasia’ programme had been conducted for some time already. (Cf. Frei 1993, pp. 120-128).

<sup>93</sup> *Was die praktische Rassenpflege aber seit 1933 vermocht hat, war nur ein Unkraut-Jäten (Juden, Erbkrankte), aber noch kein Gartenbau (positive Auslese), . . . Oder forstlich-vorbildlich gesagt: nur ein Aushieb der schlecht geformten Vorwüchse, aber noch keine Durchforstung, geschweige denn ein Waldbau. . . . Die Forstbeamtenschaft stellt eine körperlich, charakterlich und geistig scharf ausgewählte Bevölkerungsgruppe von überdurchschnittlichen Leistungsträgern dar.* (Volkert 1939, pp. 383 and 385).

Foresters were thus seen – and presented themselves – as the hereditary elite of the German *Volkskörper* who were to provide leadership to the other Volksgenossen. In the next section, we will examine how foresters performed their tasks as “leaders” and multipliers among the general population.

### 6.6.2 Forestopia on the Public Lecture Circuit

On January 14, 1936, the Badenian forester Karl Müller was ordered to speak to the *Badische Naturschutztag* (Badenian Convention on the Protection of Nature) in Karlsruhe.<sup>94</sup> The subject of Müller’s talk was announced as “The Badenian Forest in the Badenian Landscape,” yet his diction reveals that he was concerned with a *völkisch* Forestopia instead: within minutes, the forest switched from being the subject of management to becoming “our educator” – particularly in matters military:<sup>95</sup>

Longevity, diversity of its constituting members, perfect utilization of space in both air and soil – that is what the forest shows us. . . . From a vantage point, we survey the forest assembled in the landscape like an army; rambling along its edge, we inspect it like a brave front; in the interior of the forest we hark its secrets like a column of soldiers seeking rest and calm. . . . As ordered, we have appreciated the Badenian forest as a phenomenon within our landscape. Yet, to us foresters and to many others, the forest is . . . most of all a community of life in which big and small belong together as superiors and subordinates!<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Müller 1936.

<sup>95</sup> *Der Wald, den wir mit Ehrfurcht vor den Naturkräften erziehen, soll uns selbst wiederum Erzieher sein!* (Müller 1936, p. 233).

<sup>96</sup> *Langlebigkeit, Vielseitigkeit seiner Glieder, vollkommene Ausnutzung des Raumes in Luft und Boden zeigt uns der Wald. . . . Dann finden wir ihn beim Weitblick über eine solche Landschaft oft wie einen Heerbann versammelt, oder beim Wandern an seinem Trauf wie eine tapfere Front, oder wir belauschen das Geheimnis seines Innern wie eine Truppe und ihr Soldatentum bei Rast und Ruhe. . . .*

*Wir haben - was verlangt war - den badischen Wald als Erscheinung im Rahmen unserer gesamten Landschaft gewürdigt. Uns Forstleuten und vielen andern mit uns ist weiterhin zugleich und überall der Wald in seinen Innenräumen besonderes Erlebnis, Geheimnis, Gleichnis, zu tiefst Lebensgemeinschaft, wo Groß und Klein in Herrschen und Dienen zusammengehören!* (Müller 1936, pp. 217-218 and 233, paragraph break in the original).

Müller did not use the word *Volksgemeinschaft*, yet his choice of words and imagery suggest that it was the organization of the New Germany to which he directed his comparison between forest and army: the *Volk* should be organized like the forest, as a community of superiors and subordinates that survives and succeeds only as a community while depending on the heroism of the individual.

As a forester, Müller himself was both superior and subordinate in the community he was suggesting. As a civil servant, he spoke to his audience “as ordered,” doing his duty by meeting an officially created ‘need’ for *Volksaufklärung* or ‘popular enlightenment.’<sup>97</sup> Yet he was called upon to do so because as a forester he also was a *Respektperson* or ‘person in authority’ in the rural community. Due to their education, foresters commonly enjoyed the collective respect of the rural population which placed them among the other local dignitaries: teacher, doctor, priest, lawyer, pharmacist. Yet foresters also were figures of state authority: they wore uniforms, carried arms, and served as the local police force in the forest.<sup>98</sup> (see Figures 6.5 and 6.6 for uniforms and rank insignia of German foresters). As such, foresters were the perfect mouthpieces for official propaganda and the state-controlled media provided foresters with models for their speeches.

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<sup>97</sup> Hence the official name of Goebbel’s ministry: *Ministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda* (Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda).

<sup>98</sup> On the rights and duties of foresters as members of the auxiliary police forces see *Deutsche Forstbeamtenzeitung* 1935.



**Figure 6.5: Prussian State Foresters Uniforms as of 1934** (from the official dress regulation in Anonymous 1934). The uniforms are very similar to those of the *Wehrmacht*. Note the pistol on the 'forest duties uniform' (left), the dress aiguillete on the right shoulder (centre), and the ceremonial hunting cutlass (centre and right) prescribed when participating in public events (cf. Angolia and Schlicht 1986, p. 204).



heightened interest in forest matters” from an ideologically sound position.<sup>99</sup> The article covered a speech by Forstmeister Dörr before the Society for Natural Science in Brunswick (*Verein für Naturwissenschaft Braunschweig*) in which, similar to the radio ramble through Schorfheide, the audience was invited to let its “imagination wander through a forest,” this time the Kampfstüh forest near Brunswick.<sup>100</sup> The structure of the speech follows the pattern which is by now familiar: the speaker opens by crediting the new regime with the recent re-appreciation of the forest as a national treasure, before making the historical connection with the Germanic tribes (“whose heredity we preserve in our blood”<sup>101</sup>) and with the struggle for *Lebensraum* on the eastern border of the *Reich* (where the forest in question was “one of the bastions protecting Saxony against the Slavic tide”<sup>102</sup>). Then follows a natural-science discussion of the forest “as a true community of life” from which “all those unfit have been expelled.”<sup>103</sup> At the end, the forester spells out the lesson of the forest for the lay audience:

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<sup>99</sup> *Bei der allgemein gestiegenen Anteilnahme an forstlichem Geschehen werden Forstfachleute in immer größerem Umfange Wünsche zur Abhaltung derartiger Vorträge herantreten.* (from the editor’s preface to Dörr 1934, here p. 441). Another example was the 1934 book *Der Wald als Erzieher* (The Forest as Educator) by Franz von Mammen, which I treat in detail in section 6.9.

<sup>100</sup> *Wir wollen heute im Geiste einen Wald durchwandern* (Dörr 1934, p. 441).

<sup>101</sup> *dessen Erbgut wir in unserem Blut bewahren.* (Dörr 1934, p. 441).

<sup>102</sup> *eines der Bollwerke, die Sachsen gegen die slawische Brandung zu schützen hatten.* (Dörr 1934, p. 441).

<sup>103</sup> *eine wahre Lebensgemeinschaft; die alles Untaugliche ausgeschieden hat* (Dörr 1934, pp. 444 and 445).

Our ramble through the Kampfstüh [forest] has reached its end and we return from the community of life of the forest to the *Volksgemeinschaft*. No people on earth has ever held as much love for the forest as the German *Volk*. . . . The forest is our master.

Egalitarianism is not the way of nature. The strong oak tree does not disdain to form a community of life with the simple herbs. Strong and weak belong together, each supports the other, and all subordinate to the common good. That is also the way it should be in a true *Volksgemeinschaft*, which is a dream no longer but has now become reality.<sup>104</sup>

This time the speaker does not use the word ‘army,’ yet the militarization of the envisioned *Volksgemeinschaft* is obvious nonetheless. Again we encounter the keyword of “subordination” which told the *Volksgenossen* that they were the equivalent of “the simple herbs.” To further “the common good,” they were to receive their orders from the “strong oak,” i.e., the party *cum* state that determined what that common good was and how everyone was to serve it.

By ending the natural science description of forest life with musings about the proper relations of *Volksgenossen* and *Volksgemeinschaft*, the speaker – and the journal article – clearly emphasized the merely illustrative character of the forest: the point of the talk was just as much to give the *Volksgenossen* a civics lesson as it was to inform them about the biology and history of the forest in question. This is also exemplified by the ease with which this speech (and the previous one by Dörr) about one particular forest to a local audience was generalized into an address to the German people about ‘The German Forest’ that could be printed in a national journal. Evidently, the motif of the article possessed enough general resonance to enable such a transference – the result, as we saw earlier, of the many previous recitals of the *völkisch* forest theme. In turn, these speeches and articles by Müller and Dörr

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<sup>104</sup> *Unsere Wanderung durch den Kampfstüh hat ihr Ende erreicht und wir kehren aus der Lebensgemeinschaft des Waldes zur Volksgemeinschaft zurück. Kein Volk der Erde hat von jeher soviel Liebe für den Wald aufgebracht wie das deutsche. . . . Der Wald ist unser Lehrmeister.*

*Die Natur liebt keine Gleichmacherei. Die kraftvolle Eiche verschmäht es nicht, mit unscheinbaren Kräutern eine Lebensgemeinschaft einzugehen, das Starke und das Schwache gehören zusammen, ein Glied stützt das andere, alles ordnet sich dem Gemeinwohl unter. So soll es auch in einer wahren Volksgemeinschaft sein, die aus einem Traum nun Wirklichkeit geworden ist.* (Dörr 1934, p. 454, paragraph break in the original).

– and many others like them – inevitably added to the currency of the resonance among the general population. Was this currency universal? In other words, if foresters used the forest as a common-sense analogy for the *Volksgemeinschaft* when addressing a general audience, would they use a different one when speaking to a highly educated academic audience? The answer is not a different analogy, but a more elaborate one.

### 6.6.3 Forestopia in the Lecture Hall

In November of 1933, professor of forest entomology Karl Escherich gave his inaugural address as rector of Munich University. Speaking to the assembled faculty and student body, Escherich detailed an example from the forest fauna to stress the importance of individual subordination to the state. He suggestively described a termite state that

leaves the observer surprised by the absolute discipline and the absolute subordination of the individual to the common will, by the elimination of all individualism and self-interest, and by the self-sacrifice of all for the state idea. . . .

The supreme law of National Socialism – ‘common good before private profit’ – is taken to the last consequence here. Seen from the outside, the termite state represents a totalitarian state of a form so pure no human society has reached it until now.<sup>105</sup>

Escherich suggested that Germans could learn a great deal from such a totalitarian termite state:

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<sup>105</sup> *Wer je das Glück hatte, ein solches Termitenvolk zu beobachten, wird in Staunen geraten über die absolute Disziplin, über die absolute Unterordnung jedes einzelnen Individuums unter einen gemeinsamen Willen und die Ausschaltung jedes Individualismus und Egoismus, über die Selbstaufgabe und Selbstaufopferung jedes einzelnen für die Staatsidee. . . .*

*Das oberste Gesetz des Nationalsozialistischen Staates ‘Gemeinnutz geht vor Eigennutz’ ist hier bis in die letzte Konsequenz verwirklicht. Der Termitenstaat stellt, äußerlich betrachtet, einen Totalstaat reinsten Prägung dar, wie er bei den Menschen bisher noch nicht erreicht war. (Escherich 1934, pp. 13-14, paragraph break in the original).*

With its infinitesimally detailed organization of work, its discipline, its fanatic will to defend itself, its willingness of sacrifice for the community, etc, the termite state so closely resembles the ideal of the total state that we may present it as an example to humans.<sup>106</sup>

Yet, while Escherich held up the termite state as an exemplar, he cautioned that a similarly “functioning total state among humans” could be achieved

not by oppressing the individual, but by elevating the individual through education towards a state-minded personality or, as we say today, towards a political person who voluntarily submits to serving the community.<sup>107</sup>

Was Escherich obliquely criticizing the National Socialists’ denial of individuality with this caveat? On the contrary: Escherich was trying to exonerate the idea of the total state from the bad name incurred by the recently publicized excesses in the Soviet Union. He used the termites to suggest a new type of citizen who submitted to the state’s primacy not because of “castration of their individuality,” as “Bolshevism has attempted in self-delusion.”<sup>108</sup> Rather, as the title of his speech suggested, each member of the total human state was to be educated into “a political man”<sup>109</sup> by “a mighty intellectual central force” that “captivated all

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<sup>106</sup> *Immerhin gleicht der Termitenstaat mit seiner bis ins kleinste durchgeführten Arbeitsorganisation, mit seiner Disziplin, mit seinem fanatischen Verteidigungswillen, mit seiner Aufopferungsbereitschaft für die Gemeinschaft usw. dem idealen Totalstaat so sehr, daß es wohl erlaubt ist, ihn dem Menschen als Vorbild vorzuhalten.* (Escherich 1934, p. 17).

<sup>107</sup> *Wenn wir zu einem einigermaßen sicher funktionierenden menschlichen Totalstaat gelangen wollen, so gibt es nur einen Weg, der biologisch gangbar ist: Dieser heißt nicht Unterdrückung des Individuums, sondern Erhöhung des Individuums durch Erziehung zur staatlichen Persönlichkeit, oder wie man heute zu sagen pflegt, zum politischen Menschen, der sich freiwillig in die Gemeinschaft dienend einordnet.* (Escherich 1934, p. 19).

<sup>108</sup> *Auf welchem Wege ist dieses hohe Ziel zu erreichen? Jedenfalls nicht dadurch, daß wir versuchen, die Menschen ohne weiteres zu Termiten machen zu wollen, indem wir sie mit Gewalt oder Terror auf die Stufe der durch Kastration ihrer Individualität beraubten und fast nur durch Instinkte geleiteten Termiten herabdrücken. . . .*

*Der Bolschewismus hat geglaubt, diesen Weg gehen zu können und hat durch diesen “Termitenwahn” ein namenloses Unglück, in den Ausmaßen in der Weltgeschichte bisher unbekannt, über ein 160-Millionen Volk gebracht.* (Escherich 1934, p. 19, paragraph break in the original).

<sup>109</sup> *Termitenwahn. Eine Münchener Rektoratsrede über die Erziehung zum politischen Menschen* (The Delusion of the Termite State. A Rector’s Inaugural Speech on the Education of Political Man), (Escherich 1934).

members of the state and impelled them to serve the community while deriving a higher feeling of gratification” from this service.<sup>110</sup>

Germans, Escherich suggested, should not think of themselves as an identical mass of insect-like entities, but they should feel inspired by the devotion, determination and sheer pleasure with which these animals served in whatever functions their state had assigned them: soldier, worker, queen, or nurse. Escherich implored the listening students to heed this parable from the world of the forest insects and use their stay at university to “avail yourselves of the mental weaponry” necessary to fulfil “your historical task, your calling” as “the upholders and shapers of the future Europe” that will arise from the imminent “great struggle of adaptation.” In other words: prepare for the day of reckoning when a youthful Germany reopens the question of supremacy in Europe.<sup>111</sup>

When he was reappointed as rector in 1935, Escherich held a second address in which he elaborated on the notion of peoples and populations fighting in this “struggle of adaptation.” This time he used the forest ecosystem as an example of a healthy “biological equilibrium” and the role of the forest in educating Germans into “political beings.” The

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<sup>110</sup> . . . wenn sich gleichzeitig eine so mächtige geistige Zentralgewalt gebildet hat, daß alle Mitglieder fest in ihren Bann gezwungen werden – oder mit anderen Worten, daß alle Mitglieder es als ein höheres Lustgefühl empfinden, der Gemeinschaft zu dienen als ihren egoistischen Trieben zu frönen. (Escherich 1934, p. 20).

<sup>111</sup> In diesem großen Anpassungskampf wird Ihnen, meine lieben Kommilitonen, die Sie einem noch jugendlichen Volke angehören, eine wesentliche Aufgabe zufallen. Sie werden für sich in Anspruch nehmen können, die Träger und Bildner des zukünftigen Europas zu sein. . . . Das ist Ihre geschichtliche Aufgabe, Ihre Sendung, und hierzu sollen Sie sich auf der Hochschule die geistigen Waffen verschaffen. (Escherich 1934, pp. 24-25). The customary use of the word *Kommilitonen* (‘fellow combatants’) in addressing students gains a rather ominous aspect in this context.

lesson of the forest was that a community of life depended on its members being different yet “organically interconnected within, and adapted to, the whole.”<sup>112</sup> By contrast, free trade

as well as Marxism and Communism are grave biological errors because they violate the basic biological law that organisms are not equal. By necessity, they must ultimately lead to class hatred, the exact opposite of harmony. . . .

Similarly, a misunderstood humanity that indiscriminately allows all members of the community of life, even the most inferior, to breed, is a fatal biological error that leads to a deterioration of *Rasse* and thus compromises the resilience of a *Volk*. . . .

There is no doubt that the development of human peoples is greatly influenced by such biological fallacies. If this is true, then there must also be ways to heal sick nations, just as we give new health and resilience to our forests by changing our management practices.<sup>113</sup>

Marxism, then, was not an outgrowth of class difference but its cause! In fact, it was a disease that disturbed the organic and hierarchical harmony of the *Volkskörper* and could only be cured by the application of a radical cleansing force: National Socialism. National Socialism, Escherich concluded, was the way in which the German *Volk* expressed that it was determined to heal itself:

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<sup>112</sup> *Die Ungleichartigkeit muß natürlich organisch durch Ein- und Anpassung gewachsen sein. . . .* (Escherich 1935, p. 16).

<sup>113</sup> *Auch der Marxismus und der Kommunismus gehören zu den schweren biologischen Irrtümern, da sie dem biologischen Grundgesetz der Ungleichheit der Organismen vollkommen widersprechen, und infolgedessen letzten Endes zwangsläufig zum Klassenhaß, also zum Gegenteil von Harmonie, führen müssen.*

*. . . Auch die falsch verstandene Humanität, die unterschiedslos alle Mitglieder der Lebensgemeinschaft, auch die Minderwertigsten, zur Fortpflanzung zuläßt, ist ein verhängnisvoller biologischer Irrtum, der zu einer Verschlechterung der Rasse und damit zu einer Verminderung der Widerstandskraft eines Volkes führen muß.*

*. . . Es ist kein Zweifel, daß der Entwicklungsgang der menschlichen Völker durch derartige biologische Denkfehler wesentlich beeinflusst werden kann. Ist dem so, dann muß es auch Wege und Möglichkeiten zur Heilung kranker Völker geben, wie wir ja auch durch Änderung der Waldwirtschaft unseren Forsten wieder neue Gesundheit und Widerstandskraft zuzuführen im Begriffe sind. . . .* (Escherich 1935, pp. 19-20, paragraph breaks in the original).

The German *Volk* is currently going through such a process of healing. The basic idea of National Socialism, according to which that recovery shall proceed, is biological through and through. National Socialism is the biological will of the German people, as it were.<sup>114</sup>

Just as Göring's new *Dauerwald* doctrine would overcome the dire legacy of the 'timber rows' of 19<sup>th</sup>-century modern forestry, National Socialism would heal the sick *Volkskörper* by excising those parts infected by capitalism, liberalism, and all the other un-German influences.<sup>115</sup> In this view, National Socialism was a "new management practice" for the German *Volk* that would tend the *Volksgemeinschaft* according to the "laws, insights, and perspectives that we gleaned from the observation of the community of life of the forest and that can be applied to human communities of life, to human peoples."<sup>116</sup>

Rarely was the notion of a *völkisch* Forestopia expressed more forcefully and bluntly – and yet Escherich made these remarks not at just another *soirée* of laypersons, but at one of the most formal occasions of the academic year at one of Germany's biggest universities. Forestopia was thus not merely a common-sense analogy that was served up to 'the simple folk' in an attempt to pull the wool over their eyes – it was an argument that enjoyed some degree of reputability within the academic community.

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<sup>114</sup> *Die Grundidee des Nationalsozialismus, nach welcher die Heilung durchgeführt werden soll, ist durch und durch biologisch. Der Nationalsozialismus ist gewissermaßen der biologische Wille des deutschen Volkes.* The title of Escherich's address was *Biological Equilibrium. A Second Rector's Address on the Education of Political Man.* (Biologisches Gleichgewicht. Eine zweite Münchener Rektoratsrede über die Erziehung zum politischen Menschen) (Escherich 1935, p. 21).

<sup>115</sup> The *Dauerwald* doctrine, formulated by Alfred Möller in the early 1920s, was a 'traditional' school of silviculture that propounded uneven-aged and mixed stands that were cut selectively and reseeded themselves without planting. The *Dauerwald* school was made the official German forestry doctrine by decree on September 27, 1933 (cf. Chapter 4, footnote 109; and Chapter 5, footnote 37).

<sup>116</sup> *Die Gesetze, Einblicke und Ausblicke, die wir bei der Betrachtung der Lebensgemeinschaft des Waldes, des biocönotischen Gleichgewichtes und seiner Störungen gewonnen haben, lassen sich vergleichsweise auch auf die menschlichen Lebensgemeinschaften, die menschlichen Völker beziehen.* (Escherich 1935, p. 19).

Escherich's speeches point to the importance of two central tenets of the National Socialist application of 'forest laws' to the *Volk*: the importance of *Rasse* or purity of race, and the long-term goal of achieving universal conformity through education. Both are foundational aspects of the National Socialist inflection of the concept of Forestopia and thus warrant individual attention.

### 6.7 Forestopia in the Service of Education

Education or, rather, indoctrination, took many forms in National Socialist Germany as the state seized every opportunity to influence the perception of its citizens. Nothing in the public sphere was beyond the mandate of official education: whether sublime fine arts or mundane trade fairs, everything was harnessed for the purpose of transporting the message of the New Order.

For example, the *Grüne Woche Berlin*, the annual German agricultural fair in Berlin, devoted increasingly more space and attention to forestry after 1933. The 1935 fair even stood under the motto *Wald ist Volksgut* (The Forest is a National Treasure) and was declared a "Day of Honour for Our Forestry."<sup>117</sup> Likewise, the *Reichsnährstandsschau* (*Reich* Food Estate Exhibition) which, as a travelling fair, was aimed primarily at educating local smallholders, after 1933 greatly increased its coverage of forestry matters. The enlargement came at the price of total dependency on state funding, however, as the initiative

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<sup>117</sup> *Ein Ehrentag für unsere Forstwirtschaft* (cf. *Der Deutsche Forstwirt* 1935b). The *Grüne Woche* was also tied into other means of propaganda discussed above. In 1939, an entire hall was taken up by a mock village called *Rundfunkhausen* (radio town) whence reports on the fair were broadcast.



**Figure 6.7: Advertisement for the 1937 International Hunting Exhibition in Berlin** (from *Der Deutsche Forstwirt* 1937, 19(87); p. 963). See text for explanation.

and influence of forestry organizations were bought out by state-controlled bodies.<sup>118</sup>

The politicization of those sectoral shows into showcases of Germandom is reflected in the advertisement for the *Internationale Jagdausstellung* (International Hunting Exhibition) 1937 in Berlin (see Figure 6.7). Towering over the slain deer stands a bare-chested superhuman who apparently has overcome the noble beast with his bare hands, aided only

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<sup>118</sup> (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Holz 1937). For a revealing acknowledgement of the mission of National Socialist forestry propaganda within the *Grüne Woche* and other public exhibitions, see Forstlicher Pressedienst 1935.

by his eyes in the sky, the falcon on his fist – a symbol of the new *Luftwaffe*? Göring, after all, was also the proud commander in chief of the air force.

Art in general was a very important means of propaganda in the eyes of the National Socialists. The *Nationalsozialistische Kulturgemeinde* (National Socialist Cultural Community), the same semi-official cultural institution that had produced the film *Ewiger Wald*, also undertook to conflate art and forestry in propaganda painting. It organized an art exhibition under the title *Der Wald* (The Forest) in Berlin where, from June 6 to July 12, 1936, some 150 pieces of art were exhibited to express visually and intuitively where the words of foresters apparently came up short:

What the man of science or the natural philosopher can scarcely put in words about the phenomenon of the forest, the artist sometimes succeeds in expressing surprisingly well: subordination of the individual to the whole, multitude in unity, the circle of dying and becoming, struggle for survival and necessity to live together.<sup>119</sup>

With these words, the forester reviewing the exhibition for his colleagues recognized that the "völkisch" paintings were successful at transporting the propaganda message of Forestopia – subordination – to those parts of the human existence that were inaccessible to intellectual reasoning: art had become a deliberate extension of politics. Escherich had postulated the converse in one of his speeches:

Once German science, German art, and German politics – which, after all, is nothing but another form of art – combine to form a synergetic unity, an intellectual central force will arise that is unconquerable and will subjugate everything.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> *Was der Mann der Wissenschaft oder der Naturphilosoph gegenüber der Erscheinung Wald kaum andeutungsweise auszudrücken vermag, gelingt oft überraschend dem Künstler: Unterordnung des Einzelnen unter das Ganze, Mannigfaltigkeit in der Einheit, Kreislauf des Sterbens und Werdens, Daseinskampf und Zusammenlebenmüssen.* (Hilf 1936, p. 251).

<sup>120</sup> *Verbindet sich dann deutsche Wissenschaft mit deutscher Kunst und deutscher Politik, die ja nur eine Abart der Kunst ist, zu einer Einheit, zu einem Zusammenwirken, so wird eine geschlossene geistige Zentralgewalt entstehen, die unbesiegbar ist und die alles sich unterordnet.* (Escherich 1934, p. 10).

Only at first sight is this a contradiction. Underlying both views was the idea that art and politics were oriented towards the same goal: ensuring that the National Socialist message, in this case of the similarity of forest and *Volk*, prevailed in the perception of the *Volksgenossen*. Despite their limited direct reach, exhibitions and fairs could be important stepping stones towards this goal provided they were properly exploited in the mass media. Quite clearly, though, the most effective way to reach the aim of conformity was to start even before the appearance of either art or politics in the individual's life and teach the tenets of Forestopia to children so they might grow up while absorbing the spirit of the *Volksgemeinschaft* at school and at play.<sup>121</sup>

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler had delineated the goal of education in the future New Germany as follows:

The young subject of German nationality is obligated to undergo the schooling prescribed for every German. He thus submits to education to make him a racially conscious and patriotic national comrade. . . . It must be a greater honour to be a street-cleaner and citizen of this *Reich* than a king in a foreign state.<sup>122</sup>

Within weeks of their takeover, the National Socialists turned this directive into policy:

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<sup>121</sup> Point 20 of the NSDAP party program stipulated that "the curricula of all educational institutions are to be adjusted to meet the requirements of practical life. School must enable students to understand the idea of the state at the earliest age at which it can be grasped. *Die Lehrpläne aller Bildungsanstalten sind den Erfordernissen des praktischen Lebens anzupassen. Das Erfassen des Staatsgedankens muß bereits mit Beginn der Verständnisses durch die Schule erzielt werden.* (Feder 1935, 169th ed., p. 17). The 25-point program of the NSDAP was passed on February 24, 1920, and declared forever unalterable on May 22, 1926.

<sup>122</sup> Hitler deliberately wrote 'he' as he continued the passage with "The German girl is a subject and only becomes a citizen when she marries." (Hitler 1943 (1925), pp. 440 and 441).

The German school must form the political man who is rooted in his people; who serves and sacrifices himself for his people in all his thinking and doing; and who is tied wholly, deeply, and inseparably to the history and fate of his state.<sup>123</sup>

The new *nationalpolitische* school curriculum asserted “the total primacy of the state in issues of education” and had as its “logical requirement the trusting cooperation with the Hitler Youth.” Its goal was a “unified and organic German education” that was to steer the German youth towards “love for the fatherland and true *Volksgemeinschaft*.” The most important subject (after the cultivation of the “sacred national treasure of the mother tongue”) was to be history. In turn, ancient Germanic history claimed priority as it was “proof” of the “cultural achievement of our Germanic ancestors,” of the “importance of race,” and of the “connection between the heroic thinking of Germanic times and the *Führer* principle of our times.”<sup>124</sup>

The forest as a simple yet powerful analogy of both state and people was a perfect vehicle for introducing students to these tenets of National Socialism. In addition, the forest was one of the outstanding features of both the constructed Germanic heritage and the modern self-image of Germany – as well as forming a substantial part of the actual German landscape. Not surprisingly, National Socialist propaganda idealized the forest as a connection between modern Germans and their Germanic forebears and portrayed the forest as a symbolic umbilical cord, a conduit of Germanic heritage to the modern-day German. The Curriculum for Saxon Rural School Districts of 1935, for example, stated that

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<sup>123</sup> *Die deutsche Schule hat den politischen Menschen zu bilden, der in allem Denken und Handeln dienend und opfernd in seinem Volke wurzelt und der Geschichte und dem Schicksal seines Staates ganz und untrennlich zuinnerst verbunden ist.* With these words the Reich Minister of the Interior Dr. Wilhelm Frick explained “the essential features of the new education ideal” on May 9, 1933, at a conference of all Länder (Provincial) Ministers of Education. (reprinted in Rühle 1934, p. 146).

<sup>124</sup> Reich Interior Minister Frick (reprinted in Rühl 1934, pp. 146-147).

the native forest in all its biological, economic, and cultural interrelationships must be made the point of departure, the substance, and the goal of all science teaching in all grades.<sup>125</sup>

To reflect the “national-political curriculum” and the concomitant “Reform in the Service of the Unity of the *Volk*”<sup>126</sup> and satisfy the above demands, a new generation of school text books was written, of which I present one example now.<sup>127</sup>

*So lebt die Waldgemeinschaft* (Thus Lives the Community of the Forest) was a text book series for high school biology written by Hugo Keller in 1936.<sup>128</sup> It comprised three volumes on “Biological Civics”, “Biological Study of Landscape,” and “Biological Economics,” respectively. Each volume used the forest as the platform for teaching, for example by presenting sections on “The Forest Landscape as Battlefield” (in Vol. II.) or on “The Managed Forest as a Community of Upbringing” and “The Managed Forest as a Community

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<sup>125</sup> . . . wird der heimatliche Wald mit allen seinen biologischen, wirtschaftlichen und kulturellen Beziehungen zum Ausgang, Inhalt und Ziel des gesamten Sachunterrichtes auf allen Klassenstufen erhoben. (from the *Erziehungs- und Unterrichtsplan für sächsische Landschulen*, published by the National Socialist Teachers League of Saxony, quoted in Keller 1936, p. xiv.)

<sup>126</sup> Hence the title of an article in the *Deutsche Forst-Zeitung* (Rathke 1938) in which the completed reform was explained to the foresters.

<sup>127</sup> See also:

Schoenichen 1934a: an outline for the teaching of biology according to the tenets of the New Order. It stressed the importance of motherhood and eugenics, of peasantry and folk-culture, of limiting instruction about non-German landscapes to those in the former German colonies, and of teaching a form of health education that builds towards the sentence: “Your body belongs to the nation.”

Schoenichen 1934b: due to its *Blut und Boden* character, biology has become the most important subject in school. As part of it, the Hitler Youth will take youngsters into the “womb of the primeval forest” to celebrate “their common roots in the soil” and plant “Adolf-Hitler-Oaks.” The goal of this education: to animate youngsters “to swear the holy oath of wanting to live and die for Germany.” We met Schoenichen in Chapter 5 as one of the authors ‘seeing’ the *Volksgemeinschaft* in the example of the forest (cf. Chapter 5, footnote 79).

Schalow 1940: a worksheet for teaching ‘German’ biology through the example of the forest.

<sup>128</sup> Keller 1936a. The book was reviewed favourably in the major journals of forestry. See the reviews by Hartmann 1937; Schüpfer 1937; and Vanselow 1937. In 1953, Keller republished a ‘sanitized’ edition of the book as *So lebt das Waldreich* (Thus Lives the Realm of the Forest). In the new edition, all political references are removed and the book purports to be solely concerned with the fate of the forest as such.

of Performance” (both in Vol. III.)<sup>129</sup> Instead of text, Keller used plates of schematic ink drawings with concise labelling alongside. Each captioned illustration was part of self-contained page-long segment which in turn formed part of a larger unit of instruction.

In the volume which I analyze as an example, Keller outlined an entire “Biological Civics” curriculum that focussed on the community of the forest as “an ordered community of life” in which “all strata serve one another and the whole” and in which “all forest comrades form a defensive unit.”<sup>130</sup> Keller had been instrumental in developing this idea of using the forest to teach civics through biology. In previous articles, he had used the “juxtaposition of natural and managed forests” to expound the subject of “biological civics in secondary school” and showed the utility of the forest in “national-political education.”<sup>131</sup> In this book, 150 illustrations showed the numerous interdependencies and interactions between the “forest comrades” and their *Lebensraum* in three sections: I) The Forest as a Community of Living and Feeding; II) The Forest as a Community of Work and Defence; and III) The Forest as a Community of Fate.<sup>132</sup> Keller described the overall aim of the illustrations in his introduction:

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<sup>129</sup> *Die Waldlandschaft als Kampfgebiet* in Vol II.: *Biologische Landschaftskunde*. As well as *Der Wirtschaftswald als Erziehungsgemeinschaft* and *Der Wirtschaftswald als Leistungsgemeinschaft* in Vol. III.: *Biologische Wirtschaftskunde*. (Keller 1936a, p. xvi).

<sup>130</sup> Thus the headings of subsections: *Die Waldgemeinschaft ist eine geordnete Lebensgemeinschaft*; *Alle Waldschichten dienen sich gegenseitig und dem Waldganzen*; and *Alle Waldgenossen ergänzen sich zu einer Widerstandseinheit*. (Keller 1936a, p. xvii).

<sup>131</sup> Keller 1935; Keller 1936b.

<sup>132</sup> *I. Die Waldgemeinschaft als Wohn- und Tischgemeinschaft. II. Die Waldgemeinschaft als Arbeits- und Wehrgemeinschaft. III. Die Waldgemeinschaft als Schicksalsgemeinschaft*. (Keller 1936a, p. xvii).

These drawings want to present the life of the community of the forest in a concise, vivid, and well-ordered manner. They want to show which forms of organization maintain or destroy the life force of a community. To the German teacher, they want to lend a helping hand for national-political instruction through a holistic study of life (*ganzheitliche Lebenslehre*).<sup>133</sup>

This “holistic study of life” viewed human life as connected with “the life of nature and the life of the landscape in a community of fate.”<sup>134</sup> To nature and humans alike, landscape meant either “an obstacle to life and [eventually] death, or protector of life and goal of conquest.”<sup>135</sup> Landscape thus was “an entity consisting of comrades of life (*Lebensgenossen*), the *Lebensraum*” and their interrelationships.<sup>136</sup> In the preface to volume I, Konrad Guenther further explained this nexus between landscape, nature, and humans:

*Blut und Boden* belong together, in terms of the soul as in terms of the body, just as *Volk* and *Heimat* form a community of life. . . . The plates also show us that the balance among the denizens of the forest is maintained through the consumption of those who are superfluous, and that the survivors are those who are stronger and healthier, so that both the struggle and its victims serve the community. Thus the forest teaches us the foundational laws of a *völkisch* and racially aware state such as the National Socialist one. And that is no coincidence. After all, the ideals of this state rise from the blood, they are the inheritance from our ancestors, who themselves received them straight from nature. In this manner, connectedness with the forest engenders connectedness with the *Volk* and the revitalization of Germanic-German [*sic*] being.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> *Diese Bildreihen wollen das Leben der Waldgemeinschaft knapp, anschaulich und übersichtlich darstellen. Sie wollen zeigen, welche Lebensordnungen die Lebenskraft einer Gemeinschaft erhalten oder zerstören. Dem deutschen Lehrer wollen sie eine Handreichung für nationalpolitische Erziehung durch ganzheitliche Lebenslehre sein.* (Keller 1936a, p. vii).

<sup>134</sup> *Sie betrachtet das Menschenleben mit dem Naturleben und dem Leben der Landschaft als Schicksalseinheit.* (Keller 1936a, pp. vii-viii).

<sup>135</sup> *Auch sie sind Schicksal für Natur und Mensch. Für beide bedeuten sie Lebenshindernis, Tod, oder Lebensschutz und Ziel der Eroberung.* (Keller 1936a, p. viii).

<sup>136</sup> *Weitere Lebensfragen erwachsen aus den Beziehungen zwischen Lebensgenossen und Lebensraum als Landschaftseinheit.* (Keller 1936a, p. x).

<sup>137</sup> *Denn Blut und Boden gehören seelisch wie körperlich zusammen, und Volk und Heimat bilden eine Lebensgemeinschaft. . . . Und wenn die Tafeln nun weiter zeigen, daß das Gleichgewicht unter den Bewohnern des Waldes dadurch gewahrt bleibt, daß die Allzuvielen ihren Feinden zur Nahrung werden, und die Überlebenden zugleich die Stärkeren und Gesünderen sind, so daß auch dieser Kampf und seine Opfer der Gemeinschaft dienen, so führt uns der Wald zum Verständnis der Grundlehren eines völkisch und rassistisch bewußten Staates, wie es der nationalsozialistische ist. Und das ist kein Wunder. Stammen doch die Ideale dieses Staates aus dem Blut, sind Erbe der Vorfahren und diese hatten sie aus der Natur. So wird Waldverbundenheit zur Volksverbundenheit und Erstarkung germanisch-deutscher Wesensart.* (preface by Guenther in Keller 1936a, pp. v-vi).

Expanding on Guenther's grounding of the National Socialist state in the laws of nature, Keller argued that the holistic study of life *cum* civics in the community of the forest was perfectly suited to

serve the goal of education toward the *völkisch* community. Not a system of knowledge is the final and highest goal of the study of life and the study of community, but to provide insights that guide how we act in, and for, the *völkisch* community. This series of books on the life of the community of the forest wants to do its own small part towards this goal. The analogies that arise at every opportunity – between the community of the forest and the *Volksgemeinschaft*, between order in the forest and order among the *Volk* – are so obvious that they need not be pointed out individually.<sup>138</sup>

With this statement Keller was responding to a quoted exhortation by Hitler that provided the rationale for the book:

It is the task of the National Socialist revolution to teach the millions of *Volksgenossen* the basic conditions on which the life of all rests.<sup>139</sup>

Keller's biology text did its part in this revolution by presenting the "obvious" parallels between forest and *Volk* in the most elementary and most insidious manner. Instead of explicitly explaining the appropriateness of transferring insights from the forest to human society, the book let the parallels develop as connections that 'suggested themselves' to the students' minds by way of association. The advantage of teaching children the tenets of Forestopia was that they needed no justification for the claims put forth: the *Volk* simply was like the forest.

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<sup>138</sup> *Dieser Aufgabe, der Erziehung zur völkischen Gemeinschaft zu dienen, ist die moderne Biologie als 'ganzheitliche Lebenslehre' in hervorragender Weise berufen. Nicht ein System von Erkenntnissen ist also das letzte und höchste Ziel der Lebens- und Gemeinschaftslehre, sondern: durch Einsicht das Handeln zu lenken, das Handeln in der und für die völkische Gemeinschaft. Ein kleiner Beitrag dazu möchte die vorliegende Hefereihe über das Leben der Waldgemeinschaft sein. Die Analogie zwischen Waldgemeinschaft und Volksgemeinschaft, Waldordnung und Volksordnung, die sich dabei an jeder Stelle ergeben, liegen so auf der Hand, daß sie im einzelnen nicht hervorgehoben zu werden brauchen.* (Keller 1936a, p. xii).

<sup>139</sup> *Aufgabe der nationalsozialistischen Revolution ist es, den Millionen unserer Volksgenossen die Grundbedingungen klarzumachen, auf denen das Leben aller beruht.* (Hitler, quoted in Keller 1936a, p. xii, emphasis in the original).

Figure 6.8 depicts a page from Keller's book that demonstrates how the illustrations 'worked' towards achieving these aims. The purpose of this particular page is to suggest that all strata of the forest are dependent not only on one another but also on the forest as a whole. There are three salient lessons about the "life force" contained in the illustrations.

Firstly, all forest strata (represented by the six small circles arranged in a ring) are dependent on the forest soil (the small circle in the centre). Secondly, all strata form a harmonious and functioning whole (represented by the thick surrounding line in illustrations 135 and 138). Thirdly, this whole only functions as long as "parasites" (represented by the small circle farthest to the right) do not gain enough influence to disrupt the community of the forest. The caption of illustration 138 explains:

**The 'net' of interdependencies  
 and the 'ring' of the community (the 'whole' of the forest)**  
 As long as all strata of the forest are present in the right proportions,  
 they are able to serve one another as well as the whole of the forest:  
 the forest community is 'in order.'  
 However, it is not the individual plant and the individual species  
 that is important here but the plant strata!  
 Parasites, too, serve the forest community, as long as they exterminate those  
 too weak to live. They harm the forest community once they grow  
 in numbers, attack those who are healthy and thus disrupt the community.

Illustrations 132 through 135 explain the constituting principles of such a healthy "whole of the forest" depicted in 138. Meanwhile, illustrations 136 and 137 explain the mechanism of disruption: 136 shows that parasites are dependent on all other strata for survival, while 137 claims that no other stratum is dependent on the parasites. The caption under the left half of the page summarizes:

All strata are united in the community through mutual dependency = service.  
 The parasites, however, exist in a unidirectional dependency = exploitation.

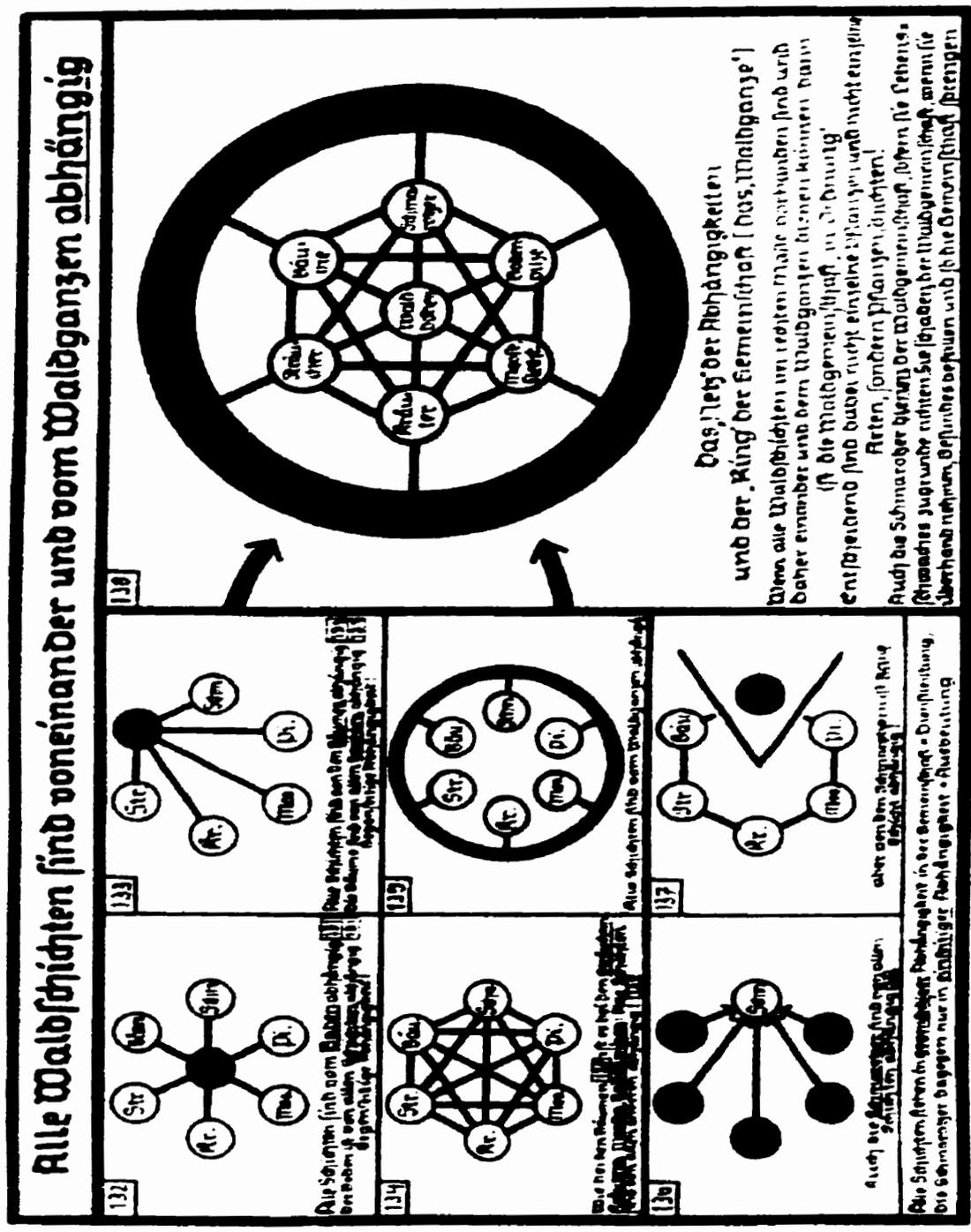


Figure 6.8: A page from *So lebt die Waldgemeinschaft* by Hugo Keller.

The political lessons contained in this page are numerous yet not always clear to a reader unfamiliar with the experience of Nazi Germany. To a student immersed in the jargon of the National Socialist curriculum, however, there could be no mistaking the principles and elements of the healthy “whole of the forest”: the central position of the forest soil symbolized the importance of *Bodenständigkeit* or ‘rootedness in the soil,’ while the all-encompassing “ring of community” surrounding “the whole of the forest” was the omnipresent state in its dominance over the *Volksgemeinschaft*. The dismissal of the individual as inconsequential when compared with the stratum reinforced the corporatist structure of the New Germany organized in occupational estates. Finally, *Schmarotzer* or “parasite” was the ubiquitous defamatory label attached to the Jews – no translation was necessary for the student to understand who was meant here.

The choice of words was further underscored by the use of graphs: by directing all arrows towards the “parasites” as the effigy of the Jews, illustration 136 suggested that the Jews were sapping strength from the other, productive strata.<sup>140</sup> Likewise, in illustration 137, the wedge isolating the “parasites” from the ring suggested both a dynamic intrusion by the “parasites” from the outside and the defensive exclusion initiated by the other strata in the ring.

The political and social message of this so-called ‘biology’ unit was the incompatibility of the Jews with the “ring of community” of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Students were taught to perceive the exclusion of Jews as a ‘natural’ means of defence by a community “in order”

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<sup>140</sup> Cf. illustration 133, where the same theoretical relationship (i.e., all strata being dependent on one particular stratum, namely, the forest trees) is depicted without the use of arrowheads. As well, the claim that the “parasites” are unidirectionally dependent on the other strata contradicts illustrations 132 through 134, where a mutual dependency of all strata is asserted.

against those bent on disrupting it: anti-Semitism was cast as a proactive measure of defence against “parasites.”<sup>141</sup> Due to its suggestive method, Keller’s school text book was a comparatively subtle vehicle of anti-Semitism. This does not mean, however, that it was less effective in influencing young Germans. Quite possibly, the reverse was the case as subtle propaganda with its more measured tone would sometimes be less easily comprehended as just that: propaganda. In this regard, subtle forest propaganda could be even more infectious than the numerous openly anti-Semitic inflections of Forestopia to which I now turn.

### 6.8 The Anti-Semitism of Forestopia

While Germans were learning from the trees in the forest about their worth as *Volksgenossen* in the *Volksgemeinschaft*, they were also given a lesson in racial hatred, particularly against Jews. As we saw in Chapters 4 and 5, anti-Semitism could be found in foresters’ writings as early as the 1840s. With the further rise of anti-Semitic tendencies after the recession of the 1870s and illegal immigration after the pogroms in Russia in the 1880s, defamatory remarks against Jews became commonplace.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Other units in Keller’s book included:

*Das Leben der Waldgemeinschaft: eine Gemeinschaft des Dienstes* (The Life of the Community of the Forest: A Community of Service (plate 38)).

*Gegenseitiger Dienst erhält die Schicksalsgemeinschaft gesund* (Mutual Service Maintains the Healthy Community of Fate (plate 41)).

*Im Naturwald herrscht gesundes Gleichgewicht unter den Gruppen der Waldgenossen* (A Healthy Balance Obtains Among the Groups of the Forest Comrades in the Natural Forest (plate 44)).

*Wenn Ungleichartigkeit das Gemeinschaftsleben ordnet, so lebt die Arbeits- und Wehrgemeinschaft durch gemeinsame Eingliederung, gegenseitigen Dienst, gegenseitige Entlastung, gegenseitige Ergänzung* (As Long as Diversity Orders the Life of the Community, the Communities of Work and of Defence Live Through Communal Arrangement, Mutual Service, Mutual Relief, and Mutual Complementation (plate 45)).

<sup>142</sup> Many authors have dealt with the question of whether and why anti-Semitism formed an integral part of German society that allowed Hitler to find “willing executioners” in otherwise “ordinary Germans.” See, for example, the recent discussions surrounding the books by Daniel Goldhagen (1996) and Christopher Browning (1992). In this study, I make no attempt at explaining the origins of anti-Semitism, but merely show its forestry-specific expression.

For example, during an excursion to a private forest estate, Professor Wiebecke from the forestry academy at Eberswalde was shown an oak plantation in which the row closest to the forest road consisted of ‘American’ red oak.<sup>143</sup> The professor reportedly reprimanded the owner: “Count, you served with the First Guard Regiment, correct? Was it customary there to place Jews in the first rank when the *Kaiser* came to inspect his troops?”<sup>144</sup> The point of this anecdote was to suggest that anti-Semitism was a sign of ‘good breeding,’ something that set ‘decent Germans’ apart from the ‘riff-raff.’

Evidently, like *völkisch* thought, anti-Semitism was not an invention of the Nazis, but the continuation of established lines of thought. And, similarly to the complementary dichotomy between blatant and subtle propaganda which we saw working in concert in, for example, the film industry, anti-Semitism in forestry writings took both overt and covert forms. In the overt variety, Jews were attacked directly, while in the covert form the Nazis’ racial hatred of Jews was transferred to a campaign against ‘foreign’ tree species in the ‘German’ forest.

An example of the overt anti-Semitism in foresters’ writings is the “Appeal” signed by the secretary of the *Fachschaft 11* (the mandatory and party-controlled labour union of all foresters) that appeared in 1935 and called on foresters to effectively ban Jews from the ‘German’ forest:

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<sup>143</sup> There are only two oaks native to Germany: *Quercus robur* and *Quercus petraea*. The red oak, *Quercus robur*, is commonly called “the American oak.”

<sup>144</sup> *Herr Graf, Sie haben doch beim 1. Garde-Regiment zu Fuß gestanden. Wurde da auch bei der Besichtigung des Regiments durch den Kaiser in das erste Glied eine Reihe Juden gestellt?* (Von Vietinghoff-Riesch 1940, p. 138, footnote 10). Wiebecke was a respected proponent of the traditional *Dauerwald* school. See the eulogy at the Annual Meeting of the German Society of Foresters (*Jahresbericht des Deutschen Forstvereins* 1925, p. 39).

In an exemplary fashion, many German spa towns and inns have already declared the presence of Jews as undesirable. We are now faced with the danger that those elements of foreign race take their perpetrations to the solitude of our forests. I expect of all political leaders of the *Fachschaft II* that they contribute to the exhaustive information of the rural population about the Jewish question.<sup>145</sup>

There never was a general ban proclaimed for the entire *Reich*, although Goebbels suggested the need for such a ban to Göring – who had the forest under his jurisdiction – at a general meeting on the “Jewish question” on November 12, 1938.<sup>146</sup> However, Steinsiek and Rozsnyay claim that regional restrictions may have been declared and that there is evidence of a “strict Gestapo ban on Jews visiting the forest,”<sup>147</sup> presumably to not only forestall the kinds of “perpetrations” insinuated in the “Appeal” quoted above, or to keep the forest for the exclusive enjoyment of “Aryans,” but also to prevent Jews from evading the constant surveillance by the Gestapo. Of course there were always other, more legalistic ways of effectively excluding Jews from the forest, for example by revoking their hunting licences, refusing them permits for collecting mushrooms and berries, or by “removing” Jewish merchants from the wood trade and industry.<sup>148</sup> The “Jewish Question” also formed the subject of numerous articles in the journals, all aimed at turning foresters into disseminators of the “racial question” among the rural population.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> *In vorbildlicher Weise haben bereits viele deutsche Kurorte und Gaststätten den Aufenthalt von Juden als unerwünscht bezeichnet. Es besteht nunmehr die Gefahr, daß diese rassenfremden Elemente ihr Treiben in die Einsamkeit unserer Wälder verlegen. Ich erwarte von allen politischen Leitern der Fachschaft II, daß sie für [sic] weitgehende Aufklärung der Judenfrage unter der Landbevölkerung beitragen.* (Koennecke 1935, p. 259).

<sup>146</sup> Goebbels 1983 (1938).

<sup>147</sup> *strenges Verbot von Waldausflügen für Juden durch die Gestapo* (Steinsiek and Rozsnyay 1994, p. 17).

<sup>148</sup> RGBI 1934 I, p. 549-564: Reichsjagdgesetz v. 3.7.1934 and RMBIFv 1939, p. 284: Ausgabe von Beeren- und Pilzscheinen an Juden. Erl. d. Rfm. v. 6.10.1939.

<sup>149</sup> For example: Elster 1935: “The Jewish Question is the Racial Question.” *Die Judenfrage ist die Rassenfrage*; as well as zur Megede 1938a and 1938b.

More frequent in the forestry literature was the covert variety of anti-Semitic agitation in which 'foreign' tree species were assigned the 'characteristics' of Jews. The point of such propaganda was to use the forest as a common-sense platform for the dissemination of racist ideology. The idea was to suggest that 'proper Germans' could not remain unconcerned as their forest was threatened by foreign influences. Once they agreed that foreign tree species had no right to live in the German forest, the extension to humans was suggested:

First, cast out the unwanted foreigners and bastards that have as little right to be in the German forest as they have to be in the German *Volk*; and, second, ensure that only those denizens with roots in the soil, i.e., those of local provenance, have a right to a *Heimat* and to a future in the German forest.<sup>150</sup>

With these words, Wilhelm Parchmann, the head of the *Forstpolitischer Apparat* (the Forestry Policy Unit of the Nazi party), explained the intent behind the *Forstliches Artgesetz* (Law Concerning the Purity of Race in Forestry) of December 13, 1934.<sup>151</sup> This law preceded the so-called Nuremberg Laws that dealt with the purity of German race and citizenship by almost a year, thus representing the first explicitly race-based legislation. In the forestry journals, the law was hailed as providing the foundations "for racially improving our forest stands" and thus guarding "against any future contamination of our stands with races that are in every respect unfit and foreign."<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> ... einmal unerwünschte Fremdlinge und Mischlinge, die im deutschen Wald genausowenig etwas zu suchen haben, wie im deutschen Volke, aus dem deutschen Walde herauszuwerfen, und zum anderen soll sichergestellt werden, daß für die Folge, genau wie bei den Menschen, nur noch bodenständige Einwohner d.h. standortsgemäße Holzarten im deutschen Walde Heimats- und Zukunftsrecht haben. (Wilhelm Parchmann, quoted in Bindseil 1935, p. 189).

<sup>151</sup> RGBl 1934 I S.1236-1237: Forstliches Artgesetz v. 13.12.1934. For the text, the preamble, and the official justification for the law, see: *Der Deutsche Forstwirt* 1934a and 1934b; *Allgemeine Forst- und Jagdzeitung* 1935.

<sup>152</sup> Insofern hat also das Forstliche Artgesetz erst eine richtige und brauchbare Grundlage für die Rasseertüchtigung unserer Forsten gegeben ... gegen weitere Verseuchung unserer Bestände mit in jeder Beziehung untauglichen und fremdländischen Rassen ... ('R.' 1935, p. 549. The 'R.' likely stands for Jakob Raab, the editor of *Der Deutsche Forstwirt*). For another 'appreciation' of the law and its "welcome provisions" for pronouncing "the death sentence" on stands of "poor race," see the editorial entitled "At last a clear direction in the question of race within forestry." *Ein forstliches Artgesetz: Endlich klare Linie in der*

Seen in isolation, the law was beneficial in that it regulated the classification of seeds and stipulated that only those categories could be used which were certified as ‘native’ and thus adapted to a certain region and site characteristics. The intent was to prevent the planting of stands which were not suited to the regional ecological site conditions. No race law, however, may ever be seen in isolation from its larger context. In this case, the wording of the law’s preamble made clear that it was firmly lodged within the greater National Socialist goal of the racialization of German society.<sup>153</sup> The preamble already applied to the racial purity of the forest the entire range of terminology that was later applied to Jews. For example, the “damages of racial contamination” were presented as obligating the forest owner to “exterminate racially inferior populations.”<sup>154</sup>

The forestry journals agreed. One editorial remarked that

As a matter of course the racial question was among the first measures [*sic*] in a National Socialist Germany. . . . The reason is that this problem is most closely related to and even contained in, as it were, in National Socialist thought.<sup>155</sup>

And even forest game was put to service in this mobilization against foreign tree species!

In an article prompting a lengthy literary discussion in the *Der Deutsche Forstwirt* during

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*forstlichen Rassenfrage* (*Der Deutsche Forstwirt* 1934a).

<sup>153</sup> This is also expressed in the newspaper reports on the law - which, needless to say, were largely ‘prefabricated’ by Goebbels and handed to the editors in his daily press conference. The following is from an article the *Berliner Tageblatt* of December 4, 1936: “With [this] law a great leap forward has been made. It serves to preserve the beauty and glory of the German forest and its protection from contamination by elements that are foreign to its nature.” *Mit dem forstlichen Artgesetz ist ein grosser Schritt vorwärts getan. Es dient einzig und allein der Erhaltung der Schönheit und Herrlichkeit des deutschen Waldes und seinem Schutz gegen artfremde Verseuchung.*

<sup>154</sup> *Die Schäden der forstlichen Rasseverseuchung* (from the justification); *Ausmerzungen rassistischer minderwertiger Bestände* (from the introduction) and *Der Waldbesitzer oder Nutzungsberechtigte ist verpflichtet, schlechtrassige Bestände und Einzelstämme auszumerzen.* (from section 1).

<sup>155</sup> *Im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland war es selbstverständlich, das gerade die Rassenfrage zu den ersten Maßnahmen gehören mußte. . . . Denn gerade dieses Problem ist ja mit am engsten verwandt und gewissermaßen mitgehalten im nationalsozialistischen Gedankengut.* (*Der Deutsche Forstwirt* 1934a, pp. 1097-1098).

1934/35, one forester by the name of Bindseil called for a cleansing of the German forest (and, by implication, the German people) from foreign races because the native deer and elk instinctively “assume a hostile attitude against most foreign tree species” and try to kill them by grazing, barking, and rubbing of their velvet “with all their might,” conducting “a war of annihilation.”<sup>156</sup> Bindseil concluded from their behaviour that the grazers served to keep the natural balance of the forest by fighting against foreign influences.<sup>157</sup> This, Bindseil concluded, should remind Germans of their own duty.

Bindseil’s argument was a complete reversal of facts: the animals picked out those species because they preferred them as more tasty and/or pliable. In fact, so ludicrous was Bindseil’s argument that it provided one of the rare opportunities for foresters who were critical of the regime and its racial tenets to safely start a literary discussion.<sup>158</sup> On the whole, however, the literature in forestry was filled with condemnations of both Jews and foreign tree species that went unopposed. These findings contradict the assertion by Gröning and Wolschke-Bulmahn that foresters were “considerably more moderate” than landscape planners in their discussions of ‘Germanic’ vs. ‘foreign’ forest species.<sup>159</sup> The long term effect of such literature on young foresters can only be surmised, but it is likely that the constant barrage of racially tinged arguments did what it was supposed to do: racialize

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<sup>156</sup> *Es ist eine auffallende Erscheinung in unseren Wäldern, daß die einheimischen Wildarten den meisten ausländischen Holzarten gegenüber eine feindselige Stellung einnehmen. Dabei pflegen sie ihnen mit allen zu Gebote stehenden Mitteln, Verbiß, Schälen, Schlagen und Fegen zu Leibe zu gehen, um ihnen den Garaus zu machen. . . . Vernichtungskrieg, den unser Wild gegen diese Holzarten führt, . . .* (Bindseil 1934, p. 1054).

<sup>157</sup> *Das Wild hat eben ein feines [sic] Instinkt und angeborenes Talent dafür, die schwachen, untauglichen und fremdartigen Elemente im Walde mit Sicherheit herauszufinden und an ihrer unverzüglichen Ausmerzung im Sinne der Gesunderhaltung des Waldes und seiner wohlgeordneten Haushaltsordnung in hervorragendem Maße mitzuwirken.* (Bindseil 1934, p. 1055).

<sup>158</sup> See the exchange between Bindseil (1934 and 1935), Dengler (1935), Krug (1935), Kulenkampff (1935), and von Minnigerode (1935).

<sup>159</sup> Cf. Gröning and Wolschke-Bulmahn 1987a, p. 144, fnt. 1.

German foresters and colour their own interactions with the general population, which in turn reinforced the xenophobic tendencies inherent in the vision of *Volksgemeinschaft*.

### 6.9 1930s *Waldbücher*: The Continuing Power of the Printed Book as a Vehicle for Forestopia

In contrast to earlier chapters with their emphasis on printed sources and particularly books, this chapter has examined a greater variety of sources and especially the new mass media emerging in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century: film and broadcasting. As we saw, the firm grip of the state on these new media made them particularly vulnerable to the imposition of state propaganda. Film and other visual forms of representation such as painting proved easily adaptable to the representation of the forest according to the wishes of the state, yet even the less-suitable medium of radio was harnessed in the service of promoting the forest as an analogy of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Still, articles and especially books continued to be a very important outlet for foresters' and non-foresters' interpretations of Forestopia as *Waldbücher* or 'forest books' continued to be amongst the most popular non-fiction genres of the 1930s.<sup>160</sup>

For example, the first edition of Carl Wilhelm Neumann's *Das Buch vom deutschen Wald* (The Book of the German Forest, 1936) had a first print run of 75,000 and sold 160,000 copies within five years.<sup>161</sup> In a collective review of "Popular Books on the German Forest" (*Volkstümliche Werke über den deutschen Wald*), Lorenz Wappes, the *éminence grise* of the

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<sup>160</sup> Cf. Schama 1995, p. 118.

<sup>161</sup> Neumann 1936: *Das Buch vom deutschen Wald*. (The Book of the German Forest). A book with 150 illustrations, 64 plates, and 4 colour plates.

German Society of Foresters, cheered that such a “staggeringly high print run” in combination with the accessible presentation and the “surprisingly low price” of the book “enabled the penetration of the broad masses” with the “non-forestry aspects of the forest.” This would play an important part in bringing the *Volk* closer to “grasping the being (*Wesen*) of the forest behind its beautiful appearance” – all of which he deemed an important part in the ongoing “reform of the German.”<sup>162</sup> From the preceding discussions, we now can gauge the meaning of those ominous words: *Waldbücher* served to re-educate German citizens into *Volksgenossen*.

Clearly not every book reached such a large audience, but the sheer number of works dealing with *Wald und Volk* and their often lavish illustrations ensured that the point of the analogy between ‘Forest and People’ was disseminated widely and intuitively.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> *Die Darstellung wendet sich an die breiten Massen, und der für die Ausstattung erstaunlich niedrige Preis ermöglicht auch – wie der Erfolg durch die gewaltige Auflage (75 000) zeigt – das Eindringen in diese. . . . Das Volk soll hinter der schönen Außenseite das Wesen des Waldes kennenlernen. . . . Denn mit der Umgestaltung des deutschen Menschen ist auch die Erkenntnis von der sozusagen ‘nichtforstlichen’ Bedeutung des Waldes erheblich gestiegen. Es muß nun dafür gesorgt werden, daß diese Errungenschaft . . . gesichert und erweitert wird.* (Wappes 1936, p. 364, emphasis in original). Wappes was chairman of the German Society of Foresters from 1919 to 1933. As the leader of the Bavarian Liberals, he was a staunch nationalist, yet not a National Socialist. He refused to join the NSDAP in 1933 and thus could no longer keep the position of chairman. Instead, he was made ‘honorary curator.’ (Cf. the biography in Wappes 1950).

<sup>163</sup> According to Hugo Keller’s 1953 bibliography of works on the forest, Neumann’s book was “the cheapest and most widely read of all recent forest books.” (Keller 1953, p. 70). A small selection of the numerous other titles includes:

Anonymous 1927: *Deutscher Wald in Schönen Bildern*. (The German Forest in Beautiful Images). With 48 pages of photographs. By 1943, 126,000 copies had been printed.

Hilf 1933-41: *Der Wald*. (The Forest). A serial publication with 217 illustrations.

Welk 1935: *Der deutsche Wald. Sein Leben und seine Schönheit. Ein Führer durch die Wälder unserer Heimat*. (The German Forest. Its Life and its Beauty. A Guide to the Forest of our Heimat). A book with over 550 illustrations and 40 colour plates.

Behm 1935a: *Das Wunder des Waldes*. (The Wonder of the Forest). With 16 plates and 16 ink drawings.

Kober 1935: *Deutscher Wald, Deutsches Volk*. (German Forest, German Volk).

Schmitt 1936-41: Eight separate forest issues in the series *Lebensgemeinschaften der deutschen Heimat*. (Communities of Life in the German Heimat).

Mezger and Oeser 1935: *Das nieverlorene Paradies*. (The Paradise That Was Never Lost).

Oeser 1941: *Deutscher Wald*. (The German Forest). A book-club edition with 192 mostly full-page photographs.

Guenther 1942: *Der Wald als Lebensgemeinschaft*. *Hilgers Deutsche Bücherei* 667. (The Forest as a

Furthermore, even if the author did not always intend his or her work to be read within a nationalist or National Socialist framework, the reviewers in the forestry journals frequently superimposed such interpretations on the book.<sup>164</sup> Ultimately, it is of secondary importance whether the interpretation was intended by the author or superimposed by the receiving audience: an appropriated work could be just as powerful a propaganda tool as a custom-ordered book.

For example, the book *Der Wald als Lebensgemeinschaft* (The Forest as a Community of Life, 1936, second edition in 1940) by Otto Feucht was considered as “strictly factual” even by Hugo Keller.<sup>165</sup> The reviewer Wilhelm Leiningen, however, quoted a passage in which Feucht stated that:

The continuation of the community of the forest depends on its individual members being different and cooperating with one another: equality is death, structure is life!<sup>166</sup>

and extended it into a political example:

Economists and politicians could learn something here. Ultimately, the sociology of the people is nothing more than applied biology!<sup>167</sup>

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Community of Life. Vol. 667 of Hilger's German Library).

Francé 1943: *Leben und Wunder des deutschen Waldes. Gesetze einer Lebensgemeinschaft*. (Life and Wonders of the German Forest. The Laws of a Community of Life). A revised edition of his 1927 *Vom deutschen Walde* (Of the German Forest).

<sup>164</sup> Often the authors employed phrases which lent themselves to such interpretations. Welk, for example, wrote of the “thousandfold will to life” in the forest, while Mezger and Oeser juxtaposed German as “a forest land” characterized by “life to will”, “order”, “diligence”, “utility”, and “beauty” with swamplands that emanated “the reek of decay.” (cf. Weyergraf 1987, pp. 222 and 232).

<sup>165</sup> *streng sachlich belehrende Darstellung* Thus Hugo Keller in his 1953 bibliography of works on the forest (Keller 1953, p. 70). The book contained 166 photographs on 80 plates and 32 ink drawings, but only 56 pages of text.

<sup>166</sup> *Auf der Verschiedenheit der einzelnen Glieder und deren lebendigem Zusammenhang beruht die Fortdauer der Gemeinschaft Wald: Gleichheit ist Tod, Gliederung ist Leben!* (Feucht 1936, p. 42).

<sup>167</sup> *Auch die Volkswirtschaftler und Politiker könnten da etwas lernen, denn die Soziologie der Völker ist letzten Endes auch nichts anderes als angewandte Biologie.* (Leiningen 1937, p. 158).

While some authors were certainly misinterpreted and misrepresented by such transference of biological tenets to political arguments, many others were quite forthcoming about the kinds of political and social lessons they wanted their audience to draw from the forest.<sup>168</sup>

I close this chapter with a particularly blatant example of such a political *Waldbuch* that will provide the capstone to our examination of the role of the forest in constructing the *Volksgemeinschaft*. The book was written in 1934 by Franz von Mammen, professor emeritus of forest policy at the Prussian forestry academy at Tharandt. During the First World War, von Mammen had written “A Guide to the Mobilization of the Forest” for the war effort.<sup>169</sup> His 1934 book, by contrast, went a long way towards achieving the goal of “mental mobilization” proclaimed by Goebbels. With a bow to the “still exceedingly topical book by Duesberg,” von Mammen called his book *Der Wald als Erzieher*<sup>170</sup> yet this re-interpretation of Duesberg’s classic exhortation stood firmly in the service of National Socialist ‘education’ of the *Volksgenossen*. Von Mammen wanted

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<sup>168</sup> See the books and speeches by Hans Wolfgang Behm, for example: *Der Wald als Lebensgemeinschaft* (The Forest as a Community of Life. Speech given at Annual Wood Convention 1935), reprinted in the Proceedings and in *Deutsche Forstbeamtenzeitung* (cf. Behm 1935b). Samples from Behm’s exhortations: “The social arrangement in the forest is obvious everywhere in the forest, leading us to the sublime realization that the individual counts nothing, the totality everything!” and “Whoever isolates himself, is doomed!” *Allerorten drängt sich uns der soziale Ausgleich im Wald geradezu auf und führt uns zu der erhabenen Erkenntnis, daß der einzelne nichts, die Gesamtheit jedoch alles gilt!* and *Wer sich isoliert, geht unter.* (Behm 1935b, p. 501, emphasis in the original).

<sup>169</sup> Von Mammen and Riedel 1917: *Die Kriegsnutzung des Waldes. Eine Anleitung zur Mobilmachung des Waldes.* (The Utilization of the Forest in War. A Guide to the Mobilization of the Forest). See also: von Mammen 1916: *Die Bedeutung des Waldes insbesondere im Kriege.* (The Importance of the Forest in War).

<sup>170</sup> *Jenes zwar schon bereits 1910 erschienene aber auch heute noch überaus zeitgemäße Buch von Duesberg* (von Mammen 1934, p. 7).

to enable everyone who lives and acts within the National Uprising to find out all that the forest can teach us, particularly at this juncture. . . . I sincerely hope that my simple contribution will do its part towards making tree and forest the educator of the German *Volk* in the Third Reich.<sup>171</sup>

With such clear premises, it is not surprising that von Mammen's book was but one continuous sermon about the *völkisch* importance of the German forest. The variations on the analogy of forest and *Volk* are simply too numerous to treat in detail here. As one reviewer noted, von Mammen had assembled "everything" written about "the ethical and aesthetical importance of the forest to Germandom."<sup>172</sup> The chapter and section titles clearly reflect this focus:

Chapter I: World Views Fighting in the Forest from Cradle to Grave:  
 Identity and Diversity  
 Socialism and Individualism  
 Struggle and Harmony<sup>173</sup>

as well as "Parties in the Forest" (in Chapter III), "Foreigners in Forest and *Volk*" (in Chapter IV), and "Harmony and Unity in Forest and *Volk* (in Chapter V).<sup>174</sup>

In these chapters, the incantations of the *völkisch* forest as 'educator' spanned all aspects of life in the New Germany: from 'racial vigour' to 'genetic improvement'; from 'duty and sacrifice' to 'Führer-principle' and 'will to power'; from 'rootedness of the strong' to

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<sup>171</sup> *Aber ich habe die Schrift, die ja von Anfang an auf nationalem Boden fußte, derart ergänzt, daß ein jeder, der mit der nationalen Erhebung lebt und wirkt, all das herausfinden kann, was gerade auch die heutige Zeit vom deutschen Walde lernen kann. . . . Ich gebe meiner schlichten Arbeit den aufrichtigen Wunsch mit auf den Weg, daß auch sie an ihrem Teile mit dazu beitragen möge, daß Baum und Wald auch im dritten Reiche dem deutschen Volke immer mehr zum Erzieher werden!* (von Mammen 1934, p. 3).

<sup>172</sup> *mit rühmenswertem Fleiß alles zusammengetragen, was hervorragende Schriftsteller über die ethische und ästhetische Bedeutung des Waldes für das Volkstum ausgesprochen haben* (Wappes 1935, p. 750).

<sup>173</sup> *I: Die im Walde von der Wiege bis zum Grabe miteinander kämpfenden Weltanschauungen: Gleichheit und Ungleichheit  
 Sozialismus und Individualismus  
 Kampf und Harmonie*

(from the table of contents of von Mammen 1934, pp. 124-125).

<sup>174</sup> *Parteien im Wald, Ausländer in Wald und Volk, and Die Harmonie, die Einheit in Wald und Volk* (from the table of contents of von Mammen 1934, pp. 124-125).

'weeding out of the weak and sick'; from 'education on the basis of biology' to the 'struggle for existence' between the '*Entartete*' (degenerate) and 'the strong'; from 'common good before private profit' to 'service to the community'; and from 'father's house' to 'mother's breast.'

Time and again von Mammen pointed to the forest and even to individual tree species to share "their lessons for man and *Volk*": There were spruce, fir, and pine as the "peasants and labourers" of the forest. "Thinly dispersed" among those were ash, linden, elm, and maple as the aesthetes who were allowed to contribute beauty and grace to the working life of the "*Volksgenossen*." Towering above all were the "hard and noble oak trees" as the "leaders of the *Volk*", victoriously fighting off the "burrowing wasps and worms" of the obsolete parliament and its parties.<sup>175</sup> In these parallels, the boundaries between forest and people were not just fluid, they were dissolved. *Wald* and *Volk* were one, functioning according to the same eternal laws that in the nick of time had brought forth the saviour of both: National Socialism.

Von Mammen added little original thought to these "lessons." In fact, *Der Wald als Erzieher* was a seamless compilation of received writings on the *völkisch* importance of the German forest that spanned the last half century and it is often impossible to tell where von Mammen speaks with his own voice and when he is repeating the views of other authors.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Chapter IV: *Die einzelnen Holzarten des Waldes und ihre Lehren für Mensch und Volk* (von Mammen 1934, p. 73, as well as pp. 88, 89, and passim).

<sup>176</sup> Originally written in 1929, the book was updated in 1934 to reflect the recent changes in Germany and the writings that had been published in the wake of those changes, for example by incorporating 'fitting' quotes from speeches by Hitler such as: "The storm would break the forest were it not for the way it stands as one. One tree must support the other: one for all, all for one, that is the secret of its strength. That is the eternal message of the *Heimat*." *Wenn der Wald nicht so stände, wie er steht, dann würden ihn die Stürme brechen. Ein Baum muß den andern stützen. Einer für Alle, Alle für Einen, das ist das Geheimnis seiner Kraft. Das ist der Heimat ewig Wort.* (von Mammen 1934, p. 49).

Despite its rambling and amorphous structure, and at the same time because of it, the book was perfectly suited to becoming a multiplier of the views put forth in those writings. Like Dörr's speech, von Mammen's book served as a resource guide for foresters in need of material and direction for their own speeches. One reviewer welcomed the fact that the book

has appeared at a very opportune moment, just when such views as are developed here are finally being restored to their proper right and receive the attention they deserve. To us, foresters who are frequently called upon to speak to the public about our forest, this work is an excellent guideline and a good source for such speeches.<sup>177</sup>

Von Mammen's *Der Wald als Erzieher* can thus provide us with the closing bracket for our examination of the analogy of forest and *Volk*. We began this examination with the first formulation of the concept of Forestopia by Duesberg in a 1910 book by the same title. Less than 25 years later, Duesberg's musings had become part of the official policy platform of the German government. For those foresters ordered to speak on the *völkisch* forest, the new and improved *Der Wald als Erzieher* provided the necessary verbal ammunition.

Moreover, the fact that von Mammen's book presented no new perspectives on the question of forest and *Volk* but only solidified existing perceptions also confirms my claim that the National Socialist use of the concept of Forestopia was not revolutionary at all, but a continuation of the *völkisch* theme of previous decades.

Finally, von Mammen's book also betrays the currency of his views. The seamless ribbon of quotations woven through the text, one might even say that constituted the text, testifies to the enormous number of writings that had dealt with the *völkisch* importance of the forest long before the National Socialists made it a public affair to love the forest.

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<sup>177</sup> *Sie ist gerade recht in einer Zeit erschienen, wo solche Gedanken, wie sie hier entwickelt sind, endlich wieder zu ihrem Recht gelangen und die Beachtung finden, die sie verdienen. Da wir Forstleute oft in die Lage kommen, in der Öffentlichkeit über unseren Wald zu sprechen, so ist die Schrift gleichzeitig ein ausgezeichnete Leitfaden für solche Vorträge und eine gute Quelle, aus der bequem viel Brauchbares geschöpft werden kann. Auch aus diesem Grunde sei die Schrift empfohlen.* (Vanselow 1935, p. 200).

## 6.10 Conclusion

One often neglected aspect of the National Socialist rule is the degree to which Germans in the mid-1930s approved of the new regime. Particularly Hitler's conservative coalition partners – who had made Hitler chancellor in the hope that he would lose his nimbus of 'redeemer' in the harsh reality of government responsibility – were surprised by the speed with which Hitler turned Germany into "a *Reich* united in hope and faith in its future."<sup>178</sup> By the mid-1930s, the coercive coordination, the incessant propaganda, but also the real and perceived improvements particularly in the social sphere, had done their magic: the *Volksgemeinschaft* "had become half reality while remaining half propaganda."<sup>179</sup> Everyday and everywhere, the *Volksgenossen* had to manifest through their behaviour that they formed part of the *Volksgemeinschaft*: by saluting the swastika flag, by greeting each other with "Heil Hitler!", by donating to countless collection drives, and by participating in marches and assemblies organized by state and party, or at the workplace. In turn, with every small affirmation of their obedience to the decreed 'national community,' Germans were giving the chimera a firmer hold on their collective lives. Such pressures on the individual were one half of the everyday "dual reality of consent and coercion" that now governed their lives.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Vice-Chancellor von Papen, speaking after the results of the November 1933 plebiscite which gave Hitler an approval rate of 95.1 % across the *Reich*. At the same time, an 'election' of a "unity list" to the *Reichstag* was held. 92.2 % voted for the list across the *Reich*, with a maximum of 99.8 % in one Protestant farming community in Kurhessen and a minimum of 78.1 % in Hamburg. The turnout was 92.5 %. According to Frei, the results were not systematically manipulated but "reflected the mood really prevailing in Germany at the time." (Frei 1993, pp. 67-69).

<sup>179</sup> (Frei 1993, p. 99). The early economic successes of the National Socialists were mostly the result of fortunate timing and circumstances beyond their control, but they took and received full credit for cutting unemployment in half in less than a year.

<sup>180</sup> Frei 1993, p. 99.

The other, more obscure part of that reality was supplied by the interminable flow of propaganda, and it was here that Forestopia with its established nationalist and communal connotations played its part in erecting and maintaining National Socialist rule. In this chapter I showed that forest and trees played a suggestive role in the symbolic representation of *Volksgemeinschaft* and *Volksgenossen*, respectively, by suggesting that all *Volksgenossen* were but elements of a greater whole which everyone served from their particular station – they were the trees in the forest of the German national community.

Certainly the use of the forest in state propaganda was not the deciding factor in creating a widespread feeling that such a ‘national community’ did indeed exist. The economic turnaround gave German workers a few ‘good years,’ while foreign policy successes such as the re-unification of the Saar region with Germany and the re-introduction of military service firmed up national pride. Yet, the numerous incantations about “The German Forest” in film, radio, print, and speeches contributed their own small part to the overall perception amongst Germans that they stood united and strong once again: like a mighty forest over which the even mightier oak of the party spread its sheltering canopy.

In many ways, the middle years of the Nazi regime were thus a time when things appeared to be looking up and when the regime was in fact widely credited for the turnaround. Alas, economic and political resurgence were not the ultimate goals Hitler held for Germany: these years were only the prelude to the conquest of *Lebensraum* in the East. But before the German people would be ready to wage another war, they had to be sufficiently racialized in their thoughts and actions to think of themselves as the ‘master race’ predestined to displace the ‘inferior’ Slavs. As the next Chapter will show, the forest once again served the National Socialists well in making Germans receptive to such slogans.

RASSE AND FORESTOPIA: THE USE OF FOREST AND FORESTRY AS RACIAL  
INDICATORS IN DELINEATING GREATER GERMANY,  
1935-1940

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Douglas fir, red oak, honey locust and a few others are currently being considered for naturalization. The outcome is certain as far as the larch is concerned because, stemming from the nearby German lands of the Alps as it does, it is not a foreign tree to us. With the larch, the forest has carried out what is denied to us in the world of politics: the entry of German-Austria into Germany.

Professor Franz von Mammen 1934<sup>1</sup>

Where the verdant green ends in the eastern reaches of the [southeastern Austrian province of] *Burgenland*, where no trees can be found in the villages anymore, that is the boundary of Germandom, that is where the steppe begins, where Asia begins.

Reich Landscape Advocate Alwin Seifert 1939<sup>2</sup>

When we walk through the forest, we see God's beautiful creation. The forest fills us with unending gratitude, with noble thoughts and aspirations, and with immense joy about God's beautiful nature. That is what sets us apart from that certain people which deems itself the chosen one and yet can see only cubic metres of timber in the forest.

Reichsforstmeister Hermann Göring 1938<sup>3</sup>

## 7.1 Introduction

After their takeover in 1933, the National Socialists skilfully adapted the *völkisch* Forestopia to their own propaganda goals. In the coordinated forestry journals and books, on the radio and in the movie theatres, the German forest was cast as symbol of the National Socialist *Volksgemeinschaft*, while the trees stood for the individual *Volksgenossen*. Most of those

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<sup>1</sup> *Douglasfichte, Roteiche, Akazie und einige andere stehen jetzt in Verhandlung wegen ihrer Einbürgerung. Am sichersten hat diese schon die Lärche erreicht, die uns ja kein wesensfremder Baum mehr ist, da sie aus den nahen deutschen Alpenländern stammt; bei ihr hat sich im Walde der in der großen Politik noch gehemmte Anschluß Deutsch-Oesterreichs an Deutschland schon vollzogen.* (von Mammen 1934, p. 99).

<sup>2</sup> *Wo etwa im Osten des Burgenlandes das Grün aufhört, wo in den Dörfern kein Baum mehr steht, da ist auch die Grenze des deutschen Volkstums, da beginnt die Steppe, beginnt Asien.* (Seifert 1942, p. 199).

<sup>3</sup> *Wenn wir durch den Wald gehen, sehen wir Gottes herrliche Schöpfung, erfüllt uns der Wald mit unendlicher Dankbarkeit, erfüllt uns mit hohem Denken, erfüllt uns mit edlem Sinn und einer ungeheuren Freude an Gottes herrlicher Natur. Das unterscheidet uns von jenem Volke, das sich auserwählt dünkt und das, wenn es durch den Wald schreitet, nur den Festmeter berechnen kann.* (Hermann Göring, cited in *Deutsche Forst-Zeitung* 1938a, p. 444).

analogies, though, were drawn as if standing before a mirror. That is to say that they were drawn not against an outside standard but by comparing Germans to an idea of Germans and Germanness constructed by *völkisch* activists. In the various Forestopias of the first few years of Nazi rule, the forest thus represented the ‘qualities’ that supposedly were the hallmark of Germans and Germanness: fortitude, rootedness in the soil, cooperation, and subordination of the individual to the whole, amongst others. The idea was to encourage Germans to think of themselves as heirs to the Germanic spirit. Applying this spirit to the present, Germans were to joyfully surrender their un-German individuality and follow the National Socialist blueprint for a classless society in a corporatist state. During the early years, the message of National Socialist forest propaganda thus was one of positive integration: ‘Together, we are like the mighty forest – join us!’ In the mid 1930s, however, that self-absorption and preoccupation with domestic issues came to an end.

Having brought state, society, and economy under their control, the National Socialist regime reset its sights on its erstwhile goal: winning *Lebensraum* in the East. This ‘foreign policy’ required the further strengthening of Germany in several ways. Firstly, all German-speakers (as well as their territories) had to be absorbed into the *Reich* to boost Germany’s *völkisch* strength, resource and food base, industrial capacity, and territorial buffer zones. To prepare for the absorption, Germans had to be shown their kinship with those ‘brethren’ currently outside the borders of the *Reich*. Secondly, Germans had to be ‘made aware’ of their racial superiority *vis-à-vis* the Slavic peoples, providing the justification for the eventual conquest of Eastern Europe.

Starting around 1936, the internal cohesion of Germany began to be reinforced through negative integration, namely, by elevating Germandom over foreign, particularly Slavic and

Jewish, 'ways of being.' In the forestry literature of those years, the shift from positive to negative integration of Germandom is readily traceable as the forest and Forestopia increasingly served to elevate the German forest over foreign forests – and to elevate the German 'race' that had created such 'German' forests over the foreign 'races' unable to do so. The gaze of foresters, previously aimed at the conditions within Germany proper, now was turning outward to juxtapose 'German' with 'non-German' and redraw the boundaries that separated them.

The juxtaposition took two forms. One involved general comparisons of German 'forest-mindedness' with the lack of such an attitude in the neighbouring peoples of Europe. Such comparisons appeared mainly during the years 1935-1937, in book form, and without explicit connection to external events. By contrast, the second category of propaganda appeared mainly in the form of articles and was timed to provide propagandistic cover for the annexation of Austria in March 1938, the occupation of the *Sudetenland* in October 1938, the occupation of Bohemia and Moravia in March 1939, and, after the beginning of the war in September 1939, the German attacks on France and Norway among others. I begin this chapter with examples of the general celebrations of German 'forest-mindedness,' before presenting case studies focussing on the countries named.

## 7.2 The German Forest as Indicator of the German *Volks- und Kulturboden*

As foresters shifted their attention to the forest on the periphery of Germany and further afield, they also complemented their *völkisch* concerns with increased attention to the general ‘character’ of the landscape which they were examining. German foresters argued that the forest was the principal ingredient of the German landscape: it was what made a landscape German and what non-German landscapes lacked.

In the mid-thirties, a powerful visualization of this dichotomy of landscapes based on ‘German forest care’ and ‘non-German forest neglect’ appeared in the form of a paired set of paintings. They were commissioned by the *Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft Holz e. V., Werbe- und Aufklärungsstelle der deutschen Forst- und Holzwirtschaft*, a central public relations board sponsored jointly by forestry services and forest industries. The original paintings were executed by Kurd Albrecht and first shown at the exhibition *Schaffendes Volk (Volk at Work)* in Berlin in 1937 (see Figure 7.1). For heightened impact, they were also schematized into black and white illustrations and in this form became incorporated into numerous publications (see Figure 7.2).

The paintings depicted a ‘before and after’ view of the same landscape: one with a well-maintained forest, the other after the destruction of the forest cover. The explanatory notes to the paintings were published in booklet form and gave the rationale for the simplifying juxtaposition:

The forest not only determines the face of the landscape and the cultural and technical development of the people living therein; it also determines their *völkisch* fate.

For this reason, the knowledge about forest and wood should form the foundation of the teaching of local history [*Heimatkunde*]. It is not easy, however, to explain the connections in a simple form that is accessible to laypersons. These paintings seek to overcome this difficulty by juxtaposing an ideal German landscape (with well-maintained forests) with a similar yet devastated landscape (in which the forests were destroyed). In doing so, they want to raise awareness that the preservation,

expansion, and improvement of our forest is a prerequisite for the culture of our landscape [*Landeskultur*] and thus for the future of *Volk* and state.<sup>4</sup>

This was a clear statement of the political importance of the forest: without the forest, the German *Volk* and ultimately the German state would be without the landscape that sustained them as such. We have encountered this sort of argument before, in Zentgraf's 1923 book *Wald und Volk*.<sup>5</sup> Zentgraf had argued that the coevolution of forest and character had formed Germans into the hardy and industrious race that they were. But what made the forest such an important pillar of the state in this more landscape-oriented argument about forest and Germandom? A comparison of the two illustrations yields the answer: it was the protective mantle that the forest spread over the landscape that kept the landscape "in order" and thus suitable as a German *Lebensraum*.

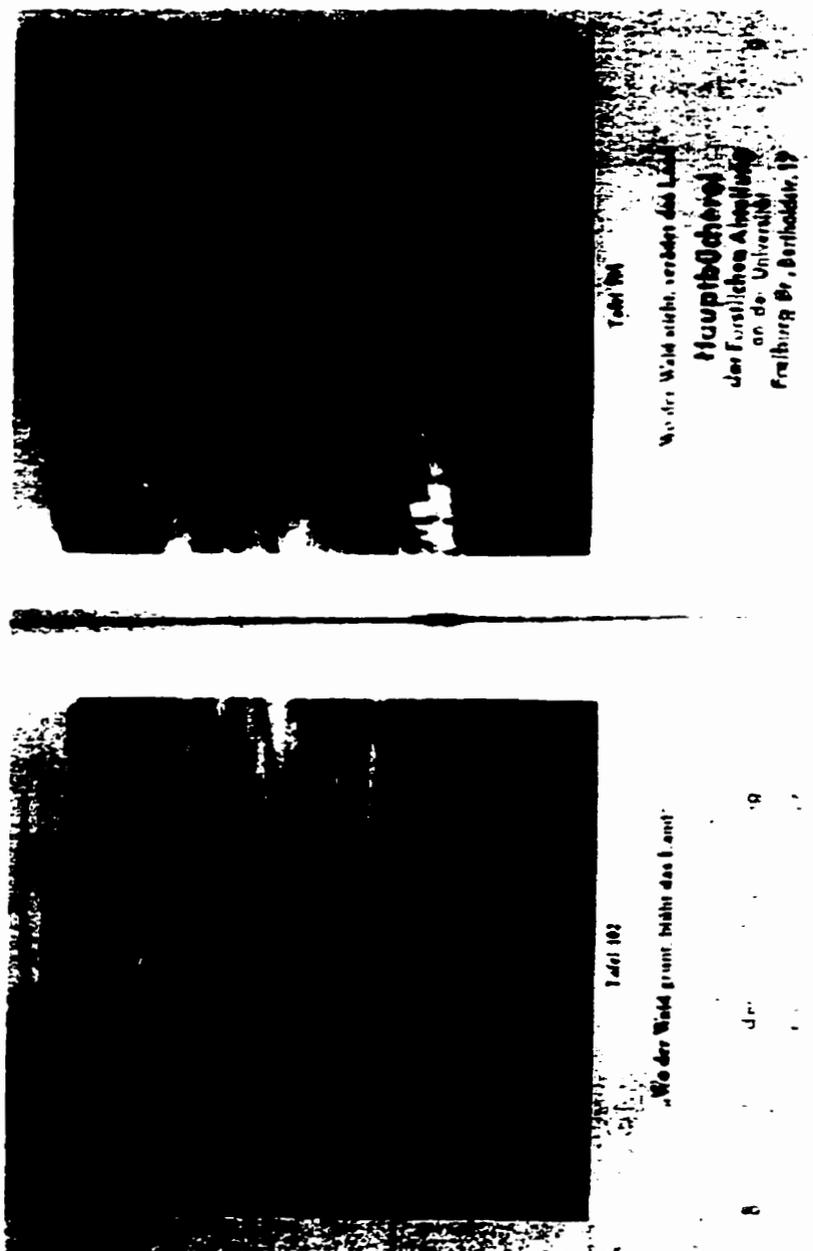
On the first illustration depicting the "ideal German landscape," the forest covers not only the hilltops and the middle slopes of the mountain ranges but is interspersed across the entire landscape. Everywhere the forest protects the soil from erosion and buffers the water budget. From this single protective capacity of the forest, all the blessings of the German landscape derive: its rich soils, its productive agriculture, its clean water, and its navigable rivers. Together, these make for a healthy primary sector which in turn is the basis for the development of prosperous cities, diversified industries, a functioning infrastructure and a

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<sup>4</sup> *Der Wald ist nicht nur bestimmend für das Antlitz der Landschaft, für die kulturelle und technische Entwicklung ihrer Menschen; er ist es auch für ihr völkisches Schicksal.*

*Die Kunde von Wald und Holz sollte deshalb Grundlage der Heimatkunde sein. Es ist aber nicht leicht, die Zusammenhänge in einfacher Form laienverständlich darzulegen. Die Lehrtafeln wollen deshalb durch Gegenüberstellung einer deutschen Ideallandschaft mit gepflegtem Wald und einer im Aufbau ähnlichen Landschaft nach Verwüstung des Waldes Verständnis dafür wecken, daß die Erhaltung, Mehrung und Besserung unseres Waldes Vorbedingung für die Landeskultur und damit für die Sicherung der Zukunft von Volk und Staat ist. (Brauer 1936, p. 3, paragraph break in the original).*

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Chapter 5, section 5.3.1.



**Figure 7.1: The original set of paintings commissioned by the *Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft Holz* and shown at the exhibition *Schaffendes Volk* in 1937: “Where the Forest Blossoms, the Landscape Thrives” (“Tafel 102” on the left) and “Where the Forest Dies, the Landscape Withers” (“Tafel 103” on the right). See text for explanation.**

booming trade. The forest thus guarantees the primary production on which a truly *völkisch*, rooted-in-the-soil society and state ultimately rest. This, the notes assert, is the ‘natural’ German landscape:

[The first illustration] “Where the Forest Blossoms, the Landscape Thrives” shows a landscape ubiquitous in German lands. The image of a verdant, blossoming countryside with an ordered economy is familiar to the German eye: it fills us with pride and security.<sup>6</sup>

Without the protection of the forest, however, that same landscape suffers rapid decline: with its soil eroded and its agriculture desiccated, the land supports neither cities nor industry, while the raging rivers hamper transportation and trade:

[The second illustration] “Where the Forest Dies, the Landscape Withers” shows an impoverished, wilted landscape. Such a landscape is foreign to the German eye: never has the German allowed his land to sink so low.<sup>7</sup>

From the two illustrations the reader was to take away the notion that Germany’s “ordered economy” was rooted in the soil not only via the peasants’ work but also through the forest that protected their farms. Ultimately, the forest was the guarantor of German self-sufficiency, which in turn was an important intermediate goal for the National Socialist regime in its preparations for conquest. That was the deeper meaning of Göring’s decreed motto for German forestry: “The German Forest is a National Treasure.”<sup>8</sup> In the years 1935 and 1936, when Göring flogged this catchphrase, he was beginning his task as Hitler’s

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<sup>6</sup> “*Wo der Wald grünt, blüht das Land*” zeigt eine Landschaft, wie sie in deutschen Landen häufig genug vorkommen mag. Das Bild eines blühenden, grünenden Landes mit geordneter Wirtschaft ist dem deutschen Auge vertraut und gewohnt: es erfüllt uns mit Stolz und Sicherheit. (Brauer 1936, p. 3).

<sup>7</sup> “*Wo der Wald stirbt, verödet das Land*” zeigt eine verarmte, verdorrte Landschaft. Sie ist dem deutschen Auge fremd, denn zu keiner Zeit hat der deutsche Mensch je sein Land so tief herunterkommen lassen. (Brauer 1936, p. 3).

<sup>8</sup> *Deutscher Wald ist deutsches Volksgut* (Cf. Göring 1935; 1935/1936; and 1936. See also *Deutsche Forstbeamtenzeitung* 1936b and 1936c).



**Figure 7.2:** A later, schemematized version of the paintings in Figure 7.1 that was used in printed publications: “The Land with Well-Maintained Forest” (top) and “The Land after Devastation of the Forest” (bottom). See text for explanation.

“Commissioner of Raw Materials” and “Plenipotentiary for the Four-Year Plan,” trying to speed up the economic preparations for waging war.

But there was more being expressed in the illustrations: not only did the ecological benefits of the forest underlie the economic prosperity of the whole country, the same benefits were also indispensable for the cultural development of the resident population:

How can we possibly imagine in such [deforested] lands a people with a rich emotional life, with arts and sciences? Invariably and irrevocably, economic decline is followed by mental impoverishment.<sup>9</sup>

Those peoples who had allowed their forests to disappear had forever compromised their ability to become or remain what the Nazis called a ‘culture-bearing’ people (*kulturtragendes Volk*). Conversely, this argument also ascribed to the German *Volk* the ability to spawn or ‘create’ culture (*kulturschaffendes Volk*). From this dichotomy it was only a small conceptual step to the argument that ‘culturally inferior’ peoples (as ‘evidenced’ by their treatment of the forest and the resulting denuded landscape) needed to be elevated from their state of “mental impoverishment” by Germans stepping in as the “superior’ *Kulturvolk* who “had to give order to the other races and determine their fate.”<sup>10</sup>

Indeed, a later wartime edition of the explanatory notes spelled out this ‘cultural mission’: Noting that “our victorious armies found such desolate landscapes not far away from the borders of the *Reich*” in Southeastern Europe and in “the repatriated Eastern regions, where only 20 years of Polish mismanagement have left behind a veritable *Steppe*,”

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<sup>9</sup> *Wie können wir uns in diesem Lande ein gesundes, frohes Volk mit reichem Gemütsleben, mit Kunst und Wissenschaft denken? Dem wirtschaftlichen Verfall folgt unrettbar auch geistige und seelische Verarmung.* (Brauer 1936, p. 13).

<sup>10</sup> *daß die hochwertigen Rassen das Schicksal der übrigen zu bestimmen und ihnen ihre Ordnung zu setzen haben* (Hitler in several speeches of the late 1930s, quoted in Eißfeldt 1941, p. 46).

the editor remarked that immediate and planned reforestation was a precondition for rebuilding these lands:

We must therefore once and for all stop the cancer of deforestation, not only in Germany, but in the coming Europe; for the forest is vital and decisive for the future of Europe, too.<sup>11</sup>

Why would Germany concern itself with such a task? The answer could only be that “our victorious armies” were to bring about a *pax germanica* which ensured that the welfare of Germany and that of Europe would be identical in the future: then German providence, supposedly proven through its centuries of masterly care of the forest as the greatest asset of the *Volk*, would take it upon itself to look out for the best interests of all of Europe.

Returning from these rather forthright writings of the war years to the more circumspect publications of the mid-1930s, we must remind ourselves that the task of the earlier writings was to establish and naturalize the difference between German and non-German areas and thus to redraw the notional boundaries between the two in preparation for the eventual erasure of national boundaries.

Another publication that used the schematized illustrations for this purpose was a slim book by Eugen Diesel on *Wald und Mensch im technischen Zeitalter* (Forest and Man in the

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<sup>11</sup> *Aber nicht allzu weit von den Grenzen des Reiches entfernt fanden unsere Heere auf ihrem Siegesmarsch durch Südosteuropa bereits solche Landschaften vor, die durch jahrhundertelange Mißwirtschaft, durch Raubbau am Walde verödet sind. . . . Und in unseren heimgekehrten Ostgebieten vermochte bereits polnische Mißwirtschaft von 20 Jahren erhebliche Versteppungserscheinungen zu hinterlassen, die eine ungesäumte, planvolle Aufforstung zur Vorbedingung des Aufbaues dieser Länder machen. Es gilt deshalb, nicht nur in Deutschland, sondern auch in dem kommenden Europa dem Krebschaden der Waldverwüstung Einhalt zu tun auf alle Zeit; denn der Wald ist auch für die Zukunft Europas lebenswichtig und entscheidend.* (Brauer 1941(?) edition, p. 4).

“Polish mismanagement” is a pejorative term that goes back to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and stereotypes the Polish people as lazy, unorganized, and neglectful. At the same time, it portrays the Polish state as in need of ‘German order.’ For a brief history of the term and the stereotype, see Burleigh and Wippermann 1991, pp. 26-27.

Technological Age),<sup>12</sup> published in 1935 by the German Museum in Munich. In this book, Diesel tried to establish the past, present, and future extent of Germandom in Europe by looking at the character of the forest in the landscape. Diesel began by examining what it was that gave the landscape of the “German *Lebensraum*” its German character. The answer was that it was the German care for the forest. In a chapter entitled “Germany as Forest-Land,” Diesel explained why Germans were the only *Waldvolk* (*Volk* of the forest) in Europe who had brought about such a landscape – even though other countries had just as much, if not more, forest cover.<sup>13</sup>

Diesel opened by dismissing the Romance countries of the Mediterranean, where “wooden culture” had long vanished in the wake of overcutting. The result was a “wilted landscape” similar to that in the second illustration. But what about France, a country with an overall average forest cover only slightly lower than that of Germany (27 % vs. 30 %)? In Diesel’s eyes the trees were scattered in “groves and tree-lined country roads” and even the “few bigger stretches” of Fontainebleau and Compiègne were but “park-like plantations.” In other words, France did have trees, but no true forest – and thus no truly balanced landscape.

Then Diesel proceeded to the ‘Nordic’ countries: England, with a forest cover of “only a few remaining percent” could be ignored. In the Scandinavian countries, however, Diesel

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<sup>12</sup> Diesel previously had tried to establish a “revolutionary geography of all of Germany” (*Gesamtdeutschland*) in an approach that integrated the treatment of Germandom, of the German political struggle, and of German nature and technology. Some of his titles: *Der Weg durch das Wirrsal* (The Path through Confusion 1927); *Die deutsche Wandlung* (The German Transformation, 1929); *Das Land der Deutschen* (The Land of the Germans, 1933).

<sup>13</sup> The quotations in the following paragraph are taken from this chapter entitled *Deutschland als Waldland* (Diesel 1935, pp. 22-25).

admitted that “the forest rules in a more primeval and mighty way than here.” Why, then, were the Scandinavian peoples not a *Waldvolk* like the Germans? Because, Diesel maintained, Scandinavians had not yet turned their lands into something resembling “the state of affairs in Germany, that particular balance between culture and nature, that certain lay of the land at once mild and solemn and yet busy and open”<sup>14</sup> In other words, Germans had distinguished themselves as the true *Waldvolk* by taming the forest into a *Lebensraum* that was both cultured and forested – the very type of “ideal” landscape depicted in the first illustration.

Diesel then turned to Eastern Europe. Here he had to explain why

in those neighbouring lands to the East, for instance in Poland and Bohemia, we frequently find a situation that resembles German conditions.<sup>15</sup>

But the explanation was quickly found:

The reason is that German influence has been brought to bear on these landscapes; they also resemble our landscapes geographically. Where we leave those influences and conditions behind and advance towards eastern Poland and Russia, the forest dominates once more, yet in a way that is different from our permanent harmony of nature and culture.<sup>16</sup>

The extended Germany – that is, Germany in its current borders and the lands where “German influence” had left its imprint – was the middle ground on which the German *Volk* with its unique character had established a perfect and stable equilibrium between nature and culture as expressed in the ‘cultured’ and balanced forest landscape. Meanwhile, in the

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<sup>14</sup> *Aber es ist hier doch nicht dies merkwürdig zwischen Kultur und Natur ausgewogene, gleichzeitig milde und ernste, regsame und offene Bild wie in Deutschland.* (Diesel 1935, p. 24).

<sup>15</sup> *In den östlich an uns grenzenden Ländern dagegen, etwa in Polen und Böhmen, sind oft den deutschen ähnliche Verhältnisse wahrnehmbar.* (Diesel 1935, p. 24).

<sup>16</sup> *Hat doch hier vielfach deutscher Einfluß geherrscht, und die geographischen Bedingungen erinnern an die unseren. Wo wir uns von diesen Einflüssen und Bedingungen fort nach dem östlichen Polen und Rußland hin entfernen, übt zwar auch der Wald seine Herrschaft aus, aber wiederum anders, nicht so im durchgehenden Gleichklang der Natur und der Kultur wie bei uns.* (Diesel 1935, p. 24).

North and East nature, i.e., the forest, was oppressive, while in the South and West it was oppressed by culture:

Germany forms part of the eastern continental forest realm that pushes from East to West, turns more and more into a cultural landscape along the way, and fills in the finer and more narrow features of Central Europe. The forest cover that once reached all the way to the coast of France now breaks off abruptly at the western and southern borders of the German language area – and gives way to a radically different cultural landscape.<sup>17</sup>

These glances to the East and West provided Diesel with his argument for the ‘true’ extent of German lands: did not the extent of the ‘cultured’ forest indicate where German culture had left its imprint on the landscape? Did not the detectable remnants of such a ‘cultured’ forest in Western Poland and its absence from Eastern Poland indicate the dividing line between the erstwhile settlement realms of Germans and Slavs? And did not the coinciding of the extent of ‘cultured’ forest with the German language area in Alsace and Burgundy delineate the ancient boundary between Franks who had remained German and those who had become ‘Romanized’? In Diesel’s argument, forest cover, cultural achievement, and race were intimately intertwined. The area where Germans had originally settled was indicated just as much by the ‘cultured’ forest landscape as it was by the extent of the German language area. In fact, one could be taken as an indicator of the other.

Diesel’s ‘geopolitics of the forest’ was by no means a new argument. In 1934, Erika Hennig, the daughter of the geopolitician Richard Hennig, had argued in her dissertation on “The Geopolitical Importance of the Forest” (which Karl Haushofer had supervised) that the Franco-German language divide followed the natural northern limit of the sweet chestnut tree

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<sup>17</sup> *Deutschland ist ein Teil des Waldgebietes des östlichen Kontinents, das gleichsam von Osten nach Westen heranwagt, hierbei immer mehr zum Kulturland wird, in die feineren und engeren Formen Mitteleuropas hineindrängt. Die Walddecke, die eigentlich bis zur Küste Frankreichs reichte, bricht heute westlich und südlich des deutschen Sprachgebietes ziemlich jäh ab und weicht ganz anderen kulturlandschaftlichen Verhältnissen.* (Diesel 1935, p. 25).

*Castanea sativa*. The limit indicates a change in ecological conditions towards a harsher climate – a change, Hennig argued, which the ‘softer’ Romance peoples evidently could not handle. Similarly, Roman rule had never penetrated the dense coniferous forest south of the Main river. The Germanic forest, Hennig concluded, was threateningly foreign to the Romance peoples, which is why “‘foreign’ and ‘forest’ (*foresta*) are of one root and one sense” in Latin. To the Germans, however, the forest was a “defensive landscape” that protected its inhabitants from foreign influences.<sup>18</sup>

Other authors expanded the German forest *Lebensraum* concept. In a 1936 article on “German Man, German Game, and German Forest,” H. J. von Bonin claimed parts of Eastern Europe as far south as Slovenia as areas where German influence had shaped the landscape:

German *Lebensraum* encompasses not only the German *Reich* as mutilated by the Dictate of Versailles, but the German language areas in Austria, in Switzerland, in parts of Poland, Czechoslovakia, etc.<sup>19</sup>

The “etc.” left the precise extent of the claim even more open than the “in parts of.” Evidently, von Bonin was not concerned with the exact dimensions of German *Lebensraum* but with the principal differences that could serve as an indicator for the eventual delimitation of the sphere of Germandom. This is also suggested by his use of the set of schematized landscape illustrations to visualize for his readers the distinction between forested, German *Lebensraum* and deforested, non-German lands.

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<sup>18</sup> *fremd und Forest (foresta) sind eines Stammes und Sinne: Abwehrlandschaft* (Hennig 1934, pp. 24 and 19).

<sup>19</sup> *Deutscher Lebensraum . . . umfaßt ja nicht nur das seit dem Versailler Diktat verstümmelte Deutsche Reich, sondern auch die deutschen Sprachgebiete in Österreich, in der Schweiz, in Teilen von Polen, der Tschechoslowakei usw.* (von Bonin 1936, p. 202).

What purpose did all these general affirmations of the 'natural' German forest *Lebensraum* have? On the one hand they were a continuation of the *Alldeutsch* or Pan-German thought which had formed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and was certainly flourishing in the 1930s. As a movement of ethnic (rather than state-centred) nationalism, the Pan-German idea demanded that the *Reich* 'bring home' all Germans by expanding its boundaries.<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, the authors of those affirmations were trying to reverse the Treaty of Versailles by beating the Allies at their own game. According to the doctrine of ethnic self-determination inscribed in the Treaty, those areas that could be shown to be ethnically German should have been allowed to determine their own fate independent of the Polish, Czech or French governments that happened to rule over them as a result of the territorial changes imposed in the Treaty of Versailles. Yet neither the German-Austrians, the *Sudeten*-Germans, nor the German population of the Free State of Danzig were allowed to join the German *Reich* in accordance with that principle. This denial of self-determination provided the National Socialist propaganda with an issue behind which it could rally most of the German population, irrespective of their political views.<sup>21</sup> When the German majority areas were not allowed to break away, the ethnic argument still allowed the German government to respond to calls for help from ethnic German majorities in those areas. This would be the pretext for the German annexation of the *Sudetenland* in March of 1938.

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<sup>20</sup> For an examination of the *Alldeutscher Verband* or Pan-German League, see Chickering 1984.

<sup>21</sup> For patriotic treatments of 'the Danzig question' in the forestry literature, see the proceedings of the 1929 meeting of the German Society of Foresters at Danzig and Königsberg (*Jahresbericht des Deutschen Forstvereins* 1929), the report on the celebration of "A Day of the Forest in Danzig" by the head forester of Danzig in Nicolai 1934, and the speech by Nicolai celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Nazi seizure of power in Nicolai 1943.

Ultimately, then, the idea of a 'German' forest landscape served as an indicator for the extent of the German *Volks- and Kulturboden*.<sup>22</sup> The *Volksboden* or 'soil of the German *Volk*' is synonymous and coextensive with the German-language area, i.e., the area settled by Germans. On the other hand, the term also expresses the rootedness in the soil that formed such an integral part of *völkisch* ideology. With the *Volksboden* concept, those areas in the West which were inhabited by German speakers and whose forest landscape displayed German characteristics, for example Alsace, could be claimed for the German *Reich*.

The *Kulturboden* part of the concept was more useful in the East where that overlap between language and coveted territory was not given. *Kulturboden* was defined as that area in which Germans did not necessarily form the ethnic majority, but which presumably showed the imprint of German cultural influence in the landscape: in this case not only certain types of settlement structure and agricultural patterns, but a unique care of the forest in the form of *Waldgesinnung*.

As we saw in Chapters 4 and 5, the existence of such a typically German *Waldgesinnung* or 'forest-mindedness' had already been claimed during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Then the argument had mainly been based on an essentialist notion of Germans and forest as 'somehow' historically connected. 'Behind' the appearance of the forest was an assumed deeper *Wesen* (being, character) of the forest that Germans were said to be able to grasp intuitively while other nationalities could not. Through the centuries, the argument concluded, that ability of Germans had given rise to Classical forest science and had safeguarded the existence of the forest even in an increasingly populated and industrialized Germany. Given the Nazis'

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Herb 1997, pp. 55-60, for an examination of the concept and its history.

infatuation with all things Germanic, it is no surprise that they launched efforts to scientifically substantiate this *Waldgesinnung*.

### 7.3 Finding the Pseudo-Scientific Roots of *Waldgesinnung*:

#### The Research Programme *Wald und Baum*

In 1938, a rather unusual triumvirate of Nazi agencies announced a comprehensive research programme called *Wald und Baum in der arisch-germanischen Geistes- und Kulturgeschichte* (Forest and Tree in Aryan-Germanic Intellectual and Cultural History).<sup>23</sup> The joint sponsors of the 4-year project were the *Reich* Forest Office under Göring, the *Reich* Food Estate under *Reich* Peasant Leader Darré, and the SS-Research Foundation *Das Ahnenerbe* (Ancestral Heritage) under SS-Chief Himmler. Considering their constant rivalry within the tangled web of Nazi jurisdictions, the cooperation of Göring, Darré, and Himmler on this project was remarkable indeed. What could have enticed them to cooperate?

Most likely, each may have hoped to derive a vindication of their individual agendas from the results of this project. For Göring, who initiated the project, the focus on forest and tree as historic influences on the development of German culture would have meant that his forestry portfolio gained in ideological capital. Meanwhile, the agrarian Romanticism of Darré, the ‘inventor’ of the collocation *Blut und Boden*, stood to be strengthened by participating in a programme that provided an appreciation of the rootedness of culture in the

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<sup>23</sup> The programme was announced in *Allgemeine Forst- und Jagdzeitung* 1938a and in *Deutsche Forst-Zeitung* 1938a.

soil.<sup>24</sup> Finally, Himmler probably hoped to find ‘scientific’ evidence to buttress his Germanic mysticism.<sup>25</sup>

Whatever their precise motives, these most influential figures of the Nazi empire agreed to sponsor the research programme with more than 250,000 *Reichsmark* from their budgets.<sup>26</sup> Scientists were to work on 42 individual research projects for which they were to receive “proper stipends” and which they were to conclude with a series of “strictly scientific, yet generally intelligible” books.<sup>27</sup> Within a few months, 26 of the 42 lucrative projects had been assigned and the scientists set out on their research endeavours.<sup>28</sup>

The goal of the project was to establish the existence of a common ‘Nordic’ forest culture by comparing – in individual projects – the influence of “forest and tree” on “Aryan,” Scandinavian, Germanic, and German art, respectively. At the same time, other projects looked at the forest as a “community of life” and at the interconnections of “Forest, Tree and Man in the Germanic *Weltanschauung*.” Together, these projects established a chain of cause and effect that began with the soil and extended, via the forest landscape and its effect on culture, to the racial characteristics of the human population. In a poignant term of the

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<sup>24</sup> For a study of Darré and his Blood and Soil ideology, see Bramwell 1985.

<sup>25</sup> For an example of the potential of Himmler’s fancies to become translated into policy, we may look to an affair related by Gröning and Wolschke-Bulmahn (1987, p. 95). In 1942, Himmler gave orders to investigate whether the presence of a particular form of ash trees on the island of Fehmarn in the Baltic Sea was connected to Germanic traditions. Himmler’s lieutenants in the RKF, particularly Wiekping, took this interest of their commander to mean that this particular type of ash now enjoyed standing as a ‘Germanic’ tree which could be planted alongside ‘German’ oaks and linden trees in the village centre.

<sup>26</sup> For comparison, the price of the newly introduced *Volkswagen* automobile was 900 *Reichsmark*.

<sup>27</sup> *Diese Reihe soll streng wissenschaftlich, dabei aber gemeinverständlich sein.* (from the announcement in *Allgemeine Forst- und Jagdzeitung* 1938a, p. 340).

<sup>28</sup> Wolschke 1980, p. 63.

day: it established the roots of a Nordic-Germanic *Waldanschauung* or ‘forest world view.’<sup>29</sup> The researchers were to deduce what was typically German (for example, half-timbered building style, farm types, and settlement structures, but also art and sacred architecture) from the forest tradition of Germandom. Accordingly, the call for applications in the *Deutsche Forst-Zeitung* encouraged foresters to unearth the “strong root system of *völkisch* being in the German forest.”<sup>30</sup> The final product of this research programme (had it not been abandoned as “non-essential” to the war effort) would have provided a scientific ‘explanation’ for ‘German’ landscape features which could then be used to delimit the extent of the German cultural influence. Eventually, these tenets would have provided the basis for identifying German *Kulturboden* outside the borders of the *Reich* – and for claiming that territory.

Between 1936 and 1938, then, the general attempts at delineating German vs. foreign forests served two purposes. Primarily, they delimited the pale of the Greater Germany claimed by the National Socialists as the rightful home of all Germans. Secondly, they offered a suggestive definition of the ‘Nordic’ Self and provided for a juxtaposition with the ‘Slavic’ and *Welsch* Other that hinged on the treatment of the forest.<sup>31</sup> In the more specific

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<sup>29</sup> The term had been in use for a few years already. Rebel, for example, had used it in his address on “The Forest in German Culture” to the German Society of Foresters in 1934 (cf. Rebel 1934, p. 12).

<sup>30</sup> *Im deutschen Walde liegt seit den Urzeiten unseres Volkes . . . das starke Wurzelwerk völkischen Wesens.* (*Deutsche Forst-Zeitung* 1938a, p. 444).

<sup>31</sup> This message also surfaced in daily newspaper coverage. See, for example, the article in the *Schlesische Volkszeitung* Breslau on January 15, 1936, on “The Consequences of Forest Devastation in Eastern Europe.” The article commented on reports that the annual cut in Estonia had to be lowered drastically: “This report may have caused surprise in Estonia and the other marginal states [a pejorative term for the Baltic states, M.I.], but rational observers of the so-called ‘forestry’ in almost all marginal states and in Western Russia have long expected this conclusion.” *Diese Meldung mag in Estland und den übrigen Randstaaten überraschen, aber wer mit vernünftigen Augen die Formen der ‘Waldwirtschaft’ in fast allen Randstaaten und auch im westlichen Rußland beobachtet hat, hat schon lange damit rechnen müssen, daß solche Erkenntnisse kommen und auch ausgesprochen werden würden.*

articles written as publicistic support for the German annexations of 1938 and 1939, these generalizations would see their first propagandistic front line service.

#### 7.4 “One Forest, One *Reich*, One *Führer*”: The Annexation of Austria

On March 11, 1938, German columns tore down the border barriers and rolled into Austria – Hitler’s assault on Europe had begun. Yet, many in the field of forestry, and many in the German and Austrian public in general, not only welcomed the *Anschluß* (‘joining’) of Austria to the *Reich* but had worked towards that goal for a long time.<sup>32</sup> On November 12, 1918, the German-speaking regions of Austria had declared themselves part of the German *Reich*. However, the Treaty of Versailles prohibited the union. Similarly, the attempt to declare a customs union was thwarted in 1931. After the Nazi takeover in Germany in 1933, the propaganda calling for the “return” of the homeland of the *Führer* into the *Reich* was accompanied by political pressure as the Nazis tried to bring their branch parties to power outside the German *Reich* proper.<sup>33</sup> Only in the Free State of Danzig did they succeed, garnering 52 % of the vote on May 28, 1933 – Danzig became a National Socialist Free State and was ‘coordinated’ with the German *Reich*<sup>34</sup>. In the Saar and Memel regions and in Austria voters did not return the necessary majorities. To Hitler, the failure to gain power in his homeland was even more disappointing because he was the supreme leader of the

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Regarding the term *Welsch*, cf. Chapter 1, footnote 15.

<sup>32</sup> This was also expressed by the remark quoted in the title of this section. It was made by the long-time chairman of the Austrian Society of Foresters, Anton Locker, at the occasion of the absorption of the Austrian foresters into the German Society of Foresters on July 31, 1938. (*Oesterreichische Vierteljahresschrift für Forstwesen* 1938, p. 160).

<sup>33</sup> On the following, see Brozsat 1981 (1969), pp. 215-221.

<sup>34</sup> For example, in the forest sector the coordination meant that after 1933 “each and every” Danzig forester was a member of the NSDAP and the mandatory foresters’ trade union. (Nicolai 1943, p. 23).

Austrian Nazi party (which placed him in the position of being Chancellor of one country and at the same time opposition leader in a neighbouring one). Hitler intensified his pressure tactics against the Austrian government but Italy, Britain and France made it clear that they would not tolerate a Nazi putsch and subsequent unification. In June of 1933, the Austrian government banned the NSDAP. By July of 1934, the illegal NSDAP was frustrated enough to attempt a wild putsch in Vienna but Hitler immediately dissociated himself from the coup, fearing relations with Italy might sour even further.<sup>35</sup> The Austrian NSDAP was forced into the underground or fled to neighbouring Bavaria, there to await the day of annexation that would not arrive until 1938.

The presence of a certain degree of popular desire to unite Germany and Austria can be discerned in the publications of foresters after 1918. In books, articles, and speeches, German and Austrian foresters stressed their common Germandom – if mainly by subsuming ‘Austrian’ under ‘German.’ In 1923, the German Society of Foresters voted “unanimously” by acclamation to interpret the word ‘German’ in its name no longer as referring to the state of Germany, but to the nationality of German – which specifically included foresters outside the German *Reich*.<sup>36</sup> At the next opportunity (1925), the German Society of Foresters held its annual meeting on Austrian soil at Salzburg to express the new union. A second meeting in Austria was planned for 1931 in Vienna but had to be cancelled due to the economic crisis – foresters could simply not afford to travel.

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<sup>35</sup> At that time, Italy was still opposing Germany and siding with France and Britain in the question of Austrian independence. Upon receiving news of the attempted coup, Mussolini amassed troops at the Brenner pass and threatened to invade Austria to keep Hitler from combining the two countries.

<sup>36</sup> Apart from Austrian foresters, this included German foresters in Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia (all part of Czechoslovakia since 1918), and Silesia, (of which parts belonged to Poland and Czechoslovakia since 1918). (cf. *Jahresbericht des Deutschen Forstvereins* 1925, p. 39).

The 1925 convention in Salzburg, however, was a remarkable demonstration of unity between German and Austrian foresters. The convention opened with an Austrian forester reciting a poem overflowing with the sentiment of unity. It welcomed the German “brethren” to “this thoroughly German” city and ended with the affirmation that “even though the border still stands, we are brothers nonetheless!”<sup>37</sup> That this was not merely one individual’s sentiment was made clear in the editor’s introduction to the published proceedings which emphasized that, as long as the “political union” of Germany and Austria was prohibited by the Treaty of Versailles, all efforts had to go towards the “spiritual unity of the brotherly tribes.” With the foresters, the editor asserted, this task was in good hands as they “have always stood in the first row where national questions were concerned.”<sup>38</sup> As early as 1925, the German Society of Foresters thus felt and acted *großdeutsch* (Greater German).

Within Austria, National Socialist foresters prepared for the day of unification by setting up a National Socialist Forest Policy Unit similar to the one in Germany. Under Erwin Aichinger, a plant sociologist from Carinthia, this unit continued its work in the underground after the ban of the Austrian NSDAP in 1933. The task of the unit was to “prepare for the ideological reorientation and the reorganization of the profession after the takeover.”<sup>39</sup> Connections between the *Reich* and the underground NSDAP were numerous but were mostly kept quiet. In the forestry literature, however, there regularly appeared celebrations

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<sup>37</sup> *Jahresbericht des Deutschen Forstvereins* 1925, pp. 35-36.

<sup>38</sup> *Die deutschstämmigen Forstleute standen von jeher, wo es sich um nationale Fragen handelte, in vordester Reihe. (Jahresbericht des Deutschen Forstvereins 1925, p. 37).*

<sup>39</sup> *die weltanschauliche Ausrichtung und die fachliche Umbildung für den Fall der Machter-greifung vorzubereiten. (Aichinger 1938).*

of Austro-German identity and the struggle of the underground NSDAP. Interestingly, these articles were presented not as editorials but as private accounts, perhaps to maintain the appearance of neutrality and not to raise the ire of the Italian neighbour who saw the rapprochement between Austria and Germany with suspicion.

In 1935, for example, a group of six German forester candidates was “detached” to Austria for a course in plant sociology with Aichinger.<sup>40</sup> Over a period of almost five (!) months, the candidates travelled the length and width of Austria to learn about its flora. It is anyone’s guess as to what other purposes this voyage might have served; the Austrian authorities at least were wary enough to dispatch a police escort for some legs of the journey. In any case, the account of the trip published in the German forestry journals certainly was meant to reinforce the notion of unity. In the article by one participant in *Deutsche Forstbeamtenzeitung*, for example, passages stressing the German character of the Austrian landscape, flora, people, and culture abounded. In addition, those passages were as a rule emphasized through double spacing. Furthermore, on the first page of the article, a photo showed a giant swastika painted on a cliffside of sheer rock – a rather surprising choice of illustration for an article dealing with vegetation. Even more revealing was the photo credit, which named the host Aichinger as the photographer in a subtle yet clear indication of the common agenda of host and guests: what the host was not allowed to say himself, his guests could voice on his behalf.<sup>41</sup>

The author of the report, forester candidate Mauter, reminded the *Reichsdeutschen*, i.e., those Germans who “happened” to live within the borders of the *Reich*, that

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<sup>40</sup> *abbeordert* (Mauter, 1936, p. 388).

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Mauter 1936, p. 388.

our brethren down South are as German, both inside and out, as one can possibly be. For their Germandom, they have made and still are making enormous sacrifices. With all their thinking and feeling they look to Germany, every song and every word is testimony to that. All one has to see is the glow in their eyes when they speak of Germany.<sup>42</sup>

What did this have to do with forestry and plant physiology? Again, it was the unity of German culture and German landscape that was the link:

Few are the instances where man and landscape fit one another in such perfect harmony as they do in this southern march [borderland] of Germandom.<sup>43</sup>

That is echoed in the report by the host that followed the participant's account in the *Deutsche Forstbeamtenzeitung*. In it, Aichinger remarked that "this southern-German border area" of Carinthia was home to

a vegetation that was almost as rooted in the soil (*bodenständig*) as the local population which through a millennium of borderland struggle could retain its peculiarity.<sup>44</sup>

Remarkably, this comment sees the human population of Carinthia as longer established in the area than the vegetation. This claim becomes even more surprising when we remind ourselves that the author was a plant sociologist! According to Aichinger, in this southernmost bastion of Germandom, "over which a southern sky stretches already,"<sup>45</sup> German culture nonetheless showed itself clearly in the landscape through its imprint on the forest flora – and the Germans who were rooted in this soil ensured that it always would.

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<sup>42</sup> *Wir Reichsdeutschen vergessen nur allzu leicht, daß unsere Brüder dort unten im Süden sowohl innerlich wie äußerlich so deutsch sind, wie nur Menschen deutsch sein können, und daß sie für ihr Deutschtum ungeheure Opfer gebracht haben und noch bringen. Ihr ganzes Denken und Fühlen zielt nach Deutschland hin, jedes Lied, jedes Wort bezeugt das; und man braucht nur das Leuchten ihrer Augen zu sehen, wenn sie von Deutschland sprechen.* (Mauter 1936, p. 388).

<sup>43</sup> *Wohl selten passen Menschen und Landschaft in solch vollkommener Harmonie zusammen wie dort unten in dieser Südecke des Deutschtums.* (Mauter 1936, p. 388).

<sup>44</sup> *ins süddeutsche Grenzgebiet entsandt . . . Dieses Land besitzt eine fast ebenso bodenständige Vegetation wie Bevölkerung, die im Jahrtausend langen Grenzkampf ihre Eigenart bewahren konnte.* (Aichinger 1936, p. 390).

<sup>45</sup> *das schon von einem südlichen Himmel überschirmte Land.* (Aichinger 1936, p. 390).

The argument underlying the statements by Mauter and Aichinger was that race was the final cause of landscape character. Geology and the “southern sky” could only cause regional variations in what was more or less predetermined by the German race of the inhabitants. German race thus was capable of bringing about German forests, whether in the foggy flatlands of Northern Germany or in the sun-drenched southern Alps. To Aichinger and his “*Reich*-German” guests, the conclusion was obvious. With the Austrian forest landscape and the “German-Austrian *Volksgenossen*”<sup>46</sup> as but regional expressions of the Greater German landscape and national character, their eventual union in *Großdeutschland* (Greater Germany) was self-evident and inevitable.<sup>47</sup>

When the *Anschluß* came in 1938, Aichinger’s underground National Socialist Forest Policy Unit stood ready, but the *Reich* Forest Office in Berlin grabbed the reins: in forestry as in other areas, the union turned out to be an outright annexation of Austria by the German *Reich*. Instead of entering the *Reich* as one *Land* or province akin to Prussia or Bavaria, Austria was splintered into seven administrative *Gaue* (districts) coextensive with the districts of the Nazi party structure. At the same time, the *Gauleiter* (party district leaders) were made governors who received their orders directly from Berlin.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Mauter 1936, p. 389.

<sup>47</sup> The German-language forestry literature is full of indications of how complete this subsumation of ‘Austrian’ within ‘German’ soon became. See, for example, the series of 1943 articles published in the *Deutsche Forstbeamtenzeitung* in celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Nazi takeover. The article dealing with the forests and forestry of former Austria does not even mention the word ‘Austrian’ but titles: “The German Forest Thanks the *Führer*” (*Der Deutsche Wald dankt dem Führer* (Starkel 1943)). In the text, ‘Austria(n)’ is replaced with ‘Eastern March’, ‘Alpine and Danube districts’, and ‘German Alpine people.’

<sup>48</sup> On the takeover of Austrian forestry by the *Reich* Forest Office in Berlin, see Rubner 1985, pp. 113-118. Aichinger went on to play a prominent role in German plant sociology. He was appointed the first German Chair in plant sociology at the University of Freiburg and in 1939 returned to Austria to assume a similar position at the University of Vienna. During the war, Aichinger rose to the rank of SS *Hauptsturmführer* and, on his tours of duty, continued to write articles in which he applied “scientific” insights from plant sociology to human society. So in a 1943 article on “Plant Associations and Human Society: A

The expansion of the *Reich* also had immediate consequences for the teaching of forestry: in the summer of 1938, the Prussian forestry academy at Hann.-Münden sent its students on a summer field trip to Austria.<sup>49</sup> Yet nowhere in their home province would Prussian foresters ever be confronted with silvicultural conditions such as those obtaining in the Austrian Alps. The trip likely had more to do with furthering the professional cohesion between Northern and Southern foresters. The Prussian forestry academy at Eberswalde even sent its students beyond Austria (now called “our Eastern marches”) and into Yugoslavia to learn about “our most recent neighbour.” Again the notion of race shone through in the account published in the journals: “Everyone” was surprised to find the Slovenian lumbermen using a certain type of saw which was highly efficient “but, as we all know, difficult to maintain.” In other words: the German foresters did not expect to see non-German workers mastering the necessary skills.<sup>50</sup> Another thing the Eberswalde students did not expect was that their 1939 summer excursion would take them to the *Sudetenland* – Hitler’s next prize.<sup>51</sup>

### 7.5 “*Heim ins Reich*” – The ‘Return’ of the *Sudetenland* to the *Reich*

While the annexation of Austria might have been seen by many Germans and Austrians as merely a reunification, it was also relatively easy to justify and achieve as post-1918 Austria

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Biological Comparison,” in which Aichinger maintained that the treeless tundra landscape hindered the mental and spiritual development of its inhabitants. Conversely, “higher differentiated humans,” such as Germans, could not survive under such conditions (cf. Aichinger 1943, p. 69).

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Schleifenbaum 1987, p. 80.

<sup>50</sup> *Jugoslawien, unser jüngstes Nachbarland. . . . Ueberrascht waren wir alle, als wir bei den dortigen Waldarbeitern die Hobelzahnsäge vorfanden, deren erhöhte Leistung, aber auch schwierige Instandhaltung ja bekannt ist.* (Bretschneider 1938, p. 929).

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Schleifenbaum 1987, p. 80.

was essentially a uniformly German-speaking country. The situation was different with the *Sudetenland*, though, which was a German-speaking region within Slavonic Czechoslovakia. The *Sudeten* were an upland region on the Czech side of the border between Germany and Czechoslovakia where roughly three million “*Sudeten-Germans*” more or less formed the regional ethnic majority. Similar to German-Austria, the *Sudetenland* districts had tried to join the German *Reich* in 1918 after the crumbling of the Austro-Hungarian Empire but were prevented from doing so by the victors

To justify German demands for annexation, German propaganda led a two-pronged assault on Czechoslovakia.<sup>52</sup> On the one hand Prague was accused of oppressing the ‘unprotected’ *Sudeten-German* minority. On occasion, forestry journals took part in slanderous propaganda salvos, for example by publishing articles such as “Struggle Between the Peoples in the *Sudeten* Area,” in which an exiled *Sudeten-German* Nazi-party big-wig scorned that the “Mongolian element” in the Czechs had been trying to destroy the “superior German cultural achievement” for a thousand years.<sup>53</sup> For the most part, however, the forestry journals published articles of a more subtle character, in which the racial Germanness of the *Sudeten-Germans* was emphasized at every opportunity. Leading up to the occupation on October 1, 1938, the forestry press carried a number of pieces which portrayed the *Sudeten-Germans* as having been part of the German realm for the better part

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<sup>52</sup> At the conference at Munich on September 29, 1938, Britain and France gave in to Hitler’s pressure. They sacrificed the inviolability of their ally Czechoslovakia in the hope of maintaining a fragile peace. Without having been represented at the table, Czechoslovakia was forced to cede the *Sudetenland* to Germany (losing a quarter of its population) and, four weeks later, regions of Polish and Hungarian ethnic majorities to Poland and Hungary (with a loss of a further 6 % of its population).

<sup>53</sup> *Der Völkerring im Sudetenraum* by the former leader of the Nazi party in Prague, Karl Viererbl (cf. Viererbl 1938). The obviously pre-ordered article appeared one day after the occupation.

of the last thousand years – which could still be seen in their German way of treating the forest.

One of the most vocal defenders of the cause of German culture and forestry in the *Sudetenland* was Eduard Krča (or Krtscha, as he would Germanize his name after the occupation), the director of the German forestry school at Reichstadt and secretary of the German Society of Foresters in the Czechoslovakian Republic. During the mid 1930s, Krča wrote articles for the German-language forestry journal *Sudetendeutsche Forst- und Jagdzeitung* on such topics as “Forest and *Volk*” and “Keeping With the Times in Teaching Forestry.” In his articles, Krča demanded to “further the connection between forest and *Volk*” because “the forest accompanied our historical becoming” and provided “the preconditions for true, deep culture and creativity of eternal value.”<sup>54</sup>

Once again, the forest was portrayed as the cradle of the only culture worth considering – German culture. And because the forest was paramount in maintaining this cultural creativity, the discipline of forestry was “fundamental” to “culture as a whole.”<sup>55</sup> Another *Sudeten*-German forester called this responsibility plainly “The Cultural Mission of the Forestry Profession.”<sup>56</sup> With such articles, the *Sudeten*-German forest, foresters, and forestry were claimed as part of the German cultural tradition, with the larger intent of preparing public perception for the eventual claim of the *Sudetenland* as part of the German *Volksboden*.

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<sup>54</sup> *Aufgabe: Verbundenheit von Wald und Volk fördern. . . . Der Wald stand am Wege unseres geschichtlichen Werdens, denn wir waren ursprünglich Waldvolk. . . . Das sind aber die Voraussetzungen wahrer, tiefer Kultur und schöpferischer Leistung von ewigem Wert.* (Krča 1937, p. 186).

<sup>55</sup> *ein für die Gesamtkultur grundlegendes Gebiet* (Krča 1935, p. 717).

<sup>56</sup> *Die kulturelle Sendung des forstlichen Berufes.* (Sigmond 1937).

Immediately after the occupation, Krtscha published a review article in which he introduced the *Reich* readership to “Forest and Forestry in the *Sudetenland*.” He used the geo-organic argument to vindicate the integration of the *Sudetenland* into Germany, noting that the “natural slope” of the *Sudetenland* explained the traditional export orientation of timber towards Germany – which was meant to make the integration appear equally “natural.”<sup>57</sup> The *Sudetenland* was able to export surplus timber to neighbouring Saxony, Krtscha argued, because its forestry followed the “law of sustainability springing from German ways of being.” More than that: *Sudeten*-Germans were also “Bearers of Forest-Culture” themselves:

They have always been bearers and brokers of the German forest-cultural will. Their intellectual history has, apart from very brief interruptions, maintained its cohesion with the cultural activity of Germans as a whole.<sup>58</sup>

Even beyond their own homeland, according to Krtscha, *Sudeten*-German foresters “spawned forest culture” in all lands of the former Hapsburg empire. But, he lamented, how poorly did the recipients of that culture thank the *Sudeten*-Germans for their efforts: after their “usurpation” by Czechoslovakia in 1918, the *Sudeten*-Germans were barred from all scientific work in forestry, their forest culture was ignored.<sup>59</sup> But now, with the return of the *Sudetenland* into the *Reich*, this state of affairs so detrimental to Germans, German forest,

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<sup>57</sup> (Krtscha 1938a, p. 1028; also in Krtscha 1938b, p. 157). On the geo-organic concept, see Herb 1997, pp. 53-55. A similar argument was made in a 1941 article by Kurt Mantel, who saw the *Sudetenland* as an integral part of a unified “middle-German” planning region. (cf. Mantel 1941, p. 311).

<sup>58</sup> *Die Waldwirtschaft selbst beruht seit Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts auf dem deutschen Wesen entspringenden Grundsatz der Nachhaltigkeit. . . . Die Sudetendeutschen als forstliche Kulturträger. . . . Sie waren bis in die Gegenwart Träger und Vermittler deutschen forstkulturellen Wollens. Ihr Geistesleben hat sich bis auf ganz kurze Unterbrechungen den Zusammenhang mit dem gesamtdeutschen kulturellen Schaffen bewahrt.* (Krtscha 1938a, pp. 1028-1029). Krtscha’s claim was not entirely unfounded: the average volume increment per hectare in the *Sudetenland* was actually higher than in Germany.

<sup>59</sup> *Einverleibung* (Krtscha 1938a, p. 1030).

and German culture would come to an end as “the entire *Volk* assumed their protection through its unprecedented leadership and arms.”<sup>60</sup> Soon, those arms would no longer pretend to free Germans oppressed by governments hostile to Germanism, but would embark on the conquest of entire countries. Only three weeks after the occupation of the *Sudetenland*, Hitler ordered the Wehrmacht to prepare to “finish off the rest of Czechoslovakia.”<sup>61</sup> Meanwhile, the *Sudetenland* was made a *Reichsgau* and completely integrated into the Greater German *Reich*. All *Reich* laws and regulations applied without exception, and the *Sudeten*-Germans became Greater Germans as their Austrian neighbours had done just months earlier. The ethnically pure Greater German *Reich*, the dream of so many *völkisch* foresters, was reality.<sup>62</sup>

#### 7.6 The Protectorate Bohemia-Moravia

On March 15, 1939, Hitler once again gambled on the British and French desire for peace in Europe. As early as November 1937, Hitler had surmised in a meeting with the Commanders-in-Chief of the Wehrmacht that “in all probability England and perhaps also France have already silently written off Czechoslovakia, and that they have got used to the idea that this question would one day be cleaned up by Germany.”<sup>63</sup> He was right: when Germany threatened Czechoslovakia with war unless it accepted the ‘protection’ of the

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<sup>60</sup> *ihren Schutz übernimmt das ganze Volk durch seine beispiellose Führung und Wehr.* (Krtscha 1938, p.1030).

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Kirk 1995, p. 147.

<sup>62</sup> For an official account of the swift and complete incorporation of *Sudeten*-German forestry into the structure of the *Reich*, see Rausch 1941 and particularly Rausch 1943.

<sup>63</sup> Hitler on November 5, 1937, according to the Hoßbach memorandum (from the official translation of the memorandum used at the Nuremberg trials, reprinted in Sax and Kuntz 1992, pp. 340-349, here p. 346).

*Reich*, it found itself abandoned by its allies. Hitler turned the eastern, less economically developed province of Slovakia into a puppet state as it was considered 'too Slavic' to be assimilable into the German realm. The western provinces of Bohemia and Moravia, however, became a "Protectorate" of the German *Reich*.<sup>64</sup> *De facto*, they were German colonies in which Hitler's *Reichsprotektor* or governor reigned supreme next to a pro-forma "autonomous" Czech government.

In Hitler's official decree for the occupation, we read that it served to end "an intolerable state of affairs in a region in which Germany has a vital interest, a region that even belonged to the German *Reich* for more than a thousand years."<sup>65</sup> Once again, this 'justification' points to Bohemia and Moravia as "historical lands" of the former Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation – it did not, however, claim that the Bohemians and Moravians were Germans. This was a subtle yet important distinction, for it bestowed on them a status radically different from that of Austrians or *Sudeten*-Germans: it made them subjects rather than citizens of the emerging Greater Germany. In the propaganda article on the "Struggle of the Peoples in the *Sudeten* Area" cited earlier, Karl Viererbl had already drawn a clear racial demarcation between the 'races' competing for control over Bohemia and Moravia: in the semi-official view, the land had originally been settled by 'Nordic' tribes, but around

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<sup>64</sup> An example of Slovakia's almost total dependence on the German *Reich* is the fact that in the first year of its existence the new 'state' was already forced to deliver 83.7 % of its timber exports to Germany (Glesinger 1942, cited in Rubner 1985, p. 143). A protectorate is a relationship between formally independent states in which the weaker state (the protectorate) places itself under the protection of the stronger state or an organization of states (the protector). In principle, the weaker state retains its independence and speaks on its own behalf internationally, while transferring certain competences to the stronger state. In reality, the relationship can range from a mutually beneficial customs union to an instrument of colonialism. An example of a recently established protectorate is Kosovo.

<sup>65</sup> *Eine Fortdauer dieser [unerträglich gewordenen] Zustände muß zur Zerstörung einer letzten Ordnung in einem Gebiete führen, an dem Deutschland lebenswichtig interessiert ist, ja, das selbst über 1000 Jahre lang zum Deutschen Reich gehörte.* (cited in Francke C. 1941a, p. 107).

AD 600 Slavic tribes had moved in. To the German foresters now ‘taking care’ of the forestry sector of the Protectorate, Germanic and Slavic consciousness were still fighting for the upper hand not only in the state, but in the individual inhabitants – in the Czech breast, Germanic and Slavic forces were constantly battling:

One the one hand, the local population feels an urge to be outside and enjoy nature. On the other hand one must note that the hikers are not used to treating nature with the same respect we see in the German *Reich*. Yet, it is by no means only recklessness or overzealousness that causes these destructions; it is mostly thoughtlessness and ignorance about the consequences.<sup>66</sup>

And the Czech foresters formed no exception, a fact that the German foresters saw as the cause of the variety of forest cultures found in this area. In an article celebrating two years of “Forestry in the Protectorate Bohemia-Moravia,” the chief forester of the Protectorate, Curt Francke, explained the linkages between “German Foresters and Their Environment” in the Protectorate and the difficult patchwork of varieties of forest-mindedness they were facing:

The people working in forestry in the Bohemian-Moravian area are by no means all German and Czech – one has to be aware of numerous differences. Through centuries of separation, the Germans in and around Prague have developed differently from those inside the *Reich* or even those living close to the old border with the *Reich*. Environment and views – forestry included – were different and sometimes considerably so. Moreover, there are not only Czechs [in the Protectorate, M.I.] but there are also the Moravians who consider themselves as different and act accordingly. Finally, one has to deal with the Slovaks and the so-called Slonzaks.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> *Das ist einmal der starke Drang der hiesigen Bevölkerung in die Natur und eine starke Freude am Naturerleben. Zum anderen muß man aber auch feststellen, daß die wandernden Menschen nicht so sorgsam mit den Naturerscheinungen umzugehen gewohnt sind, wie wir dies vom Deutschen Reich her kennen. Dabei ist es aber durchaus nicht so, daß lediglich aus Uebermut oder übertriebenem Eifer Zerstörungen angerichtet werden, sondern zumeist aus Unüberlegtheit und Nichtwissen um die Folgen.* Oberlandforstmeister Curt Francke at the German-Czech Conference on Nature Protection and Forestry on April 24, 1941, in Prague. (*Deutsche Forst-Zeitung* 1941a, p. 177).

<sup>67</sup> *Die im böhmisch-mährischen Raume mit der Forstwirtschaft beschäftigten Menschen sind keineswegs nur Deutsche und Tschechen, sondern man muß sich vor Augen halten, daß zahlreiche Verschiedenheiten auftreten. Die Deutschen in und um Prag entwickelten sich in den Jahrhunderten der Trennung anders als im Reich oder auch schon an der alten Reichsgrenze; Umwelt und Anschauungen, auch forstlicher Art, wichen z. T. stark voneinander ab. Ebenso gibt es nicht nur Tschechen, sondern auch die Mährer fühlen sich als etwas anderes und wirken sich dementsprechend aus; außerdem hat man es noch mit einem Teil von Slowaken und mit den sogenannten Slonzaken zu tun.* (Francke C. 1941a, p. 110).

To Francke, all these different ethnicities had different attitudes to the forest that violated the German ideal more or less. Yet the degree to which they differed depended not only on the particular blend of their racial heritage but also on the cultural environments in which they had developed. For example, under German tutelage, Czech foresters could develop a considerable forest consciousness.<sup>68</sup> Conversely, left to his own ‘Slavic’ devices, the “basically very well-trained, extremely conscientious Czech” could give in to “his inclination to place formalism before practical work.”<sup>69</sup> What Francke was saying was that ‘the Czech’ was able and willing but needed supervision by Germans because of his tendency for bureaucratic busiwork – which was a form of laziness to Francke. But, with the creation of the Protectorate, “German commissioners” were ready to “assist and supervise” the Czechs in their search for enlightenment. German foresters were grafted onto the Czech forest service where their task was to guide their Czech minions away from the sins of the past: the spruce monocultures, the neglect of deciduous species, the planting of non-site-adjusted species, and all the other silvicultural mistakes German forestry had long overcome.<sup>70</sup>

To administer the Bohemian and Moravian forest, the strict forestry laws enacted in the *Reich* were extended to the Protectorate.<sup>71</sup> Apart from the introduction of German standards and measures, this meant that no clear cutting was allowed, monocultures were to be changed into mixed and uneven-aged stands, and detailed long-term management plans were made

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<sup>68</sup> For example, in an official 1943 evaluation of the work of German foresters and their Czech subordinates, the latter are credited with “conscientious cooperation” (*gewissenhafter Mitarbeit*) (cf. Pflanz 1943, p. 22).

<sup>69</sup> *als der an sich sehr gut ausgebildete, äußerst gewissenhafte Tscheche dazu neigt, den Formalismus der praktischen Arbeit voranzustellen.* (Francke C. 1941a, p. 111).

<sup>70</sup> *deutsche Kommissare, die helfend und überwachend mitwirken.* (Franck 1941, p. 113; see also Pflanz 1943, where an official account of the work of German foresters in the Protectorate is given).

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Pflanz 1943.

mandatory. The imposition of German forest law meant the complete loss of national distinctiveness for Czech forestry which now was subsumed under German forestry. Yet the subsuming also was a backhanded expression of German respect for Czech forestry and forests as it meant that both were deemed close enough to their German counterparts to be 'redeemable' through the application of German methods. For example, the extension of the Law for the Protection of Racial Purity of Forest Plants to the Protectorate meant that seeds from the Protectorate that were certified as 'racially pure' were automatically certified for use in the entire *Reich*.<sup>72</sup>

At the same time, many Czech operational foresters were "posted" to the forest service in the *Reich* where they filled those lower-level positions vacated by called-up German foresters. Czech academic foresters even were allowed to study and work as academic assistants at universities in the *Reich*.<sup>73</sup> In Germany, the logic went, both operational and academic foresters would not only fill a need but also absorb some of the forest-mindedness of their German superiors which they would subsequently transplant to the Protectorate.

In this respect, Czech foresters were privileged compared to the large numbers of Czechs shipped to the *Reich* as forced labour, almost 250,000 in 1943 alone.<sup>74</sup> By 1943, the German forest service had lost half of its complement to the military and was depending on the knowledge and experience of Czech foresters to help meet the increased demands of the war economy. According to Rubner, roughly 20 % of all persons working in the forestry

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<sup>72</sup> Cf. Langner 1942.

<sup>73</sup> Rubner 1985, p. 121.

<sup>74</sup> Kirk 1995, p. 148.

sector of the Old *Reich* during the war years were non-German, some on contracts, many others as forced labour<sup>75</sup>

The ambiguous attitude towards Czech foresters and to the Czech population in general was a reflection of the 'intermediate' racial worth which the German authorities assigned them. Czechs were considered Slavs, yet of an 'assimilable' kind, because they had 'enjoyed' German influence for many centuries. For example, individual Czechs were considered fit for absorption into the German *Volkskörper* or national body if they were isolated from one another and immersed in German culture in the *Reich*. This rationality found its most perverse expression in the kidnapping of 'racially suitable' Czech children to the *Reich* where they were to be raised as Germans.<sup>76</sup>

The relative respect that both the Czech forest and the Czech population merited in the eyes of the National Socialists saved them from the worst wrath of the Nazi behemoth. By contrast, in reports by lower levels of the forest administration to the *Reich* Forest Office, we can read how German foresters dealt with the race-based 'character deficiencies' of their

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<sup>75</sup> (Rubner 1985, p. 125). From a file in the federal archives in Berlin we can gain some sense of the numbers involved on a regional basis. At the beginning of the new fiscal year on 1 October 1941, the numbers of forest labourers in the *Sudetengau* were given as follows: 12,454 forest labourers in total, of whom 8,155 were Germans, 778 Slovaks, 156 Poles, 1,327 Croats, 320 Hungarians, 110 Ukrainians, 263 Czechs, and 1,345 French prisoners of war. Seasonal variations were considerable, though: in July 1941 there had been as many as 3,500 Croatian and 500 Hungarian forest labourers in the *Sudetengau*. (BA R37.01 / 199: *Betreffend: Arbeitsbedingungen der Ausländer (ohne Polen und Russen)*; here: sheets 33 and 15).

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Koehl 1957 for the story of the so-called "Well of Life" (*Lebensborn*) children as revealed at the Nuremberg trials. It is difficult to ascertain exactly how many children were abducted, but the file numbers assigned at the *Lebensborn* office indicate the existence of thousands of cases from all over eastern Europe. The children were removed from orphanages, taken from their parents, or, as in the case of the village of Lidice, taken to the *Reich* after their parents were summarily executed in retribution for partisans' attacks.

Ruthenian, Romanian, and Hungarian forest workers by calling on the Gestapo who promptly “treated” and “removed” the “recalcitrant elements.”<sup>77</sup>

At the state level, Hitler granted the Protectorate a nominal autonomy denied to any other of the “appended” and “incorporated” territories in Eastern Europe. Plans for the time after the war saw the ‘relatively German’ Protectorate even functioning as an experimental garden in which the SS veterans would rehearse their establishment of a new aristocracy of Blood and Soil.<sup>78</sup> As a skilled industrial work force, the Czech population also was a valuable asset for the German war economy and thus escaped depopulation policies of the sort applied by the SS – and, as we will see in the next chapter, the German forest service – in Poland and the Soviet Union. First, however, we will turn to the West and follow German foresters on their campaign through France.

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<sup>77</sup> Federal Archives Berlin BA R 37.01 / 203 *Betreffend: Einsatz von Ausländern (ohne Russen).*

Sheet 200, p. 2: *Bei der körperlichen und charakterlichen Veranlagung der Ruthenen und Rumänen muß ein anderer Maßstab als beim deutschen Arbeiter angelegt werden. Diese Volkstämme neigen von Natur aus zum Faulsein, zum Simulieren, zum Lügen und Übertreiben! Daß damit in den ersten Wochen ihres Einsatzes gewisse Schwierigkeiten zu überwinden waren, mußte in Kauf genommen werden und es hat sich ja auch gezeigt, daß bei entsprechender Behandlung (Gestapo!) und nach Behebung der ersten Anlaufschwierigkeiten (Unterkunft, Verpflegung, Bekleidung, Geräte, Rauchwaren usw.) die Männer erfreuliche Leistungen aufweisen konnten.*

Sheet 207, p. 3: *Teilweise waren auch arbeitsunwillige und widerspenstige Kräfte zugewiesen, deren Ausscheidung in der Regel mit Hilfe der Geheimen Staatspolizei erfolgte.*

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Koehl 1957, p. 42.

## 7.7 “The Frenchman is a Stone-Being – just as the German is a Forest-Being”: French Forest and People on Trial

In contrast to natural German forestry, the Frenchman has lost his way over the centuries, ending up in artificial wood production.

*Forstmeister Kaysing 1940*<sup>79</sup>

When the German armies invaded the Netherlands, Luxemburg, and Belgium on 10 May 1940, they took control of regions which the Nazis considered to be part of the ‘Germanic’ realm. In the forestry literature, this ‘honour’ was reflected in the positive evaluation of the “productive and flawless” forest industry of Luxemburg, for example.<sup>80</sup> Even more respect was afforded the French regions of Alsace and Lorraine, which were considered German ‘ethnic soil’ and had been under German control as recently as the years between 1871 and 1918. The remainder of France, however, was seen as the lair of the ‘arch enemy’ whence trouble had come to Germany time and again. To check this threat once and for all, clearly a very different approach to occupation and governance was necessary than in the ‘Germanic’ regions.<sup>81</sup> But how to define where the line was to be drawn between ‘Germanic’ and ‘*welsch*’ territory? Again, foresters could help with the task as they suggested the state of the forest as an indicator for the racial characteristics of the resident population: German ‘ethnic soil’ extended as far as the forest displayed German characteristics.

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<sup>79</sup> *Der Franzose hat im Gegensatz zur naturgemäßen deutschen Waldwirtschaft sich im Laufe der Jahrhunderte in eine gekünstelte Holzwirtschaft verloren.* (Kaysing 1940, p 401).

<sup>80</sup> (Wegener 1943, p.27). For a German assessment of the promises and problems of forestry in Belgium, see Krauß 1941.

<sup>81</sup> For an assessment of the German occupation in terms of forestry policy, see Rubner 1985, Chapter 8.4.

Just like Austria and the *Sudetenland*, the region of Alsace between the Rhine river and the western slope of the Vosges mountains was ‘by definition’ German; and just as with Austria and the *Sudetenland*, foresters made a case for this supposed Germanness of Alsace by pointing out the unity of people, landscape, and forests on the western, Alsatian bank and the eastern, Badanian bank of the Rhine. For example, Eduard Zentgraf, who had become Professor of Silviculture at the University of Freiburg in Baden in 1939, reminded his readers in 1940 that “the entire valley of that great German river is inhabited by Frankish and Alemannic people.”<sup>82</sup> This racial argument was accompanied by an extensive discussion of the landscape symmetry between the Vosges and the Black Forest with the “German” Rhine as the axis of symmetry in the middle. Zentgraf started his argument by pointing out the symmetry in the sequence of geological formations on either side of the Rhine, progressed to the similar water regimes, and finally stressed the similar altitudinal sequence of forest types that cover the slopes of the Vosges and the Black Forest.<sup>83</sup>

We have encountered this form of geo-organic argument before, when *Sudeten*-German foresters argued for a supposed ‘natural’ unity of the *Sudetenland* and the neighbouring region of Saxony based on the continuous slope of the forested terrain from the former to the latter. Similarly, Zentgraf based his claim for the unity of Baden and Alsace on the symmetric lay of the land which to him was “merely two halves of a beautiful apple.”<sup>84</sup> He

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<sup>82</sup> . . . daß im gesamten Oberrheingebiet rechts und links des großen deutschen Stromes Franken und Alemannen wohnen. . . . (Zentgraf 1940a, p. 266).

<sup>83</sup> Zentgraf 1940a, pp. 265-266.

<sup>84</sup> Zentgraf 1940a, p. 265.

rejoiced: "Today, when our eyes survey the mountains of the Vosges, we know that those are German lands and that German work has commenced."<sup>85</sup>

This "German work" in Alsace was squarely aimed at integrating the Alsatian forestry sector seamlessly into that of the neighbouring province of Baden.<sup>86</sup> Within days of the German crossing of the Rhine on 15 June 1940, the chief of the Badenian forest service, Wilhelm Hug, was ordered to expand his jurisdiction to Alsace:

You will take immediate control of all aspects of forestry, wood processing, hunting, and fishing in Alsace. Restart production and reorient the entire administration and production towards the regulations and goals obtaining in the *Altreich*<sup>87</sup>

The use of the term *Altreich* or 'Old Reich' made clear that Alsace was considered an essential part of Greater Germany and thus to be made an integral and indistinguishable part of the *Reich* once more. As the leading Badenian forester Crocoll wrote in his assessment of forestry in "this magnificently beautiful land of ancient German culture" which "the genius of the *Führer* had led home into the *Reich*," this required strengthening the 'Germanic' element represented by the Alsatian population while removing the French element introduced by the central government in Paris during its tenure in the region since 1918. Consequently, the first measure of the new German forest administration was to dismiss those 80 % of academically trained foresters who were not of Alsatian extraction, which meant firing all but five administrative-level foresters. By contrast, almost all

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<sup>85</sup> . . . und wenn heute die Blicke auf die Berge der Vogesen schweifen, dann wissen wir, dort ist deutsches Land, deutsche Arbeit hat dort eingesetzt. . . . (Zentgraf 1940b, p. 509).

<sup>86</sup> Notwithstanding the creation of the *Reich* Forestry Office in 1934 and the *de facto* elimination of the federal structure of the German *Reich* in the same year, forestry affairs in Germany continued to be organized on the level of the individual states.

<sup>87</sup> *Uebernehmen Sie sofort das ganze Forst, Holzwirtschafts-, Jagd- und Fischereiwesen im Elsaß, bringen Sie alles sofort in Gang und stellen sie alles in Verwaltung und Betrieb auf die im Altreich geltenden Grundsätze und Ziele um.* (Hug 1943, p. 26).

operational-level foresters were Alsatian and were thus automatically allowed to remain at their posts. To make up for the shortfall in administrative foresters of Alsatian/German ancestry in Alsace, Badenian foresters were “immediately seconded to reconstruction work in the ancestrally identical (*stammesgleich*) land across the Rhine.”<sup>88</sup>

Yet the thrust of integrating Badenian and Alsatian foresters in one comprehensive forest service went beyond administrative concerns and aimed at a definite racial horizon, namely “to avoid the mistake of 1871, when the geographically, historically, ancestrally, and economically dissimilar regions of Alsace and Lorraine were united in one province.” This time, Baden and Alsace were to be reconstituted as the racially and historically homogenous unit they supposedly had formed until the French occupation of the region by Louis XIV. Consequently, while the Alsatian forest was administered from Strasbourg, the forests of Lorraine were under the control of the forest administration of the neighbouring *Gau Westmark* in St. Wendel.<sup>89</sup>

To Crocoll, this common ancestry was well-evidenced by the “valiant” attempts of Alsatian foresters between 1918 and 1940 “to uphold German achievements in forestry even under French rule and to avoid a descent of Alsatian forests to the extensive management levels seen in France,” even while “French centralism with its suppression of individual responsibility and the well-known deficiencies of the parliamentary system . . . were placing

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<sup>88</sup> *Ein herrlich schönes Land ältester deutscher Kultur war dank der genialen Strategie des Führers mit geringen Blutopfern fast unversehrt ins Reich zurückgekehrt. . . . eine Anzahl badischer Forstbeamter sofort . . . abgeordnet zur Aufbauarbeit im stammesgleichen Lande jenseits des Rheins.* (Crocoll 1940, p. 397). On the deportation of French nationals from Alsace as part of the greater scheme of ‘resettling’ ethnic Germans, see Koehl 1957, particularly p. 211.

<sup>89</sup> *Diese Berufung ließ erkennen, daß der Fehler von 1871 – die Vereinigung der geographisch, geschichtlich, stammesmäßig und wirtschaftlich völlig verschiedenen Gaue Elsaß und Lothringen zum Reichsland – sich nicht wiederholen würde.* (Crocoll 1940, p. 397).

often insurmountable obstacles in the way of the proficient Alsatian foresters.”<sup>90</sup> The current state of the Alsatian forest was thus portrayed as the result of the tireless work of ‘German-thinking’ Alsatian foresters when the attribute in question was positive (such as the “still much more natural species composition in comparison to the rest of the *Reich*” or the retention of the German tradition of selling felled timber rather adopting the French method of selling standing trees). Obversely, the state of the forest was seen as the consequence of French neglect when the attribute in question was negative (such as the “very unsatisfactory state of those areas replanted during the last 20 years” or the “general lack of a spatial order in the forest”).<sup>91</sup> Thanks to this highly flexible argumentation, all aspects of the Alsatian forest landscape could be easily ‘explained’ as the outcome of the struggle between Germanic forest consciousness and *welsch* inability to appreciate the forest. In the eyes of National Socialist foresters, both qualities were determined not least by race. Over the course of centuries, ‘Germanic’ Alsatian foresters had created an essentially German forest,

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<sup>90</sup> *Es muß anerkannt werden, daß die elsässischen Forstbeamten sich große Mühe gegeben haben, die zur reichsländischen Zeit erzielte Höhe der Forstwirtschaft auch unter französischer Herrschaft zu halten und ein Absinken der elsässischen Waldungen auf die Stufe der extensiveren innerfranzösischen Wirtschaft zu vermeiden. . . . Im Walde selbst aber haben der französische Zentralismus mit seiner Unterdrückung der Verantwortungsfreudigkeit, die bekannten Schwächen des parlamentarischen Systems und die völlig ungenügende Bewilligung von Mitteln für Kulturen, Kulturpflege, und Wegbau den tüchtigen elsässischen Forstbeamten meist unüberwindliche Hindernisse in den Weg gelegt und nicht nur einen Fortschritt verhindert, sondern oft sogar zu einem Rückgang geführt.* (Crocoll 1940, p. 397).

<sup>91</sup> *Zusammenfassend läßt sich über die Holzartenverteilung sagen, daß sie in noch viel weitergehendem Maße den natürlichen Verhältnissen entspricht, wie [sic] dies im übrigen Reiche der Fall ist.* (Crocoll 1940, p. 399).

*So ist es den elsässischen Forstbeamten z. B. gelungen, den Verkauf des Holzes nach Aufbereitung beizubehalten, während in Frankreich bekanntlich das Holz an den Käufer auf dem Stock abgeben wird.* (Crocoll 1940, p. 397).

*Die in den letzten 20 Jahren entstandenen Jungwuchsflächen sind für unsere Begriffe in der großen Mehrzahl der Fälle sehr unbefriedigend.* (Crocoll 1940, p. 399).

*Eine räumliche Ordnung ist nicht zu erkennen.* (Crocoll 1940, p. 400).

The same praise for the “good will and motivation of Alsatian foresters” as opposed to the neglectful attitude of the French central government is expressed in other articles as well. (Here: *Deutsche Forst-Zeitung* 1941b, p. 234).

sometimes even bringing about a forest that was in a more natural, pristine, and thus better state than that in “the rest of the *Reich*.” During the years of French rule, they also had succeeded in preventing the worst effects of ‘*welsch* neglect and greed’ and thus had kept the land German in its aspect.

In the case of Alsace, the German foresters thus argued from forest to people: the exemplary ‘natural’ state of the forest was interpreted as the result of the Germanic character of its Alsatian guardians. In the case of Lorraine, however, foresters could not so argue because the state of the forest was less than desirable, despite the claimed presence of a Germanic local population. To reconcile the apparent contradiction, foresters reversed the thrust of their argument and blamed the deterioration of the forest on the overwhelming influence of powerful foreigners grafted onto the Germanic population by the French central government. As the Lorrainian forester Kaysing argued in a 1940 article, the simple yet righteous German population had stood no chance against the greed and cunning of ‘the *welsch*.’ For example, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the French crown installed the deposed Polish King Stanislaw I as the Duke of Lorraine, he was seen as saddling the region with the effects of infamous “Polish mismanagement.” Similarly, after the French revolution, the forest supposedly suffered because “a democratic and parliamentary system is not suited to the furthering of forest care and prevents any progress.” Finally, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the French iron and glass industry in its hunger for fuel wood had grabbed the forest from the German peasant woodlot owners, impoverishing them until “the Jew” could dispossess them and farm out his own cows in their stalls. In exchange for the milk, “the Jew” both claimed

the calves and demanded a fee – evidently, Kaysing was revisiting Düesberg’s charge of a Semitic “golden herd” with his accusation.<sup>92</sup>

To the German forester writing here, the conclusion was clear. The “deficiencies in *völkisch* and social life, the hollow phrases, the vain conceit and the undisputable decline of all inner values and strengths” of the “degenerated Frenchman” could not but show everywhere across the country. And he concluded: “Can it be any different with the forest?”<sup>93</sup> The state of the forest in Lorraine was thus to be blamed on the depraved French overlords rather than the pressured German population. Victims of modernization and industrialization, the German population (and, by extension, the ‘German race’) was not to be held responsible for the decline of the forest in Lorraine. But it certainly had taken it upon itself to reverse the decline:

What tremendous task we Germans have been assigned by *Führer* and fate: to rescue those ancient German lands in the West from three centuries of decline.<sup>94</sup>

German foresters’ descriptions and explanations of forest development in Lorraine thus already foreshadowed the greater struggle between Germanic and *welsch* ‘ways of being’ which was waged at the national level.

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<sup>92</sup> (Kaysing 1940, p. 402). On ‘Polish mismanagement’ (*polnische Wirtschaft*) see footnote 11.

*Ein demokratisches und parlamentarisches System ist zur Förderung pfleglicher Waldwirtschaft nicht geeignet und lähmt jede Vorwärtsentwicklung.* (Kaysing 1940, p. 403).

*Die Kuh ging weg. Ersatz wurde vom Juden eingestellt, gegen Kalbablieferung und Geld. In der Gegend um Münztal-St. Louis gab es einen Juden, der über 600 Milchkühe so verliehen hatte.* (Kaysing 1940, p. 403).

<sup>93</sup> *Der Franzose war stets der Mann raffinierten Denkens und Geschmacks. Uebriggeblieben ist ein entarteter Franzose. . . . Aller Glanz großer Städte und der wenigen großen Produktionsstätten in Frankreich ist vor den Augen des Deutschen nicht imstande, all die Mängel des völkischen und sozialen Lebens, die Hohlheit der Phrasen, die überlegene Einbildung und das unbestreitbare Absinken von innerem Wert und Kraft auf allen Gebieten zu überdecken. Kann es mit dem Walde anders sein?!* (Kaysing 1940, p. 401, multiple punctuation in the original).

<sup>94</sup> *Welch ungeheure Aufgabe ist uns Deutschen vom Führer und Schicksal gegeben, um dort im Westen altes deutsches Land zu retten aus einem Niedergang von 3 Jahrhunderten.* (Kaysing 1940, p. 403).

As foresters swept across the French *pays* with the German army, they sent back articles to their disciplinary journals in which they reported on the state of the French landscape and forest. In itself, this was nothing new as articles on the state of forestry in foreign nations had been a regular feature in German forestry journals. Up to the year 1938, however, those articles were mostly neutral or even positive in tone and reported from a professional point of view without straying into too many negative political or racist statements. At times, and particularly if the nation under the microscope was a ‘friendly’ one (e.g., Italy) the articles were even more positive than the state of the forest actually merited.<sup>95</sup> After 1938, and particularly after the beginning of the war, however, the tone of the articles began to change sharply. Now frequent references to the political or ‘racial’ situation of the country under scrutiny – or rather: occupation – peppered the descriptions of forest and forestry.

In their articles on France, foresters connected the state of the forest and the landscape in general to a ‘typical’ carelessness of the French population which in turn they saw as the result of a decline of their racial heritage. The articles usually began with a description of the neglected state of the general countryside before progressing to an assessment of the forest and, finally, to a racial ‘explanation’ for the perceived malaise. As an example, I present an article entitled “France 1940 Seen Through the Eyes of a Forester” by Ernst-

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<sup>95</sup> During the years 1935 and 1936, there were several neutral and positive articles on France and Poland in the pages of the *Deutsche Forstbeamtenzeitung*, the official organ of foresters in the Third Reich. That said, there were numerous articles in the 1920s in which Polish forestry in particular was harshly criticized for ‘flooding’ the German market with wood. (Cf. for example Weiger 1929; Hayn 1931). These articles, while slanderous at times, were still of a less defamatory nature than the writings we will encounter later in this chapter.

The Italian forest (which, according to the professed German standards of the 1930s, should have been the subject of severe ridicule) was praised in a 1938 special issue of the *Deutsche Forst-Zeitung*. The likely reason for the publication was the desire to stiffen the emerging axis Berlin-Rome (Cf. *Deutsche Forst-Zeitung* 1938b).

Günther Strehlke. In many respects, this article is typical of the writings of German foresters about France and deserves detailed analysis.

In making his argument, Strehlke works backwards from the perceived lack of ‘order’ and ‘care’ in the forest landscape to the *völkisch* decline of the French ‘race’ and finally the underlying cause: racial impurity brought about by ‘rootlessness’ and ‘interbreeding’ of ‘races.’ To give the reader an opportunity to experience firsthand the development of this argument, I quote two extensive, contiguous segments from the article. The article begins:

When we entered France from Belgium, our soldiers were bitterly disappointed: This is France, all those uninviting, dirty villages and cities? This lack of order and beauty? What on earth have the French been doing since the end of the war? they asked. No new settlements, outdated farmsteads, nary a new building to be seen anywhere, and sanitary installations dating – at best – from the time of our grandfathers’ generation. Granted, they were fascinated by Paris. It seems as though we mistook Paris for France when speaking about ‘the world’s premier cultural nation.’

And now the South of France. A magnificent garden, though not through industriousness and intention on the part of the inhabitants, but merely by the grace of God. The villages, handsome from afar, provided hardly any rooms satisfactory even for our modest needs. Looking at the inhabitants, we realized at once the effects of rural flight. Almost every farmstead resembles a ruin with its crumbling walls and buildings. Abandoned farms overgrown by shrubs and weeds, neglected fields and vineyards, fallow land, potato beetle and wheat stem rust – all things that are incomprehensible to us. But they revealed to us one of the main reasons for the terrible collapse of this leaderless nation.

During the fighting, the forester did not care much about tree nor forest. But now that the forester’s eye has time to look around and compare, it sees much that adds in frightful ways to the overall picture.

One impression had exemplified in a remarkable way the different character of the people inhabiting this area: the war cemeteries. On the allied side cold marbled splendour, opulent flowerbeds, and incidental exotic shrubs. By contrast, the German heroes’ cemetery is a sacred grove with its endless rows of simple wooden crosses fading into the distant darkness of the forest. The Frenchman is a stone-being – just like the German is a forest-being.

That explains much, yet can it excuse what one sees here in terms of forestry? We feel transported back to the middle ages. The forest is predominantly managed as a coppice forest, often comprising nothing but oak. It was the same all over the northern half of France, where I cannot remember having seen a single high grade forest.

There follows a technical description of various forest management types Strehlke saw in the northern half of France. He then continues:

The farther south one travels, the more black locust, sweet chestnut, Austrian pine and maritime pine are interspersed in the forest. Occasionally, one can spot very productive stands of Scots pine, yet always in a state of neglect. At the same time, the almost ubiquitous, often impenetrable undergrowth bespeaks the high potential of the soil.

In the region around Angoulême–Cognac–Bordeaux one encounters extensive coniferous plantations of maritime pine in all age classes, but mostly in a dismal state. Is it a question of race that one can hardly find a straight tree in these forests? While I was looking at such a crooked, leaning, and snakelike twisted stand of pines, there suddenly re-appeared before my eyes the mismatched couple I – but certainly not any Frenchman – had noticed in the last village: a jet-black, woolly-haired *Nigger* and a white girl.<sup>96</sup>

The thrust of Strehlke's racist argument becomes plainly visible when we let it unfold in such a way. And just as we today detect the definite slant of his 'logic' towards establishing an essentialist understanding of 'race' as the only valid foundation of human existence,

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<sup>96</sup> *Als wir von Belgien her nach Frankreich kamen, da waren unsere Landser tief enttäuscht: Das soll Frankreich sein, diese unfreundlichen dreckigen Dörfer und Städte? Dieser Mangel an Ordnung und Schönheit? Was haben die Franzosen eigentlich nach dem Krieg gemacht? fragten sie. Keine neuen Siedlungen, rückständige Bauernhöfe, kaum ein Neubau zu sehen, sanitäre Einrichtungen wie zur Zeit unserer Großväter – bestenfalls. Gewiß, Paris hat sie begeistert. Anscheinend hat man Paris immer für Frankreich gehalten, wenn man von der ersten Kulturturnation der Welt sprach.*

*Aber nun erst Südfrankreich. Ein herrlicher Garten; – doch nicht durch Fleiß und Willen der Bewohner, sondern einzig durch die Güte Gottes. Die Dörfer, von Ferne stattlich, boten als Quartiere kaum für unsere geringen Ansprüche genügende Räume. Wenn wir die Bewohner ansahen, verstanden wir mit einem Male, wohin Landflucht führt. Fast jeder Bauernhof, mit seinen verfallenen Mauern und Gebäuden, wirkt wie eine Ruine. Verlassene Höfe, von Gestrüpp und Unkraut überwuchert, ungepflegte Felder und Weingärten, soviel Brachland, Kartoffelkäfer und Getreiderost, alles Dinge, die für uns unbegreiflich sind. Doch sie offenbarten uns eine der Hauptgründe für diesen schrecklichen Zusammenbruch eines führungslosen Volkes.*

*Während der Kampfhandlungen war wohl jedem Forstmann Baum Baum und Wald Wald. Nun hat das forstliche Auge Zeit, wach zu werden. Und was es vergleichend sieht, fügt sich erschreckend ins allgemeine Bild.*

*Merkwürdig schon hatte ein Eindruck die andersartige Natur des diesen Raum bewohnenden Volkes aufgezeigt: Die Friedhöfe des Weltkrieges. Bei den Alliierten kalte Marmorpracht, üppige Rabatten, dessinlose exotische Sträucher. Der deutsche Heldenfriedhof mit den endlosen Reihen im Baumdunkel sich verlierender schlichter Holzkreuze ist ein heiliger Hain. Der Franzose ist ein Steinmensch – so wie der Deutsche ein Waldmensch ist.*

*Das erklärt vieles; aber kann es entschuldigen, was man an Waldwirtschaft sieht? Hier fühlt man sich ins forstliche Mittelalter zurückversetzt. Die vorherrschende Betriebsart ist der Mittelwald, sehr oft mit der Eiche als einziger Holzart. So war es auch in der nördlichen Hälfte Frankreichs, wo überhaupt einen Hochwald gesehen zu haben, ich mich nicht entsinnen kann.*

[ . . . ]

*Je weiter man nach Süden kommt, desto mehr nehmen Akazie, Edelkastanie, Schwarz- und Strandkiefer als Mischhölzer und Lückenbüßer zu. Vereinzelt sind sehr wüchsige Bestände der gemeinen Kiefer zu treffen, doch wenig gepflegt. Ein oft kaum durchdringbarer Unterwuchs läßt fast allenthalben Rückschlüsse auf die hohe Leistungsfähigkeit des Bodens zu.*

*In der Gegend zwischen Angoulême–Cognac–Bordeaux trifft man ausgedehnte Nadelholzwaldungen, meist von trostlosem Zustand, Strandkiefern (*Pinus maritima*) aller Altersklassen. Ist es eine Rassenfrage, daß man in diesen Beständen kaum einen geraden Schaft findet? Jedenfalls bei der Betrachtung so eines krummen und schiefen, schlangenartig gewundenen Bestandes, sah ich plötzlich das ungleiche Paar vor Augen, das mir – gewiß aber keinem Franzosen – erst wieder im letzten Ort aufgefallen war: ein tiefschwarzer wollhaarer *Nigger* mit einem weißen Mädchen. (Strehlke 1940, pp. 212-213, emphasis and paragraph breaks in the original).*

contemporary readers would surely have identified this piece of propaganda writing as just that: propaganda. But we must not forget that the role of propaganda in the Third *Reich* was a much more prominent one than today and that it did not necessarily have the same altogether bad reputation it has today. Rather, it was a somewhat expected part of the everyday experience of Germans. Goebbels's ministry aptly advertised its mission with its very name: Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda. Thus, although we might find the tone and the slant of the writing so contrived as to be discredited, this might not necessarily have been the case with contemporary foresters. To them, it might have represented another repetition of what they had heard and read many times before.

The effect of propaganda articles such as Strehlke's is not connected to their individual degree of veracity but to their position in a chain of frequently repeated concepts or phrases. In other words, an argument that might sound outlandish and farfetched at first encounter might slowly work its way into acceptance by being repeated and presented from different angles. In this respect, we can compare propaganda to a meditative mantra which, while not becoming any more 'realistic' or 'true' through constant repetition, can nonetheless become effective.

Besides repetition, the suggestiveness of propaganda is also tied to its potential to make disconnected aspects of social life, for example 'race' and forest, seem 'naturally' connected, i.e., its potential for the naturalization of the political. Keeping this in mind, how does Strehlke establish this connection between race and forest, between the natural and the political in his article? The purpose of the first two paragraphs clearly was to establish the difference between German and French 'ways of being' by using the landscape as a mirror of 'national characteristics.' Strehlke presented the French landscape as fertile yet

underutilized. The presence of former farmsteads and weeds bespoke the potential of the soil, while the “incomprehensible” neglect and backwardness of the human occupants of this “magnificent garden” wasted it away. To let this potential go unused was anathema to German foresters trained in the rational science of forestry. After all, their goal was to achieve the maximum sustainable yield on any given site by carefully choosing the mix of tree species to be planted (sometimes as far as one or two rotations into the future), devising a detailed management plan, and even safeguarding the availability of a permanent complement of local forest labour by providing settlement incentives and land allotments. To fall short of the maximum possible use of the land, whether in the fields or in the forest, was to fail at one’s collective responsibility as a cultural nation to ‘improve’ the land and maintain a cultural landscape.

Even the glittering metropolis of Paris with its grandeur could not offset the negative impression that the German beholders had formed of the ‘neglected’ countryside. In fact, in their view the pull of the bright city lights was one of the premier reasons for the sorry state of the countryside: the sharp contrast between glittering Paris and the abandoned countryside only served to throw into stark relief the effects of migration to the cities, another favourite bogeyman of German foresters. In the tradition of the cultural pessimism they had inherited from their *Bildungsbürger* elders, German foresters decried the effects of rural depopulation on the cultural landscape as weakening the overall *völkisch* resilience of a nation. The French nation, ‘uprooted’ from its ancestral soil, consequently had lost the strength it needed to stand on its own – and with it the right to continue to stand on its own: the landscape “revealed to us one of the main reasons for the terrible collapse of this leaderless nation.” For Strehlke, the collapse had been inevitable. It was not brought about

by German aggression, but had already occurred earlier: France had rotted from the inside out. All the German army had done was crush the glittering yet brittle shell that had hidden the true state of affairs.

With the ‘fact’ of the underutilization of the soil and the *völkisch* inferiority of the French thus ‘established’ through a reading of the cultural landscape in general, Strehlke could progress to a forestry-specific interpretation of “the different character of the people inhabiting this area.” But before letting his “forester’s eye . . . look around and compare” for a detailed evaluation of French forests and forestry, Strehlke set the tone by bringing in the polarity between German ‘culture’ and French ‘civilization’ through the example of the war cemeteries.<sup>97</sup> While the French cemeteries were elaborate works of garden design, he deemed them soulless as they failed to make the connection with the soil in which the German heroes were placed to rest – and whence they re-emerged in the vigour of the trees growing around them. Men and trees were one, sheltering and nourishing one another in life and death alike: the German with his forest-mindedness had protected trees and forest throughout his life; now the trees repaid the favour in the “sacred grove.” This example served to differentiate the French as civilized yet soulless “stone-beings” from the Germans whose culture came from being firmly rooted in nature – they truly were “forest-beings.”

With ‘German forest-mindedness’ being generally seen as an absolutely positive character attribute, this distinction alone vastly elevated Germans over French – or at least that was what the author wanted to suggest to his German readers. But Strehlke was not satisfied that this national characteristic alone could “explain,” let alone “excuse” the

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<sup>97</sup> For a cross-cultural comparative discussion of the symbolism of war cemeteries, see Mosse 1991.

'medieval' state of forestry affairs in France. To illustrate the grounds for his doubt, he continued his evaluative comparison of French and German 'ways of being' by pointing out the numerous deficiencies of the actual forests he had seen during his advance through France. The tenor of Strehlke's silvicultural observations is captured in the statement at the end of the first segment: "I cannot remember having seen a single high grade forest." To a German forester, this statement exemplified all that was wrong with French forestry: it was literally stuck in the middle ages, the time before the advent of German forest science. Back then, forests were primarily grown for fuel wood and with an eye to the maximization of forest by-products such as honey or tanning bark. Those product goals, combined with a lack of tools, mechanization, and transportation, meant that the trees were harvested when they were still of manageable dimensions, which in turn required frequent cuts in short rotations (as short as seven years in the extreme). The resulting forest was called a coppice forest and yielded far less wood volume than the high grade forest of the new German school of forestry. The high grade forest consisted of even-aged and evenly spaced trees, some of which were culled in regular intervals to provide enough light and water for the remaining trees which then would concentrate the entire growth potential of the site on their boles alone and thus produce the maximum attainable volume of saw wood.

By holding on to the outdated method of coppicing their forests, the French had disqualified themselves in the eyes of the German forester: once again, they were guilty of wasting the high potential of the soil. This was further emphasized by Strehlke's comment that the South of France had some "very productive stands of Scots pine, yet always in a state of neglect. At the same time, the often impenetrable undergrowth almost everywhere bespeaks the high potential of the soil." Throughout the article, Strehlke thus juxtaposed the

high fertility of the natural landscape with the simultaneously contrived and neglected cultural landscape that *welsch* nonchalance had imposed on it. This simplistic formula for chastizing the French for their ‘unnatural’ behaviour culminated in the express linking of ‘interbreeding’ between human ‘races’ and deformations of tree form factors as similar lapses of racial awareness.<sup>98</sup> Was it any wonder, Strehlke asked, that the French had let the landscape slip into decline if they did not even have enough awareness to keep their own racial heritage pure? Don’t you see, he asked with his simile, what disastrous potential the combination of high fertility and lack of racial vigilance holds for the overall health of a country, whether we look at the forest form factor or the racial purity of the human population?

Ultimately, Strehlke argued, it was this lack of vigilance that had led to the collapse of the French nation: uprooted from its soil through urbanization, it had lost its *völkisch* strength; failing to appreciate the fertility of its land, it held on to outdated methods of agriculture and silviculture; and diluted in the purity of its blood by its lack of racial mindfulness, it had become unworthy of respect. But Germany was willing to help, it was standing ready to break France’s free fall. Follow the German lead in forestry as in politics, and you can be on the winning side:

The inner and outer collapse has shown the French nation in draconian terms the effects of its mistakes and missed opportunities. Will it find its way back? Will France, too, realize that the soil is not a commodity that can be treated at anyone’s whim? That *völkisch* strength can only root in the soil of the *Heimat*? Once that is the case, vast opportunities will open up for a purposefully planned and executed forestry.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> This comparison resonates with the hate propaganda published in the forestry journals by Hans zu Megede, for example. (see Chapter 6, footnote 61).

<sup>99</sup> *Der innere und äußere Niederbruch hat dem französischen Volk in furchtbarer Härte die Folgen seiner Fehler und Versäumnisse vor Augen geführt. Wird es sich jetzt zurückbesinnen auf sich selbst, wird auch Frankreich erkennen, daß der Boden keine Ware ist, mit der jeder machen kann, was er will, daß nur in der*

German foresters and the German nation as a whole were extending a hand to what they perceived as misguided yet salvageable French nation: realize the error of your past ways and join us in a new future – on our terms. We will teach you how to conduct ‘proper’ forestry, how to take care of your landscape, and how to find your way back to a national existence rooted in the soil.

In practice, French forestry was placed under German military administration which imposed strict guidelines. A ‘law’ decreed in August 1942 required forest owners to publicize their annual cut which was subsequently raised by 50%. A further ‘law’ required the ‘coordination’ of French foresters in associations nominally controlled by the chief of the French forest administration. As Rubner relates, the cooperation of German military administration and the remaining French forestry administration seems to have been rather smooth. For instance, as a reward for the cooperation of the French forest administration, the German occupiers allowed the reopening the forest academy at Les Barres as early as December 1940.<sup>100</sup>

With their ‘invitation’ to accept the ‘blessings’ of German ways, German foresters thus still granted a degree of agency to the French nation, which they saw as more or less related in terms of ‘race,’ if misguided and insufficiently vigilant against ‘racial dilution.’ As we will see in the next chapter, such agency – and the underlying respect for another people, however spurious its rationale might have been – was denied to the local populations when German foresters marched East. Before we follow them to Poland and the Soviet Union,

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*Heimaterde die völkische Kraft wurzeln kann? Ein weites Feld eröffnet sich dann zu planvoll geleiteter forstlicher Tätigkeit.* (Strehlke 1940, p. 213).

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Rubner 1985, pp. 155-158.

however, we will conclude this chapter by examining how forest and people in the ‘fellow-Nordic’ countries in the North fared under German occupation.

### 7.8 Norway and Germany: A “Nordic Community of Destiny”

In April of 1940, German troops occupied Denmark and Norway, giving concrete form to the National Socialist vision of a German ‘supply zone’ in Northern Europe. In an article entitled “Norway: *Volk, Space, and Economy*,” the forester Stalman analyzed the potential Norway’s people, geography, and economy held for Germany while outlining the approach the German forest administration had taken to tap that potential. At the same time, Stalman’s article gave expression to the National Socialist dictum of a ‘Nordic community of destiny’ that supposedly united Germans with their Scandinavian cousins:

In Norway, the Nordic-Germanic race has been preserved in its purest form. . . . Climate, soil, and time have shaped the Norwegian. . . . In the isolated Norwegian mountains, the master race developed.<sup>101</sup>

Clearly, as the Norwegians were regarded as the most pure form of the ‘master race,’ the German occupiers could not violate the rights of this ‘fellow-Nordic’ people – at least not blatantly so. Accordingly, the German policy of “reorganizing” the Norwegian forestry sector which Stalman outlined in his article was one of remarkable restraint and consideration not only for the integrity of the ‘Nordic forest’ of Norway, but also for the rights of Norwegian foresters and forest proprietors. Changes were mainly administrative and were to be overseen by a newly created Forest Directorate, a German supervisory body

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<sup>101</sup> *In Norwegen hat sich die nordisch-germanische Rasse am reinsten erhalten. . . . Klima, Boden und Zeit haben den norwegischen Menschen gestaltet. . . . In den einsamen norwegischen Gebirgen ist der Herrenmensch gewachsen, der, seit 1000 und mehr Jahren auf eigener selbst erworbener Scholle stehend, dieses seiner Hände Werk mit niemandem zu teilen gewillt ist und der in stolzer Verschlossenheit nur sich selbst und seiner Familie lebt. . . .* (Stalman 1943, p. 39).

grafted atop the Norwegian forest administration which was left intact. The Forest Directorate recruited a cadre of Norwegian Forestry Supervisors who were to ensure the implementation of the changes at the ground level. Towards the top, the Forest Directorate reported directly to the *Reich* Commissioner as the representative of the *Führer* in Norway.

While the Forest Directorate assumed complete planning control over forestry and all wood processing industries, it did not expropriate private forest owners, who continued to control more than 80 % of the Norwegian forest area. Forest owners were not dispossessed of their forests – as long as they complied with the policies issued by the Directorate. As could be expected, the premier goal of the policies was to exploit the Norwegian forest, yet at the same time the Forest Directorate was instructed to:

complete this unusually difficult task, viz., to meet the immensely heightened need for wood created by the war, without inflicting permanent damage on the Norwegian forest reserves.<sup>102</sup>

This statement made clear that the notion of *Nachhaltigkeit* or sustainability, the prime directive of German forestry since the days of Classical German foresters in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, was to be maintained at all cost even in this occupied country and even under the exigencies of war. As we saw earlier, this was a privilege otherwise afforded only to “reincorporated” lands thought to be a part of Germany, such as neighbouring *Sudetenland* and Alsace. The fact that the faraway Norwegian forest was to be treated with the same consideration as the forest on “German ethnic soil” is a remarkable indication of the racial

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<sup>102</sup> . . . . Erfüllung der gestellten ungewöhnlich schwierigen Aufgabe, nämlich den kriegbedingten ungemein gesteigerten Holzbedarf ohne nachhaltige Schädigung der Holzvorräte Norwegens zu decken. (Stalman 1943, p. 60).

worth German foresters assigned to what they considered the ‘fellow-Nordic’ people and landscape of Norway.<sup>103</sup>

We can see this idea of a commonality expressed further in an article relating “Forestry Impressions from Norway,” in which forester Hermann Leonhard stressed the similarities between the Norwegian people and landscape and their German equivalents:

Instinctively, one is reminded of the landscape of the uplands of central Germany, such as the Harz mountains or the Black Forest. . . . A contemplative wanderer finds many similarities and some differences as he compares the forests of Norway and Germany. . . . 150 years ago, poor road access, forest pasture, and overexploitation had reduced the German forest to a state similar to that of the Norwegian forest today. Through decades of tenacious work the yield of the German forest was raised to present levels. In the same manner, it must be possible to raise the condition of the forest in Norway. Proof is available in the form of a number of exemplary districts. The men who lead Norway today are convinced of the necessity of giving the Norwegian forest the attention and the furtherance it deserves. . . . May the belief in their own future and in a new Europe give the Norwegian people and our professional comrades in the North the strength to rebuild the Norwegian forest.<sup>104</sup>

Leonhard saw Norwegians as possessing the same “forest-mindedness” usually reserved for the German population and was hopeful that this ‘natural’ consideration for the forest would enable them to follow the German path of forest development of their own volition. As Stalman pointed out, it was the task of the Forest Directorate to further foster this spirit of persuasion by:

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<sup>103</sup> The same overall respect emerges from the pages of the files of the Reich Forest Office’s General Sections for Denmark and Norway collected in the folder BA R 37.01 265 (*Betreffend: Generalreferate Dänemark und Norwegen*) in the Federal Archives Berlin.

<sup>104</sup> *Unwillkürlich wird man an deutsche Mittelgebirgslandschaft, wie Harz oder Hochschwarzwald, erinnert. . . . Viele Aehnlichkeiten und manches andersartige findet der besinnliche Wanderer, wenn er den norwegischen Wald mit dem deutschen Wald vergleicht. . . . Mangelnder Aufschluß der Wälder, Waldweide und Uebernutzung hatten vor etwa 150 Jahren den deutschen Wald in einen Zustand gebracht, der den heutigen Waldverhältnissen in Norwegen ähnelt. Durch zähe jahrzehntelange Arbeit ist es gelungen, die Leistung des deutschen Waldes auf die jetzige Höhe zu steigern. So muß es auch in Norwegen möglich sein, den Waldzustand grundlegend zu verbessern. Beweise können an Hand von einer Reihe Musterbetrieben geliefert werden. Die Männer, die heute in Norwegen führen, sind davon überzeugt, daß es notwendig ist, dem norwegischen Wald die Beachtung und Förderung zu schenken, die er verdient. . . . Möge der Glaube an die eigene Zukunft und an ein neues Europa dem norwegischen Volk und unseren Berufskameraden im Norden Kraft geben, so daß sie in der Lage sind, den Neuaufbau der norwegischen Wälder durchzuführen.* (Leonhard 1941, p. 71).

coordinat[ing] the legal, organizational, and technical conditions for Norwegian forestry as much as possible with the actuality of the *Reich* while giving full consideration to the particular conditions of Norway.<sup>105</sup>

In the same spirit of cooperation amongst ‘fellow-Nordic peoples,’ the Forestry Directorate also instructed its Norwegian Forestry Supervisors to win over individual forest owners through advice and persuasion rather than coercion:

The forestry supervisors will only be successful in their work if they manage to win forest owners for the New Economy by means of persuasion and if they achieve close cooperation on the basis of trust. In the application of coercive measures they must limit themselves to those absolute necessary against malicious opponents.<sup>106</sup>

The ‘velvet glove’ approach the German occupiers took to extracting resources from the Norwegians did not mean, however, that Norway was not expected to make its contribution to the struggle Germany was supposedly fighting on the behalf of all Nordic peoples. The same year Stalman was writing about “close cooperation on the basis of trust,” Norway was saddled with the demand for a *Sonderhieb* or one-time additional cut amounting to 1 million cubic metres or 10% of its sustainable annual cut. As well, Norway (along with the occupied former Baltic states) was called upon to send 10,000 ‘hardened’ forest labourers to Finland so that the Finns could double their timber shipment to the *Reich* to 3 million cubic metres.<sup>107</sup>

Overall, the ‘Nordic’ forests and peoples of Scandinavia were treated with a certain respect by the German occupation foresters. As ‘fellow-Nordic’ peoples able to create and

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<sup>105</sup> *Die gesetzlichen, organisatorischen und technischen Grundlagen wurden unter voller Berücksichtigung der besonderen norwegischen Verhältnisse den Gegebenheiten im Reich weitestgehend angeglichen.* (Stalman 1943, p. 57).

<sup>106</sup> *Die Forstaufsichtsbeamten werden nur dann erfolgreich tätig sein, wenn es ihnen gelingt, die Waldbesitzer durch Überzeugung für die neue Wirtschaft zu gewinnen, und wenn sie auf der Grundlage des Vertrauens zu einer engen Zusammenarbeit mit ihnen gelangen. In der Anwendung von Zwangsmitteln müssen sie sich auf das unbedingt Notwendige gegenüber böswilligen Kontrahenten beschränken.* (Stalman 1943, p. 58).

<sup>107</sup> Federal Archives Berlin, BA R 37.01 / 204 *Betreffend: "Arbeitseinsatz Betriebsfremder (Ausländer, pp.) Sonderbeauftragter f. d. Einsatz ausländischer Arbeitskräfte im Ausland."* Here: sheet 3.

maintain an 'almost German' forest landscape, Scandinavians possessed a considerable degree of 'racial worth' in the eyes of the German occupiers who consequently treated them as somewhat reluctant allies who were merely in need of convincing before they too would come to see the common cause of racial purity that united the 'Nordic race.' As we will see in the next chapter, the peoples to the East of Germany lived through a very different experience.

## 7.9 Conclusion

During the mid-1930s, the National Socialist regime enjoyed the approval of a large number of Germans. The economy was booming, unemployment had been all but eradicated, and German national pride was boosted by a number of foreign policy successes. Partly through genuine improvements to the life situation of a substantial number of Germans, partly through coercion, and partly through skilful propaganda, the National Socialists had achieved total control over all aspects of German society. With the domestic situation thus firmly secured, the Nazis began to pursue in earnest their erstwhile goal of conquering *Lebensraum* beyond Germany's borders. In the first stage of the conquest, Germany claimed neighbouring areas which were deemed German 'ethnic and cultural soil'— and again the forest served as a common-sense vehicle for the National Socialist propaganda message.

On a general level, foresters were pointing to the German forest landscape as exemplifying German racial characteristics such as rootedness in the soil, diligence, responsibility, and communal spirit. By contrast, they argued, the forest landscapes of *Welsch* and Slavic peoples clearly showed the signs of neglectfulness, sloth, and greed that supposedly characterized those peoples.

On a more specific level, foresters used the forest landscape as an indicator of the spatial extent of the territory of German race as they pointed to the 'clearly German' attributes of the forests of Austria, the *Sudetenland*, and Alsace in support of the German claim to those areas. Where the forest was of a German kind, their argument went, the presence of German race was undeniable as it was the only race capable of accomplishing such a forest landscape. Logically, those areas should rightfully become part of the emerging Greater Germany that strove to unite all Germans within its borders.

In the case of the occupation of Czechoslovakia, the situation demanded a different approach. Here foresters could clearly not argue that the local population was of German descent. Instead, foresters used the argument of German cultural influence as a means of rationalizing the German occupation of Bohemia and Moravia. In their writings, foresters argued that the Czech forest, where it was in a good state of management, bespoke the presence of a beneficial German cultural influence. Where the forest was neglected, overexploited, or not of a 'proper' composition, the detrimental 'Slavic element' was said to have gained the upper hand. Similarly, the supposedly 'un-German' state of the forest of Lorraine was blamed on an alleged '*welsch*' dominance over the German population.

German foresters thus used the forest landscape as a means of sharpening the racial consciousness of Germans, reinforcing and naturalizing the 'us vs. them' message of National Socialism. Pointing to the example of the forest, German foresters elevated German race and culture over the *Welsch* and Slavic Other. When the German armies invaded Poland and the Soviet Union, they also put these notions of superiority and cultural messianism to work in their practical administration of the forest. Sadly, they also mobilized them against the local population.

— CHAPTER 8 —

**LEBENSRAUM AND FORESTOPIA: THE USE OF THE IDEALIZED FOREST AS A  
BLUEPRINT FOR THE GERMANIZATION OF OCCUPIED SPACE IN THE EAST,  
1939-1945**

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World forestry, too, is a new territory that is to be conquered and colonized with organizational vision, great skill and competence.

*Forstmeister Adalbert Ebner 1938<sup>1</sup>*

Over vast areas, nothing of the truly Polish settlement and lay of the land is worthy of retention. Above us the big sky of the East, below our feet Mother Earth, and in our hands the order to rebuild the forest of this land from the ground up.

*Oberlandforstmeister Adolf Sommermeyer 1943<sup>2</sup>*

Shoulder to shoulder with our incomparable *Wehrmacht*, we proudly fight for victory with axe and saw!

*Oberlandforstmeister Johannes Barth 1943<sup>3</sup>*

After all, forest policy is but the translating of our *Weltanschauung* into action.

*Oberlandforstmeister Erwin Jaeger 1943<sup>4</sup>*

## **8.1 Introduction**

By the beginning of 1939, the internal consolidation and peripheral expansion of Germany into a strong and ethnically homogeneous Greater Germany had surpassed even the most ambitious hopes of the *völkisch* opposition of the Weimar period. After the reunification with the Saar region in 1935 and the remilitarization of the Rhineland in 1936, the

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<sup>1</sup> *Auch die Weltforstwirtschaft ist ein Neuland, das errungen und mit organisatorischem Weitblick, neben fleißiger Arbeit und großem Geschick und Können kolonisiert werden will.* (Ebner 1938, p. 566).

<sup>2</sup> *Von echt polnischer Siedlung und Landverfassung ist oft auf weiten Gebieten auch nichts erhaltungswürdig. Über uns der weite Himmel des Ostens, unter unseren Füßen die Mutter Erde und in unseren Händen der Auftrag, dieses Land von Grund auf in seiner Bewaldung neu aufzubauen.* (Sommermeyer 1943a, p. 19).

<sup>3</sup> *Es ist unser Stolz, neben unserer unvergleichlichen Wehrmacht mit Axt und Säge für den Sieg zu kämpfen!* (Barth 1943, p. 36).

<sup>4</sup> *Forstpolitik ist schließlich nichts anderes als die Umsetzung unserer Weltanschauung in die Tat.* (Jaeger 1943, p. 46).

annexation of Austria and the *Sudetenland* in 1938 had added another 10 million German-speakers to an ever stronger *Reich*. Within a mere five years, National Socialist Germany had emerged as the bully of Europe, eager to turn the tables on the victors of 1918. Now Hitler was emboldened to openly pursue his erstwhile goal of conquering *Lebensraum* in the East. One of the clearest indications of the new course came in February of 1938, when Hitler assumed personal command over all three branches of the German armed forces to overcome opposition in the German military against going to war with Czechoslovakia over the *Sudetenland*. Less than a year later, after the occupation of what remained of Czechoslovakia on March 15, 1939, there could be no further doubt that a strong and ethnically pure Greater Germany had never been Hitler's ultimate goal. Instead, it was a stepping stone on the way to conquering *Lebensraum* in the East.

In the late 1930s, then, the National Socialist regime shifted its attention from the peripheral consolidation of *Volkstum* or Germandom towards the external expansion into new *Lebensraum* that lay beyond even the most inclusive definitions of both German *Volks-* and *Kulturboden* ('ethnic' and 'cultural' soil). The foreign areas annexed to the German *Lebensraum* in the course of the war were to be 'reorganized' according to their suitability for German settlement, their resource yield for the war effort, and their agricultural potential for supplying Germany with food. Equally important in deciding how the resources of those territories were to be appropriated by the German authorities, however, was the perceived 'racial worth' of the resident population.

To the Nazis, the occupied peoples and territories from Norway to France in the West and from the Baltic states to the Ukraine in the East represented a microcosm of different

degrees of 'racial worth,' ranging from 'fellow-Nordic' to 'subhuman' races and landscapes. In this chapter, we will use the writings of German foresters to visit those landscapes and peoples which the Nazis considered 'subhuman' and upon which they unleashed their unbridled terror: Poland and the Soviet Union. In journal articles, foresters related their assessment of the state of affairs they had found upon entering the newly occupied territory; in policy documents they outlined their vision for future improvements; and in reports they evaluated the means employed and the progress made towards arriving at that future state. In all of their writings, foresters voiced their impressions of the forest landscapes they saw and gave 'racial explanations' for the state of those landscapes. We will see how the racial differences foresters perceived to exist informed the formulation and implementation of differential forest policies across German-occupied Eastern Europe – and thus further reinforced the racial stigmatization of the local populations.<sup>5</sup> Finally, we can also glean an idea of the "future Europe" German foresters envisioned for the time after the war – a Europe in which foresters were to play a much more authoritarian and sinister role than German forest history has so far acknowledged.

Throughout this chapter, we will see that German foresters saw the character of the landscape and the character of the resident population as intertwined: alleged racial traits such as 'Slavic indolence' were seen as leading to the deterioration of the landscape.

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<sup>5</sup> For example, the folders BA R 44 211 (*Behandlung jüdischen und staatsfeindlichen Grundbesitzes, Sudetenland, 1940-1945*); BA R 44 221 (*Rechtsverhältnisse des Forstgrundbesitzes, Allgemeines und Einzelfälle, 1941-1945*); and BA R 44 222 (*Behandlung jüdischen und staatsfeindlichen Grundbesitzes, Allgemeine Richtlinien, 1941-1944*) in the Federal Archives in Berlin give a first-hand impression of the argumentation of the forest administration concerning the expropriation of forest estates in the various occupied territories.

German foresters portrayed this alleged lack of forest-mindedness as a moral justification for the German forest authorities to take control of those landscapes and 'protect' them from further abuse by their 'racially deficient' inhabitants so as to arrest the process of degradation. Yet this professed goal of ecological landscape restoration was from the beginning overshadowed by a larger political goal: German foresters planned to refashion the occupied landscape into a German forest landscape so future German settlers would feel at home in the 'new territories.'

After a brief review of the shift in Nazi ideology from *Volkstum* to *Lebensraum* in the late 1930s, we will follow German foresters to their occupation posts in Eastern Europe, where they made a threefold distinction. In western Poland, they claimed the existence of historical "ethnic German soil" which was outright joined to the *Reich* as the so-called 'Reincorporated Eastern Areas.' Further east, in central Poland, they helped establish a 'Slavic reservation' called *Generalgouvernement* whose landscapes were to be 'Germanized' in preparation for future German settlement through the planting of 'German' forests. Even further east, in the occupied Soviet Union, German foresters established an unmitigated exploitation regime to strip this alleged "colonial space" of its wood resources.

## 8.2 From *Volkstum* to *Lebensraum* Ideology

By autumn of 1938, the concept of *Volkstum* and the goal of uniting all Germandom in an ethnically pure *Volksgemeinschaft* had outlived its usefulness as the ostensible guiding principle for National Socialist foreign policy. Almost all German-speakers had been consolidated within the newly expanded borders of what was now officially called

*Großdeutschland* or Greater Germany – and foresters had delivered part of the justification for this expansion with their claim that the presence of a typical German forest could be seen as historical ‘proof’ of the German cultural influence. Any additional demands for territory in the East clearly could no longer be justified by demanding the right of self-determination for ethnic Germans living in that territory because there were only scattered Germans living in Poland or the Soviet Union, for example. On the contrary, the addition of the overwhelmingly ‘Slavic’ populations of those territories to the *Reich* would only have diluted the desired ‘racial purity’ of Germany.<sup>6</sup>

The demands for territory could be justified, however, by pointing to the fact that Germany was the most populous country in Europe. Even within the newly expanded boundaries of *Großdeutschland*, the propaganda insisted, Germans were limited to too small a territory and had too few resources at their disposal. What was needed was more ‘living space’ with more resources: *Lebensraum*. To illustrate this claim, the propaganda emerging from the forestry sector frequently used a pie diagram which ingeniously connected the demons of population pressure and resource scarcity. The pie diagram represented how much of the world’s forest area was controlled by various countries. Of this pie, Germany held only the tiniest of slivers; so tiny, indeed, that the population of Germany could not be

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<sup>6</sup> According to a 1939 memo by Himmler outlining the “Planning Fundamentals for the Future Development of the Eastern Territories,” even in those areas of western Poland which until 1918 constituted the Prussian province of Posen and were officially ‘reincorporated’ into the *Reich* immediately after the end of the Poland campaign, only 11 % of the population were German-speakers. Polish-speakers constituted 82 %, while the remaining 7 % were classified as Jews who were expected “to leave this area before the end of the winter.” The memo also concedes that even before the Treaty of Versailles, when the province was still part of the *Reich*, the German-speaking population never exceeded 50 % (*Planungsgrundlagen für den Aufbau der Ostgebiete*, reprinted in the appendix of Gröning and Wolschke-Bulmahn 1987a, pp. 220-222). Koehl gives the ratio of Germans to non-Germans in the annexed eastern areas as 1:13 (Koehl 1957, p. 191).

represented on it. In a suggestive visualization of this 'crowding,' the minute human figures symbolizing the German population spilled forth from the pie segment and into the margins of the diagram - whereupon they formed an ominously ordered phalanx with a swastika banner flying high above their tight formation.<sup>7</sup>

In another illustration of the 'raw deal' Germany was said to have received, the German *Michel* (the equivalent of John Bull or Marianne) was shown in his undersized bedstead, trying to cover himself with too small a blanket in the shape of the territory of the German *Reich* – representations of an overcrowded *Reich* and the insufficient per capita forest 'cover,' respectively. But a Valkyrian Germania with her sword and winged helmet comes to his aid, handing him a large additional blanket labelled "Colonies" so that *Michel* may cover himself again.<sup>8</sup>

Such visualizations were supplemented by press releases which supplied "facts" to newspaper editors which the latter were expected to incorporate into their articles. For example, the *WPD-Kurzdienst*, a "political economy fact newsletter," on 28 June 1939 circulated a calculation that incredibly showed that Britain controlled 35 times more forest area than Germany. On the same day, text passages and tables from the newsletter appeared

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<sup>7</sup> For example on a panel exhibited at the German Colonial Exhibition from June 21 to September 10, 1939, in Dresden. (cf. Fr [sic] 1939, p. 216, as well as *Der Deutsche Forstwirt* 1939).

<sup>8</sup> This representation was designed for the German Colonial Exhibition in Freiburg in 1935 by the "Institute for Foreign and Colonial Forestry" at the Forestry Academy at Tharandt. It is reprinted in Francke 1935, p. 563.

in an article in the respected daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* under the headline “Colonies Indispensable for Wood Supply.”<sup>9</sup>

Through such references to the ‘unfair’ distribution of the world’s colonial forest area, forestry propaganda frequently highlighted the ‘colonial question.’ This stemmed mainly from the long-time interest of German foresters in colonial forestry, which not only promised to supplement Germany’s increasingly deficient domestic wood supply, but to also open up job prospects for the chronically underemployed forestry graduates.<sup>10</sup> Beginning in 1938, however, *Lebensraum* propaganda in the forestry sector, too, focussed on a potential ‘colony’ much closer to home: the territories of Germany’s eastern neighbours.

In most *Lebensraum* propaganda aimed at the general German audience, the issue of self-sufficiency in food production was foremost. Indeed, the food situation in Germany, while never critical, had been increasingly strained by the exigencies of the self-imposed policies of autarky and rearmament. In 1936, the so-called ‘fats crisis’ almost led to the introduction of rationing cards for butter and other fats. Hitler’s stop gap measure, announced with great

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. the newspaper clippings contained in the file BA R113, 45 C 2.1 to 50 C 2.6 (also on film roll 53441): *Zeitungsausschnittsammlung: Forstwirtschaft, 1935-1939*.

<sup>10</sup> Germany at that time could produce only 75% of its annual consumption of approx. 80 million cubic metres of wood. On foresters’ hopes for colonial employment, see Trendelenburg 1934. After 1937, the Forestry Academy at Tharandt offered courses in colonial forestry which were administered by the Academy’s Institute for Foreign and Colonial Forestry (founded in 1931). Beginning in 1938, the Institute published a dedicated periodical entitled *Kolonialforstliche Mitteilungen* or Colonial Forestry Journal. According to a report by its member Alfred Francke, the Institute employed as many as 21 academic and 28 technical full-time staff in 1941. (Francke A. 1941, p. 289).

Among the surviving files in the Federal Archives in Berlin, there are several folders which document the extensive and high-level planning efforts of the *Reich* Forest Office for future German colonies in Africa. The discussions concerning the hunting regulations in those imaginary colonies alone fill three folders (BA R 37.01 479 *Koloniales Jagdwesen [1941-1942]*; BA R 37.01 501 *Jagdgesetzgebung für die Kolonien, Bd. 1, 15.4.41-31.12.41*; BA R 37.01 502 *Jagdgesetzgebung für die Kolonien, Bd. 2, 1.1.42-?*). As late as 1942, German foresters were discussing the “Foundations of Colonial Forest Law” in the newly founded Hermann Göring Academy of Forestry (cf. Heske 1942). All this took place while Germany had no colonial territory.

fanfare at the *Reich* Party Congress in Nuremberg on 9 September 1936, was to launch a comprehensive Four Year Plan in which every aspect of the German economy was to be centrally planned under the auspices of the new “Plenipotentiary General,” Hermann Göring. Meanwhile, secret preparations were already underway for a violent long term ‘solution’ to the questions of both food supply and *Lebensraum*: the creation of an agrarian empire for German settlers on the fertile plains of Eastern Europe. Hitler’s immediate goals were to place the breadbasket of Eastern Europe at the exclusive use of Germany and to gain access to the oil fields of the Caucasus. In the long run, the aim was to fetter the countries of southeastern Europe in a Greater German “supply zone” (*Versorgungsraum*) to secure the raw materials necessary for waging war first against the Soviet Union in the East, and then against Britain for world domination. *Lebensraum* in the East thus became the official goal as this new ideology of space joined the notion of race as the driving force of German foreign policy. In Nazi propaganda, *Lebensraum* was equated with space for German agrarian settlement, a secure food base, a farmstead for every German wanting to return to the soil, an ethnic buffer zone, and a military staging area against ‘the Slavs.’

As early as 1925, Hitler had demanded more *Lebensraum* for the German people in *Mein Kampf*. Immediately after his rise to power in 1933, he outlined his vision of *Lebensraum* in the East to the military leadership and other select circles, but did not allow it to figure prominently in propaganda for several years. This changed after the Munich conference in September of 1938 during which Hitler bullied France and England into sacrificing the *Sudetenland*, the last prize to be sought and obtained under the policy of *Volkstum*-consolidation. This last irredenta territory fast in hand, Hitler made a turnabout

and declared *Lebensraum* the official primary goal of National Socialist policy in a speech in the *Reichstag* on January 30, 1939. The new party line was immediately passed down through all levels of the coordinated state. Speaking to an audience of propaganda, culture, film and broadcasting officials of the Nazi party in April of 1939, *Reich* Organization Leader Robert Ley made it clear that “every meeting must include the demand for more land.”<sup>11</sup>

This land, Hitler had suggested in *Mein Kampf* (as had Düesberg in his *Der Wald als Erzieher* in 1910), was to be found in eastern Europe and particularly in the Ukraine. Not only was this ‘heartland’ very fertile, but it was also inhabited, in Hitler’s mind, by Slavic *Untermenschen* or ‘subhumans’ who did not deserve to occupy such a bountiful land and in any case were kept in serfdom by the Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy in Moscow.<sup>12</sup> To prepare Germans for the eventual onslaught, Hitler used every propaganda argument possible. In 1936, for instance, when the foreign exchange crisis caused by the demands of the rearmament program led to minor food shortages, Hitler masterfully turned the grumbling of the populace against the peoples of Eastern Europe. Germany, the argument went, had to go without butter because it was forced to spend its precious few resources on protecting itself from the greedy hands of those neighbours who had plenty of resources to begin with, particularly the Soviet Union. In this fashion, the chimaera of a “Class Struggle Between Nations” was conjured up, intended to whet the appetite of ‘shortchanged’ Germans for the resources of their ‘undeserving’ neighbours to the East.<sup>13</sup> Within Germany, then, the internal

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<sup>11</sup> *Jede Versammlung muß einen Appell nach mehr Land enthalten.* (cited in Sywottek 1976, p. 182).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Hitler 1943 (1925), pp. 138 ff.

<sup>13</sup> Thus the party newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter* on July 3, 1939, under the headline of *Klassenkampf der Völker* (Class Struggle Between Nations). As late as spring 1939, Hitler was still making

propaganda stressed Germany's 'need' for *Lebensraum* as a "concept of natural law" that had only become political through its violation thanks to the "machinations of forces foreign to the area in question."<sup>14</sup>

The external propaganda, however, was more circumspect in its choice of arguments. In its foreign news service, the Ministry of Propaganda frequently presented *Lebensraum* as a mere *Großwirtschaftsraum* or 'Greater Economic Zone' that formed the precondition for any "truly constructive politics in the future":

The politics of *Lebensraum* realizes on the European continent, more specifically in the area which according to nature and history falls to Germany, the consolidation of all economic forces in one unit. This said *Lebensraum* is of a higher order and thus transcends the boundaries of the nation state. In this new unit, the smaller states integrate themselves – without having to relinquish or losing their freedom and political independence – into the order of the Greater Economic Zone which is led by that state which possesses the qualifications and ability necessary for leadership. Balancing the interests of all constituent areas, this state will consolidate and plan the entire *Lebensraum*.<sup>15</sup>

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advances to Poland to participate in his plan to gain *Lebensraum* by wresting the Ukraine from the Soviet Union. It was only when Poland refused to join the Anti-Comintern Pact that Hitler decided to delay his attack on the Soviet Union and plot with Moscow to carve up Poland. Stalin agreed on August 23, 1939, clearing the way for the German attack on Poland. A week later, at the dawn of 1 September 1939, German troops began the Second World War.

<sup>14</sup> *Naturrechtsbegriff* . . . wird erst durch Störversuche raumfremder Kräfte politisch. Thus the wording in the August 19, 1939, issue of the *Zeitschriftendienst* or 'newspaper service,' a weekly official guideline for journalists that contained 'pointers' on how to treat topical issues in their newspapers. The title of the issue was *Lebensraum - Schlagwort oder Naturrechtsbegriff?* (*Lebensraum* - Slogan or Concept of Natural Law?). (cited in Sywottek 1976, p. 184).

<sup>15</sup> *Die Politik des Lebensraumes verwirklicht auf dem europäischen Kontinent, und zwar in dem Deutschland nach Natur und Geschichte zufallenden Raume nur die Zusammenfassung aller wirtschaftlichen Kräfte in einer Einheit, eben dem 'Lebensraume', der eine höhere und damit die Grenzen des nationalen Staates überschreitende Ordnung darstellt. In dieser neuen Einheit gliedern sich die kleineren Staaten - ohne ihre Unabhängigkeit und politische Selbständigkeit aufgeben zu müssen oder zu verlieren - in die Ordnung eines Großwirtschaftsraumes ein, dessen Führung dem Staate zukommt, der hierzu die Voraussetzungen und Befähigung hat, und der die Zusammenfassung und Planung im Ausgleich der Interessen aller diesen 'Lebensraum' umfassenden Gebiete vornimmt.* (emphasis in the original). The passage is taken from an official statement by the Ministry of Propaganda in the 24 May 1939 edition of the *Dienst aus Deutschland* (Newsservice from Germany), a regular newswire intended for foreign audiences. The title of the item was *Die Politik des Lebensraumes* or 'The Politics of *Lebensraum*' (cited in Sywottek 1976, p. 184).

Outside Germany, then, the propaganda was designed to convince audiences that Germany's goal was merely to achieve some form of economic overlordship over the smaller nations of eastern Europe, an area which 'naturally and historically' fell to Germany anyway. The implied question to the audiences in France and Britain was clear: are you prepared to go to war over the oil fields of a few "smaller states"? But the French and British governments called the bluff: when Germany invaded Poland on 1 September 1939, they stood firm. From then on, additional *Lebensraum* no longer came at the expense of words but had to be purchased with blood.

Yet the odds seemed to be against the Allies. As country after country fell under German domination, the 'Greater Economic Zone' of German propaganda quickly became a European reality. The forestry sector was among the first to realize the new economic order on a continental scale. The following is an assessment of the situation in late 1941, prepared by Egon Glesinger, the Secretary General of the Comité International du Bois, who reported on the "The Impact of the War on Forest Industries" in the *Journal of Forestry*:

Wherever the Nazis penetrate they are taking possession of all private enterprise. So-called commissars have the function to carry out a general policy of expropriation and to turn over all existing firms to members of the party or trustworthy partisans of the Nazi regime. . . . Forest ownership, wood industry, and the trade in forest products all over Nazi-controlled Europe (with the exception of Sweden, Switzerland, and Portugal) are now entirely in the hands of Nazi agents. [ . . . ]

Beyond the political borders of so-called states within Europe a new system of trade in forest products has recently been introduced as part of the "new order." A "plan" has been drawn up by the Germans, regulating production as well as foreign exchanges of wood. The requirements of all deficit areas within the German orbit are being assessed by Berlin. The Scandinavian countries have been compelled to enter into arrangements, fixing quotas of production and exports for every producer. No other exports receive licenses, nor can new factories or mills be erected without special consent. For the Central-European and Mediterranean area monopolistic "forest industry companies" in each country have been entrusted to organize and to handle the entire production, exports and imports of forest products. Germany owns the majority of shares in each of these companies, all of which are combined into a holding corporation, *Deutsche Holzwirtschafts A.G.*, located in Berlin. Even the trade between Slovakia and Belgium, or from Sweden to Holland is mainly handled by German

agents and wholesalers, and – similar to other cases – the entire structure of that “new order” is on a tributary basis in favour of the German conquerors.<sup>16</sup>

Yet beyond dominating the timber trade of the countries under German domination, the German forestry authorities also had an direct and indirect impact on the everyday life of the population. The direct impact arose from the policies that foresters who were in positions of authority in the occupied territories across Europe were able to impose on the local population, for example when they ordered them ‘removed’ from afforestation areas. The indirect impact was of a more insidious and varied form. When foresters described and evaluated the forests of occupied countries across Europe, they were at the same time passing judgement over the resident population. Sometimes they did so openly and intentionally, sometimes their writings were misrepresented by reviewers to fit the purpose of stereotyping. Either way, the characterizations of the populations of foreign territories by foresters contributed to the propagandistic creation of ‘national characteristics’ and racial stereotypes. Ultimately, these characterizations also lowered the threshold of inhibitions against the perpetration of violence against those peoples. In the remainder of this chapter, we will see that the peoples of Europe were not all alike in the eyes of German foresters and that their relative standing was often dependent on the impressions – or imaginations – their forests had elicited in the German foresters.

With their articles about the alleged Germanness of the forests of Alsace and Lorraine in 1940, German foresters helped delineate the notional boundaries between the new Greater German *Reich* and the ‘*welsch*’ occupied territory in the West. Similarly, their articles about

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<sup>16</sup> (Glesinger 1942, p. 6, paragraph break in the original). The Comité International du Bois had been founded in 1932 as a forum for countries involved in the international timber trade.

the claimed Germanness of the forests of Bohemia and Moravia in 1939, and the forests of Austria and the *Sudetenland* in 1938, had provided propagandistic cover for the annexation of those territories into the emerging *Großdeutschland*. In all of these cases, foresters were buttressing German claims that had been well established on the public policy agenda not only of the Third *Reich* but also that of the Weimar Republic and the *Kaiserreich* before that. Regardless of government form or party in power, the goal of expanding the German *Reich* to include as many German-speakers as possible had for decades been a nearly universally supported policy goal of successive German governments.

Yet, as the historian Fritz Fischer showed in 1961, German governments also had undeclared designs for the creation of a Greater German empire that was neither ethnically unified nor unilingual, and based neither on legal claims nor historical precedent. Against the vociferous but ultimately futile opposition of received German historiography, Fischer proved from archival evidence that in the summer of 1914, Imperial Germany did not 'slide' into what would become the First World War but was purposely stoking a conflict whose desired outcome was German supremacy on the European continent. In essence, the Imperial German government was planning a colonial empire in Central Europe. After the German defeat in 1918, the governments of the Weimar Republic concentrated on regaining the territories ceded by Germany under the Treaty of Versailles – until the Brüning government of 1930-32 began to make concrete plans for the realization of this dream of eastern

*Lebensraum* once again. Finally, in 1939, after several years of intense preparations, the Nazi regime rose to render the dream a blood-stained reality.<sup>17</sup>

On the cusp and in the wake of the German attack, foresters headed east into the long-coveted territories. Propelled by the ease with which the German armies seemed to gain ground, they advanced as far east as Moscow, taking control of a forest area more than twice that of the *Reich*. Once again German foresters wrote articles and reports on the state of the foreign forest, the landscape in general, and the resident population they encountered there. We will look at how the writings of foresters during the years 1939 to 1945 described and evaluated the various areas of eastern Europe. Also, for the first time in our study, we will see how foresters took a practical role in the administration of the occupied territories. Foresters developed policies for the treatment of forest, landscape, and population of the occupied territories; they devised landscape planning regulations that were to change the face of the eastern European landscapes; and they participated in the ‘removal’ of the local populations for the sake of ‘landscape Germanization’, ‘landscape health’ and ‘landscape harmony.’

We will further see that the notion of race in forester’s writings no longer served to naturalize the political goal of uniting all Germans in one *Reich*. Rather, race was put in the service of grabbing territory from other nations, turning it into amorphous space by removing the population under the pretense that their tenure was detrimental to the health of landscape,

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Fischer 1967.

and finally claiming that now ‘void’ space by way of Germanizing the landscape through afforestation.

In their writings, foresters adopted the official terminology and differentiated between three distinct regions in the occupied territories in the East: the so-called *Wiedereingegliederte Ostgebiete* or ‘Reincorporated Eastern Areas’ in western Poland; the *Generalgouvernement* or ‘General Government’ in central Poland and Galicia; and the *Besetzte Ostgebiete* or ‘Occupied Eastern Territories’ from the Baltic states in the north to the Ukraine in the south. In the following three sections, I will discuss the different approaches foresters took to the treatment of forest, landscape, and people of each of those areas – and how these approaches resonated with the overall *Lebensraum* program of the Nazi regime in those areas.<sup>18</sup>

### 8.3 The Reincorporated Eastern Areas

Our task is not only to Germanize the East in the customary sense, that is, to teach the resident population German language and German law. Rather, we must ensure that only those live in the East who are of truly German, Germanic blood.

Heinrich Himmler 1942<sup>19</sup>

On 7 October 1939, Hitler issued a secret decree which gave the powerful Chief of Police and SS, Heinrich Himmler, the additional portfolio of ‘Reich Commissioner for the

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<sup>18</sup> In contradistinction to the three regional designations, I use the term ‘occupied territories in the East’ when I refer to the entirety of eastern European territories occupied by Germany.

<sup>19</sup> *Unsere Aufgabe ist es, den Osten nicht im alten Sinne zu germanisieren, das heißt den dort wohnenden Menschen deutsche Sprache und deutsche Gesetze beizubringen, sondern dafür zu sorgen, daß im Osten nur Menschen wirklich deutschen, germanischen Blutes wohnen.* Thus Himmler’s official motto for the Germanization of the Reincorporated Eastern Areas. (Himmler 1942, p. 157).

Strengthening of Germandom.’<sup>20</sup> This office conferred the following three tasks on Himmler:

1. To bring back from abroad those Germans and ethnic Germans who are suitable for return to the *Reich*,
2. to eliminate the detrimental influence of those elements of the population who are foreign to the *Volk* and who pose a threat to the *Reich* and the German *Volksgemeinschaft*,
3. to create new German settlement areas through resettlement, in particular through settling Germans and ethnic Germans returning from abroad.<sup>21</sup>

The area where the “returning” Germans were to be settled was a strip of territory immediately to the east of the eastern border of Germany, stretching from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Protectorate in the south. Within weeks of the German conquest, this territory was fully absorbed into the *Reich* as the so-called Reincorporated Eastern Areas and administratively subdivided into the two *Reichsgaue* or ‘provinces’ of Wartheland and Danzig & West Prussia, and the two *Regierungsbezirke* or ‘counties’ of Zichenau south of East Prussia, and Kattowitz in Upper Silesia. A total of 10 million people lived on the roughly 90,000 sq km of annexed territory – and Himmler’s task was to expel all those who were not of “truly German, Germanic blood” to make room for German settlers from South

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<sup>20</sup> The office was often referred to by its acronym RKFdV (or RK), from *Reichskommissar für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums*.

<sup>21</sup> 1. *Die Rückführung der für die endgültige Heimkehr in das Reich in Betracht kommenden Reichs- und Volksdeutschen im Ausland,*

2. *die Ausschaltung des schädigenden Einflusses von solchen volksfremden Bevölkerungsteilen, die eine Gefahr für das Reich und die deutsche Volksgemeinschaft bedeuten,*

3. *Die Gestaltung neuer deutscher Siedlungsgebiete durch Umsiedlung, im besonderen durch Selbsthaftmachung der aus dem Ausland heimkehrenden Reichs- und Volksdeutschen.* (Geheimer Führererlaß of 7 October 1939, Federal Archives Berlin BA R49 II, also reprinted in Gröning and Wolschke-Bulmahn 1987b, p. 149).

Tyrol, the Baltic states, Volhynia, Bukovina, Slovenia, Bessarabia, and the other areas whence ethnic Germans were to 'return' to the *Reich*.<sup>22</sup>

The German claim to the settlement area was based on two 'historical precedents.' Often, the German propaganda would hark back to the medieval *Ostkolonisation* first by Charlemagne and later by the Teutonic Knights.<sup>23</sup> More frequently, however, the propaganda referred to the more recent annexation of the western parts of Poland by Frederick the Great in the first two partitions of Poland in 1771 and 1793.<sup>24</sup> For the next 125 years (interrupted only by a brief Napoleonic interlude from 1807-1815), that part of Poland became the Prussian province of Posen. In their writings, German foresters of the 1930s and 1940s frequently hailed the supposed German achievements of that period, when the Posen region was allegedly improved and imprinted with "a German face" still clearly present in the forest structure, but also in the "familiar" architecture of foresters' homesteads and office buildings.<sup>25</sup> In line with the argument discussed in Chapter 7, this "German face" of the landscape was interpreted as a clear indicator that this region formed part of German 'cultural soil' – and foresters were given the task of reclaiming it in the footsteps of the army. In his welcome address to a conference of foresters and officials in charge of the Reincorporated

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<sup>22</sup> This task was not a small one: while there were sizable German minorities living in the more western areas of the Reincorporated Eastern Areas, the easternmost county of Zichenau, for example, was home to less than 2% Germans. On the resettlement scheme in general, see Koehl 1957.

<sup>23</sup> For example: Eißfeldt 1941; Hesmer 1941; Borath 1942.

<sup>24</sup> On the German *Drang nach Osten* or 'Push towards the East' in general, see Burleigh and Wippermann 1991, p. 26.

<sup>25</sup> *Forstlich hat überhaupt das Gebiet der ehemaligen Provinz Posen ganz sein deutsches Gesicht gewahrt; vertraut grüßen die Backsteinbauten der Forstgehöfte des deutschen Ostens.* (Sommermeyer 1940, pp. 103-104).

Eastern Areas, the head of the Reich Forest Office, Generalforstmeister Friedrich Alpers, exhorted German foresters to take up their “honourable duty in the East”:

Now that the victorious German troops have liberated ancient German settlement land here in the East from years of foreign rule, the German *Volk* is charged with the great task of making this land into *Heimat* soil once again.<sup>26</sup>

But beyond ‘reclaiming’ cultural soil, German foresters were also encouraged to see their mission in the Reincorporated Eastern Areas as one of expanding the German realm into the beckoning plains of Eastern Europe. In a 1940 article, Adolf Sommermeyer, the Head of the Forest Service of the newly established *Reichsgau Wartheland*, gave his foresters the order to march east, there to complete the mission of Frankish and Prussian colonizers:

It is the task of our generation to expand this cleanliness and orderliness [of the former Prussian province of Posen] further east to those areas of the *Warthegau* which formerly were part of Congress Poland. Immeasurably rich and fertile this land stretches east, and all that is lacking to make those rich sources flow is the German. [. . .] For a thousand years the East has been calling for the best German human material. In ancient times, the struggle was for Elbe and Oder, now it is for Vistula and Warta.<sup>27</sup>

The task of foresters was thus placed squarely into a constructed historical mission of procuring German *Lebensraum* in Eastern Europe. In this section I will argue that the aspirations and policies of foresters in the Reincorporated Eastern Areas must be seen in the context of this professed policy goal of the Nazi regime, as well as in the special context of

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<sup>26</sup> *Ehrendienst der Forstbeamten im Osten*. Thus the title of Generalforstmeister Alpers’ address to the conference. The quote translates as follows: *Nachdem die siegreichen deutschen Truppen hier im Osten uraltes deutsches Siedlungsland von jahrelanger Fremdherrschaft befreit haben, erwächst dem deutschen Volke die große Aufgabe, dieses Land wieder zu deutscher Heimaterde zu machen.* (Alpers 1943, p. 6).

<sup>27</sup> *Diese Sauberkeit und Ordnung vorzutragen in den ehemals kongreßpolnischen östlichen Teil des Warthegaues ist unserer Generation vorbehalten. Unerschöpflich reich und fruchtbar dehnt sich dieses vorgeschobene Land, und es bedarf nur der deutschen Menschen, um diese reiche Quellen zum Fließen zu bringen. [. . .] Seit tausend Jahren ruft der Osten nach bestem deutschen Menschenmaterial. In Vorzeiten ging es um Elbe und Oder, jetzt gilt’s dem Land um Weichsel und Warthe.* (Sommermeyer 1940, pp. 103-104). ‘Congress Poland’ was a term for the Russian puppet state created on Polish territory by the Congress of Vienna in 1815. Elbe, Oder, Warta, and Vistula are rivers situated successively farther in the east.

the forceful Germanization of the new territory. I will show that foresters closely cooperated with institutions of party and state to ‘empty’ the landscape of unwanted populations who stood in the way of creating “new German settlement areas” in accordance with Hitler’s orders to Himmler and his SS.

I will begin by discussing a conference held in early 1942 which showcases the vision the German forest administration had for the Reincorporated Eastern Areas, proceed by examining the landscape planning regulations which the forest administration developed jointly with SS-led landscape planning bodies in an effort to realize that vision, and close by presenting a case study of the practical implementation of the ‘resettlement’ policy by foresters and other authorities.

On 24 September 1941, an *Arbeitskreis für die Wiederbewaldung des Ostens* or ‘Research Group for the Reforestation of the East’ was founded as part of the ‘Reich Foundation for German Eastern Research’ (*Reichsstiftung für deutsche Ostforschung*) at the new Reich University at Posen.<sup>28</sup> The constitutive conference was held on 28 and 29 January 1942, bringing together leading academic and administrative foresters as well as forestry officials from the Reich Forest Office in Berlin. The assembled foresters described to invited representatives of party, army, and civil administration their plans for the Reincorporated

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<sup>28</sup> A note on the distinction between ‘reforestation’ and ‘afforestation’: in this chapter, I use ‘afforestation’ as the general term for planting areas to forest, regardless of whether those areas were reforested (i.e., replanted with trees after only a brief time without tree cover) or afforested (i.e., when trees are planted on long-time fields or wastelands). I retain the word ‘reforestation,’ however, where it is the exact translation of the term used in the German original (as in *Wiederbewaldung* and *Wiederaufforstung*, for example).

On German *Ostforschung*, see Burleigh 1988.

Eastern Areas. The published proceedings of this conference thus provide us with a glimpse of the German forest administration's visions for the future of forestry in the East and their assessment of their own role in this area.<sup>29</sup>

The conference was convened and opened by Arthur Greiser, Hitler's governor of the *Reichsgau Wartheland*. In his opening remarks, Greiser, a non-forester, defined the role of the *Arbeitskreis* in the overall mission of "German Eastern Research" by quoting from its charter:

At the beginning of all research and planning towards the goal of winning back the Eastern Areas as *Lebensraum* for Germandom lies the reorganization of the land . . .

At the hands of a Slavic population, the areas of the East have been deforested so extensively as to suffer severe climatic and economic damage. Moreover, the deforested landscape is in danger of losing the very aspect that is so familiar to the German.

For that reason, the planting of new German settlers must be accompanied by the planning and execution of an orderly reforestation of the East.<sup>30</sup>

In an interview with a forestry journal published one year previously, Greiser had expressed the same in more drastic terms:

This great reforestation program, unique and unmatched as it is in the world, is ultimately the result of the Polish mentality. The Pole is obtuse and possesses no creative energy. To work and to plan for the future is completely foreign to him. Out of this mentality, and in contrast to the German, he has settled on soils which would never satisfy the needs of a German farmer and settler, the needs of a German family.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> The proceedings were published in book form in 1943 (Cf. *Reichsstiftung für deutsche Ostforschung* 1943). The individual contributions also appeared in numerous articles, for example: Sommermeyer 1942; Alpers 1942a and 1942b; Jaeger 1942. Jaeger's contribution is already foreshadowed in Jaeger 1941.

<sup>30</sup> *Bei dem Ziel, die Ostgebiete als Lebensraum dem deutschen Volkstum zurückzugewinnen, steht mit am Anfang aller Forschungen und Planungen die Neuordnung des Landes . . .*

*Die Gebiete des Ostens sind in der Hand einer slawischen Bevölkerung so weitgehend entwaldet worden, daß nicht nur schwere klimatische und wirtschaftliche Schäden entstanden sind, sondern z. T. die entwaldete Landschaft ihr dem deutschen Menschen vertrautes Gesicht zu verlieren droht.*

*Gleichzeitig mit dem Ansatz neuer deutscher Siedler in diesem Raum muß also eine geregelte Wiederbewaldung des Ostens geplant und durchgeführt werden.* (Greiser 1943, p. 5, paragraph breaks in the original).

<sup>31</sup> *Dieses große und in der Welt einzig dastehende und einmalige Aufforstungsprogramm ist im Grunde zurückzuführen auf die Mentalität des polnischen Volkstums. Der Pole ist stumpf und besitzt keinerlei*

Hence the Nazi regime's 'justification' for its orders to 'de-Polonize' the landscape by 'removing' the farmers and 'returning' it to its 'original' German aspect through afforestation. At the same time, Greiser's statements can be read as a summary of the key claims behind the overall German justification for grabbing the Reincorporated Eastern Areas in the first place, namely:

- that the area was originally German and that the settlers were only 'returning' to it
- that, upon their return, the Germans had found the landscape in disrepair
- that the Germans had returned just in time to reverse the damage through reforestation
- that the Polish population had a 'squatter' attitude towards the land
- that Polish farmers occupied marginal soils better suited to forest cover
- that they should thus be 'removed' and their land reforested
- that the Polish population had 'proven' itself unable to manage the landscape properly
- that the 'Polish mentality' had deeper racial causes.

Not only do we see these 'arguments' crop up time and again in the writings of foresters about the Reincorporated Eastern Areas, but the title of the *Arbeitskreis* itself was a condensation of the above claims: "Reforestation of the East" expressed that it was the 'historic' German "East" that was to be "re"-forested and thus returned to its 'erstwhile' German aspect.

In practical terms, the conference revolved mainly around the question of how the desired "Reforestation of the East" could be accomplished in practice given the immense magnitude of the task at hand: the goal was to afforest more than one million hectares of land (or 10%

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*schöpferische Kräfte. Arbeiten und Pläne für die Zukunft sind Begriffe, die ihm fremd sind. Aus dieser Mentalität heraus hat er bisher im Gegensatz zu den deutschen Menschen auch auf Böden gesiedelt, die einem deutschen Bauern und Siedler und einer deutschen Familie in keiner Weise genügen würden. (Greiser 1941, p. 25).*

of the annexed territory), which meant creating 3 to 4 new forest districts annually for “generations to come.”<sup>32</sup> The ostensible rationale for the massive scale of the reforestation/afforestation campaign was to restore the landscape of the Reincorporated Eastern Areas to what foresters called “a healthy balance and a rational spatial order of settlement area and forest.”<sup>33</sup> Fundamental to this goal was to raise the percentage of forest cover from a “disturbingly” low 16% in the *Wartheland* to the “healthy” *Reich* average of 29%.<sup>34</sup>

Three points are worth mentioning in this context. First, prescribing the average forest cover of the *Altreich* as the ‘natural’ long-term goal of forest creation in the new territories was clearly arbitrary and ideologically tainted. After all, there were landscapes in northwestern Germany with comparable ecological conditions (e.g., most of the North Sea Plains north of the line Oldenburg-Hanover-Berlin) which had a forest cover that was equally low or even lower than that of the *Wartheland* (for example in the county of Osnabrück). These areas were thus neither ‘balanced’ nor ‘spatially ordered’ according to the standards applied in the Reincorporated Eastern Areas – still neither they nor their German inhabitants were deemed ‘degenerated’ or in need of “reorganizing” on account of that low forest cover. The ideological explanation foresters gave for this discrepancy was simple: in the “old

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<sup>32</sup> (Sommermeyer 1943a, p. 11). Prorated over 40 years, this would mean the afforestation of approx. 25,000 hectares annually. For comparison, the total area afforested in all of Italy in the year 1939 was just over 12,000 hectares.

<sup>33</sup> *Wenn also der Gau Wartheland seine Aufgabe, ein Gau deutscher Bauern zu sein, erfüllen soll, so muß der Forstmann dafür zum gewissen Teil die Voraussetzungen schaffen, indem Siedlungsraum und Wald in ein gesundes Gleichgewicht und räumlich in eine vernünftige Ordnung zueinander gebracht werden.* (Sommermeyer 1943b, p. 25).

<sup>34</sup> Jaeger 1943, p. 48.

cultural heartland” of Northwestern Germany, the “need of the *Volk*, the hunger for land in the cramped space available to the *Volk*” had forced Germans to “push back” their beloved forests - an argument similar to that used in the case of Lorraine. “One glance at the East,” however, revealed an “objectified and plundered cultural landscape swept equally by frozen and parching winds.” But what about the undeniable presence of large contiguous forest tracts in the East? Here the argument of Diesel (cf. Chapter 7.2) was put into service once again:

Yet those forests are in no way connected with the Eastern man and his activity. They are not organically intertwined or connected with him; even less are they a part of his love and his longing. He does not respect them . . . <sup>35</sup>

The value of a given landscape was thus dependent more on the intentions (which were of course seen as a corollary of racial heritage) of the people who had created the landscape than on its actual physical structure. Yet while the inhabitants of Northwestern Germany were seen as exonerated by the pressures placed upon them, no such understanding was granted to the Slavic populations of the East, who were portrayed as acting out of greed and disregard for the landscape.

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<sup>35</sup> *Gewiß zwang die Not des Volkes, der Landhunger im engen Volksraum, immer wieder die Waldreserve anzuschlagen, und in Wirklichkeit sind in den alten Kulturprovinzen die großen und zusammenhängenden Wälder nahezu verschwunden. . . . Wie groß aber ist der Unterschied der Landschaft Nordwestdeutschlands gegenüber der Landschaft des Warthegaues! Im Westen stehen um Haus und Hof die alten Eichen. Wenn der Wald auch zurückgedrängt wurde in die tiefen Einschnitte der Bäche und Flüsse und an den Steilkamm der Berge, so ist er doch immer noch da. In einem Blick erkennen wir Haus und Hof, Waldstreifen, Baum, Einzelpflanze und Hecke. Im Osten aber sehen wir in einem Blick die versachlichte und ausgeplünderte Kulturlandschaft, über welche die eisigen, ebenso die heißen Winde brausen und Sand-, Humus- und Tonstoffe weit ins Land verfrachten. Trotzdem gibt es hier große zusammenhängende Wälder. Diese Wälder aber stehen in keinem Zusammenhang mit dem ostischen Menschen und seinem Werk. Sie sind nicht organisch mit ihm verwachsen und verbunden oder gar Teil seiner Liebe und Sehnsucht. Er achtet ihrer nicht, . . . (Mantel 1944, pp. 118-119).*

Second, the *Warthegau* had traditionally been an area of intensive grain production, which meant that the goal of raising the forest cover to the *Reich* average required the afforestation of productive agricultural soils. Foresters stressed the fact that the new German authorities were willing to partially afforest a recently regained ‘bread basket’ and thus incur losses in grain production as proof of the “truly German” trait of acting in the best interest of the landscape – which they placed in sharp contrast to “Polish mismanagement” of the landscape.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, the forest administration claimed that the areas to be afforested were to be identified and ranked primarily according to landscape-restorative considerations: first the drifting sand dunes were to be afforested, followed by the poorest soils, then the marginal soils. All afforestation was to be achieved through the planting not of pine plantations, but of mixed and uneven-aged stands. The forest administration insisted that this ranking was proof of its commitment to “restoring the landscape” since the alternative goal of wood production would have demanded the opposite sequence and a different species composition: in that case the best available soils would have been planted first, and only with fast-growing pine in pure plantation stands.<sup>37</sup>

In their justification for the massive afforestation project in the East foresters thus stressed non-economic goals such landscape health and landscape balance. Yet, as the

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. Alpers 1943, p. 6; Leiber 1941, p. 150.

<sup>37</sup> The sequence and the explanations are taken from a joint interview granted to the *Deutsche Forst-Zeitung* by the silvicultural expert of the *Reich* Forest Office (Lukas Leiber) and the forester who served as a liaison with Himmler’s office of ‘*Reich* Commissioner for the Strengthening of Germandom’ (Erwin Jaeger). (Cf. Leiber and Jaeger 1941).

contributions of the forestry officials participating in the *Arbeitskreis* conference reveal upon closer inspection, the afforestation effort was not first and foremost a question of ecological restoration, although environmental concerns might well have played a role in the individual motives of the foresters involved.<sup>38</sup> Even the goal of maximum wood production, paramount as it was for the war effort, was seen only as a temporary priority.<sup>39</sup> Instead, the afforestation of the Reincorporated Eastern Areas from the beginning was underlain by the greater agenda of Germanizing the landscape into suitable *Lebensraum*. “The German East is calling!”, as an anonymous operational forester wrote in 1941:

Volunteers to the front! Beyond our duties as foresters, we are called upon to be bearers of culture, educators, pioneers, – representatives of a master race with all its demands. . . .

Without historical precedent is the expansion of the *Lebensraum* which the *Führer* has given to us. Now we must infuse our purchase with our blood so that foreign *Volkstum* may never gain ground again. For a thousand years to come, the best of our *Volk* will have to create the wall of blood necessary for the eternal existence of our *Volk*.<sup>40</sup>

Other articles in forestry journals with such titles as “The German Man in the East”, “The Honourable Duty of Foresters in the East”, and even “The Honourable Mission of German Foresters’ Wives in the East,”<sup>41</sup> celebrated the role of the German settlement in the East and

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<sup>38</sup> For an interesting attempt at fathoming the “conflicts and overlaps among the forces of technological modernism, Nazi politics, and environmental concern” in the context of constructing the *Autobahn*, see Rollins 1995 (quote on p. 494).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Sommermeyer 1943b, p. 25; Leiber 1941, p. 150.

<sup>40</sup> *Freiwillige vor!* Es heißt hier über das Dienstliche hinaus Kulturträger, Erzieher, Pionier, Vertreter eines Herrenvolkes mit allen seinen Forderungen zu sein. . . .

Einmalig in der Geschichte ist die Ausweitung des Lebensraumes eines Volkes wie der Führer sie uns gegeben hat. Jetzt gilt es, das Erworbene für immer so mit unserem Blut zu durchsetzen, daß niemals mehr ein Einbruch fremden Volkstums erfolgen kann. Die Besten unseres Volkes müssen es sein, die auf ein Jahrtausend jenen Blutswall im Osten zu schaffen haben, der zum ewigen Bestehen unseres Volkes notwendig ist. (*Deutsche Forst-Zeitung* 1941, p. 28, paragraph break in the original).

<sup>41</sup> *Der Mensch im deutschen Osten.* (Eißfeldt 1941); *Ehrendienst der Forstbeamten im Osten.* (Alpers 1943); *Ehrevoller Einsatz der deutschen Forstbeamtenfrauen im Osten.* (*Deutsche Forst-Zeitung* 1939).

the prominent role foresters (and their wives) were to play in the securing of the new *Lebensraum*. Foresters were thus made very aware and proud of the importance of their ‘blood’ in the greater scheme of the *Lebensraum* policy of the *Reich*.

At the same time, they were also aware that this process began invariably with the ‘resettlement’ of the resident Polish population – and what this entailed. For example, as the forester in charge of identifying the areas to be afforested reported to the conference, by 1942 more than 175,000 hectares had already been selected for planting. Yet he also stated that other areas were already under afforestation, primarily those “from which the population has already been removed and which now lie fallow, but also wasteland and wandering sand dunes.”<sup>42</sup> Similarly, his superior Adolf Sommermeyer, the Head of the Forest Service of the *Reichsgau Wartheland*, spoke in his presentation of the forest administration’s special responsibility for finding a suitable interim use for those “abandoned agricultural soils which are not to be immediately afforested.”<sup>43</sup>

The “removed” populations and the “abandoned” soils were an oblique reference to the hundreds of thousands of non-Germans who had been expelled from their farmsteads and homes. Indeed, as a poster commissioned by Himmler’s *Reich* Commissariat for the Strengthening of Germandom proudly proclaimed, as many as “408,525 Poles and Jews” had

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<sup>42</sup> *Daneben gibt es jedoch bereits Flächen, die schon jetzt dringend zur Aufforstung heranstehen, sei es, weil sie bereits ausgesiedelt sind und brachliegen, oder daß es sich um Ödländereien handelt oder um fliegende Sande, die der Aufforstung bedürfen.* (Schneider 1943, p. 34). On the following page, Schneider goes on to say that even ethnic German forest owners were forced to resettle in this reshuffle of lands. This may qualify Koehl’s statement that the prosecution in the Nuremberg trials could not produce a single ethnic German witness who was resettled against his or her will (Koehl 1957, p. 210).

<sup>43</sup> *Als besonderes Problem wird überhaupt eine Zwischennutzung auf verlassenem landwirtschaftlichen Böden, die nicht sogleich zur Aufforstung anstehen, von uns zu entwickeln und in das System der zeitlich [sic] und räumlichen Ordnung einzugliedern sein.* (Sommermeyer 1943a, p. 23).

been “resettled” within eighteen months of the ‘Reincorporation,’ leaving their land to be rededicated and redistributed at will by the occupiers.<sup>44</sup> For a frank assessment of how keen the forest administration was to stress its own role in this process of ‘removal,’ we may examine the programmatic address of Adolf Sommermeyer, the Head of the Forest Service of the *Reichsgau Wartheland*, in more detail.

In the introduction to his presentation, Sommermeyer eliminated all doubts as to the greater purpose of German afforestation in the Reincorporated Eastern Areas and the important role of foresters therein:

... the task of afforestation with which we are charged must be executed within the larger framework of *Volk*-policy, in step with the other forces of German colonization, and always following the overall goals of the strengthening of Germanism.<sup>45</sup>

In further explaining this overarching mission of ‘Germanization through afforestation,’ Sommermeyer tacked back and forth between ecological and *Volks*-hygienic reasoning. He acknowledged the importance of the afforestation for the restoration and conservation of deteriorating marginal soils, as well as for the improvement of regional and micro climates. This was immediately followed, however, by a more extensive plea that the forest alone could provide the “soul-climate which the German requires.” The creation of the new forest as “a landscape so fateful for the life of the *Volk*” thus required not merely the re-establishment of the ‘pre-Polish’ forest cover, but “a reorganization of the Eastern space

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<sup>44</sup> Between 1939 and 1945, approximately one million people were deported from the Reincorporated Eastern Areas to areas further east, with another 10 million marked for eventual removal (Koehl 1957). The poster is reprinted in Gröning and Wolschke-Bulmahn 1987a, p 55, and again in Gröning and Wolschke-Bulmahn 1987b, p. 151.

<sup>45</sup> *Schließlich aber – und diesen Gedanken möchte ich besonders hervorheben – sind die von uns durchzuführenden Aufforstungsaufgaben in einem großen volkspolitischen Rahmen im Gleichschritt mit anderen großen Trägern einer deutschen Kolonisation unter den übergeordneten Gesichtspunkten der Festigung deutschen Volkstums durchzuführen.* (Sommermeyer 1943a, p. 12).

according to principles rooted in the politics of the *Volk*.<sup>46</sup> To see his foresters “freed from all unnecessary hindrances in the execution of this difficult task,” Sommermeyer demanded that “at least for the duration of the afforestation, which after all is a process of utter colonization,” the forest administration should obtain complete jurisdiction over the afforestation areas:<sup>47</sup>

It is evident that the afforestation effort will utilize the labour of the Polish population which currently vegetates in the afforestation areas. Moreover, the requirement to separate Germans from Poles in itself demands the concentration of Polish labour in the large contiguous afforestation areas.

As soon as the progress of afforestation causes those areas to lose their former agricultural character, that labour will have to be displaced and quartered in barracks by the local forest administration.

There are several reasons why the afforestation areas should – at least for the duration of the afforestation – become independent jurisdictions. First, it is exclusively the forest administration which has any interest in maintaining the manpower of the population in the afforestation area. Second, the afforestation represents the sole support and way of life for the population in the afforestation area. Finally, the Polish population in the forest and afforestation areas will have no share in the life of the new German settlements.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> *Seelenklima, das der Deutsche braucht . . . Schaffung einer für das Volksleben schicksalhaften Landschaft . . . eine nach volkspolitischen Grundsätzen zu planende Neuordnung des Ostraumes . . .* (Sommermeyer 1943a, pp. 12, 14, and 16).

<sup>47</sup> *Ich möchte auch an dieser Stelle meine Auffassung dahin äußern, daß zumindest während der Aufforstungszeit, die ja ein absolut kolonialisatorischer Vorgang ist, sogar eine selbständige kommunale Forstbezirksbildung analog den selbständigen Forstgutsbezirken in Preußen wird eintreten müssen, um den Träger der Aufforstung bei Durchführung seiner schweren Aufgabe . . . von unnötigen Hemmungen zu befreien.* (Sommermeyer 1943a, p. 18).

<sup>48</sup> *Es werden also voraussichtlich die Arbeitskräfte der zur Zeit auf den Aufforstungsgebieten vegetierenden polnischen Bevölkerung für die Arbeiten des Aufforstungswerkes nutzbar zu machen sein. Die Forderung nach Trennung des deutschen Volkstums von dem polnischen weist den polnischen Arbeitskräften diese Lokalisierung auf den großen geschlossenen Aufforstungsgebieten gerade zu [sic].*

*Sobald beim Fortschreiten der Aufforstungen solche Gebiete ihre ehemalige landwirtschaftliche Verfassung verlieren, werden Verschiebungen und Kasernierung dieser Arbeitskräfte durch die Forstverwaltung auf diesen Gebieten gegeben sein.*

*Da an der Erhaltung der Arbeitskraft dieser Bevölkerung auf Aufforstungsgebieten ausschließlich der Träger der Aufforstung interessiert ist und die Aufforstungsarbeiten allein Lebensquelle und Lebensform der Bevölkerung in den Aufforstungsgebieten darstellen, glaube ich besonders auch aus diesem Gesichtspunkt heraus, zumindest für die Aufforstungsperiode, die Schaffung einer kommunalen Selbständigkeit der Forst- und Aufforstungsgebiete fordern zu müssen, zumal die polnische Bevölkerung der Wald- und Aufforstungsgebiete an dem Leben der neuen deutschen Gemeinden keinen Anteil hat.* (Sommermeyer 1943a, pp. 25-26, paragraph breaks in the original).

Sommermeier's vision of the role of his forest administration in the "colonization" of the land and the "utilization" of the local Polish population could hardly have been more candid: the forest administration was to become the immediate representative of the state in the afforestation areas, with the authority and the means to treat the occupants of the territory as mere units of labour which could be shifted and disposed of according to the needs of the afforestation project.

In Sommermeier's address we have an indication of how the forest administration wished to be empowered in the re-ordering of the Reincorporated Eastern Areas. For those in the ranks of his own administration who might have doubted how earnest their leadership was about realizing this vision, Sommermeier had the following words:

Rest assured that all this is backed by the firm will to solve these problems, and that we will not stop at the theoretical discussion of these problems in this *Arbeitskreis*.<sup>49</sup>

A similarly ominous warning to foresters not to underestimate the resolve of their leadership was expressed by Germany's second-highest forestry official, Generalforstmeister Friedrich Alpers, who admonished in his address that the *Arbeitskreis* brought together "the best" practitioners and academics because:

Science and practice will have to devise new methods to realize the planned afforestations within an acceptable time frame.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> *Seien Sie aber überzeugt, dahinter steht der feste Wille, die Probleme zu lösen, und lassen Sie sich versichern, daß wir nicht bei der theoretischen Besprechung dieser Probleme in diesem Arbeitskreis stehenbleiben werden.* (Sommermeier 1943a, p. 27).

<sup>50</sup> *Wissenschaft und Praxis werden nach neuen Methoden sinnen müssen, um in einer vertretbaren Zeit die Aufforstungsplanung verwirklichen zu können.* (Alpers 1943, p. 8). Friedrich Alpers had replaced Walter von Keudell as Generalforstmeister in 1937 after the latter was no longer willing to support the overcutting demanded by Göring to supply the rearmament program with the necessary wood products. (Cf. Rubner 1985, chapters 5 and 6).

We will see presently that these “new methods” necessary for realizing the new and far-reaching ambitions of the forest administration went far beyond the traditional purview of forestry and dovetailed with the SS-led “resettlement” scheme developed by Himmler’s *Reich Commissariat for the Strengthening of Germandom*.

One of the first “new methods” to be developed was the complete ‘reordering’ of the forest property structure in the Reincorporated Eastern Areas. With the occupation, all titles to forest land held by non-Germans were effectively null and void, making the forest land subject to arbitrary redistribution by the occupiers. In an interview with a forestry journal given on the first anniversary of the occupation, Sommermeyer had voiced his delight that the retreating Polish forces allegedly had removed all official records from the forest offices, as this enabled him “for once to begin my work without files” – thus allowing him and his forest administration to set their own precedents. As well, and doubtless very conveniently for the German forest administration, the absence of official records also meant that “not one title claim could ever be documented” by the former Polish forest owners.<sup>51</sup> There can be little doubt, then, that foresters were keenly aware of the opportunities presented by the *tabula rasa* of an occupied territory in which all considerations for pre-existing legality and due process seemed to have evaporated.

At the same time, foresters were keen to fill the supposed legal vacuum with laws of their own making, for, no matter how arbitrary the erstwhile expropriation of the Polish property

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<sup>51</sup> Sommermeyer 1940, p. 27.

might have been, the re-allocation of property among the possible German claimants (e.g., army, state, municipalities, private individuals) was to be executed according to the proper standards of German administrative procedure. Sometimes the forest administration tried to devise its own guidelines, but in most cases it negotiated mutual arrangements with another institution of the Nazi state which was both competitor and ally to the *Reich* Forest Office: Himmler's powerful *Reich* Commissariat for the Strengthening of Germandom. The agreements between the *Reich* Forest Office and the *Reich* Commissariat for the Strengthening of Germandom show that the forest administration was perfectly aware of the implications of cooperating with the SS-led *Reich* Commissariat for the Strengthening of Germandom. More than that, foresters welcomed the opportunity of using the SS to "clear" afforestation areas of their population.<sup>52</sup>

In his presentation to the *Arbeitskreis*, the forestry official serving as liaison between the *Reich* Forest Office and the *Reich* Commissariat for the Strengthening of Germandom, Oberlandforstmeister Erwin Jaeger, outlined the result of the negotiations between the two offices regarding the "Forest-Political Principles for the Structure and Reorganization of the Forest in the Reincorporated Eastern Areas":

From the beginning it was clear that – apart from ethnic German property, which admittedly is in need of some readjustment, too – none of the confused and splintered Polish property distribution could

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<sup>52</sup> Relations between the two offices were not always cordial, however, as they had competing visions for the future of the territories occupied by Germany in the East. While Himmler envisioned the East as an agricultural empire to be settled by SS-veterans turned farmers, the forest administration saw the East as a testing ground for a reformed and centralized forest administration whose officials claimed local state authority in forest areas. The files in the Federal Archives in Berlin are full of memoranda which reflect the concern of the two offices to achieve their respective goals while maintaining the level of cooperation necessary for achieving the common goal of 'Eastern Colonization.' In the estimation of Gröning and Wolschke-Bulmahn (1987a, p. 196), the two offices eventually arrived at a mutually acceptable division of powers in the Reincorporated Eastern Areas.

be retained. Rather, it must be our fundamental principle to bring about a distribution of forest ownership which allows the forest to best perform its *völkisch* and cultural functions while guaranteeing maximum wood production.<sup>53</sup>

Jaeger quoted this principle from a 1941 “Agreement Concerning the Afforestation and the Arrangement of Forest Property Distribution in the Reincorporated Eastern Areas between the *Reich* Commissariat for the Strengthening of Germandom and the *Reich* Forest Office.”<sup>54</sup>

This agreement served to clarify the fundamental question as to who should own the future forest area in the Reincorporated Eastern Areas and how the ownership should be “transferred” in practice. The official document as published in mid-1941 was rather noncommittal when it came to spelling out the exact ways in which those objectives were to be reached: definite arrangements were the “prerogative” of the parties involved, they were to be agreed upon “in separate agreements” and “in due time.”<sup>55</sup> The agreement as published thus primarily served to lend a semblance of legality to the outright annexation of state territory and private property.

From one of the files preserved in the former East German State Archives in Potsdam, however, we can gain some insight into the true objectives of the agreement and what sort

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<sup>53</sup> *Klar war von vornherein, daß – außer dem volksdeutschen Besitz, der allerdings auch noch mancher Korrektur bedarf – die verworrenen und zersplitterten polnischen Besitzverhältnisse keinesfalls übernommen werden konnten. Vielmehr muß es oberster Grundsatz sein, die Eigentumsverteilung an den Waldflächen so vorzunehmen, daß der Wald seine völkischen und kulturellen Aufgabe am besten und zweckmäßigsten erfüllen kann und eine höchstmögliche Erzeugung sichergestellt wird.* (Jaeger 1943, pp. 48-49). In a similar statement, the *Warthegau* forester Krahl-Urban insisted that “former and current property distribution will play no role in the selection of afforestation areas.” *Da frühere und jetzige Eigentumsverhältnisse bei der Auswahl und Ausscheidung der Aufforstungsgebiete keine Rolle spielen werden, . . .* (Krahl-Urban 1941, p. 363).

<sup>54</sup> *Abkommen zwischen dem Reichsforstamt und dem Reichsführer-SS, Reichskommissar für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums, über die Aufforstung und die Regelung der Eigentumsverhältnisse an Waldflächen in den eingegliederten Ostgebieten (Reprinted in Deutsche Forst-Zeitung 1941c).*

<sup>55</sup> *bleibt besonderer Regelung vorbehalten . . . wird in einer besonderen Vereinbarung näher geregelt . . . zu gegebener Zeit . . .* (Deutsche Forst-Zeitung 1941c, p. 301).

of measures were to be taken to achieve them. The file contains drafts and memoranda in which various levels of Himmler's *Reich* Commissariat for the Strengthening of Germandom express their goals and concerns and in which they comment on the position taken by the *Reich* Forest Office in the negotiations. Through the documented perceptions of foresters' interlocutors in the *Reich* Commissariat for the Strengthening of Germandom, we can thus gain an indirect sense of the forest administration's position in the negotiations.<sup>56</sup>

The draft preamble for the agreement as tabled by the *Reich* Commissariat for the Strengthening of Germandom on 10 October 1940 stated as the express "cultural" purpose of the afforestation to "create a German landscape and to secure the German population."<sup>57</sup> This clearly acknowledged that the present landscape was by no means German but had to be made so in the first place. To create the necessary property framework, the "*Reich* Commissioner [i.e., Himmler] will take it upon himself to compile and confiscate all forest property of Polish nationals and Jews."<sup>58</sup> In a supplementary "Agreement Concerning the Transfer of Ownership of Afforestation Areas to the *Reich* Forest Exchequer," Himmler's office also took on the task of "procuring" those areas to be afforested and "transferring"

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<sup>56</sup> The documents are now kept in the Federal Archives Berlin and are filed under the file signatory BA R49 169. The complementary records of the *Reich* Forest Office did not survive.

<sup>57</sup> Hauptabteilung Planung und Boden (HA II): *Zweck der Aufforstung: Die Aufforstung dient dazu, die landwirtschaftlich nicht nutzbaren Böden aus der Bewirtschaftung herauszunehmen, den Wasserhaushalt zu regeln und Verwehungen zu verhindern. Kulturell dient sie zur Schaffung einer deutschen Landschaft und zur Sicherung und zur Erholung der deutschen Bevölkerung.* (BA R49 169, sheet 1).

<sup>58</sup> *Der Reichskommissar übernimmt die Erfassung und Beschlagnahme des forstlichen Grundbesitzes der polnischen Staatsangehörigen und Juden.* (BA R49 164, sheet 7).

them to the *Reich* Forest Exchequer “free of all claims and liabilities.”<sup>59</sup> This obligation expressly included “clearing” the population:

Furthermore, the *Reich* Commissioner, with the help of the appropriate bodies, will clear all afforestation areas of their current population and make them available to the *Reich* Forest Office for the purpose of afforestation.<sup>60</sup>

For this ‘service’ rendered by the “appropriate bodies” – that is, the SS under Himmler’s command – the *Reich* Forest Office was to pay 200 *Reichsmark* per hectare.<sup>61</sup> It is evident that the *Reich* Forest Office was only too happy to let Himmler’s security apparatus depopulate the areas it wished to afforest.

Having ‘solved’ the question of forest ownership in the East, the two offices could tackle the question of how the landscape should be physically restructured on the ground. During 1941 and 1942, the *Reich* Commissariat for the Strengthening of Germandom and the *Reich* Forest Office negotiated a set of “Guidelines for Landscape Structure in the New Areas of the *Reich*” which Himmler, by virtue of the powers invested in him by Hitler, officially

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<sup>59</sup> *Demgemäss übernimmt es der Reichskommissar, das Eigentum an denjenigen Aufforstungsflächen, die Eigentum des Reichsforstfiskus werden sollen, zu beschaffen und dem Reichsforstfiskus lastenfrei zu übertragen.* (BA R49 169, sheets 17-22: *Abkommen II zwischen dem Reichsforstamt und dem Reichsführer-SS, Reichskommissar für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums, über die Übertragung von Eigentum an Aufforstungsflächen an den Reichsforstfiskus, sowie den zeitlichen Ablauf des Verfahrens.* (Aufgrund des Abkommens I zwischen dem Reichsforstamt und dem Reichsführer-SS, Reichskommissar für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums, über die Aufforstung und die Regelung der Eigentumsverhältnisse an Waldbesitz). Cf. also BA R49 168: *Richtlinien über die Regelung der Eigentumsverhältnisse an Wald- und Aufforstungsflächen für ein Abkommen über die Aufforstung in den eingegliederten Ostgebieten, 1941-1942.*

<sup>60</sup> *Der Reichskommissar übernimmt es ferner, die gesamten zur Aufforstung bestimmten Flächen mit Hilfe der zuständigen Organe von der bisher auf den Aufforstungsflächen wohnenden Bevölkerung zu räumen und vorläufig dem Reichsforstamt zur Durchführung der Arbeiten zur Verfügung zu stellen.* (BA R49 169, sheet 17).

<sup>61</sup> BA R49 169, sheet 19.

enacted on 21 December 1942 as General Order No. 20/VI/42.<sup>62</sup> According to the introduction to these so-called ‘Landscape Guidelines,’ they were “the capstone in the edifice of planning guidelines for the structure of the new settlement areas.”<sup>63</sup> Yet the Landscape Guidelines were not merely a task- and place-specific set of rules, but were also to serve as a model for a future *Reich* Landscape Law which was to govern the planning and conservation of the landscape in all of its aspects and all over the German realm.<sup>64</sup> As such, the Landscape Guidelines can be read as a general manifesto of National Socialist ideas for future landscape planning.

In the case of the landscape of the Reincorporated Eastern Areas, the Landscape Guidelines stipulated an immediate need for German intervention:

Across vast tracts, the landscape of the Reincorporated Eastern Areas has been neglected, devastated, and exploited by the cultural ineptitude of a foreign race. Over large areas, and contrary to the natural ecological conditions, the landscape has assumed the imprint of the steppe.<sup>65</sup>

To German forestry, the threat of *Versteppung* or ‘steppification’ was the worst possible fate for a landscape: for a landscape to lose its forest was tantamount to death. To stem and

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<sup>62</sup> *Allgemeine Anordnung Nr. 20/VI/42*. The ‘General Orders’ were binding for the entire civil administration of the Reincorporated Eastern Areas. The Guidelines were published in an annotated book form in 1943 (cf. Mäding 1943). As the Head of the Section for Landscape Architecture and Landscape Conservation in the *Reich* Commissariat for the Strengthening of Germanism, Mäding was instrumental in defining the guidelines.

<sup>63</sup> *Mit dieser letztgenannten Allgemeinen Anordnung hat das Gesamtgebäude der Planungsrichtlinien für den Aufbau der neuen Siedlungsgebiete in den Hauptteilen seinen Abschluß gefunden*. (Mäding 1943, p. 16).

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Mäding 1943, p. 28; as well as the discussion in Gröning and Wolschke-Bulmahn 1987a, pp. 113-114.

<sup>65</sup> *I. Zielsetzung: Die Landschaft in den eingegliederten Ostgebieten ist auf weiten Flächen durch das kulturelle Unvermögen fremden Volkstums vernachlässigt, verödet und durch Raubbau verwüstet. Sie hat in großen Teilen entgegen den standörtlichen Bedingungen steppenhaftes Gepräge angenommen*. (BA R49 165: *Gestaltung der Landschaft in den eingegliederten Ostgebieten und Entwurf von Richtlinien für den landschaftlichen Aufbau der neuen Reichsgebiete, 1941-1943*, sheet 258, emphasis in the original).

reverse this process through afforestation was thus the ostensible goal of landscape restructuring in the East. The paramount goal, however, was the creation of settlement space for Germans for which the afforestation of the land was but a precondition:

Hence it is not enough to settle our *Volkstum* in these areas and to eliminate foreign *Volkstum* from them. Rather, these spaces must be structured in an adequate manner which corresponds to our character, so the Germanic-German man feels at home, establishes himself, and learns to love and to defend this new *Heimat*.<sup>66</sup>

The wording of this goal unmasks the inhuman *Lebensraum* ideology behind the afforestation process: the creation of an “adequate” landscape for the “Germanic-German man” involved not only the erasure of existing landscape structures, but also the erasure of their populations as the vectors of detrimental influence. In the context of the reconstruction of the landscape that was to follow the “elimination of foreign *Volkstum*,” the forest occupied a central position as the German landscape *par excellence*. This importance was not based primarily on its economic or ecological benefits, however, but on its impact on the social hygiene, political consciousness, and defence capabilities of the German *Volk*. This is revealed in the sequence of rationales for the planned afforestation in the greater framework of landscape planning given in the preamble to the Guidelines:

- 1) “Human considerations”: first and foremost the preamble postulated a definite connection between landscape devastation and crime levels. Thus, to keep society morally intact, the landscape needed to be kept intact, which in turn required a ‘healthy’ forest cover.

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<sup>66</sup> *Es genügt also nicht, unser Volkstum in diesen Gebieten anzusiedeln und fremdes Volkstum auszuschalten. Die Räume müssen vielmehr eine unserer Wesensart entsprechende Gestaltung erhalten, damit der germanisch-deutsche Mensch sich heimisch fühlt, dort seßhaft wird und bereit ist, diese neue Heimat zu lieben und zu verteidigen. (Ba R49 165, sheet 258).*

2) “World view considerations”: in this second category, the preamble suggested that a “racially appropriate” (*artgerechte*) landscape was the natural source of a future post-Christian “German belief.” Only in his ‘natural’ forest surroundings could the German remain in touch with his spiritual roots.

3) “Political considerations”: according to this point, the forested landscape helped

defend Germany against the roaming and plundering peoples of the yellow steppe. Next to the care of our blood, the racially appropriate care for the landscape is the fundamental pillar of all care for the *Volk*.<sup>67</sup>

4) “Military considerations”: to defend Germany in the age of tanks and airplanes, the landscape was to be covered with the best natural defence there was: the forest.

The first four of a total of six rationales thus claim definite connections between the character and fate of the landscape and the character and fate of the resident population – in essence the idea of Blood and Soil. Together, they provide an assumed rationale for a planning approach that looks at landscape and population as an integrated whole. From the documents presented above, it is evident that the “Reforestation of the East” was an eminently ideological enterprise. The purpose of the afforestation was mainly to “create” a German landscape with utter disregard for the landscape already in place. The landscape was to be restructured so as to serve as a ‘natural’ habitat for the German settlers who were to be planted in the Reincorporated Eastern Areas.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> *Deutschland und der europäische Osten ist, in langen Zeiträumen gesehen, durch eine mit Wald und Waldstreifen verbaute Landschaft, durch tätige, ackernde Menschen in einer fruchtbaren grünen Landschaft besser gegen die schweifenden und raubenden Völker der gelben Steppe zu schützen, als durch irgend welche anderen Massnahmen. Neben der Blutpflege ist eine artgerechte Landschaftspflege das tragende Gerüst einer jeden Volkspflege.* (BA R49 165, sheet 1).

<sup>68</sup> Some foresters went so far as to say that it needed to be given structure in the first place. Mantel, for example, spoke of a *erstmaligen Neuordnung des Waldes im Ostraum*. (Mantel 1942, p. 115).

The Landscape Guidelines developed by the *Reich* Commissariat for the Strengthening of Germanism in concert with the *Reich* Forest Office served to give both ideological signposts and practical instructions for achieving a German landscape in the Reincorporated Eastern Areas. They covered all aspects of landscape planning and architecture, from forestry to road construction and hydrological engineering, and regulated in detail such diverse elements of the landscape as slope gradients and tombstones. As a blanket regulation for the creation of a functional and aesthetic German landscape, the Guidelines reached into all aspects of forestry.

On the basis of the Guidelines, foresters were busy planning the creation of a German landscape, devising regulations for the administration of the new landscape, and preparing for the task, for example by putting in place nurseries which were to supply the enormous number of “German” tree seedlings needed for the afforestation. Fortunately, most of the planning and preparations were deemed less and less essential as the tide of war turned against Germany. Alas, not all ambitions of foresters remained just that. In the next segment, I will discuss two examples of foresters complicity in the atrocities committed in the Reincorporated Eastern Areas.

The first example is reconstructed from the correspondence between the forest administration and the SS concerning the expansion of the Stutthof concentration camp, situated in a pine forest some 30 km east of the city of Danzig. Originally a nursing home, the property was taken over by the SS as early as July 1939 in anticipation of the imminent internment of Polish civilians. The *Reich* Forest Office and the central holding company for

all economic ventures of the SS, the *Deutsche Wirtschaftsbetriebe G.m.b.H.*, entered into a contract regulating the “operation of a prison camp” in the state-owned forest.<sup>69</sup> In February 1942, Stutthof was officially declared a concentration camp and began to receive civilian prisoners and prisoners of war from various countries and in ever increasing numbers. As the camp became too small, the SS sought to buy an additional 12,000 hectares of state-owned forest from the *Reich* Forest Office. The files preserved in the federal archives in Berlin document, from the perspective of the *Reich* Forest Office, the protracted negotiations in which the SS tried to purchase this forest land from the forest administration.<sup>70</sup>

From the files it is evident that the forest administration was perfectly clear about what was happening in the concentration camp. For example, in a letter dated 15 August 1941, the regional forest office appealed to the *Reich* Forest Office to allow the sale of the forest “since, in the long term, the immediate proximity of the local operational forester’s office to the prison camp would be intolerable to the incumbent’s family anyway.”<sup>71</sup> Living near a concentration camp with its telltale sights, smells, and sounds was evidently not tolerable in the eyes of the forest administration. Moreover, the presence of detailed maps in the files of the *Reich* Forest Office indicates that the forest administration was privy to the plans for

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<sup>69</sup> BA R44 33: *Schreiben der Kommandantur des Zivil-Gefangenenlagers Stutthof an Reichsforstmeister vom 16. Juli 1941 (AZ IV/8b/16.7.1941): Vertrag zwischen der Reichsforstverwaltung und der Deutschen Wirtschaftsbetriebe zum Betrieb eines Gefangenenlagers.*

<sup>70</sup> BA R44 33: *Betreffend: (Geheim) Erweiterung des Kriegsgefangenenlagers/KZ/SS-Schule Stutthof bei Steegen auf der Nehrung bei Danzig.*

<sup>71</sup> . . . *da die Lage der Revierförsterei in unmittelbarer Nachbarschaft des Gefangenenlagers für die Familie des Stelleninhabers auf die Dauer ohnehin untragbar geworden wäre. (BA R44 33: Schreiben des Reichsstatthalters in Danzig-Westpreußen - Landesforstamt vom 15. August 1941 (AZ F II/102/488)).*

the expansion of the camp which were stamped with the highest security classification *Geheime Reichssache* ('Secret Reich Matter').<sup>72</sup>

The response of the *Reich* Forest office to the purchase request by the SS, however, completely ignored the inhumane reality of the camp of which it was so evidently aware. Instead, the *Reich* Forest Office focussed on the "great sacrifice" the sale would represent to the forest administration: not only would the sale reduce the forest administration's land holdings, but it would also mean the loss of "valuable pine stands" and would be "problematic from the standpoint of forest and landscape conservation."<sup>73</sup>

After protracted negotiations, the *Reich* Forest Office finally sold the forest in question on 26 February 1944, enabling the SS to erect more than sixty barracks on an area of almost 3 sq km for several thousand prisoners – but in September of that year the SS was back for more, planning to triple the number of barracks in the camp to more than 180 because, "as will need no further explanation, a great number of similar camps has been lost in the East."<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> BA R44 33: Schreiben des Reichsführers SS und Chefs der Deutschen Polizei, SS Wirtschafts-Verwaltungshauptamt an Reichsforstmeister vom 24. Februar 1942 (AZ A III/2 - 10589).

<sup>73</sup> . . . daß die Hergabe der von ihnen beanspruchten Flächen für die Forstverwaltung ein großes Opfer bedeutet, da, abgesehen von der Tatsache der Flächenabtretung überhaupt, gerade das beanspruchte Gelände mit wertvollen Kiefernbeständen, deren Umfang in der Danziger Gegend sehr beschränkt ist, bestockt ist und weil die Herausnahme von Waldgrundstücken aus dem nur sehr schmalen Waldstreifen auf der Nehrung aus Gründen des Forst- und Landschaftsschutzes nicht unbedenklich ist. (BA R44 33: Schreiben des Reichsforstmeisters an Reichsführers SS und Chef der Deutschen Polizei, SS Wirtschafts-Verwaltungshauptamt vom 19. März 1942 (AZ B 327.01 Da 16-5g)).

<sup>74</sup> Inzwischen hat sich die Notwendigkeit herausgestellt, das KL erneut zu vergrößern. Im Osten sind, wie wohl nicht näher ausgeführt werden braucht, zahlreiche derartige Lager verlorengegangen. Ihre Insassen mussten in das Altreich überführt werden. Aus diesem Grunde ist die erneute Erweiterung unerlässlich. (BA R44 33: Schreiben des Reichsführers SS SS-Wirtschafts-Verwaltungshauptamt an Reichsforstmeister vom 16. September 1944 (AZ A III/4/8204)).

By the time the camp was liberated by the Red Army in May 1945, an estimated 115,000 prisoners had passed through the Stutthof camp, of whom more than half died. Was the forest administration, by providing the land for the camp, partly responsible for the fate of those who died in Stutthof? Or was the string of 'ecological' objections by the forest administration in fact a veiled attempt at stalling the expansion of the camp? Either interpretation is possible and plausible, yet neither can probably be corroborated beyond doubt. For a variety of reasons (for example, the rapid ageing of the contemporary age cohort some sixty years later, the loss of a good part of the records as well as the erstwhile nonexistence of documentation, the tendency of surviving contemporaries to euphemize their own involvement, or plain forgetting), it is impossible to fathom the motivation of individuals involved in the negotiations. The reconstruction of an assumed institutional stance of the forest administration as a whole from the surviving files, sometimes even files kept by other institutions, is thus not without problems. In the above case of Stutthof, we could thus come to several interpretations of the forest administration's role, ranging from reluctance to acquiescence to active support. By contrast, the second example I present shows foresters as actively engaged in the SS-led 'removal' of local populations from an afforestation area.

The county of Saybusch in western Galicia / Upper Silesia.<sup>75</sup> was one of four ‘model planning districts’ (*Versuchsplanungen*) selected by the planning office in the *Reich* Commissariat for the Strengthening of Germandom where “the theoretical planning principles developed by the various planning bodies are to be tested in reality.”<sup>76</sup> Saybusch was seen as representative of the planning problems posed by a forested mountain landscape and the empirical insights gained and methods tested here were to be applied in the ‘restructuring’ of mountain areas across the occupied territories in the East. The *Reich* Forest Office conducted its own on-site research into the importance of the forest in Upper Silesia in support of the “enormous planning and settlement measures tackled” by the *Reich* Commissariat for the Strengthening of Germandom in that region. The exploration was to be conducted by Viktor Dieterich, Professor of Forest Policy from the University of Munich, in “constant coordination with the *Reich* Commissariat for the Strengthening of Germandom” and was meant to serve as a “model for other regions.”<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> The county of Saybusch belonged to the independent Kingdom of Galicia which was joined to the Polish crown in the late middle ages, fell to Austria-Hungary in the partitions of Poland in 1772 and 1795, became Polish again in 1918, and in 1939 was annexed by Germany as part of the Upper Silesian county of Kattowitz.

<sup>76</sup> ... die von den verschiedensten Stellen bisher nur theoretisch erörterten Gestaltungsgrundsätze praktisch erprobt werden. (Frank 1942, p. 1, cited in Gröning and Wolschke-Bulmahn 1987a, p. 58).

<sup>77</sup> Ich habe Universitätsprofessor Dr. Dieterich - München, der die Fächer Forstpolitik und forstliche Betriebswirtschaftslehre vertritt, mit der Durchführung einer forstwirtschaftlichen Standortserkundung des Gaus Oberschlesien beauftragt. Durch diese Untersuchungen sollen die Aufgaben herausgearbeitet werden, die der Wald in wehrpolitischer, rohstoffwirtschaftlicher, landes- und volkscultureller und sonstiger Hinsicht in den einzelnen Teilen des Gaus zu erfüllen hat. Dadurch würden erstmalig sichere Grundlagen für eine forstliche Raumplanung eines Gaus und somit eine wichtige Ergänzung der allgemeinen Planungsunterlagen gewonnen. Angesichts der von Ihnen in Oberschlesien in Angriff genommenen großen Planungs- und Siedlungsmaßnahmen verträgt die Lösung der Professor Dieterich gestellten Aufgabe keinen Aufschub. Sie hat dazu als Beispiel für ähnliche Untersuchungen in anderen Gauen eine besondere Bedeutung. (BA R49 167, sheet 88: Brief von Eberts an RKFDV vom 20. Juni 42: Betrifft: Forstwirtschaftliche Standortserkundung in Oberschlesien).

... mit der Dienststelle des Beauftragten des RKFDV [Reich Commissariat for the Strengthening of

In the federal archives in Berlin, a file from the *Reich* Commissariat for the Strengthening of Germandom entitled “Exploration of the Conditions for Forestry in Upper Silesia” contains the correspondence between the *Reich* Commissariat for the Strengthening of Germandom and the *Reich* Forest Office concerning the ‘resettlement’ of populations in this area, including the county of Saybusch.<sup>78</sup> In a memorandum about a joint trip into the area by planners from the *Reich* Commissariat for the Strengthening of Germandom and representatives of the *Reich* Forest Office on 22 and 23 August 1940, the position of the forest administration is reported in detail to the *Reich* Commissariat for the Strengthening of Germandom. The memorandum was written by a planner in the service of the *Reich* Commissariat for the Strengthening of Germandom and summarizes the wishes voiced by the forest administration during the trip regarding the timed “retention” and “removal” of the local population, and the “desirable” new property distribution and structure of the forest:

The forest administration is adamant that forest labourers in the forest areas in the South of the county of Kattowitz are under no circumstances to be resettled before the necessary German forest labourers can be placed. Besides the necessary space, the planning must hence supply and maintain the necessary people for forest labour, particularly as regards the new projects of road construction, regulation of mountain streams, and afforestation. . . .

The forest administration wishes no private forest to be established, only state forest and communal forest. . . .

The county of Saybusch currently employs 2,500 to 3,000 forest labourers. The afforestation requires another 2,000. That means that 4,000 to 5,000 forest labourers must remain. In the county of Teschen they [the forest administration] reckon on 19 forest districts with 150 labourers each = approx. 3,000 forest labourers = 15,000 people. . . .

4,000 Germans from Volhynia [an ethnic German area to the northeast of Galicia] will be settled here, in exchange 25,000 Poles must be resettled. Over the last 40 years, the county of Saybusch has increased from 100,000 to 150,000 inhabitants. A certain depopulation is very much desired.

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Germandom] bei der Bearbeitung dauernd Fühlungnahme hält. (BA R49 167, sheet 89: *Durchschlag des Antwortschreibens des RKFDV von von Schauroth vom 6. Juli 42*).

<sup>78</sup> BA R49 167: *Betreffend: “Forstwirtschaftliche Standortserkundungen in Oberschlesien.”* Here: “*Vermerk über die Bereisung mit Vertretern des Reichsforstmeisters vom 22. und 23. 8. 1940*” (sheets 5 and 6).

In the county of Teschen, the following obtains: too many farmsteads have been planted in the contiguous forest districts, which the forest administration wishes to see eliminated.<sup>79</sup>

From this wish list of actions to be performed for the forest administration by the *Reich* Commissariat for the Strengthening of Germandom, we can clearly read off the stance the *Reich* Forest Office took towards the local population in the afforestation areas. The local population was seen exclusively as a workforce in bondage whose dispensability was governed by the labour demand of the afforestation project. Once the work was done, they could be deported to be replaced by German settlers. But why were those settlers of a much smaller number? The reason was the alleged higher cultural standing of the German settlers which caused the latter to require more and better land than the local population which foresters stigmatized as the “descendants of nomadic tribes.”<sup>80</sup> Yet even the new German population and landscape was subject to intense manipulation by the forest administration: to maintain maximum control over the new forest, private individuals were to be all but

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<sup>79</sup> *Die Forstverwaltung legt allergrößten Wert darauf, daß in den Waldgebieten im Süden des Regierungsbezirkes Kattowitz keinesfalls die Waldarbeiter ausgesiedelt werden, ehe nicht die Ansiedlung der nötigen deutschen Waldarbeiter erfolgen kann. Es muß also bei der Planung der nötige Raum und das nötige Volk für die Waldarbeit und besonders auch für die neuen Wegebauten, Wildbachverbauungen und Aufforstungen bereitgestellt, bezw. erhalten werden. . . .*

*Die Forstverwaltung wünscht, daß kein Privatwald gebildet wird, dagegen ausschließlich Staatswald und Gemeindewald. . . .*

*Der Kreis Saybusch beschäftigt z. Zt. 2500 - 3000 Forstarbeiter. Für die Aufforstungsarbeiten werden 2000 benötigt. Es müssen also auf jeden Fall 4 - 5000 Forstarbeiter im Lande verbleiben. Mit Familien sind dies 25000 Köpfe. Im Kreis Teschen rechnet man mit 19 Forstämtern zu je 150 Arbeitern = etwa 3000 Forstarbeiter = 15000 Menschen. . . .*

*Es werden jetzt 4000 Wolhyniendeutsche angesiedelt werden, dafür müssen 25000 Polen ausgesiedelt werden. In den letzten 40 Jahren hat der Kreis Saybusch von 100000 auf 150000 Menschen zugenommen. Eine gewisse Entvölkerung ist sehr erwünscht.*

*Für den Kreis Teschen gilt folgendes: Es sind hier zu viele Höfe zwischen die geschlossenen Waldgebiete eingesetzt worden, die nach dem Wunsche der Forstverwaltung beseitigt werden müssen. (BA R49 167, sheets 5 and 6, paragraph breaks in the original. The representative of the *Reich* Forest Office likely was the liaison Erwin Jaeger).*

<sup>80</sup> Rosenfeld and Helm 1942, p. 99. Regarding the alleged connection between ‘cultural standing’ and land requirements, see Greiser 1941 (cf. footnote 31).

excluded from ownership and the future number of people working and living in the forest was to be governed exclusively by the needs of the forest administration for a permanent labour complement.

The timing of the removal of the local population was to be determined entirely by the needs of the forest administration as dictated by the progress of the afforestation project. The *Reich* Commissariat for the Strengthening of Germandom and the *Reich* Forest Office came to an agreement

that the foreign [i.e., local] forest labourers will be exchanged against forest labourers from Bukovina [an ethnic German area to the southeast of Galicia] as far as latter are available, and that the remaining foreign forest labourers will be left at their current place of residence for the time being. Their resettlement and the Germanization of the area will proceed only within the framework of the progressing afforestation.<sup>81</sup>

Moreover, the forest administration was confident that the SS would deliver its part of the bargain and hand over the areas to be afforested with the ‘appropriate’ number and ‘kind’ of residents as the forest administration required them. In late October of 1941, several high-ranking members of the *Reich* Forest Office and academics from the forestry academy in Tharandt and the University of Munich joined regional forest administrators on a tour of Upper Silesia to inspect the progress of the “Afforestation of the Reincorporated Eastern Areas as per the Agreement with the *Reich* Leader of the SS.” In a memorandum “restricted to exclusive use by your Heads of Division,” the *Reich* Forest Office informed the *Reich*

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<sup>81</sup> *Wie der Beauftragte in Kattowitz anlässlich von Besprechungen am 8.4. und 9.4.41 mitteilt, ist inzwischen eine Einigung zwischen dem Beauftragten [of the Reich Commissariat for the Strengthening of Germandom] und dem Landesforstmeister dahingehend zustande gekommen, dass die fremdstämmigen Waldarbeiter, soweit Waldarbeiter aus dem Buchenlande zur Verfügung stehen, ausgetauscht werden, und dass die noch verbleibenden fremdstämmigen Waldarbeiter vorläufig an ihrem gegenwärtigen Wohnort belassen werden. Hier wird eine Aussiedlung resp. Eindeutschung erst im Rahmen der fortschreitenden Aufforstungsmassnahmen erfolgen. (BA R49 167, sheet 28: Vermerk über die Behandlung fremdstämmiger Waldarbeiter in den Kreisen Bielitz und Teschen vom 15.4.41, gefertigt von der Hauptabteilung II (Planung und Boden).*

Commissariat for the Strengthening of Germandom about the deliberations that took place during that trip, thus giving us insights into the discussions among the participating foresters.<sup>82</sup> In the main meeting of the excursion, the Head of the Forest Policy Section of the *Reich* Forest Office, Heinrich Eberts, assured the assembled foresters that

problems are not to be anticipated, though, as the *Reich* Commissioner for the Strengthening of Germandom [i.e., Himmler] is in complete control of the resettlement.<sup>83</sup>

It is not difficult to imagine what this “complete control” meant: The SS units acting under orders of Himmler had *carte blanche* when dealing with the population.

While the internal files and memos bristled with dehumanizing and technocratic language, the published assessments of foresters were frequently no less questionable in their wording and intent. In a forestry journal article dating from 1942, two foresters presented a call for action in Upper Silesia which followed the argument outlined above: only those who “served the forest” were to retain the right of residence once the “urgently” needed “cleansing” of the area was begun. As soon as the future need for labour was assessed, the “draining” of the “excessive” local population was to begin with the “removal of all pernicious elements (no enclaves [are to be left], which are only geared towards theft

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<sup>82</sup> BA R49 167, sheets 78-81: *Niederschrift über die Bereisung Kattowitz am 30.10. bis 1.11.1941. Betrifft: Neubewaldung der eingliederten Ostgebiete - Abkommen mit dem Reichsführer SS.*

<sup>83</sup> *Mit Schwierigkeiten braucht aber nicht gerechnet zu werden, da der RK [Reich Commissioner for the Strengthening of Germandom, i.e., Himmler] es in der Hand hat, die Aussiedlung zu steuern.* (BA R49 167, sheet 80).

Eberts was Head of the Forest Policy Section of the *Reich* Forest Office from 1938 to 1945. In 1942, he became the forestry representative on the board of the *Reich* Foundation for Eastern Research, which comprised the *Arbeitskreis* for the Reforestation of the East. In the eulogy on the occasion of Ebert's 75<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1977, forest historian Karl Hasel praised that “one has to admire the courage and the ability of Eberts, who managed not to dirty his hands. Heinrich Eberts deserves our respect.”. . . *Mut und Geschicklichkeit von Eberts bewundern, dem es gelang, sich nicht zu beschmutzen. Heinrich Eberts verdient unser aller hohen Respekt.* (quoted in Steinsiek 1995, p. 392).

anyhow); followed by the removal of all dispensable elements.”<sup>84</sup> The overall aim of the resettlement, as yet another forester wrote in his article on “Restructuring Tasks for Forestry,” was to “direct the local economy in the long term interest of the *Volksgemeinschaft*” – a polity, as we saw earlier, from which the “resettled” local population was emphatically excluded.<sup>85</sup>

The dreams of the forest administration for absolute control thus were not just internally discussed, they also were publicly aired and thus became part of the discourses within the public sphere. And, with the broad-based politicization of public discourse – in which foresters played their own part, as we saw in Chapter 6 – these discourses could be just as rabid in their choice of language, turning humans into mere “elements” which could be “drained” and “supplied” as needed.

Alas, the dreams of the forest administration did not always remain dreams – they also became partly true as more and more inhabitants of the Reincorporated Eastern Areas were dispossessed: Broszat reports that in the so-called *Saybusch Aktionen*, 17,413 persons were

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<sup>84</sup> *Es sind somit von der ganzen Enklavenfläche rund 56% von Leuten bewohnt, die dem Walde nicht dauernd dienen, . . . Es ist daher allerhöchste Zeit, daß hier ein durchgreifender Wandel der Verhältnisse Platz greift. . . .*

*Auch im ehemals polnischen Gebiete der Herrschaft geht die Bereinigung besser als hier vonstatten, weil die rechtlichen und organisatorischen Voraussetzungen günstiger liegen. . . .*

*Aus all dem geht hervor, daß planmäßig nach folgenden Richtlinien gearbeitet werden muß:*

*a) Feststellung der zur klaglosen Bewältigung aller forstwirtschaftlichen Arbeiten samt Wegebau auch in der Zukunft nötigen Arbeitskräfte.*

*b) Ableitung der Überbevölkerung im Gebirge, und zwar zunächst Entfernung aller schädlichen Elemente (kleine Enklaven, die nur auf Diebstahl eingestellt sind); sodann Entfernung aller entbehrlichen Elemente, d.s. Industriearbeiter und in fremden Betrieben Arbeitende, Ansiedlung derselben durch die Industrien in der Nähe des Arbeitsortes. (Rosenfeld und Helm 1942, pp. 107-108, paragraph breaks in the original).*

<sup>85</sup> *Auch eine Umsiedlung, wie etwa im Falle der goralen Waldbauern, muß ins Auge gefaßt werden, um die Wirtschaft so zu lenken, wie sie der Volksgemeinschaft auf weite Sicht am besten dient. (Francke C. 1941b, p. 563).*

deported from that county between September and December of 1940 alone. He calculates that for each 'new' German farmstead of approx. 15 hectares to be established, nine Galician smallholders were displaced.<sup>86</sup> Yet the 'model district' of Saybusch was but one county of many. In all, almost 1 million Polish inhabitants of the Reincorporated Eastern Areas were displaced in this way. Where were they taken after being dispossessed of their land and chased out of their homes? They were pushed east and dumped in the adjoining territory of the *Generalgouvernement*, where they were exploited for their labour. Before we examine German foresters' views on the *Generalgouvernement*, it is worth summarizing the characteristics the Reincorporated Eastern Areas held in the eyes of German foresters.

In the Reincorporated Eastern Areas, the German occupiers were after *Lebensraum* or land for settlement. To turn Poland into mere land, though, the Germans had to displace millions of Polish inhabitants from their land and homes. The policy of deportation from western Poland was underlain by the claim that Germans were 'reprising' an essentially German land which had only recently been compromised by the temporary tenure of 'foreign *Volkstum*.' In defence of this claim, foresters put forward the notion that the area between the Oder and Vistula rivers had historically borne 'German' forests which had only recently been "plundered" by the Polish population and "Jewish merchants".<sup>87</sup> This argument was

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<sup>86</sup> Broszat, Martin (1961) *Nationalsozialistische Polenpolitik 1939-1945*, Schriftenreihe der Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte, 2, Stuttgart, p. 99 (cited in Gröning and Wolschke-Bulmahn 1987a, pp. 58-59).

<sup>87</sup> *Juden plündern den polnischen Wald . . . Verjudung des Holzhandels* (Eißfeldt 1940, p. 171). See also Bu. [sic, likely Erwin Buchholz] 1941/42.

thus an extension of the argument we encountered in Chapter 7 that the presence of a German forest indicated the extent of German racial soil. As such, the land was seen as ready for immediate repossession by German settlers. As well, the climate, geomorphology, and soils were seen as being similar to those obtaining in Germany. In the eyes of foresters, the “Polish frittering” of the erstwhile German forest and the ensuing ecological deficits in the land that was to become the Reincorporated Eastern Areas could be remedied through a combination of afforestation and planned settlement. The goal was the restoration of the landscape to a healthy, balanced, and productive cultural landscape with “a German imprint, a face that has been lost across vast swaths of this land through Polish mismanagement.”<sup>88</sup> The settlement of the Reincorporated Eastern Areas was thus begun without delay. By contrast, the *Generalgouvernement* just to the east was already seen as the beginning of Asia – which meant to foresters that it had to be colonized and civilized first.

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<sup>88</sup> *polnische Luderwirtschaft* (Eißfeldt 1941, p. 47). . . . *deutsches Gepräge gegeben wird, ein Gesicht, das weiten Gebieten dieses Landes durch polnische Mißwirtschaft verlorengegangen ist.* (Alpers 1943, p. 6).

## 8.4 The *Generalgouvernement*

In the area of the *Generalgouvernement* the forces of the East clash with those of the West. . . . Here the Germanic man and the forest stand shoulder to shoulder in a fight that will only be won if this unity of "race and forest" is given clear expression in the landscape.

*Forstmeister Arnold Spletstößer 1942*<sup>89</sup>

I can tell you about one distinct difference [between the Protectorate and the *Generalgouvernement*]. In Prague, for example, big red bills were posted on which it was written that 7 Czechs had been shot that day. And I thought to myself: if I wanted to have bills posted for every seven Poles shot, then all the forests of Poland would not suffice to make enough paper for them..

Governor General of the *Generalgouvernement* Hans Frank 1940<sup>90</sup>

The colonial landscape starts to the east of the *Generalgouvernement*, while the *Generalgouvernement* itself is the last outpost of an administration run according to *Reich* standards.

Governor General Frank 1941<sup>91</sup>

The *Generalgouvernement* was a German dependency created in the middle third of the dissolved Polish state. The name aptly expressed the reality of its status: the *Generalgouvernement* was neither a sovereign state, nor part of the German *Reich*. Instead, it was a German "auxiliary territory" whose inhabitants were termed "stateless persons of Polish ethnicity" and whose "most noble task [was] to serve the *Reich*."<sup>92</sup> Beginning immediately to the east and south of the Reincorporated Eastern Areas, the *Generalgouvernement* ended

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<sup>89</sup> *Im Gebiet des Generalgouvernements stoßen sich die Kräfte des Ostens mit denen des Westens. . . . Hier stehen der Germane und der Wald im gemeinsamen Kampf, der nur gewonnen werden wird, wenn diese Einigkeit "Rasse und Wald" in der Landschaft sichtbaren Ausdruck erhalten wird.* (Spletstößer 1942b, pp. 251 and 257).

<sup>90</sup> *Einen plastischen Unterschied kann ich ihnen sagen. In Prag waren z.B. große rote Plakate angeschlagen, auf denen zu lesen war, daß heute 7 Tschechen erschossen worden sind. Da sagte ich mir: wenn ich für je sieben erschossene Polen ein Plakat aushängen lassen wollte, dann würden die Wälder Polens nicht ausreichen, das Papier herzustellen für solche Plakate.* (in an interview with the official Nazi party newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter*, cited in Präg and Jacobmeyer 1975, p. 104).

<sup>91</sup> *Die koloniale Landschaft fängt erst östlich des GG [Generalgouvernement] an, das GG selbst ist der letzte Ausläufer einer unmittelbar nach Reichsmethoden geführten Verwaltung.* (Frank on 21 November 1941, quoted in Präg and Jacobmeyer 1975, p. 8).

<sup>92</sup> *Nebenland des Deutschen Reiches* (*Der Deutsche Forstwirt* 1942, p. 483; also in Koehl 1957, p. 77 (quoting governor-general Hans Frank)); *daß das Generalgouvernement es als seine vornehmste Aufgabe ansähe, dem Reich zu dienen.* (*Der Deutsche Forstwirt* 1943, p. 307, quoting deputy governor general Bühler); *Staatenlose polnischen Volkstums* (Koehl 1957, p. 199).

at the Bug river in the east, beyond which the land was annexed by the Soviet Union on the basis of the secret protocol of the German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact of 23 August 1939. In the beginning, the *Generalgouvernement* encompassed almost 100,000 sq km with 12 million inhabitants and was divided into four districts (Krakow, Lublin, Radom, and Warsaw). After the attack on the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, the annexation of the previously Soviet-occupied Eastern Galicia as a fifth district added another 50,000 sq km and 5 million inhabitants to the *Generalgouvernement*.

Within weeks of the end of the Poland campaign, on 26 October 1939, the *Generalgouvernement* was turned over to a separate civilian administration under governor-general Hans Frank, formerly the *Reich* minister of justice.<sup>93</sup> His 'government' was free to create its own laws (there even was an agency with the telling name *Amt für Gesetzgebung* or 'Office for Legislation'), and its jurisdiction was territorial and absolute, meaning that ministries in the *Reich* had no say in how their portfolios' affairs were run in the *Generalgouvernement*. While the integration of the Reincorporated Eastern Areas into the German *Reich* was immediate and all-encompassing, the *Generalgouvernement*, notwithstanding its complete subjugation by Germany, was a territory carefully separated from the *Reich* in all aspects: laws, currency, administration, even postal stamps were kept distinct.

Why was occupied Poland divided into two such eminently different domains? The reason was a difference in the quality of the annexed *Lebensraum* as it was perceived by the

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<sup>93</sup> The structure of the *Generalgouvernement* and its everyday administration are documented in the more than 10,000 pages of daily office diaries of governor general Hans Frank. They cover the period from the first day of civil administration on 26 October 1939 until 3 April 1945 and are available in annotated form in Präg and Jacobmeyer 1975.

German occupiers. Those areas where German settlement had existed at some point in the past were considered easily 'redeemable' and could simply be 'reincorporated' into the German *Reich*: the land was ready for immediate German settlement after the removal of the current Polish population. Those areas which had not been settled by Germans before were deemed in need of a certain period of 'upgrading' before they could become part of the *Reich*. Thus, the Reincorporated Eastern Areas were a zone of restructuring and Germanization through immediate German settlement, while the *Generalgouvernement* was seen as a land suitable for mid- to long-term German settlement. Meanwhile, the immediate function of the *Generalgouvernement* was that of a resource pool for the German war effort, both in terms of materials and human labour.

For the duration of the war, the *Generalgouvernement* was to be exploited for its resources with the forced help of the local Polish population. In addition, the Polish population in the Reincorporated Eastern Areas, which was deemed a hindrance to the Germanization of the newest *Gaue* of the *Reich*, was deported to the *Generalgouvernement* for forced labour. On 26 October 1939, his first day in office, governor-general Frank decreed a universal labour duty for persons between 18 and 60 years of age. On 14 December, the minimum age was lowered to 14 years. Primarily, the labour was to be used in the agricultural sector with the aim of boosting food exports to the *Reich*, but more than 180,000 persons were forced to work in the forestry sector.<sup>94</sup> On 28 October 1939, Frank

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<sup>94</sup> Oberlandforstmeister Eißfeldt reporting to a meeting of the government of the *Generalgouvernement* in Krakau on 14 April 1943 (from the meeting minutes, cited in Präg and Jacobmeyer 1975, p. 638). Eißfeldt went on to mention that only 50,000 of those forest labourers "of foreign race" had received full rations and that none of them had received any meat or fat so far.

issued an order “to cut the forests to their maximum sustainable capacity,” which translated into a doubling of the quota to be cut. In accordance with this order, the forest administration immediately began “to establish large labour camps” in which the Polish population could be exploited in spatial and racial isolation from the *Reich* proper and from the German settlers.<sup>95</sup>

In the meantime, the German occupiers – among them foresters – made plans for a substantial ‘remodelling’ of the landscape of the *Generalgouvernement* to make it suitable for eventual German settlement. The forestry journals of the years 1939 to 1943 are full of articles in which German foresters used the image of an exhausted Polish forest as a vehicle for the stereotyping of both the landscape and the local population as harbingers of the much-maligned *Steppe*. At the same time, they presented the afforestation of the *Generalgouvernement* with a future German forest as an ecological and cultural bulwark against this steppification. In their writings, German foresters frequently presented the *Generalgouvernement* as a “battle ground” between a host of what they termed constructive European and deleterious Asian forces: forest and *Steppe*, Germanic and Slavic races, cultural achievement and negligence, settled agriculture and nomadism, temperate and extreme climates were portrayed as clashing in the *Generalgouvernement*. As we will see, foresters took on a radically more degrading tone than in their descriptions of the Reincorporated Eastern Areas, a reflection of their professed disdain for the supposedly ‘Asian’ landscape and population of the *Generalgouvernement*.

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<sup>95</sup> Oberlandforstmeister Eißfeldt at a meeting in Lodz on 29 October 1939 (from the meeting minutes, cited in Präg and Jacobmeyer 1975, p. 51).

One of the aspects of the landscape German foresters covered frequently in their articles was the relatively more continental climate of the *Generalgouvernement*. This is not surprising as it allowed foresters to emphasize their profession's importance to the future Germanization of the landscape: they argued that the absence of forest was liable to make the climate harsher, while the planting of forests would make the climate more suitable for German settlers accustomed to a more temperate climate. For an example of the naturalization of the political contained in the seamless transition from forestry to ideology, we may examine an article by Arnold Spletstößer, a forester in the forest administration of the *Generalgouvernement*. In 1942, Spletstößer wrote "The *Generalgouvernement* as the Battle Ground of the Forces of Nature," in which he explained the struggle between Germans and Slavs as rooted in the transitional climate regime of the area:

In the area of the *Generalgouvernement*, the forces of the East clash with those of the West. This is particularly obvious in the intercourse of nations, where a seemingly eternal struggle exists between Germans and Slavs.

The struggle, however, is also present in the climate, and maybe it is in this contest between maritime and continental climates that we can find the key to understanding the struggle among humans. . . .

In the winter, the Eastern wind irrupts with the vehemence of the Asian masses and whirls snow across the bare land. . . . At the same time, the storm brings low temperatures to the area such as are unknown in the West of Europe. In this way, the last remnant of a civilized Western European climate disappears, and an Asian character rules the region.

As was said earlier, this area is by nature a battle ground: here Asia and Western Europe collide. The climate as the fundamental force has not only formed fauna and flora, but naturally has formed humans too and it will continue to do so. It is no coincidence that this enormous land stretching from the Western part of Europe to the coast of China and Japan is marked by the same cultural stage. . . . This area [the *Generalgouvernement*] is on the margins of Western Europe. Here it is still possible to acquire cultural soil. For this great project to succeed, however, it will be necessary to ban the fundamental evil, i.e., the Asian climate and particularly the Eastern Storm. In turn, a large-scale alteration of the climate will only succeed in the framework of a professional design of the landscape which breaks the force of the storm.

Hence the design of the landscape holds the key to the eternal pacification of this land – among humans, too, for in the long term the Germanic man will only comfortable in this area if the influence of the East is eliminated as far as possible.

Here the Germanic man and the forest stand shoulder to shoulder in a fight that will only be won if this unity of "race and forest" is given clear expression in the landscape.<sup>96</sup>

In this article, Splettstößer uses climate to explain political conflict in general and German land-grabbing in particular as 'natural' processes. The supposedly 'civilized' temperate character of Western Europe is taken to parallel an equally civilized and even-tempered character of the Western European population, while the extreme character of the continental climate is cited as the reason for a supposed developmental deficit on the part the Asian 'race' – which Splettstößer deals with summarily as being one and the same from Warsaw to Shanghai. In his view, taking their land and turning it into German "cultural soil" was in fact an improvement, even if it had to be realized against their resistance in the interest of ultimate pacification – an absolute *pax germanica*, no doubt, since this idea of peace clearly

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<sup>96</sup> *Im Gebiet des Generalgouvernements stoßen sich die Kräfte des Ostens mit denen des Westens. Dies ist besonders augenfällig im Völkerleben, wo ein scheinbar ewiger Kampf zwischen den Germanen und den Slawen besteht.*

*Der Kampf ist aber auch im Klima vorhanden, und vielleicht liegt in diesem Naturringen des Seeklimas mit dem Landklima in diesem Raum der Schlüssel zur Erkenntnis des Kampfes der Menschen untereinander. . . .*

*Im Winter braust dann der Ostwind mit asiatischer Massenwucht herein und wirbelt die Schneemassen über das kahle Land. . . . Gleichzeitig mit dem Sturm kommen Kältegrade in dieses Gebiet, die im Westen Europas nicht bekannt sind. So schwindet dann jeder Hauch westeuropäischer Klimazivilisation, und ein asiatischer Charakter beherrscht das Feld.*

*Wie schon eingangs gesagt, ist dieser Raum von Natur aus ein Kampfraum: hier stoßen sich Asien und Westeuropa. Das Klima als Urfaktor hat die Pflanzen- und Tierwelt und selbstverständlich auch die Menschen geformt und wird sie weiter formen. Es ist kein Zufall, daß in diesem ungeheuer großen Landraum, der sich zwischen dem westlichen Teil Europas bis an die Küsten von China und Japan erstreckt, mehr oder weniger der gleiche Kulturzustand herrscht, während ringsherum, wo das Seeklima einen Einfluß ausüben konnte, eine andere Kulturform sich ausbreitet. Dieses Gebiet liegt an der Grenze von Westeuropa. Hier ist es möglich, noch Kulturboden zu gewinnen. Soll dieses große Werk gelingen, so wird es aber erforderlich sein, zunächst das Urübel, d. h. das asiatische Klima, vor allem den Oststurm, zu bannen. Eine Klimabeeinflussung im großen Maße wird aber nur bei sachkundiger Landschaftsgestaltung möglich sein, die es fertigbringt, der Machtentfaltung des Sturmes immer wieder ein Hindernis entgegenzustellen.*

*So liegt in der Landschaftsgestaltung der Schlüssel zur ewigen Befriedung dieses Landes, auch unter den Menschen; denn der Germane wird sich auf die Dauer in diesem Raum nur wohl fühlen, wenn der östliche Einfluß möglichst weitgehend ausgeschaltet wird.*

*Hier stehen der Germane und der Wald im gemeinsamen Kampf, der nur gewonnen werden wird, wenn diese Einigkeit "Rasse und Wald" in der Landschaft sichtbaren Ausdruck erhalten wird. (Splettstößer, 1942, pp. 251, 256, and 257).*

banked on the complete absence of the former populations who could contest the German claim.

Replacing the local populations with “the Germanic man,” however, depended on the ability of the authorities to provide settlers with an environment in which they could thrive. As a territory “on the margins of Western Europe,” the *Generalgouvernement* was the most suitable for this project, because the climate was not too different and thus could be actively altered from “the Asian climate” to a “civilized Western European climate.” The key to the climate alteration was the ability to change the landscape and utilize its effect on climate moderation to the fullest. And here foresters could claim that their afforestation project was by far the most effective means of changing the regional and micro climates. Foresters and their work thus were cast as the exponents of the “unity of ‘race and forest’” that was indispensable for the success of the “great project.”

Splettstößer’s musings about an ‘Asian’ climate and race in the middle of Eastern Europe may sound contrived, but they gained wide currency in his time. In 1942, the government of the *Generalgouvernement* invited the editors of all German forestry journals to come for a visit and inspect the results of “Three Years of German Forestry in the *Generalgouvernement*.”<sup>97</sup> For five days, the editors were toured around by the busload and heard presentations from German foresters in the *Generalgouvernement*, among them Splettstößer who talked about his theory and distributed offprints with maps and illustrations.<sup>98</sup> Upon their return, the editors used this material in their articles about the

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<sup>97</sup> Thus the title of the editor’s report in the *Deutsche Forst-Zeitung* (cf. Alpers 1942).

<sup>98</sup> Rubner 1943, p. 119.

*Generalgouvernement* and soon Splettstößer's idea surfaced in numerous German forestry journals, for example the *Deutsche Forstwirt*, the *Deutsche Forst-Zeitung*, the *Tharandter Forstliches Jahrbuch*, and the *Zeitschrift für Forst- und Jagdwesen*.<sup>99</sup> Moreover, among the authors of those articles were not only known party mouthpieces, but also eminent professors of forestry whose reputation lent this viewpoint additional weight.

For example, in his article in the *Tharandter Forstliches Jahrbuch*, Professor Konrad Rubner concurred with Splettstößer that the "Asian influence" of dust and snow storms could be reduced "through well-designed stretches of forest."<sup>100</sup> Similarly, in his report about the tour in the *Zeitschrift für Forst- und Jagdwesen*, Professor Alfred Dengler quoted from the "impressive presentation by Dr. Splettstößer" that the task at hand was to

"stem the progressive change towards the Asian and to transfer this area to the Western European cultural form." This great thought we may well apply to the entire economic management and administration of the *Generalgouvernement*. That is the lasting impression all participants took home from the tour. What the German sword has conquered, the German spirit will now pervade and retain for all time!<sup>101</sup>

Dengler candidly expressed how the process of Germanization in the *Generalgouvernement* was different from that in the Reincorporated Eastern Areas: supposedly, in the latter, old German land was reprised; while in the former, German land was newly formed. With their idea of the *Generalgouvernement* as a "battle ground" between European and Asian climates,

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<sup>99</sup> Cf. *Der Deutsche Forstwirt* 1942; Borath 1942; Rubner 1943; Dengler 1942.

<sup>100</sup> *Durch geschickt angelegt Waldkulissen werden diese "asiatischen Einflüsse" vermindert werden können.* (Rubner 1943, p. 119, quoting Splettstößer).

<sup>101</sup> ... "der fortschreitenden Entwicklung zum Asiatischen ein Halt [sic] entgegenzustellen und diesen Raum der westeuropäischen Kulturform zuzuführen." Diesen großzügigen Gedanken darf man wohl auf die ganze Wirtschaftsführung und Verwaltung des *Generalgouvernements* übertragen. Das ist der große Eindruck, den alle Teilnehmer unserer Reise von ihr mitgenommen haben. Was das deutsche Schwert erobert hat, wird nun der deutsche Geist durchdringen und für alle Zeiten festhalten! (Dengler 1942, p. 352, quoting Splettstößer).

vegetation, and races, foresters contributed a convenient justification for conquering such lands which were evidently not German. They argued that to prevent these lands from sliding into Asian conditions through afforestation was a service German foresters in the *Generalgouvernement* “far from all customary cultural achievements and in constant struggle with the adverse forces of nature” provided in the interest of the entire Western European cultural community.<sup>102</sup>

Foresters thus saw themselves as spearheading the ‘enculturation’ of the *Generalgouvernement* into a future part of a German-dominated Europe. Once again, their mission was to establish a forest cover comparable to that of the *Reich* as a precondition for tempering the continental climate. Yet, as was the case in the Reincorporated Eastern Areas, the afforestation was at the same time presented as a precondition for eventual settlement by Germans:

Here great tasks await National Socialist forestry. For it is the will of the Führer that a German landscape and a German forest be created wherever new German settlement space is to be formed. How else could the Germans posted here ever see this land as their *Heimat*? In close cooperation with the *Reich* Commissariat for the Strengthening of Germandom . . . , forestry planning will secure the foundations for a landscape design in the Germanic sense. The forest cover will be raised from 19% to at least 25%. For the widespread deforestation has already begun to exacerbate the climatic extremes. Agriculture is endangered. The land is beginning to turn into a *Steppe*, the rivers are silting up, the mountains are eroding.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> . . . fern aller gewohnten kulturellen Errungenschaften in widrigem Kampf mit den Gewalten der Natur. (Rubner 1943, p. 121).

<sup>103</sup> Hier harren für die nationalsozialistische Forstwirtschaft große Aufgaben. Denn nach dem Willen des Führers soll überall dort, wo neuer deutscher Siedlungsraum entstehen soll, zunächst einmal eine deutsche Landschaft und ein deutscher Wald geschaffen werden. Wie könnten die hier im Osten eingesetzten Deutschen anders das Land als ihre Heimat betrachten? In enger Zusammenarbeit mit dem Reichskommissar für die Festigung des deutschen Volkstums und der Hauptabteilung Ernährung und Landwirtschaft [of the government of the Generalgouvernement] wird hier die forstliche Raumordnung die Grundlage schaffen für eine großzügige Landschaftsgestaltung im germanischen Sinne. Das Bewaldungsprozent soll von 19 vH mindestens auf 25 vH gehoben werden. Denn schon verstärken sich die Klimaextreme infolge weitgehender Entwaldung. Die Landeskultur ist gefährdet. Das Land beginnt zu versteppen, die Flüsse versanden, die Gebirge verkarsten. (Eißfeldt 1943, pp. 25-26, emphasis in the original).

In purely technical terms, then, the task of German foresters in the *Generalgouvernement* was comparable to that in the Reincorporated Eastern Areas: approximately 1.1 million hectares were to be afforested, a German forest and landscape structure was to be established, and the eventual settlement of Germans was to be prepared.<sup>104</sup>

Yet there were great differences with respect to the ideological premisses and the means by which they were to be turned into reality. Since German foresters were claiming that the Reincorporated Eastern Areas were essentially German territory, they did not denigrate the landscape entirely but postulated a residual German character which had been compromised through Polish tenure. In their approach to the *Generalgouvernement*, by contrast, German foresters displayed an outright colonial attitude that denied any prior Europeanness and individuality of both forest and people and instead treated them as Asian, undifferentiated, and mere fragments of a seemingly boundless and amorphous mass which were unworthy of individual consideration. In short, the landscape was represented as a vessel into which European culture could be filled once the current 'Asian' population (as ultimate cause of the Asian character of the landscape) was removed.

On the following pages, I will examine the approach German foresters took to the forest landscape and people of the *Generalgouvernement* by analyzing one of several programmatic statements which listed the objectives of German forestry in the *Generalgouvernement*. According to the editor of the *Deutsche Forst-Zeitung*, Rudolf Borath, the following were

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<sup>104</sup> Eißfeldt 1940, p. 174.

the “primary tasks” of forestry in the *Generalgouvernement* which were tackled with “hard energy” and “iron consequence:”

1. the complete elimination of the destructive Jewish element from economy and intellectual life
2. the centralization of the entire forest production in the Department of Forestry [of the government of the *Generalgouvernement* ] in order to guarantee its coordination
3. the introduction of a German leadership class that serves as both vanguard and role model
4. a forest law closely resembling that in the *Reich*
5. the full utilization of the cheap local labour and its complete harnessing for the economy of the Greater German Zone.<sup>105</sup>

How were those tasks pursued by the forest administration? In line with the genocidal policies of the Nazi regime, the Jewish population was ruthlessly “eliminated” from the *Generalgouvernement*. For the forest administration this meant that of the approximately 1,000 saw mills operating in the territory of the *Generalgouvernement* it could appropriate some 700 after they supposedly had been “abandoned” by their Jewish owners.<sup>106</sup> This fed into the second goal, the centralization of the forest production, as the forest administration now was able to run a vertically integrated production system spanning all stages from tree to end product across wide areas of the *Generalgouvernement*. Both goals were pursued with complete impunity as there were no legal or ethical restrictions upon the latitude of the German occupiers: as we saw earlier, their power to create their own ‘legal’ framework was absolute.

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<sup>105</sup> 1. die restlose Ausschaltung des destruktiven jüdischen Elements aus Wirtschaft und Geistesleben  
 2. die Zusammenfassung der Holzwirtschaft innerhalb der Hauptabteilung Forsten in einer Hand und damit die Gewährleistung einer einheitlichen Ausrichtung  
 3. die Eingliederung einer richtungsweisenden und beispielgebenden deutschen Führungsschicht  
 4. eine sich stark an das Reich anlehrende Gesetzgebung auch im forstlichen Sektor  
 5. die billige Arbeitskraft des Landes voll auszunützen und der Wirtschaft des Großdeutschen Raumes voll dienstbar zu machen (Borath 1942, p. 285). For similar statements, see Mantel 1942.

<sup>106</sup> Das war um so schwieriger, als sich die Werke zu etwa 80% in jüdischem Besitz befanden und größtenteils von ihren Besitzern verlassen waren. (Eißfeldt 1940, p. 172). See also Eißfeldt 1941, p. 47.

The third goal of grafting a German leadership class onto the local Polish population was of particular interest to foresters, who saw themselves as an elite even within the German population.<sup>107</sup> Similar to their mission in the Reincorporated Eastern Areas, German foresters were told it was their task to spearhead the German conquest and 'defend' the newly won territory against the Slavic population:

Forestry officials serve in the foremost frontline. They are the trailblazers, the combat officers of the shock commandos who clear the way for the Germans who follow them, who make the region inhabitable, in short, who lay the foundations for the settlement of the area. Beyond that, they will also become part of the German human bulwark that has to be erected in the East.<sup>108</sup>

The German foresters posted to the East thus were expected to build a defensive wall of German blood against the racial threat posed by the Slavic population. Their actual presence, though, was underwhelming: in the entire *Generalgouvernement*, only 60 German administrative foresters and 120 German operational foresters were posted. On average, each of these German foresters had to supervise 60 non-German foresters and hundreds of Polish forest labourers.<sup>109</sup> The 'proper' relations between German and non-German foresters in the *Generalgouvernement* were defined in a set of regulations which reveal a peculiar double standard. On the one hand, Polish foresters were treated with a combination of colonial and military condescension: upon encountering a German superior, Polish foresters had to report

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<sup>107</sup> Cf. the insistence by Volkert that foresters represent "a physically, morally, and mentally highly selected group of disproportionately productive individuals." *eine körperlich, charakterlich und geistig scharf ausgewählte Bevölkerungsgruppe von überdurchschnittlichen Leistungsträgern* (Volkert 1939, p. 385). For further praise for the alleged elite qualities of German foresters, see Künkele 1926a and 1926b; Rausch 1935; Gusovius 1937; Orth 1938 and 1942.

<sup>108</sup> *Und hierbei steht die Forstbeamtschaft in vorderster Front. Sie sind die Vorkämpfer, die Frontoffiziere der Stoßtruppen, die den nachkommenden deutschen Menschen den Weg bereiten, das Gebiet wohnlich machen, kurz die Voraussetzung für die Besiedlung der Gebiete zu schaffen haben. Sie wird dann selbst aber auch ein wesentlicher Teil des Walles deutscher Menschen sein, der im Osten errichtet werden muß.* (Jaeger 1941, p. 155).

<sup>109</sup> Borath 1942, p. 281; Eißfeldt 1943, p. 25.

their “rank, name, posting, and momentary activity” in a “brief, military” fashion. They were not allowed to leave their district without permission, and, in a regression to the customs of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, they even had to ask permission to marry from the chief forester of their district – which the latter could deny without further explanation.<sup>110</sup>

On the other hand, Polish foresters were indispensable to the thinly stretched German leadership caste. Without the cooperation of Polish foresters, nothing could be accomplished in the forest. Thus they also found themselves treated preferentially by the German forest administration, for example when their right to bear arms on duty was reinstated as early as 14 December 1939.<sup>111</sup> The head of the forest administration of the *Generalgouvernement*, Kurd Eißfeldt, repeatedly praised the loyalty and cooperation of the non-German foresters “in the fight against the elements of disorder and decay” and even convinced the head of the Reich Forest Office, Generalforstmeister Alpers to express his thanks to several representatives of the non-German foresters during his visit to the *Generalgouvernement* in the fall of 1943.<sup>112</sup> As is obvious from the official photograph of the occasion, the visit inspired neither side to displays of sympathy for the other. (See figure 8.1).

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<sup>110</sup> § 6: *Sämtlichen deutschen Vorgesetzten hat der Forstbeamte bei dienstlichen Zusammentreffen ein kurze (militärische) Meldung zu erstatten, die je nach den Umständen über seinen Dienstrang, seinen Namen, seinen Dienstsitz und seine augenblickliche Beschäftigung Auskunft gibt. . . .*

§ 15: *1. Der Forstbeamte darf seinen Dienstbereich ohne Urlaub nicht verlassen. . . .*

§ 17: *Alle Forstbeamten, die beabsichtigen, eine Ehe zu schliessen, haben vor der Einleitung des Aufgebots die Genehmigung des Distriktschefs Abteilung Forsten einzuholen. Mit dem Genehmigungsantrag ist der Ariernachweis der Frau, mit der die Ehe geschlossen werden soll, beizubringen. Die Genehmigung kann ohne Angabe von Gründen verweigert werden. (Anonymous 1941, pp. 2, 6, and 7).*

<sup>111</sup> “Verordnung über das Waffentragen der polnischen Forstbeamten im Generalgouvernement” in *Verordnungsblatt des Generalgouverneurs für die besetzten polnischen Gebiete 1939*, p. 223, reprinted in *Präg 1975*, p. 51.

<sup>112</sup> *im Kampf gegen die Elemente der Unordnung und der Auflösung* (cited in *Der Deutsche Forstwirt 1943*, p. 307).

More surprising than the lip service paid to the importance of Polish foresters was that the German forest administration considered them useful allies in strengthening the German blood among the local population. Through marriage to an Aryan woman, select Polish foresters who were “connected to the soil”<sup>113</sup> were ‘allowed’ to contribute their ‘residual’ German blood to the effort of *Aufrassung* or ‘upbreeding.’ When applying for a marriage permit to his German superior, the Polish forester thus had to attach written proof that his prospective wife was of Aryan descent. Evidently, the success of such ‘upbreeding’ depended on the erstwhile presence of German blood in the Polish foresters. To ensure this, the forest administration of the *Generalgouvernement* screened its Polish foresters according to race:

The Polish foresters have been selected not only according to their professional qualifications, but also according to their racial disposition. For example, we have retained foresters who were expelled from the Corridor [i.e., the Reincorporated Eastern Areas] but possess German ancestors or were decorated with the Iron Cross in the World War; on the other hand, we have fired those who belong to the Asian peoples.<sup>114</sup>

This policy reveals the arbitrariness of the different standards applied in the racial evaluation of the local Polish populations: a degree of ‘German blood’ deemed insufficient for remaining in the ‘Germanized’ Reincorporated Eastern Areas could earn the same individual the right to work and start a family just a few kilometres further east in the *Generalgouvernement*.<sup>115</sup> Finally, the position of the German forest authorities that proven valour in the

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<sup>113</sup> *der bodenverbundene nichtdeutsche Forstmann* (cited in *Der Deutsche Forstwirt* 1943, p. 307).

<sup>114</sup> *Die polnischen Beamten sind nicht nur nach fachlichen Qualitäten, sondern auch nach ihrer rassischen Veranlagung ausgewählt. Wir haben also beispielsweise Beamte, die aus dem Korridor ausgewiesen wurden, aber deutsche Vorfahren oder das Eiserne Kreuz des Weltkrieges hatten, übernommen und dafür andere, die den Völkern Asiens angehörten, entlassen.* (Eißfeldt 1941, p. 47).

<sup>115</sup> A similarly sharp and arbitrary distinction was made between the forest landscapes on either side of the boundary between the Reincorporated Eastern Areas and the *Generalgouvernement*. While the

trenches of the First World War could substitute for racial heritage completely exposes the spurious base for the entire idea of delineating Germanic and Slavic races and assigning distinct landscapes to them.

The fourth “primary task” of forestry in the *Generalgouvernement* – the creation of a forest law similar to that in the *Reich* – was systematically pursued by academic and administrative foresters as it promised to be a way of vastly broadening their institutional and professional power base. The years 1942 and 1943 saw negotiations between the forest administration and other administrative branches in the *Generalgouvernement* concerning a future Law Concerning the Forest Culture in the *Generalgouvernement* which was to be enacted on 1 October 1943 but was postponed as non-essential to the war effort when the situation on the eastern front deteriorated. Preserved in the files of the *Reichsstelle für Raumordnung* or ‘Reich Office for Regional Planning’ in the federal archives Berlin is a complete draft version of the law, along with the comments and objections by regional planners. Together, the draft and the comments provide us with a window into both the aspirations of the forest administration in the *Generalgouvernement* and the reservations of other administrative branches regarding those claims.<sup>116</sup>

According to the draft, the forest administration intended to claim jurisdiction over not only forestry, but also over the entire wood industry, game management, and all landscape

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afforestation in the Reincorporated Eastern Areas was portrayed as an intrinsic part of the new German landscape, an afforestation of the same type just across the border inside the *Generalgouvernement* was primarily seen in instrumental terms as a protective belt against climatic influences from the East. (Cf. BA R37.01 264: *Betreffend: Aufforstungsprogramm im Generalgouvernement*).

<sup>116</sup> (BA R113 1978: *Betreffend: Entwurf eines Waldkulturgesetzes von der Hauptabteilung Forsten der Regierung des Generalgouvernement*).

planning in the *Generalgouvernement*. Evidently, this would have given foresters vertically integrated control over all aspects of wood production and thus considerable economic clout. Besides eyeing the financial profits to be had from controlling all value-adding processes, however, the forest administration was evidently also interested in the public authority such a far-reaching forest law could confer on them: they demanded the creation of a “special force with police authority” that would enable them to enforce the law independent of the general civil administration.<sup>117</sup>

Even more presumptuous, not least in the eyes of rival administrative branches, was the provision that foresters could assume control over any given part of the landscape simply by designating it as an area to be afforested in the future.<sup>118</sup> As the Office for Regional Planning of the *Generalgouvernement* pointed out in an indignant objection to this passage of the draft, this would have given foresters control over any area they happened to fancy as well as giving them claim to the entire portfolio of landscape planning and landscape architecture.<sup>119</sup> Finally, the forest administration claimed the right to sanction or veto the sale of all forested land in the *Generalgouvernement*, as well as the right of preemption, thus

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<sup>117</sup> § 1 *Waldkulturhoheit*: (1) Die gesamte Waldkultur untersteht der Regierung des Generalgouvernements, Hauptabteilung Forsten. . . .

§ 2 *Umfang der Waldkultur*: Die Waldkultur umfasst die Waldwirtschaft, die Holzwirtschaft, die Jagd und die Landschaftspflege. . . .

§ 8 *Waldschutztruppe*: Zur Überwachung der Waldkulturaufgaben kann eine besondere Truppe mit polizeilichen Befugnissen aufgestellt werden. (BA R113 1978: Teil I: *Waldkulturhoheit*).

<sup>118</sup> § 9 *Begriffsbestimmungen*: (1) Wald ist jede Grundfläche der freien Natur, die mit wildwachsenden Holzarten oder Sträuchern bestanden oder zur Bestockung mit derartigen Pflanzen durch die Waldkulturbehörden bestimmt ist. (BA R113 1978: Teil II: *Waldwirtschaft*).

<sup>119</sup> BA R113 1978: *Schreiben des Hauptamtes für Raumordnung der Regierung des Generalgouvernement an den Leiter der Reichsstelle für Raumordnung vom 24. September 1943*.

ensuring the option of further increasing its holdings and influence.<sup>120</sup> In all aspects, this draft for a Forest Culture Law in the *Generalgouvernement* was even more unmindful of the existing situation than the Landscape Guidelines in the Reincorporated Eastern Areas. Neither ownership rights nor the concerns of other agencies of the state were given consideration in the draft whose obvious goal was the creation of an independent and extensive power base for the forest administration.

Lastly, the fifth “primary task” of German foresters in the *Generalgouvernement* – “the full utilization of the cheap local labour and its complete harnessing for the economy of the Greater German Zone” – was of particular interest to the very labour intensive forestry sector. Again we can identify a difference between the approaches of the forest authorities in the Reincorporated Eastern Areas and in the *Generalgouvernement*. While the former was only willing to tolerate the presence of Polish forest labourers as long as there were not enough ethnic German forest labourers available for ‘resettlement,’ the latter was planning to utilize the local Polish population (as well as the deported populations dumped in the *Generalgouvernement*) in a continuous exploitation scheme. As the head of the forest administration of the *Generalgouvernement*, Kurd Eißfeldt, announced, “entire villages will have to be drafted into labour or large camps will have to be erected” for the purposes of

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<sup>120</sup> § 11 Waldgrundstücksrecht: (1) Der Verkehr mit Forstgrundstücken bedarf gemäss der Verordnung über den Verkehr mit Grundstücken im Generalgouvernement vom 27. März 1940 der Genehmigung des Kreishauptmannes (Stadthauptmann). Die Genehmigung darf nur mit Zustimmung der niederen Waldkulturbehörde erteilt werden.

(2) Alle nichtstaatlichen Forstgrundstücke und Eigentumsanteile an Forstgrundstücken sind mit einem Vorkaufsrecht zu Gunsten des Generalgouvernements belastet. Das Vorkaufsrecht kann auch im Interesse öffentlich rechtlicher Körperschaften ausgeübt werden. (BA R113 1978: Teil II: Waldwirtschaft).

afforestation work.<sup>121</sup> But even for the daily operations Polish labour was to be pressed into service. As early as 29 October 1939, at one of the first meetings of the government of the *Generalgouvernement* and well preceding any detailed plans for the afforestation, Eißfeldt announced that “in suitable areas great camps were to be erected” in which the Polish population was to be kept available to execute the orders of the governor general and his forest administration.<sup>122</sup>

In the eyes of the German forest administration, the foremost problem with the great tasks awaiting them in the *Generalgouvernement* was thus not scarcity of labour. As Eißfeldt remarked to a conference of Nazi party administrators in 1941, “we have the Poles for the execution of the work – we don’t need any Germans for that.”<sup>123</sup> The perceived problem, however, lay in the need to train and supervise the Polish forest labourers in order to increase their allegedly low productivity since, contrary to the situation in the Reincorporated Eastern Areas, the Polish labourers were not to be eventually ‘exchanged’ against allegedly better forest labourers of German ethnicity.

Through the policies and actions outlined above, the German forest administration in the *Generalgouvernement* tackled each of its supposed five “primary tasks” separately. As we have seen, some of those measures differed from those taken in the Reincorporated Eastern

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<sup>121</sup> *Es muß die Bevölkerung dörfweise herangezogen werden, oder es müssen große Lager errichtet, der Pflanzennachschub muß geregelt werden.* (Eißfeldt 1941, p. 48).

<sup>122</sup> *In geeigneten Gegenden würden große Arbeitslager eingerichtet werden.* (Eißfeldt according to the meeting minutes cited in Präg and Jacobmeyer 1975, p. 51).

<sup>123</sup> *Für die Ausführung der Arbeiten haben wir ja die Polen, dafür brauchen wir keine Deutschen.* (Eißfeldt 1941, p. 47). Eißfeldt goes on to explain that the Poles, while sometimes cooperative and even loyal, overall were “unsuited to any kind of organizational task.” . . . *Pole ist und damit für jede Organisationsaufgabe sich untauglich erweist.* (Eißfeldt 1941, p. 48). Similarly: Eißfeldt 1940, p. 174 and Eißfeldt 1943, p. 25.

Areas in kind, others only in degree. There was one forestry institution in the *Generalgouvernement*, however, whose structures and measures had no equivalent in the Reincorporated Eastern Areas: the *Forstschutzkommando*.

The *Forstschutzkommando* was a paramilitary ‘forest protection commando’ of approx. 2,000 foresters created by Göring in response to a request from the governor general of the *Generalgouvernement*.<sup>124</sup> In the winter of 1939/40, Frank had been informed by his head of the forest administration, Kurd Eißfeldt, that the situation in the forests of the *Generalgouvernement* was deteriorating. The chaos of the dissolution of the Polish state and the extremely harsh winter had led to the formation of “roaming bands of armed bandits up to 500 men strong” who had stolen wood amounting to the equivalent of an entire year’s cut.<sup>125</sup> To stem the theft and impose German ideas of order in the forest, Frank requested help from the *Reich* Forest Office. *Reichsforstmeister* Göring obliged and on 2 February 1940 decreed the creation of the *Forstschutzkommando* which was to give the forest administration of the *Generalgouvernement* the necessary muscle to enforce its will.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> A total of 9,500 foresters served in the *Forstschutzkommando* from 1940 to 1945. The high turnover is due to the fact that, for the reasons related in Chapter 4 and in Appendix I, foresters were highly sought after by the army and thus were frequently drafted away from the *Forstschutzkommando*. By “drafting volunteers” from among young forest labourers at age seventeen and thus before the age of conscription, the *Reich* Forest Office managed to preempt the claim of the military at least for one year’s time. (Cf. *Der Deutsche Forstwirt* 1944a, p. 52).

<sup>125</sup> Eißfeldt 1940, p. 173.

<sup>126</sup> *Reichsmittteilungsblatt der Forstverwaltung* 1940 p. 35: *Aufstellung eines Forstschutzkommandos. Runderlaß der Reichsforstmeisters vom 2. 2. 1940.*

The *Forstschutzkommando* was renamed *Forstschutzkorps* in 1941. To avoid confusion, I will use the term *Forstschutzkommando* throughout this chapter.

The rank and file of the *Forstschutzkommando* were composed of German forest labourers who volunteered to serve as *Forstschützen* or ‘forest riflemen.’ The NCOs were drawn from among operational foresters, while the officers were administrative foresters.<sup>127</sup> The *Forstschutzkommando* was armed with small firearms and machine guns which were supplied by Göring’s *Luftwaffe*, as were the distinct green uniforms which had been refashioned from surplus uniforms of the Legion Condor Hitler had sent to fight on Franco’s side in the Spanish Civil War. The volunteers were gathered in a 10-week basic training camp at Birkenthal near Oppeln in Upper Silesia, where they were given instruction in military, police, and forestry matters. While most of the time was spent on honing the forest labour skills which they were to pass on to the local labourers in the *Generalgouvernement*, the foresters were also given the “far-ranging world view training which was indispensable for the future missions of the *Forstschutzkommando*.” This was complemented by “intensive instruction in the use of all applicable types of small arms” and even close combat techniques – hardly skills foresters would usually expect to require in their work.<sup>128</sup>

The *Forstschutzkommando* was thus organized, equipped, and trained like a military unit, all under the command of a former lieutenant colonel of the *Feldjäger*, Ernst Boden.<sup>129</sup> The self-image of the *Forstschutzkommando* as a military unit is further evidenced by

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<sup>127</sup> (Rubner 1985, p. 137).

<sup>128</sup> *Vorbedingung ist für die Angehörigen des Kommandos eine gute militärische Grundausbildung und ausgiebige Unterrichtung im Gebrauch der in Frage kommenden Handfeuerwaffen. . . . Einen Hauptteil der Ausbildung machte der Unterricht in der forstlichen Arbeitslehre aus. . . . Die gesamte Ausbildung wurde getragen von einer weit ausgreifenden weltanschaulichen Erziehung, dazu bestimmt, die unentbehrliche Grundlage für den zukünftigen Einsatz des Kommandos zu bilden. (Der Deutsche Forstwirt 1940, p. 293).*

<sup>129</sup> On the *Feldjäger*, see Appendix I.

documented statements by its commander. For example, in a letter to the *Reich* Forest Office, Boden expressed his concern that the military reputation of his unit could be tarnished through confusion with the *Forstarbeitskommando* or ‘forest work commando’ which had been founded by Göring in September 1943. The idea behind the *Forstarbeitskommando* was to force an increase in the productivity of foreign forest labourers by drafting them into permanent units of similar nationality which were to be commanded by German foresters and to be uniformed in the same style as the *Forstschutzkommando*.<sup>130</sup> Boden complained that allowing the *Forstarbeitskommando* to wear the very same uniforms by which the *Forstschutzkommando* “is known in the East ” could lead to confusion:

This is not in the interest of a military unit of the *Reichsforstmeister* whose creation has taken enormous effort and which has earned hard the reputation it now enjoys in all agencies and offices, particularly those in the military. . . .

The *Forstschutzkommando* was founded in February 1940 after the example and the principles of the *Wehrmacht* and with assistance from the *Luftwaffe* as a military unit of the *Reichsforstmeister*.

. . .<sup>131</sup>

Boden then insisted that the *Forstarbeitskommando* was not a military unit but was merely founded to achieve the best possible work performance, thereby further implying that the emphasis of his own *Forstschutzkommando* units lay in areas related less to actual forest work and more to tasks such as the enforcement of German ideas of law and order.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> On the *Forstarbeitskommando*, see Worm 1944.

<sup>131</sup> *In diesen Uniformen ist es im Osten bekannt. Das dient nicht dem Vorteil einer Truppe des Reichsforstmeisters, die mit unsäglicher Mühe aufgestellt [sic] und sich mit vielen Schwierigkeiten die Stellung, die sie heute hat, bei allen Behörden und Dienststellen, vornehmlich militärischen, erworben hat. Das Forstschutzkorps ist im Februar 1940 nach dem Vorbild und den Grundsätzen der Wehrmacht unter Mithilfe der Luftwaffe als Truppe des Reichsforstmeisters aufgestellt und der Luftwaffe als Wirtschaftstruppenteil angegliedert worden. (BA R37.01 / 207, sheet 60: Schreiben des Kommandeurs Boden an den Landforstmeister Stech im Reichsforstamt vom 7.1.44, emphasis in the original).*

<sup>132</sup> *M. E. [Meines Erachtens] wird das tragende Moment der Arbeit nicht genügend betont. Die beste Arbeitsleistung im Holzeinschlag ist aber gerade der Grund, weshalb das Forstarbeitskommando eingerichtet worden ist. (BA R37.01 / 207, sheet 60).*

Overall, it thus must be assumed that the *Forstschutzkommando* was designed and expected to use military means in achieving its objective of ending the civil disobedience among the local population and speeding up wood transports. Towards the end of the war, there even was a partial integration of *Wehrmacht* soldiers into the *Forstschutzkommando* as well as integrated commandos consisting of *Forstschutzkommando*, *Wehrmacht*, police, and other armed branches of the German authorities.<sup>133</sup> As well, the *Forstschutzkommando* frequently provided auxiliary services to army operations in some sections of the front.<sup>134</sup> From the documents in the archives (both those mentioned so far and those we will examine presently), it appears that the *Forstschutzkommando* indeed prided itself on being a military unit and that it behaved accordingly. The German public, however, was not informed of the nature of the involvement of the *Forstschutzkommando* in the *Generalgouvernement*.

For instance, the brief official statement in which the German News Service informed the German public of the creation of the *Forstschutzkommando* on 7 February 1940, merely announced that the *Forstschutzkommando*'s first mission would take it to the occupied eastern territories where it was to "introduce the population to proper forest labour and the orderly protection of the forest."<sup>135</sup> The general public thus was led to believe that the

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<sup>133</sup> Cf. BA R37.01 / 208 (*Betreffend: Unfälle im Forstschutzkorps*); and the letter of Boden to the Reich Forest Office in BA R37.01 / 207, sheet 60.

<sup>134</sup> Cf. MA RW31 / 320: *Wirtschaftsstab Ost: Allgemeine Wirtschaftsgrundsätze: Niederschrift zur Dienstbesprechung am 10. und 11.9.1942*; BA R37.01 / 208: *Betreffend: Unfälle im Forstschutzkorps*; BA R6 / 272: *Die Forst- und Holzwirtschaft in den besetzten Ostgebieten*; and Rubner 1985, p. 140.

<sup>135</sup> Berlin, 7. Februar. *Der Reichsforstmeister hat für besondere forsttechnische Arbeiten und Zwecke des Forstschutzes ein Forstschutzkommando gebildet, das sich je nach der Dienststellung aus Forstbeamten und Waldarbeitern rekrutiert. Der erste Einsatz dieses Forstschutzkommandos wird in den besetzten Ostgebieten stattfinden, wo es gilt, die Bevölkerung mit einer normalen Waldarbeit und einem geordneten Forstschutz bekannt zu machen.* (BA R43II / 218, sheet 15: *Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro*, 7.2.1940: *Aufstellung eines Forstschutzkommandos*).

function of the *Forstschutzkommando* was primarily one of educating the local population about efficient working techniques and 'proper' (read: German) attitudes toward the forest.

Meanwhile, in a forestry journal article, the *Generalgouvernement's* head forester Eißfeldt stated that the *Forstschutzkommando*,

beyond preventing wood theft and protecting forest and forest industries, has the task of affording the forest administration executive powers across the vast, impassable land and of enabling it to enforce its orders with the necessary rigour. . . . In addition, it is intended to be used in the improvement of the completely unsatisfactory organization and execution of work by the Polish foresters and labourers, as well as in the upgrading of their poor performance through instruction and supervision.<sup>136</sup>

From such statements, German foresters were already slightly more aware than the general population that the true emphasis of the *Forstschutzkommando* lay not only on the enforcement of Polish forced labour, but also on the protection of forests and infrastructure against partisan attacks.<sup>137</sup> Tragically, it was mainly through this involvement of the *Forstschutzkommando* in the fight against both real and alleged partisan activity that foresters bloodied their hands in the *Generalgouvernement*.

Borkenhagen reports that a total of 62 men were killed while serving in the *Forstschutzkommando*, almost all of them in skirmishes with partisans.<sup>138</sup> No numbers are

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<sup>136</sup> *Ueber die Bekämpfung des Holzdiebstahls und die Sicherung der forst- und holzwirtschaftlichen Betriebe hinaus hat es die Aufgabe, der Forstverwaltung die Möglichkeit einer Exekutive in dem weiten, unwegsamen Lande zu geben und den Anordnungen der Verwaltung den erforderlichen Nachdruck zu verschaffen. . . . Daneben ist beabsichtigt, es für die Verbesserung der völlig ungenügenden Arbeitsorganisation und Arbeitstechnik der polnischen Forstbeamten und Waldarbeiter einzusetzen und deren geringe Leistungsfähigkeit durch entsprechende Unterweisung und Aufsicht zu heben.* (Eißfeldt 1940, p. 173).

<sup>137</sup> Other veiled indications were given in leaflets of the *Reich* Forest Office when one of the functions of the *Forstschutzkommando* was given as *zu Sonderzwecken* or "for special purposes" (Cf. *Der Deutsche Forstwirt* 1944b, p. 53).

<sup>138</sup> (Borkenhagen 1977, p. 149). This number only includes those killed while on duty with the *Forstschutzkommando*. As is explained in Appendix I, the total number of foresters killed in battle as members of the regular army was vastly higher.

available on the deaths among the partisans and the local population in which the *Forstschutzkommando* was directly or indirectly involved. Nonetheless, we can glimpse an idea of its involvement in the oppression of the Polish population from the reports the *Forstschutzkommando* sent back to Berlin, and even from published articles in which its activities were related and evaluated.

One example of the para-military role of the *Forstschutzkommando* is its involvement in the “reclaiming” of the forest reserve of Bialowies in eastern Poland in June 1941.<sup>139</sup> In a 1942 article in the journal *Wald und Holz* written by the forestry press secretary of the government of the *Generalgouvernement*, Schmidt-Colinet, we read that

The *Forstschutzkommando* has excelled in the cleansing of the forest of partisans and bandits. Without its deployment tasks such as the cleansing missions . . . and many others could simply not have been accomplished.<sup>140</sup>

It can thus be surmised that the *Forstschutzkommando* was involved in military-style “cleansing missions” which sent so many of the local residents of Bialowies to their mass graves.<sup>141</sup> Further down on the same page we furthermore learn that not all “cleansing

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<sup>139</sup> The “reclaiming” referred not to a supposed previous German settlement in the area, but to the fact that Bialowies had been under German “administration” during the First World War, when a German military forest administration under Georg Escherich (the brother of Karl Leopold Escherich whom we met in Chapter 6) built up the largest forest exploitation enterprise in the world on the backs of 10,000 forced labourers and prisoners of war. (Cf. Nußer 1973, p. 74).

<sup>140</sup> *Bei der Säuberung des Waldgebietes von Partisanen und Banden hat sich u. a. das Forstschutzkommando hervorragend bewährt. Ohne seinen Einsatz wären die zu leistenden Aufgaben die [sic] Säuberungsaktionen, Ingangsetzung der wirtschaftlichen Betriebe, Schutz besonders wertvoller Objekte, Abfuhr der wertvollen geschlagenen Hölzer mit Hilfe der vorzüglichen Waldbahnen und viele andere mehr, einfach nicht zu erfüllen gewesen.* (Schmidt-Colinet 1942, p. 80).

<sup>141</sup> To this day, the reputation of German foresters among the local population is tainted by the events of 1941-1945. On a forestry excursion to the Bialowies district in 1988, the author was repeatedly shunned and rejected by local inhabitants whose families had suffered at the hands of the German authorities. On the mass graves in Bialowies, see pp. 70-74 and the illustrations following p. 82 in Schama 1995, as well as the illustration following p. 138 in Rubner 1985.

missions” had a military rationale, but that some were ordered by Göring simply to remove the population from what was to become a giant game reserve for the personal hunting pleasure of Göring and his state guests:

The *Reichsmarschall* [Göring] has ordered the significant enlargement [of the reserve] so that it may be restored to its original extent and within its natural borders encompassing 260,000 hectares. All villages and settlements in this area which were not deemed viable have been resettled to more fertile areas which are better suited to the founding of farms.<sup>142</sup>

As in the county of Saybusch in the Reincorporated Eastern Areas, the German forest administration had a hand in the ‘removal’ of the local population from an area in which it (or at least its boss Göring) had an interest, but this time it went beyond planning and demanding the ‘clearing.’ In Bialowies, foresters were evidently participating in the “cleansing missions.”

In an unpublished manuscript dating from 1959, the commander of the *Forstschutzkommando*, Ernst Boden, relates that parts of the local population evaded the “cleansing missions” and fled into the forest where they lived off poaching and plundering. An incensed Göring dispatched *Sonderkommandos* or ‘special detachments’ to hunt them down, but to no avail. Finally, the commander of the *Forstschutzkommando* received the following cable:

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<sup>142</sup> *Auf Anordnung des Reichsmarschalls wird das Gebiet wesentlich vergrößert, d. h. es wird in seinem ursprünglichen Ausmaß und innerhalb seiner natürlichen Grenzen in einer Gesamtgröße von 260000 Hektar wieder erstehen. Die in diesem Gebiet liegenden Dörfer und Siedlungen sind, soweit sie nicht lebensfähig waren, in fruchtbarere und für die Begründung landwirtschaftlicher Betriebe besser geeignete Gebiete umgesiedelt worden.* (Schmidt-Colinet 1942, pp. 80-81, quoting Oberstjägermeister Ulrich Scherping).

I authorize you to evict the population of Bialowies without the help of SS and police, to burn down the villages, and to take all measures you deem necessary for the protection of the forest administration and those units of the *Forstschutzkommando* deployed in Bialowies.

Signed: Göring.<sup>143</sup>

It is only thanks to the personal intervention of Boden that this absolute *carte blanche* for violence did not further implicate the *Forstschutzkommando* in atrocities against the population of Bialowies. Boden doubted the authenticity of the cable, had it destroyed immediately, and took no further action. The sender of the cable, whether it was Göring or someone else, never followed up on the request. It remains to be stated, however, that someone in the German forest administration was evidently willing to deploy the *Forstschutzkommando* in a way that would have made them altogether indistinguishable from the SS.

Yet even where the *Forstschutzkommando* was not directly involved in violence, it often welcomed or tolerated the actions of the SS against the local population. At the very least, the foresters in the *Forstschutzkommando* were aware of the methods of the SS. In the fall of 1942, for example, the Fifth *Abteilung* or company of the *Forstschutzkommando* was stationed in the Belarus town of Baranowitsche. On 12 October 1942, the commanding officer Kanzow sent a letter to the local *Sicherheitsdienst* (the ‘security service’ of the SS in charge of foreign and domestic intelligence), in which he reported about the “Effect of the large scale operation of the SS in September of 1942 on the work of the *Forstschutzkommando*.” Kanzow lamented that the ‘work’ of the SS had not had the desired effect:

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<sup>143</sup> *Ich bevollmächtige Sie, ohne Hilfe der SS und Polizei die Bevölkerung von Bialowies zu exmittieren, die Dörfer zu verbrennen und alle Maßnahmen zu ergreifen, die Sie zum Schutze der Forstverwaltung und der in Bialowies eingesetzten FSK-Kommandos für erforderlich halten. Göring.* (Boden in his unpublished 1959 manuscript *Das Forstschutzkorps 1940-1945*, cited in Rubner 1985, p. 136).

I had expected as a result of the deployment of the SS in the fight against the bandits in the area of the Commissariat of Baranowitsche that the largest gangs would be destroyed. I had further hoped that the population would be pacified and that the work of the forest riflemen would be facilitated.<sup>144</sup>

Kanzow complained that none of these expectations had come true because the SS had indiscriminately murdered and pillaged among the local population who now were more afraid and apprehensive than before. Yet, similarly to the technocratic argumentation of the forest administration of the Reincorporated Eastern Areas with regard to the expansion of the Stutthof concentration camp, we again detect little objection to the actual methods employed by the SS. Rather, the officer of the *Forstschutzkommando* was dismayed that the SS had eliminated the 'wrong' persons, namely those needed in for upcoming log transport operation. Finally, he considered as "particularly bitter" the fact that the numbers of the all important draught horses had been greatly reduced by the slaughter.<sup>145</sup>

Another example of how entrapped the *Forstschutzkommando* could become within the mesh of the 'security apparatus' can be found in the files of the so-called Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories, where the activities of the *Forstschutzkommando* in the fight against partisans and 'bandits' are reported along with those of the SS and the police.<sup>146</sup> Accounts of skirmishes between the *Forstschutzkommando* and partisans alternate with

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<sup>144</sup> *Von dem Einsatz der SS zur Bekämpfung der Banden im Bereich des Hauptkommissariats Baranowitsche hatte ich mir eine Vernichtung der grössten Banden, und als deren Folge eine Beruhigung der Bevölkerung und eine Erleichterung der Arbeiten der Forstschützen versprochen. (BA R6/354, sheet 17: Schreiben von Kanzow an den SD in Baranowitsche: Betrifft: Auswirkungen des Grosseinsatzes der SS im September 1942 auf die Arbeit des Forstschutzkommandos vom 12. 10 1942). The letter is stamped Geheim or "Secret."*

<sup>145</sup> *Besonders schmerzlich ist, daß der Pferdebestand der überlebenden Bewohner kaum 1/5 des ursprünglich Vorhandenen beträgt (BA R6/354, sheet 17).*

<sup>146</sup> *BA R6 / 354: Verstärkte Partisanentätigkeit in den besetzten Ostgebieten und Bekämpfung der Banden. Hierin: Einsatz des Forstschutzkommandos 1942.*

reports submitted by local SS-leaders in which hundreds of executions and thousands of ‘eliminations’ of partisans are tabulated. The files also speak of the effectiveness of the

*Forstschutzkommando:*

Logging and transport have come to a complete halt [because of partisan activities in the area]. Only in those areas where the *Forstschutzkommando* of the *Reichsforstmeister* is deployed can the saw mills be supplied sufficiently with wood. The three platoons of the *Forstschutzkommando*, 135 well-armed and well-trained men in all, force the villages into supplying labour, draught animals, and carts. It is too weak, however, to protect the log transports all over the district.<sup>147</sup>

From the archival material, it appears that the *Forstschutzkommando* was integrated at least to some degree into the machinery of oppression the German authorities unleashed on the population of the *Generalgouvernement*. (It is worth mentioning that the military muscle of the *Forstschutzkommando* was also put to use in the *Altreich*, for example when they were assigned to supervising Russian prisoners of war working in the forest: according to the report by the Sixth *Abteilung* for August 1941, forest riflemen were needed in the forest district of Nienburg in Lower Saxony because the newly arrived Russian prisoners “are malnourished and need a firm hand to make them work” – a hand the forest riflemen apparently were qualified to lend.<sup>148</sup>)

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<sup>147</sup> *Der Schwerpunkt der forstlichen Tätigkeit muss leider in abgelegenen Gebieten liegen, da in der Nähe der Bahnen und der festen Strassen der Wald bereits von den Russen abgeholzt ist. Einschlag und Anfuhr sind jetzt zur Zeit völlig ins Stocken geraten, nur dort, wo das vom Reichsforstmeister zur Verfügung gestellte Forstschutzkommando eingesetzt werden kann, wird die Versorgung der Sägewerke sichergestellt. Das Forstschutzkommando, das in einer Stärke von 3 Zügen = 135 Mann, gut bewaffnet und ausgebildet eingesetzt ist, erzwingt von den Gemeinden die Stellung von Arbeitern und Gespannen, es ist jedoch zu schwach, um die gesamte Abfuhr innerhalb des Bezirks zu schützen. (BA R6 / 354, sheets 13-15: Schreiben der Abt. III Forst und Holz an den Reichskommissar (persönlich vorzulegen) vom 29. Juni 1942).*

<sup>148</sup> *Im FA [Forstamt] Nienburg sind russische Kriegsgefangene neu eingesetzt. Sie sind schlecht genährt und müssen hart angefaßt werden, damit sie arbeiten. (BA R37.01 / 207: Betreffend: Aufstellung des Forstschutzkommandos, (Diensttagebuch und Tätigkeitsberichte der VI Abteilung, sheet 4)*

In the *Forstschutzkommando*, the forest administration of the *Generalgouvernement* possessed an instrument which enabled it to pursue several of the declared immediate goals of forestry in the *Generalgouvernement*, namely:

- to purge the Jewish population,
- to usurp the forest industries and bring forest land under its control,
- to enforce current and future forest regulations, and
- to coerce the local population into forced labour.

For the time after the war was won, the members of the *Forstschutzkommando* were also expected to help achieve two long term goals. The first was the task of the actual afforestation, in which the *Forstschutzkommando* was to “organize and supervise” the Polish foresters and labourers who were deemed incapable of working on their own.<sup>149</sup> In effect, the *Forstschutzkommando* was expected to be warden to the chain gangs of Polish forced labourers even under the future ‘peace.’

The second goal was that of forming a German leadership class in the Germanization in the *Generalgouvernement*. In line with Himmler’s scheme of Germanizing the land in the east through the settlement of pioneering *Wehrbauern* or ‘militia farmers’ in place of the deported populations, veterans of the *Forstschutzkommando*, along with veteran of SS and army, were to form the nucleus of the ‘new aristocracy of blood and soil.’<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> *Eine Durchführung dieses Programms mit nur polnischen Kräften ist wegen deren mangelnder Organisationsfähigkeit nicht möglich. Hier liegt vielmehr die friedensmäßige Aufgabe des Forstschutzkommandos. Dieses wird berufen sein, die Meliorationen, die Pflanzenanzucht in Großbetrieben, die Transporte und die Aufforstungsarbeiten zu organisieren und zu beaufsichtigen.* (Eißfeldt 1940, p. 174).

<sup>150</sup> *Daneben wird voraussichtlich die Möglichkeit bestehen, diejenigen, die im Osten siedeln wollen, neben den Angehörigen der SS und der Wehrmacht als Wehrbauern einzusetzen.* (Eißfeldt 1941, p. 48). On the *Wehrbauern* scheme, see Koehl 1957, pp. 159-160). On the ‘new aristocracy of blood and soil,’ see the

For the time being, however, the war was anything but over; in fact, it was raging all over the *Generalgouvernement* as partisans took their struggle to the forest. At first they attacked mainly collaborating Polish foresters,<sup>151</sup> but soon German foresters and even strongholds of the *Forstschutzkommando* were under attack. On 25 July 1942, for instance, partisans abducted four forest riflemen literally from their beds. Similarly, a partisan attack on the quarters of the Fifth *Abteilung* on 20 August 1942 left two forest riflemen dead and three wounded.<sup>152</sup> The *Forstschutzkommando* responded to the surging attacks by increasing its strength and even recruiting Polish foresters who were loyal to the German cause. It began to become clear, however, that the presence of German foresters in the occupied territories was strained to the limit. Kurd Eißfeldt gloomily admitted to his lieutenants that he looked to the future “with great apprehension.”<sup>153</sup> In the meantime, however, the German armies were fighting even further east, adding a third occupied area to the care of German foresters: the Occupied Eastern Territories.

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book by the same title by Himmler's agricultural point man Walther Darré (Darré 1935).

<sup>151</sup> The year 1943, for example, brought hundreds of attacks on Polish foresters. Cf. the minutes of the frequent meetings of the government of the *Generalgouvernement* in which the forest administration reported about its problems with the partisans:

26 May 1943: 455 attacks on Polish forestry offices and forest labourers in the district of Radom, resulting in 18 casualties;

31 May 1943: 216 attacks in the entire *Generalgouvernement* in the first half of May alone;

4 August 1943: 900 of the 1,100 forestry offices in the district of Radom had reported attacks, with 32 foresters dead and 28 wounded.

(cited in Präg and Jacobmeyer 1975, pp. 661, 678, and 719).

<sup>152</sup> Cf. BA R6 / 354, sheets 5 and 7.

<sup>153</sup> . . . *sehe der Zukunft mit großen Bedenken entgegen* (in a meeting in Radom on 26 May 1943, cited in Präg and Jacobmeyer 1975, p. 661).

## 8.5 The Occupied Eastern Territories

Here we will have to draw the line: hither settlement space in the eastern areas, Blood and Soil; yonder in the Russian space only new soil, a forward defence area for securing our own space [*Raum*], reserve land for securing the food supply and the economy of the Greater Economic Zone [*Großraum*] of Europe.

*Oberlandforstmeister Erwin Jaeger 1943*<sup>154</sup>

In the long run, the newly occupied eastern territories will be exploited under colonial aspects and with colonial methods. The only exception will be those areas of the Eastern Lands which the *Führer* has ordered to be Germanized.

*Reichsforstmeister Hermann Göring 1941*<sup>155</sup>

Unending thickets await the ordering incision, the attentive care of the forester.

*Forstmeister Arthur Freiherr von Kruedener 1943*<sup>156</sup>

Wood is the key resource of the Occupied Eastern Territories.

*Oberlandforstmeister Johannes Barth 1943*<sup>157</sup>

As the German armies overran large parts of the western Soviet Union in the summer of 1941, German foresters, too, expanded their field of activity far eastward. 200 German foresters were dispatched to the occupied Soviet territory from Estonia in the north to the Ukraine in the south to take control of 20 million hectares of forest (compared with 14 million hectares in the *Altreich*) and bring 25,000 local foresters in line with the German policies. The German forest administration also took control of more than 1,500 saw mills

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<sup>154</sup> *Hier muß ein Schnitt gezogen werden: Auf der einen Seite in den Ostgebieten Siedlungsraum, Blut und Boden, dort im russischen Raum nur neuer Boden, gewissermaßen Vorfeld zur Sicherung des eigenen Raumes, Reserveland zur Sicherung der Ernährung und Wirtschaft des Großraumes Europa.* (Jaeger 1943, p. 44).

<sup>155</sup> *Auf lange Sicht gesehen werden die neubesetzten Ostgebiete unter kolonialen Gesichtspunkten und mit kolonialen Methoden wirtschaftlich ausgenutzt. Eine Ausnahme gilt nur für die Teile des Ostlandes, die nach dem Auftrag des Führers zur Eindeutschung bestimmt sind.* (Hermann Göring, chairing a meeting on economic policy and organisation in the newly occupied eastern territories on 8 November 1941, cited in Corni and Gies 1994, p. 205).

<sup>156</sup> *Unendliche Dickichte sind es, die des ordnenden Eingriffs, der pflegenden Sorgfalt des Forstmannes harren* (von Kruedener 1943, p. 120).

<sup>157</sup> *Holz ist der Schlüsselrohstoff des besetzten Ostgebiets.* (Barth 1943, p. 30).

and over 100 forest industries, where it 'employed' more than 210,000 people. From the beginning, the newly occupied territories were difficult to 'protect' from partisans. According to their own admission in their report for the year 1942, German foresters did not dare log in half of the area now supposedly under their control. Within one year of the attack on the Soviet Union, the German forest administration had suffered 18 casualties, while the *Forstschutzkommando*, of which three companies had been dispatched to the Occupied Eastern Territories in autumn of 1942, had lost 16 men. Meanwhile, the number of "local labour" killed or abducted by partisans for collaborating with the German authorities was given as "hundreds."<sup>158</sup>

If control over the new forest in the East came at such a dear cost and yet remained so precarious, why did the German forest administration attempt it nonetheless? The primary reason was that there was simply no alternative: the forests of the occupied Soviet Union were urgently needed to supply the *Wehrmacht* with wood for bridges, fortifications, barracks, heating, and countless other purposes. With supply lines from the *Altreich* now being over a thousand kilometres long, the forests just west of the frontline had to supply all the necessary wood:

The task before forestry and wood industries in the Occupied Eastern Territories can be outlined in one short sentence, namely: "To supply the troops and the war economy with wood at all cost."<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> *Von den einheimischen Kräften sind bereits Hunderte von den Banden ermordet oder verschleppt.* (MA RW31 / 321: *Gesamtdarstellungen: Forst- und Holzwirtschaft in den bis zur Sommeroffensive 1942 besetzten Ostgebieten: Derzeitiger Stand und Planung für 1943*).

<sup>159</sup> *Die Aufgabe der forst- und holzwirtschaftlichen Organisationen in den besetzten Ostgebieten ist mit einem kurzen Satz eindeutig zu umreißen, sie heißt: "Versorgen der Truppe und der Kriegswirtschaft des besetzten Ostgebiets mit Holz um jeden Preis."* (Barth 1943, pp. 31-32).

German foresters posted to the Occupied Eastern Territories were supplied with a leaflet which warned that in order to fulfil their “Mission in the East” they would have to suspend some of their dearest silvicultural principles:

For the time being, the entire work of forestry and the wood products industries in the eastern areas serves exclusively the needs of the army. This means that many forestry principles which are in force in the *Altreich* must be deliberately ignored.<sup>160</sup>

The “Eastern Mission” of German foresters was thus to extract the maximum obtainable amount of wood from the occupied forest, regardless of economic, ecological, or any other considerations. Such an emphasis on exploitation logging is to be expected during war time when military considerations sweep aside all others. Yet even for the time after the war, the German planners foresaw the forests of the newly occupied territories as managed under the rationale of maximum exploitation. In the “Preliminary Regulations for Forestry Operations” in the Occupied Eastern Territories issued five weeks after the beginning of the offensive against the Soviet Union, it was clarified that:

The task of forestry in those Occupied Eastern Territories not annexed to the *Reich* or the *General-gouvernement* is one of pure exploitation. . . .

In the future, all purely forestry-specific considerations are to be ignored when planning logging quotas.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> *Die gesamte Arbeit der Forst- und Holzwirtschaft in den Ostgebieten dient vorerst dem Augenblicksbedarf der Truppe, hieraus ergibt sich, dass vielfach Wirtschaftsgrundsätze, die im Altreich Gültigkeit haben, bewusst ausser Acht gelassen werden müssen.* (MA RW31 / 322: *Osteinsatz von Forstbeamten: Merkblatt über Osteinsatz von Forstbeamten des RfdbO [Reichsministeriums für die besetzten Ostgebiete]*).

<sup>161</sup> *Die forstliche Aufgabe für die besetzten Ostgebiete, soweit sie nicht zum Reich oder zum G.G. [Generalgouvernement] geschlagen werden, ist eine reine Exploitationsaufgabe. . . . Alle rein forstlichen Gesichtspunkte sind bei der zukünftigen Einschlagsplanung ausser Betracht zu lassen.* (MA RW31 / 320: *Allgemeine Wirtschaftsgrundsätze: Abschrift eines Schreibens des Wirtschaftsstabes Ost, Chefgr. W/S.Gr.FH/BNr. an Wi In Nord, Wi In Mitte und Wi In Süd vom 23.7.1941: Erste Richtlinien für den forstlichen Einsatz*, pp. 6-7).

With this terse statement, the German forest authorities declared open season on the forests of the occupied Soviet Union. While the forests of the Reincorporated Eastern Areas were to be enlarged and improved upon, and while the forests of the *Generalgouvernement* were to be harnessed for the long-term Germanization of the landscape, the forests of the Occupied Eastern Territories were nothing but a giant wood pile to which the *Reich* could turn to ease its continual wood deficit.

At the same time, this brief sentence also established an important exception to this rule. While the overwhelming part of the occupied Soviet forest was to be 'relieved' of its wood resources like any other colony, a tiny minority of areas on which the German forest authorities had cast a covetous eye (because they were of immediate interest for research, game hunting, or any other purpose that would make them worth preserving or managing) were to be governed by the regulations and the attitudes obtaining in the *Reich* or in the *Generalgouvernement*. The distinction had grave consequences for the forests and the people in question: while the forests undoubtedly benefited from the protection inherent in their inclusion in the legal sphere of the *Reich*, the local populations often experienced the opposite.<sup>162</sup>

In the case of the forest of Bialowies, for example, Göring took a personal interest in retaining exclusive control over the district so as to claim the game resources he knew and coveted from several state visits before the war. He donned his hat of "Plenipotentiary for

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<sup>162</sup> For example, within the area of the *Reich* clear cuts of any kind continued to be prohibited until August 1944, when the situation became so grave that Göring had to lift the ban in the interest of mobilizing all reserves for the final stance of the German armies. In November 1944, several other silvicultural dogmas of German forestry were suspended. (Cf. Rubner 1985, p. 128).

the Four Year Plan” and informed competing ministries that the entire district of Bialystok, “although not yet part of the *Reich* in legal terms, must be treated as a part of the *Reich* in economic terms.” This was intended to bar the army administration from helping itself to the wood while giving Göring’s foresters complete control over the forest and game resources in Bialowies. At the same time, Göring was quick to clarify that this economic inclusion of Bialowies in the *Reichsgau* East Prussia in no way meant that the local population should be treated like inhabitants of the *Reich* when it came to receiving goods or food rations. In fact, they were to be cut off from external supplies and to subsist on local resources exclusively.<sup>163</sup> As we saw in the earlier discussion of the *Forstschutzkommando*, this inhumane policy would soon be superseded by determined efforts to depopulate the area altogether.

The goal of the forest administration in the Occupied Eastern Territories, then, was to identify and take exclusive control of forest areas of natural beauty, historical importance,

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<sup>163</sup> *Im Einvernehmen mit dem Herrn Reichsminister des Innern bestätige ich Ihnen, daß der dem Chef der Zivilverwaltung unterstellte Bezirk Bialystok, obwohl er staatsrechtlich noch nicht Bestandteil des Reiches ist, wirtschaftlich wie ein Teil des Reichsgebietes behandelt werden muß. . . .*

*Bei der Behandlung der Versorgungswünsche des Bezirks Bialystok gehe ich allerdings davon aus, daß die nichtdeutsche Bevölkerung mit Verbrauchsgütern und Waren aller Art, die dem Bezirk von außen zugeführt werden müssen, grundsätzlich nicht versorgt wird. Ausnahmen sollten nur in einem Umfang gemacht werden, der im Reichsinteresse zwingend erforderlich ist. Die Höhe der auf den Bezirk Bialystok entfallenden Warenkontingente wird sich also im wesentlichen nach den Versorgungsbedürfnissen der dort lebenden Deutschen, der im Reichsinteresse arbeitenden Wirtschaftszweige und nach den im Reichsinteresse zwingend notwendigen wirtschaftlichen Arbeiten zu richten haben. . . .*

*. . . daß die Erfassung und der Abtransport von Rohstoffen im Bezirk Bialystok künftig nicht mehr Angelegenheit der militärischen Dienststellen, also des Wirtschaftsstabes Ost und der Rüstungsinspektion I in Königsberg sein kann. Die im Bezirk vorhandenen Rohstoffe und Vorräte stehen mit Ausnahme der militärischen Beute vielmehr zur Verfügung der zuständigen Reichsstellen. (BA R44 / 231: Betreffend: Organisation der neuen Ostgebiete - Bezirk Bialystok: Schreiben des Reichsmarschalls des Großdeutschen Reiches, Beauftragter für den Vierjahresplan, Wirtschaftsführungsstab Ost vom 30. September 1941 an Reichsforstmeister, Reichsminister für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft, Reichsminister für die besetzten Ostgebiete: “Betrifft: Gleichstellung des Bezirks Bialystok mit den eingegliederten Ostgebieten” (AZ: V.P. 15555/1., RFA AZ: B 303.04.01)).*

game stock, or any other potential worthwhile to the occupiers. Those areas were to be granted the full protection of the laws obtaining in the *Reich* and managed in accordance with 'German' methods of forest management. By contrast, those areas not singled out for 'preferential' treatment were to be fully utilized, first for the war effort, and later to relieve the 'home forests' of the *Reich*. In effect, they were reduced to the status of a colony whose only function was to ease the wood deficit in the *Reich*:

The task is to win the war first and then, after the war, to provide considerable relief for the German forest.<sup>164</sup>

In contrast to foresters writing about the Reincorporated Eastern Areas and the *Generalgouvernement*, then, foresters in the Occupied Eastern Territories emphasized neither the great feat of future afforestation, nor the need to heal, balance, or otherwise alter the landscape towards a supposed German character, nor even the mission to bring the blessings of 'German' forestry to the 'abused' forests of the East. Instead, they stressed the economic importance of the forest of the Occupied Eastern Territories for the often proclaimed goal of 'resource freedom' for the German *Reich*:

For a long time to come, the forester will not be able to conduct forestry in the German sense. Instead, he will have to produce wood.<sup>165</sup>

In fact, when the German press, accustomed to the accolades for afforestation and forestry in the Reincorporated Eastern Areas and the *Generalgouvernement*, hailed the work of foresters in the Occupied Eastern Territories in comparable terms, the chief of the forest

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<sup>164</sup> *Es gilt den Krieg zu gewinnen und nach dem Kriege den deutschen Waid wesentlich zu entlasten.* (Schlabitz 1943, p. 42).

<sup>165</sup> *Noch lange wird der Forstmann nicht Forstwirtschaft im Sinne des deutschen Waldes treiben können, sondern er wird Holz schaffen müssen.* (Barth 1943, p. 36).

administration of the Occupied Eastern Territories, Johannes Barth, complained to the department 'responsible' for press and radio in the Occupied Eastern Territories. Barth asked to "give clear directions to the press" and prevent it from printing "inappropriate articles of any kind about hunting in the newspapers of the East," as such articles gave an altogether wrong idea of the forests of the Occupied Eastern Territories:

Moreover, these articles frequently stress the importance of afforestation, of increasing access to the forest, and the cultural importance of the forest in general. Those tasks can only be tackled in the distant future. Anyone familiar with the situation can only shake his head when he sees forestry in Ruthenia depicted as geared towards those goals – particularly so under the current conditions.

Naturally, the Chefgr. FH [Chefgruppe Forst- und Holzwirtschaft, the forest administration of the Occupied Eastern Territories] places great weight on seeing as many press articles as possible about issues of forestry and wood industries. Their emphasis, however, should be on the economic aspects.<sup>166</sup>

To rectify the picture, Barth agreed to pen an article with the title "Forestry and Wood Industries of the Eastern Space and their Importance to Continental Europe" for the Foreign Ministry. The article was to appear under Barth's name "in the important newspapers and magazines in continental Europe and the Greater Asian Area" (i.e., the Japanese area of influence) and thus "support our external press propaganda."<sup>167</sup> On another occasion, Barth

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<sup>166</sup> *In den Zeitungen des Ostens irgend welche Aufsätze über Jagd zu bringen, erscheint mir in Anbetracht der Lage nicht angemessen.*

*Ferner spielt in diesen Artikeln immer wieder eine große Rolle die Aufforstung und die Erschließung der Waldgebiete, wie überhaupt die kulturelle Bedeutung des Waldes. Diese Aufgaben stehen vorläufig nur für eine ferne Zukunft an; der Kenner der Verhältnisse kann nur lächeln, wenn er gerade unter den augenblicklichen Verhältnissen in Weißruthenien den Schwerpunkt der Forstwirtschaft in dieser Richtung dargestellt sieht.*

*Selbstverständlich legt die Chefgr. FH [Chefgruppe Forst- und Holzwirtschaft] außerordentlichen Wert darauf, daß in der Presse möglichst viel über forst- und holzwirtschaftliche Dinge steht, der Schwerpunkt sollte aber auf der wirtschaftlichen Seite liegen. (MA RW31 / 322, sheet 47: Schreiben von Barth an Abteilung I/8 vom 14.1.43).*

<sup>167</sup> *... daß Sie bereit sind, unsere pressepolitische Auslandspropaganda durch einen Beitrag aus Ihrer Feder über das Thema "Die Forst- und Holzwirtschaft im Ostraum und ihre Bedeutung für Kontinentaleuropa" zu unterstützen. ...*

*... unter Ihrem Namen in den maßgebenden Zeitungen und Zeitschriften der Länder des kontinentaleuropäischen sowie des großasiatischen Raumes zum Abdruck gelangen soll. (MA RW31 / 322, sheet 45: Schreiben des Auswärtigen Amtes, Presseabteilung, Auslands-Artikeldienst vom 29.12.42 an*

suggested that “I or one of my men” could speak on one of the radio programs about forestry in the Occupied Eastern Territories. For, while he saw those programs as indicating a welcome rise in public awareness of the importance of forestry, he faulted them for giving “utterly wrong numbers” with respect to the forests of the Occupied Eastern Territories.<sup>168</sup>

This was also the tenor of most of Barth’s official reports and journal articles, in which he repeatedly spoke of the “fallacy” of concluding from the “tremendous natural potential of the eastern forests” that they would harbour “inexhaustible” resources.<sup>169</sup> Thus, while Barth and his foresters wanted the media to emphasize the utilization of the forest resources in the Occupied Eastern Territories, they cautioned that expectations should not be too optimistic because they faced enormous obstacles when it came to actually mobilizing the forest resources of the East for the economy of the *Reich*. First and foremost there were the enormous difficulties of logging and transporting logs in the isolated and swampy forests of the East. Equally daunting, however, was another task: how to persuade, co-opt, or force the local foresters to do the bidding of the German occupiers. For, without the cooperation of local foresters, and without their knowledge of the existing administrative network and

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*MinDirigent Barth (teilweise Abschrift)*). See also Barth 1943.

<sup>168</sup> . . . zumindest für das Gebiet der Forst- und Holzwirtschaft, ausgesprochen falsche Zahlenangaben gemacht wurden. . . . Wenn man die Meldungen über forst- und holzwirtschaftliche Dinge im Rundfunk als ein Zeichen dafür werten könnte, daß nun endlich ein gewisses allgemeines Verständnis für die ungeheuer wichtigen Aufgaben der Forst- und Holzwirtschaft heranreift, so würde ich aber doch vorschlagen, daß lieber einmal ich oder einer meiner Herren einen kurzen Rundfunkvortrag über diese Dinge hält, als daß solche aus dem Zusammenhang gerissene und auch noch falsche Meldungen in die Welt gehen. . . . wenn die Presse des besetzten Ostgebiets von Ihnen in dieser Beziehung klar ausgerichtet wird. (MA RW31 / 322, sheet 49: Schreiben von Barth an Abteilung I/8, z. H. MinDirigent Zimmermann (teilweise Abschrift)).

<sup>169</sup> Wenn auch den Wäldern des Ostens eine ungeheure natürliche Kraft innewohnt, so ist es doch bis zu einem gewissen Grade ein Trugschluß, wenn man immer wieder von dem “unerschöpflichen Waldreichtum” der besetzten Gebiete sprechen hört. (Barth 1943, p. 32; see also Barth 1944).

physical infrastructure, the thinly spread German forest administration was powerless to achieve its goals in this vast new territory.

Across the Occupied Eastern Territories, the German forest administration took two different approaches to involving and empowering the local forest administrations. In the former Baltic countries, a “minimal German leadership cadre” presided over local forest administrations which were essentially left intact. By contrast, in the “traditional Russian areas” German foresters saw no chance for such a development in the “foreseeable future.” Here the forest administration was completely taken over by the German occupiers.<sup>170</sup>

Once again, the reasons for assigning forest and people of a given region to one or the other category were based largely on racist preconceptions. German foresters depicted the former Baltic states as racially related to the Nordic race and thus assigned to them a certain degree of racial worth which was reflected in allowing them to retain their local forest administrations. Where criticism of Baltic forestry was raised, it referred to impacts of the brief “Bolshevik reign” 1939-1941 or the fact that 9 out of 10 saw mills were “in Jewish hands,” both of which were used in explaining the less-than-expected contribution the Baltic states could make to the economy of the *Reich*.<sup>171</sup> In their disciplinary journals, foresters

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<sup>170</sup> . . . wo die ehemals lettischen, estnischen und litauischen Forstdirektionen in vollem Umfang wieder aufgebaut sind und unter dem kleinst gehaltenen deutschen Führungsstab direkte landeseigene Forstverwaltungen bestehen. Ansätze zu dieser Lösung sind in der Ukraine und Weißruthenien vorhanden, während sie in den altrussischen Gebieten zwar angestrebt werden, aber in absehbarer Zeit kaum erreichbar sind. (Barth 1943, p. 3)1.

<sup>171</sup> *Bolschewistenherrschaft . . . ein sehr wesentlicher Teil der Werke, fast bis zu 90%, befand sich in jüdischen Händen, so daß eine Neubesetzung der Betriebsführung in erheblichem Umfang einsetzen mußte.* (Schlabitz 1943, pp. 40 and 41).

were cautioned to prepare for a disappointment: “Many foresters know the Baltic Lands from the Great War – they must be warned that everything has completely changed.”<sup>172</sup>

Overall, the Balts and particularly the Latvians were considered as potential allies by the German foresters, and given certain privileges: they retained their administration and their own academic forestry program. In 1942, loyal Latvian foresters were even grouped in a local Latvian *Forstschutzkommando* that was to take up the fight against partisans.<sup>173</sup> This assessment also surfaces in Rubner’s 1985 analysis of National Socialist forestry in Latvia when he attributes “the partial success of German forestry in Latvia . . . to the traditional connections of Latvian forestry with German culture.”<sup>174</sup>

While the forests and people of the former Baltic states were thus depicted and treated in a relatively benign fashion, the same cannot be said for Ruthenia, Ukraine, and Belarus. In the same manner we saw in the Reincorporated Eastern Areas and the *Generalgouvernement*, the forest of these “original Russian areas” was depicted as the victim of incompetence and greed of its previous Slavic masters. German foresters described the forests of the occupied areas of the Soviet Union as the victim of ‘subhuman’ “forest butchers.” The task of the Germans was, “for the sake of the future of Europe, to restore and use what was

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<sup>172</sup> *Viele Forstleute kennen das Baltenland vom Weltkriege her, ihnen sei gesagt, daß sich alles gänzlich verändert hat.* (Schlabitz 1943, p. 36).

<sup>173</sup> BA R 92 / 1108: *Generalkommissariat Riga für Lettland: Forst- und Holzwirtschaft, Jagd, Wilderer.* (cited in Rubner 1985, p. 154).

<sup>174</sup> *Man darf annehmen, daß für den partiellen Erfolg der deutschen Forst- und Holzwirtschaft in Lettland nicht so sehr die Distanz von der Sowjetmacht, sondern vielmehr alte Bindungen der lettischen Forstwirtschaft an die deutsche Kultur maßgeblich gewesen sind.* (Rubner 1985, p. 155).

neglected by the Tsars and plundered by the Bolsheviks.”<sup>175</sup> This description of German foresters’ ‘mission’ in the Occupied Eastern Territories made explicit that they were not improving the forest or the climate, either *in situ* or for the benefit of neighbouring ‘Germanized’ regions. Neither were they performing indispensable preparatory work for an eventual German settlement in the area, as they had done in the Reincorporated Eastern Areas and the *Generalgouvernement*. Instead, they emphasized their task of mobilizing the forest reserves of the Occupied Eastern Territories for the German *Reich* and for European culture as a whole.

Overall, then, the statements, articles, and documents written by foresters in the Occupied Eastern Territories show a much smaller concern with ideological justifications for the actions of the German administration than those written by foresters in the Reincorporated Eastern Areas and the *Generalgouvernement*. After the attack on the Soviet Union, there could be no doubt any longer that the policy of the Third Reich was governed by sheer hunger for power, land, and resources. Whatever reasons were given for the attack on the eastern neighbours, including the ‘fight against world Jewry,’ they were increasingly recognized as what they were: mere smokescreens for the pursuit of *Lebensraum*. The task of foresters in the Occupied Eastern Territories was one of pure exploitation. Little documentation has survived about the activities of foresters in the Occupied Eastern Territories, yet from those that did it appears that they did indeed exploit the forest and the

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<sup>175</sup> *Waldschlächter . . . gefährlich groß in dem Streben, alle Erscheinungsformen höher gearteten Lebens auch außerhalb seiner Grenzen zu vernichten (Deutsche Forst-Zeitung 1941d, p. 262). . . . daß hier für Europas Zukunft Deutsche neu aufbauen und nutzen, was das Zarentum ungenutzt ließ und der Bolschewismus gewissenlos zerstörte und ausschachtete.* (von Hopffgarten 1942, p. 310).

people of the East for the benefit of the *Wehrmacht* and the *Reich*. Despite their primary function of supplying the army, the distant forests of the East exported three times as much wood to the *Altreich* as France.<sup>176</sup> In assuring this wood supply, German foresters cast aside all non-economic concerns for the future of the forest under their control, or for the well-being of the local population. In doing so, they also abandoned any pretexts and justifications and for the first (and last) time were candid about their involvement in the Nazi policies of occupation and exploitation of the Eastern *Lebensraum*.

## 8.6 Conclusion

Beginning with the attack on Poland in September 1939, German foresters were posted in eastern Europe to help take control of the newly conquered *Lebensraum*. Over the next five years, they established forest administrations in the three distinct occupation zones of the Reincorporated Eastern Areas, the *Generalgouvernement*, and the Occupied Eastern Territories. In line with the perceived racial worth of the local population and the natural potential of the landscape, each of these zones was governed differently by the German occupiers, and the forest administration was no exception.

On the supposed “ethnic German soil” of western Poland, foresters were set to do their part in turning the Reincorporated Eastern Areas into “a parade ground of National Socialism” by creating a forest landscape that was even more ‘German’ than that in the

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<sup>176</sup> Cf. Rubner 1985, p. 158.

*Altreich*.<sup>177</sup> A giant afforestation project was to accompany the planting of German settlements in the new territory because the German settlers were deemed to need the familiar forest around them to retain their cultural and racial Germanness in the East. Together, the German forest and the German settlers were to ‘restore’ to the landscape the German face it was supposed to have borne until Polish tenure had despoiled it. Moreover, they were to guarantee that the land remained German in the future, as a bulwark against the advance of the Slavic *Steppe*. In the Reincorporated Eastern Areas, the forest of the New Germany was to be created literally from the ground up. To achieve the necessary *tabula rasa*, the local Polish population had to be ‘removed’ and, as we saw in the case of the county of Saybusch, foresters did not shirk from their role in this task, even putting forward their own timelines for the “desired depopulation.”

Further east, in the *Generalgouvernement*, the German forest administration was less concerned with immediately Germanizing the landscape into settlement space suited for German settlers. Here they participated in the creation of a ‘Slavic reservation’ geared towards the short- to mid-term exploitation of both forest and population for the benefit of the *Reich*. The local Polish populations and those deported from the Reincorporated Eastern Areas were sent into the forest to procure wood for the German war effort and for exports to the *Reich*. When the threat of partisan attacks began to keep the German forest administration out of large parts of the forests it was supposed to control, it called for armed help. The Reich Forest Office responded by creating the *Forstschutzkommando*, a

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<sup>177</sup> *Exerzierplatz des Nationalsozialismus* Thus Hitler’s governor of the area, *Gauleiter* Arthur Greiser. (Cited in Präg and Jacobmeyer 1975, p. 7).

paramilitary unit of armed foresters which was to regain the upper hand in the forest. Besides its immediate tasks of protecting foresters and forestry operations from partisans, enforcing German decrees, and 'speeding up' log transport, the *Forstschutzkommando* was also intended to be used in long-term projects after the war: Polish forest labourers were to be trained and supervised, the giant afforestation project that was to be extended from the Reincorporated Eastern Areas into the *Generalgouvernement* was to be organized, and veterans of the *Forstschutzkommando* were also to blaze the trail for future German settlement as 'militia farmers.' Alas, as the documentary evidence suggests, the *Forstschutzkommando* also became implicated in "cleansing actions" against the local population.

Finally, in the Occupied Eastern Territories, the German foresters dispensed with all plans for future improvement of the landscape and instead instrumentalized the forest in the service of the *Reich*. A few areas of particular beauty, forest structure, or game stock were to be protected by the same management and conservation principles obtaining in the *Reich*. Most of the forests of the occupied Soviet Union, however, were to be exploited ruthlessly with colonial methods and with a colonial perspective. Thus, whereas the forest of the Reincorporated Eastern Areas was to be enlarged and protected in the interest of immediate German settlement, and whereas the forest of the *Generalgouvernement* was to serve the short-term needs of the war economy before being restructured into a 'German' forest that would protect the soil and temper the climate in preparation for eventual German settlement, the forest of the Occupied Eastern Territories were to be exploited indefinitely with a view to taking pressure off the 'home forest' of the *Reich*.

Yet apart from planning and implementing forest policies across the occupied territories in the East, German foresters also contributed to the racialization of German society at home in the *Reich*. With their descriptions and evaluations of both the forests and the populations they found at their new postings, foresters created and reinforced racial stereotypes about the peoples of eastern Europe. They denigrated forest and people of the occupied east variously as unordered, uncivilized, diseased, 'Slavic,' and 'Asian.' As we saw in Chapters 6 and 7, such racializing descriptions were nothing new in the German forestry literature. What was new, however, was the increasingly rabid tone of foresters' descriptions of the occupied territories in the East. And the further east foresters looked, the more denigrating their language became.

Foresters deduced from the alleged inferiority of the forests in Poland and the Soviet Union an equally inferior racial heritage of the local population: a people who had let their forests go to waste would surely be overall culturally inept, the argument went. In arguing so, foresters also provided a justification for the German occupiers to 'rescue' the landscape from further deterioration by grabbing the land from the local populations and restructuring it in the German image.

— CHAPTER 9 —  
CONCLUSION

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What sort of times are these,  
when a conversation about trees is almost a crime  
because it involves silence on so many atrocities.

Poet and Playwright Bert Brecht 1939<sup>1</sup>

After all, forest policy is but the translating of our *Weltanschauung* into action.

Landforstmeister Erwin Jaeger 1943<sup>2</sup>

The German aggression during the Second World War brought with it the need to fit the occupied territories conceptually within the New Order of National Socialism. Complex ideologies turning on race and space were harmonized and manifested on the ground, sometimes leading to contradictory appreciations of the same territory. For example, was Poland ancient German ethnic soil or the staging ground of a Slavic advance pointing at the heart of Germandom? As for the Russians, were they still the kindred souls of Czarist times or had they become the “underworld of humanity, unleashed by Bolshevism”?<sup>3</sup> Somewhere on the new conceptual map of Europe, a line had to be drawn between ‘us’ and ‘them,’ between ‘master people’ and ‘helots,’ between peoples who were deemed worthy of living within the pale of the National Socialist definition of humanity – and those who were not.

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<sup>1</sup> Was sind das für Zeiten, wo  
Ein Gespräch über Bäume fast ein Verbrechen ist  
Weil es ein Schweigen über so viele Untaten einschließt.  
(from the poem *An die Nachgeborenen* (To Those Born Thereafter)).

<sup>2</sup> *Forstpolitik ist schließlich nichts anderes als die Umsetzung unserer Weltanschauung in die Tat.*  
(Jaeger 1943, p. 46).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Hilf and Strehlke 1931, p. 50.

The process of demarcation took many forms as the German authorities employed varying degrees of physical violence, military occupation, economic subjugation, and administrative assimilation to brand the new boundaries and collective identities onto the conquered peoples of Europe. Coercion and violence openly went hand in hand 'out there' far away from the domestic public opinion, the only one that mattered to the National Socialist state. But how did the regime represent the rationale and the practice of this violent demarcation process to the all-important public at home? How were Germans primed to become accomplices? In the words of Christopher Browning and Daniel Goldhagen: how were "ordinary men" indoctrinated so they would one day serve as "Hitler's willing executioners"?<sup>4</sup>

This study has shown that cultural representations of the forest landscape were one of the means used in this indoctrination. Through representations of the forest, the National Socialists gave a common-sense symbolic expression to the racially-based notions of 'Germanness' and 'foreignness' which were intended to instil a sense of racial superiority in the German people, mobilize them for aggression against the 'Other,' and generally justify territorial claims in the East. Foresters were valuable mouthpieces for this National Socialist project because they enjoyed a respected position in German society that lent credibility to their voice. Moreover, the forest was a prime topos for these naturalizing and racializing discourses because, as Part I of this study demonstrated, it already carried connotations of both 'German nature' and 'German race' stemming from extensive nationalist use ever since the Wars of Liberation against Napoleon. The National Socialists built on this

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Browning 1992 and Goldhagen 1996.

‘Germanization’ of the forest which was begun by 19<sup>th</sup>-century writers and radicalized by foresters early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century into a *völkisch* model for the New Germany, an analogy I call Forestopia. In this century-long process of ‘nationalizing nature,’ the forests of Germany were stereotyped into ‘The German Forest.’ When the Nazis came to power, they seized upon the established ‘German’ connotation of the forest and presented it as a common-sense argument for their own project of ‘naturalizing the nation.’

While thus clearly not an invention of the National Socialists, the conflation of ‘German’ and ‘forest’ certainly reached a rousing crescendo during the Third *Reich*. Now the forest found practical political application when it was used as an analogy of three successive and increasingly expansionist National Socialist notions of Germany: the ethnically pure *Volksgemeinschaft*, the peripherally consolidated *Großdeutschland*, and the colonial realm of an expanded German *Lebensraum* in Eastern Europe. In this manner, the forest was used as a common-sense justification for pushing the demarcation line between ‘us’ and ‘them’ farther outward and claiming more and more territory for Germany – it was used to naturalize the spatial claims of German chauvinism.

In the representations of the forest that were used in these discourses of naturalization and racialization, ‘Germanness’ and ‘foreignness’ were exemplified by different types of forests. In the view of German foresters, the differentiation was tripartite. A domestic, ‘truly German’ forest inside the *Reich* proper displayed desirable and allegedly ‘German’ qualities such as straightness and orderliness. On the fringes of the *Reich*, a forest grew which, despite having been ‘adulterated’ by years or even centuries of ‘Polish mismanagement’ or ‘*welsch* neglect,’ could nonetheless be ‘straightened out’ by the application of *völkisch*

German forestry. Well outside the *Reich*, however, a thoroughly 'foreign' forest stretched which was condemned by the presence of 'un-German' climate, topography or human ignorance. Here, only a radical re-ordering of the forest according to the tenets of scientific German forestry could make it exploitable for German purposes.

This trichotomy of National Socialist conceptualizations of the forest as 'naturally' German, salvagable through German management, and redeemable only through outright German-engineered eradication and reseedling, parallels a trichotomy used in National Socialist conceptualizations of race. In the Nazi view, the Aryan race of Germany was bordered by peoples who could be more or less assimilated through the application of German 'enculturation.' Beyond, there were only 'subhuman' races to be colonialized and exploited. The conceptualizations of both forest and race thus turned on a binary opposition between 'Germanness' and 'foreignness' that produced a threefold spatial differentiation with Germany at the centre, a peripheral transition zone suitable for assimilation through Germanization and 'racial up-breeding' (whether of trees or people), and an extended *Lebensraum* whose forests and human labour were equally subject to German colonial domination and exploitation.

In the representations of the forest landscape by German foresters, the two conceptualizations were conjoined. By 'piggybacking' on the common-sense object forest, the concept of race was naturalized and depoliticized – and in the process made a 'normal fact of life' in the public imagination. To adapt Kay Anderson's assessment of race to the context of German forest representations: the bipolar racial concept of 'Germanness' and

'foreignness' was a "cultural ascription" for which the forest provided a 'natural' material base, a "critical nexus through which the race definition process was structured."<sup>5</sup>

Through the writings of German foresters during the National Socialist period, the forest was actively implicated in the ideologically motivated renegotiation of power structures in Germany and beyond. Yet, as is apparent from the evidence presented in Part I of this study, this political use of the forest by the Nazis was neither an unfortunate slip-up nor the preposterous outgrowth of an irrational regime. Instead, forestry has always been a deeply political endeavour whose natural-science concepts are all-too easily converted into social norms which can then be used and abused to naturalize ideology – be it the service of liberating Germany from French occupation during the Napoleonic period or for the purpose of justifying the German occupation of France during the Second World War.

This study has also shown that foresters were not the apolitical resource managers as which they are portrayed in traditional German forest historiography. From the *Kaiserreich* to the Third *Reich*, Foresters played an active role in the project of German *völkisch* nationalism by scripting, adapting, and disseminating the concept of Forestopia as a vehicle for the naturalizing of varying ideas of German national identity. The question of why foresters acted in this capacity did not form the focus of this study. While it occasionally suggested historical and structural reasons for the involvement of the profession of foresters in the project of nationalism, this study does not claim to explore the personal and biographical motivations of individual foresters. Such investigations must remain the task

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<sup>5</sup> Anderson 1987, p. 580.

of more detailed future studies. This study merely aims to demonstrate the continuity and the scope of German foresters' involvement in the politicization of German society and the oppression of neighbouring peoples that marked the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Similarly, this study does not claim to be able to ascribe personal responsibility and blame to the foresters who were treated individually. Instead, these individuals were meant to serve as examples of the profession, even of German society, as a whole. To the reader living in a stable and safe democracy, the strictures and temptations individuals faced in a society in violent transition such as Germany in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, will remain blissfully foreign. We can only surmise what personal threats and professional disadvantages German foresters as individuals, and particularly as civil servants, stood to expect if they refused participation in the New Order. Yet none of these caveats can diminish the fact that foresters also stood ready to benefit from the sudden career boosts offered by the National Socialist purging of unwanted incumbents. What Sandner and Rössler wrote about German geographers thus can equally be applied to foresters:

Their knowledge was appropriated by the institutions and political organizations of the Nazi state in different ways, but [they] also promoted the application and usefulness of their own work.<sup>6</sup>

As we have seen, the relationship between foresters and the state was characterized by a mutually beneficial agreement: foresters put their trusted public voice in the service of the state and supplied their powerful imagery of the 'German' forest to the National Socialist project. In exchange, the state raised the forestry profession from its administrative neglect and dominance by departments such as agriculture or the treasury. As could be expected,

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<sup>6</sup> Sandner and Rössler 1994, p. 127.

foresters leapt at this opportunity to raise their disciplinary profile and establish their own *Reich* Forest Office with the powerful Hermann Göring as minister. Alas, as they became increasingly cozy with the National Socialist state, foresters were also drawn into the spiral of violence and oppression that this state was to set in motion. In the occupied territories of Eastern Europe, German foresters became implicated in atrocities against the local populations: they ‘removed’, ‘resettled’, and ‘replaced’ living and breathing humans, all for the purpose of planting forests that would embody the glory of the New Germany – or simply advance their own careers.

In studying the interrelationships between forest, foresters, and state in the Third *Reich*, this study for the first time combines perspectives from German forest history and English-language human geography. By subjecting the forest landscape to an examination informed by critical geographical theory, it contributes to a long overdue conceptualization of the forest as a political, rather than natural, landscape. This study also transgresses established boundaries between disciplines and languages and tries to realize the synergisms to be had from a combination of their respective perspectives.

Within the discipline of forest history, this study breaks new ground by documenting the involvement of foresters in the creation, maintenance, and expansion of the National Socialist state. More generally, this study also for the first time investigates the role of foresters in shaping public perception and their contribution to German nationalism. In so doing, this study has taken a first step towards a critical history of German foresters as political actors, a task still eschewed by German forest history. Future studies may build on

this initial documentation and on its basis select more specific directions of research. Numerous questions remain to be answered with respect to the interweaving of forestry and politics in the Third *Reich* and the continuing repercussions of their relationship. For example, how are we to assess the legacy of the extensive environmental legislation enacted by the National Socialist regime, both in forestry and in nature conservancy in general? How was the forest transformed after 1945 from a staunchly nationalist symbol to the thoroughly apolitical symbol as which it figured in the domestic German *Heimatfilm* production of the 1950s? Or, more recently, how was the forest resignified as a symbol of German 'Green' environmentalism of the 1980s? Such more general studies might be complemented by biographical studies of individual foresters during the Third *Reich* to further our understanding of the reception of the writings which this study has collected for the first time. For these and other future efforts in the forest history of Germany, this study may serve as a first orientation and introduction.

Within the discipline of human geography, this study surveys new territory as well. To begin, it is among the first to take the forest landscape as its subject. Moreover, it also addresses the forest landscape not as a 'natural' category, but as a political landscape which is both a political creation and a political actor. This study thus opens the way to a critical evaluation of the forest as a contested cultural landscape that goes beyond the search for the manifestation of social power structures in the landscape and acknowledges the reciprocity of landscape and society. While the political character of the forest landscape is rather easy to demonstrate when referring to such an obviously authoritarian regime as the Third *Reich*

(although it took a surprisingly long time for anyone to do so), contemporary readers are less likely to accept such a statement about the forests of their own time and place. This study thus encourages other scholars to apply its insights into the political character of the forest landscape – and indeed of any landscape – to their own, contemporary environments. While the forest is no longer considered an expression (or guarantor) of racial superiority, it still has enormous suggestive and emotive potential which has far-reaching political implications. For instance: never more emphatically than today – and never more unjustifiedly than today – the forest is declared the last remnant of ‘Nature’ whose other parts are under relentless attack from human activity. The resulting aura of ‘naturalness’ does exactly the same as the aura of ‘Germanness’: it camouflages the political character of the landscape and prevents an informed and balanced discussion of its benefits and disadvantages, be they economic, ecological, or aesthetic. Yet, whether in the old growth forests of British Columbia or in the plantations of New Zealand, the political character of the forest landscape must be acknowledged and taken into consideration when debating how forests should be used or protected. For the argument of ‘naturalness’ no longer has any validity when we talk about the forest.

Finally, this study is a tribute to those who lost their lives, their health, their happiness, their livelihood to the misguided dreams of German foresters. In 1939, Bert Brecht could still write that “a conversation about trees is almost a crime / because it involves silence on so many atrocities.” Today, such an innocent view of the forest is no longer possible. It is

not only the uncounted mass graves that haunt the forests of German-occupied Europe – today we know that the idea of ‘The German Forest’ itself could kill.

APPENDIX I:  
THE HISTORICAL AFFILIATION OF FOREST SERVICE AND THE MILITARY IN  
PRUSSIA

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The German state forest services of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were in many ways connected with the military. For example, the beginnings of a formalized instruction in forestry around the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century can be found in military academies, as can the roots of the strict hierarchical structure with green uniforms and rank insignia which characterize the German forest services to this day.<sup>1</sup> Before and during their professional training, foresters had to serve in their own elite army units where they shared experiences and developed an *esprit de corps* that continued into their professional careers. The roots of this affiliation can be found in Prussia during the reign of Frederick II ('the Great,' 1740-1786). As Prussia was by far the most important 'power' in German forestry, I will present the development in this state as a case study.<sup>2</sup>

With the rising importance of forest products for the fiscal wellbeing of the mercantilist

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<sup>1</sup> Each *Land* (province) of the Federal Republic maintains its own state forest service as forestry does not fall under federal jurisdiction.

<sup>2</sup> Prussia was the most powerful German kingdom before unification, as well as the dominant *Land* or province in the *Kaiserreich*, contributing two thirds of the population (cf. Chapter 4, footnote 75) and area to the Empire (and, by extension, to the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich). The Prussian state also was by far the biggest forest owner with 1.6 million hectares or a third of the forests on its territory in the year 1800. Through territorial gains made in the wake of the Wars of Liberation, that area grew to 2.4 million hectares by 1820. With the rise of liberalist economics, large tracts subsequently were sold off and by 1858 the state's share had fallen to 1.8 million hectares. Nonetheless, the Prussian state still held more than double the forest area of its greatest rival, Bavaria (0.8 million hectares), and ten times more than the next largest owners, Hanover, Württemberg, and Kurhessen (0.2 million hectares each). The largest privately owned forests encompassed only 0.1 million hectares (Rubner 1967, pp. 111-114). As the largest forest owner, Prussia often played the role of a pacemaker in forest policy making. For example, laws that were issued for the entire Reich were often modelled after Prussian provincial law. More importantly, however, both the *Kaiserreich* and the Third Reich were extensively modelled after the Prussian model.

state in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, administrative positions in forestry increasingly became the domain of the nobility. Since noblemen also provided all officers for the army, military and forestry functions were frequently held in an informal personal union. It was Frederick II of Prussia, however, who first institutionalized the affiliation by outright combining forestry and military careers.<sup>3</sup> Yet he did so not in recognition of a noble birthright, but to harness the unique qualities foresters could bring to the modern army: he had realized that forestry and hunting provided useful training grounds for military skills. Not only were foresters allowed to carry weapons in their parallel capacity as hunting officials, but their daily work also afforded them constant practice in marksmanship, riding, orienteering, and other military skills which were particularly valuable in unknown territory.<sup>4</sup>

The king concluded that foresters would make valuable guides, scouts and couriers for his troops in the imminent campaign in Silesia. On November 24, 1740, only a short time after his ascent to the throne and a mere fortnight before the outbreak of the First Silesian War, Frederick founded the *Reitende Feldjägercorps*, an elite 'Mounted Rangers Corps' drawn exclusively from royal forestry officials. For the next 179 years, until the Treaty of

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<sup>3</sup> There had been other, less permanent attempts by German rulers to use the foresters in a military function. For example, when the Teutonic Knights attempted to extend their hold to the eastern border districts of East Prussia in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the ecclesiastic lords settled foresters as their vanguard of settlement. The Order used its foresters not only to control the important resources of hunting, fishing, and trapping, but also to represent its authority in the otherwise lawless forests. Finally, it housed its foresters in fortified outpost dwellings or *Wildhäuser* which served as a first line of military defence against heathen counter attacks. (Eschment, Heyden, and Schulz 1994, p. 27). In the Electorate of Brandenburg, the precursor of Prussia, foresters had been obligated by law to serve in the army at least since 1656 (Voigt 1983, p. 379).

<sup>4</sup> From today's perspective, the emphasis on the foresters' marksmanship seems odd, but one must take into account the high price of gunpowder and bullets. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the average Prussian soldier in peacetime was allotted enough gunpowder for nine practice shots each year - and no lead bullets at all. Foresters, however, could practice their skills all year round on the hunt. (Münter 1988, p. 33).

Versailles demanded its dissolution, this unit formed the core of Prussian forestry training and one of the most highly regarded detachments<sup>5</sup> — it also provided the model for the National Socialist resurrection of the conjoining of forestry and military.<sup>6</sup>

In a royal order, Frederick made his chief forester Schenk *Capitaine de Guides* and ordered him to choose twelve outstanding members of his forest service for this special task force. As a sign of their elite standing, he granted them the right to wear a distinct uniform made of green cloth, a colour which has characterized foresters ever since.<sup>7</sup> During the campaign, the new corps performed its dangerous tasks with such panache that its complement quickly was increased to 110 members. Frederick himself was so taken by the devotion and dependability of his new elite corps that he surrounded himself with *Feldjäger* as his personal guards. After the end of the war, the corps was reduced to peace strength and Frederick expressed his gratitude to the discharged 47 men by ordering that they should be exempt from local taxes<sup>8</sup> and be installed as administrative officials in his forest service before all others.<sup>9</sup> But the king had more on his mind than rewarding his soldiers by providing them with a pension in the form of a public office; he also expected them to bring their impeccable reputation and incorruptible attitude to his forest service which was plagued by inefficiency, and thus strengthen his administration where it was weakest: out in the still

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<sup>5</sup> On the history of the *Feldjäger*, see: Anonymous 1894; Jentsch 1939; Borkenhagen 1977; Kinna and Moss 1977; Koehler 1986; Voigt 1983; Münter 1988; and *Militärarchiv MA Broschüre 51*.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Chapters 6 and 8.

<sup>7</sup> The royal order is reprinted in Jentsch 1939, pp. 211-212.

<sup>8</sup> Borkenhagen 1977, pp. 151-153.

<sup>9</sup> Royal order of October 29, 1742 (quoted in Jentsch 1939, p. 213).

sparsely settled forests on the margins of his realm.<sup>10</sup>

It is important to note here that Frederick was not primarily interested in forestry as an end in itself. Rather, he saw the forest as a source of funds for the army and as a land reserve to which settlers could be invited.<sup>11</sup> But for either purpose, to draw more income from it and to organize its settlement, the forest had to be put under an efficient forest service, and Frederick's veterans were to form the backbone of that service.

The outbreak of the Second Silesian War in 1744 caused Frederick to recall his *Feldjäger* to active duty - and he had further plans for all of his foresters. While the members of the mounted corps did not necessarily have officer status, they were overwhelmingly of noble descent.<sup>12</sup> Yet the king believed that the empirically trained, if illiterate commoners who served at the lowest level of his forest service had valuable skills to bring to his army too. Consequently, Frederick founded a *Feldjägerscorps zu Fuß* or 'Ranger Corps on Foot' of 300 forest wardens. Based on the tactical skills of the foresters who manned its ranks, this light infantry unit was designed to fight flexible battles in difficult terrain. Later we will see how the *Feldjägerscorps zu Fuß* and its successors became the mandatory service units for

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<sup>10</sup> An anecdote has Frederick writing into the margins of a report on the state of forestry in his kingdom: "The damned drinking of those foresters must stop henceforth" *Das aasiche Gesaufe derer Heidereuter muß hinfort aufhören.* (quoted in Jentsch 1939, p. 216).

<sup>11</sup> For example, religious refugees from Holland and Salzburg: "I prefer people over wood" *Menschen sind mir lieber als Holz* (quoted in Jentsch 1939, p. 216).

<sup>12</sup> Borkenhagen reports that, up to World War I, the *Feldjägerscorps* was an almost exclusive domain of the protestant Prussian nobility, with Upper Silesian catholics making up only 10% (Borkenhagen 1977, p. 151). In 1842, Wilhelm Leopold Pfeil commented in his "*Kritische Blätter*" that "to this day, no commoner has been admitted to the position of forest master; evidently, the necessary knowledge is connected to a string of noble ancestors" [In Sachsen hat sich noch kein bürgerlicher Forstmann die Befähigung zum Forstmeister erwerben können, und die erforderlichen Kenntnisse hierzu scheinen an eine Anzahl adliger Vorfahren gebunden zu sein.] (ibid. p. 42).

generations of Prussian forest wardens and operational level foresters up to 1919. For now we will return to the mounted corps as the traditional unit for administrative foresters.<sup>13</sup>

During the Second Silesian War (1744-1745), the mounted corps once again proved its worth and Frederick decided to maintain it as a standing unit in peacetime. Accordingly, the corps was restructured to further its utility for both military and forestry functions.<sup>14</sup> At any given time, half of the corps was garrisoned in Berlin to be at the service of the king for courier services to foreign courts. The other half was posted to forest districts all over Prussia where they were to acquire a solid knowledge of practical forestry. Both groups rotated through the tasks to ensure balanced training. As well, to supply the corps with suitable recruits who could be trained as *Feldjäger* from a young age, the selection process was extended to draft the sons of administrative forest officials. When the Third Silesian (or Seven Years) War began in 1756, the unit was ready for immediate action and was swiftly raised to a strength of 174 men.

Yet while the Seven Years War enabled Frederick to strengthen and expand Prussia, it also worsened the situation as it pertained to forestry: not only was the Prussian forest widely neglected due to the forced absence of foresters from their districts, the war also brought more forest land that was in a less than desirable state under Prussian rule. And, as the population grew, new industrial and agricultural demands for forest products left large parts of the forest exhausted. To stem the decline, Frederick initiated a protectionist mercantilism

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<sup>13</sup> The following is based mostly on Jentsch 1939, who in turn builds his account on the official history of the corps published as manuscript in 1890 and again in 1926.

<sup>14</sup> Jentsch 1939, pp. 214-215.

in which lumber came under a state monopoly.<sup>15</sup> But to implement this policy, Frederick needed to increase the reach of his forest service by deploying more men who were better educated and organized more effectively.

The king resolved that this goal could best be reached by extending the parallel military/forestry training to the rank and file and thus installing a two-tier system of well-trained administrative and operational foresters, respectively. To this purpose, the *Feldjägerkorps zu Fuß* was expanded into a *Jägerbataillon zu Fuß* or 'Rangers Foot-Batallion' for which the mounted corps provided the officers. From now on, all future operational foresters had to serve in the *Jägerbataillon* for a minimum of 9 years to be considered for a position in the state forest service. Parallel to their military service, the candidates were instructed in forestry matters by their officers from the mounted corps, who in turn were educated in their unit. The two-tier system formed the foundation of the Prussian *Oberförster/Revierförster* system of forest administration for almost two centuries: after their discharge, the officers were installed as administrative officials or *Oberförster*, while the NCOs became their subordinate operational foresters or *Revierförster*.<sup>16</sup>

In 1770, Frederick added a third level by centralizing all forestry affairs in a separate forest ministry. His goal was to create a uniform and effective chain of command and, accordingly, the training of both levels of foresters was primarily geared to ensure strict obedience to instructions from above. But it had become evident that military virtues alone could not help change the dire situation of the forest. Frederick decided that his foresters had

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<sup>15</sup> Rubner 1967, p. 68.

<sup>16</sup> The enlisted men provided the labour force, which did not belong to the administration proper.

to go to school to learn their trade.

In 1770, Frederick asked the respected botanist Gleditsch to instruct his foresters in Berlin. After Frederick's death in 1786, his successor Frederick William II increased the emphasis on professional qualification and ordered an entire forestry curriculum to be set for the administrative level. After 1787, all candidates for the forest service were examined by a central examination board. Among the subjects taught were many that served military and forestry applications equally well: an engineer officer taught surveying, an artillery lieutenant mathematics, private teachers taught French and Polish, riding and drawing.<sup>17</sup> In Prussia, the first attempts at formalizing forestry education were thus borne entirely by the demands and the possibilities of the army.

Until 1815, the overlap between army and forest service was so complete that all administrative positions in the Prussian forest service were reserved for members of the mounted corps. But the severity of the forest decline in the last decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century required more foresters than the mounted corps was able to provide. In 1810 a forestry chair was established at the new university at Berlin, to which all *Feldjäger* were posted for studies, but which also accepted civilian candidates.<sup>18</sup>

Through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the purpose of the mounted *Feldjägercorps*, i.e., the unit that trained future forest administration officials or *Oberförster*, shifted. Initially, the forestry aspect had been conceived of as a training ground and a pension plan before and after the

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<sup>17</sup> Jentsch 1939, pp. 217-219.

<sup>18</sup> One consequence of the affiliation with the university was that candidates had to pass the *Maturitas* (university entrance diploma), the gate-keeper of the *Bildungsbürgertum* (cf. Chapter 4).

soldier's active service. But after widespread overuse and insect calamities had further devastated the forest in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the forestry function moved to the fore. More technical competence was now required so that the *Oberförster* could instruct his subordinate *Revierförster* in the new methods of silviculture which were being developed in order to regenerate the cleared areas. Consequently, the officer training was no longer seen as the end, but as a means for the forestry career where the future forestry official could learn the rules of self-discipline and command. Every future forester still had to serve to be admitted to the career, but the candidate moved on to his administrative position after only a few mandatory years of active service. Meanwhile, the operational *Revierförster* career continued to be tied to a longer military service. Here military virtues and strict discipline were still regarded as more important than professional qualifications. The Prussian regulations of 1903 and 1905 may serve to give us an idea of the typical careers of administrative and operational foresters at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In 1903, the officer/*Oberförster* career in Prussia was as follows.<sup>19</sup> After graduating from secondary school and serving between one and three years with the *Feldjägercorps*, the candidate was posted to one of the royal forestry academies in Eberswalde (northeast of Berlin, for the provinces east of the Elbe) or in Hann.-Münden (south of Hanover, for the western provinces). Here the candidate received thorough training in all theoretical and practical aspects of forestry. In addition, he had to attend a university for two terms of *Staatwissenschaften*, a subject which combined law, economics, and public administration,

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<sup>19</sup> Bestimmungen über die Vorbereitung für den Königlich Preußischen Forstverwaltungsdienst vom 25. Januar 1903 (quoted in Borkenhagen 1977, p. 27).

constituting a vestige of the cameralist tradition in the German forest service. After graduation, the aspirant was admitted to the administrative forestry career and before long was put in charge of a forest district with between six and twelve *Revierförster* as his direct subordinates.

For the *Revierförster*, the training was as follows.<sup>20</sup> After public school, the candidate applied for a position as forester with his district government. After acceptance, he apprenticed with a master forester for a year of practical training. Then he reported to one of the two *Jägerbataillon*, either the 4th Naumburg batallion or the 14th Mecklenburg batallion.<sup>21</sup> Here, beginning in the second year of service, he received his education in forestry from an academically trained officer of the *Feldjägerkorps*. From time to time, the candidate was posted to perform practical work in *Forstkommandos*. After between three and eleven years of service, the candidate sat an examination to acquire a forester's licence. Now he was eligible to assume an operational-level position in the Prussian state forest service. Alternatively, he could apply to the forest services of public corporations and foundations, where all positions above a certain salary level were reserved for graduates of the state curriculum.

The result of combining forestry and military education and of concentrating foresters in special units was that until World War I the NCOs of the 4th and 14th *Jägerbataillone*,

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<sup>20</sup> Bestimmungen über die Vorbereitung und Anstellung im Königlich Preußischen Forstschutzdienst vom 1. Oktober 1905 (quoted in Borkenhagen 1977, p. 45).

<sup>21</sup> The disproportionate share of foresters the 4th Naumburg batallion is discernible in the annual newsletters, for example. In the 1939 issue, more than half of all personal notes were submitted by foresters. Cf. *Aus dem Kreis der Kameraden* 1939, pp. 50-53 (a copy is at the Military Archives under the file signatory MA Bibliothek MSg 3 - 691/1).

the *Gardeschützen* in Lichterfelde and the *Gardejäger* in Potsdam were almost exclusively drawn from the ranks of operational foresters, while the COs were almost all administrative foresters of noble ancestry and with academic training.

As far as its role in the military structure of first Prussia and then the Kaiserreich was concerned, the mounted corps survived all army reforms. By 1871, the *Feldjäger* were the only unit in the Prussian army that consisted entirely of officers and it continued to defend its reputation as an elite detachment.<sup>22</sup> In 1872, the Chief of the German General Staff, Count von Moltke, called the *Feldjäger* “simply indispensable.”<sup>23</sup> During peacetime, the members of the mounted corps rotated through forest training at home and active service as couriers abroad.<sup>24</sup> On their farflung postings, the *Feldjäger* came in contact with the colonial idea and collected ‘foreign legion’ experience: 1893 in the Cameroon rebellion, 1895 in Togo, 1897-1899 in German East-Africa, 1900/1901 in the Boxer rebellion in China , 1904/1905 in the Russian-Japanese War, and 1905-1908 in German Southwest-Africa.

Because of their foreign experience, their physical fitness, and their select status, foresters’ units were considered elite troops during World War I that were “the first in the

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<sup>22</sup> This is how the military historians Kinna and Moss (1977, p. v) describe the *Jägerbattalione*: “Representing only a small proportion of the Imperial German army, the *Jäger* (Hunters) and *Schützen* (sharpshooters) nevertheless carried a prestige far transcending their actual number. Basically of light infantry character and of an independent and largely volunteer nature, they presented an élite image such as the modern paratrooper bears in relation to the orthodox infantry. Specialising in difficult terrain, often well in advance of the main body, the *Jäger* excelled in a skirmishing capacity, operating on a more roving and independent basis than the conventional infantryman, and combining all the attributes of the hunter with that close affinity with nature that only the professional forester acquires.”

<sup>23</sup> “that the *Feldjäger* in their current form excelled during [the 1870/71] war to a degree that made them simply indispensable” . . . *daß die Feldjäger in ihrer derzeitigen Organisation im Kriege sich so ausgezeichnet hatten, daß sie gar nicht entbehrt werden könnten.* (quoted in Jentsch 1939, p. 224).

<sup>24</sup> In 1900, 65 of the 80 members of mounted corps were in forestry training, while 15 served on courier duty in Berlin and abroad. (Jentsch 1939, p. 225).

field and last to leave.”<sup>25</sup> And they paid the price that comes with the fame: 20% of all foresters died on the battlefields, more than four times the average losses of other professions.<sup>26</sup>

The *Feldjäger* system of parallel military and forestry careers remained intact until 1919, when the *Feldjägerkorps* was dissolved as a consequence of the Treaty of Versailles which stipulated that a professional army replace the conscript army.<sup>27</sup> On October 1st, 1919, the fourth-eldest unit of the Prussian army was dissolved after 179 years. Accordingly, the last class was admitted in 1919, and the last graduates entered the Prussian forest service in 1932. But even after the dissolution of the *Feldjägerkorps*, its traditions were kept alive in the *Akademische Feldjägersgesellschaft* (Academic *Feldjäger* Society) at the forestry academies of Eberswalde and Hann.-Münden. Here the sons and grandsons of former members of the elite corps who now studied forestry at the academy were imbued with an *esprit de corps* that was rooted in both the military traditions of the elite *Feldjägerkorps*, and the political conservatism and nationalism of a traditional forestry fraternity. In the academic societies, the *esprit de corps* of administrative foresters was continued through the years of the Weimar Republic.<sup>28</sup>

The non-academically trained *Revierförster* continued their traditions in other ways.

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<sup>25</sup> The *Jäger* spirit, according to Kinna and Moss 1977, p. vii.

<sup>26</sup> Borkenhagen 1977, p. 175.

<sup>27</sup> Rubner 1985, p. 11.

<sup>28</sup> (Borkenhagen 1977, p. 151). Between 1919 und 1945, the Academic *Feldjäger* Society had 180 members. (Koehler 1986, p. 5). On the role of the fraternities in the socialization of foresters, see Chapter 4.

During World War I, the foresters serving in the 4th *Jägerbataillon* stationed in Naumburg had begun to meet for 'green evenings.' These social gatherings laid the foundation for a professional association, the *Deutscher Försterbund* or 'German Operational Forester's League.'<sup>29</sup> In contrast to the administrative foresters' societies, the operational foresters' league developed into a professional organization that pursued the labour interests of operational foresters and found itself in outright opposition to the Third Reich. Consequently, it was eliminated in the *Gleichschaltung* in 1933.

In other German states, the development was different in degree and character.<sup>30</sup> For example, while the northern German states under the leadership of Prussia relied on separate forest academies in conjunction with military training, the southern German states made forestry a subject to be taught at university and did not incorporate forestry into the military structure. Yet when the National Socialists reformed the forest service, they followed the Prussian model.

Beginning in 1935, and even before the general draft was reintroduced in March of that year, the NSDAP decreed that younger forester candidates had to serve with the Reichswehr for one year to become eligible for the forest service. Elder candidates beyond the draft age were required to attend a three-month Volunteer Training Course in the Reichswehr, together

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<sup>29</sup> Borkenhagen 1977, p. 86.

<sup>30</sup> Neither was the affiliation of forestry and military limited to Germany. Ever since Napoleon, French foresters were serving together in special corps (cf. Boback 1935). Similarly, Russian "Forest Cadets" were instructed in "closed institutions" and were promoted to "Lieutenants of the Forest Corps" upon graduation. (Buchholz 1932, pp. 514-515).

with SS-men and party veterans. There existed no legal foundation for this requirement, only a party directive – but that was all it took to effectively remilitarize the forest service.<sup>31</sup>

From October 1937 on, all candidates had to complete a mandatory year of military service in infantry, rifle, or engineer units before being allowed to sit the final exams.<sup>32</sup> This requirement quickly rose to two years of active military service, preceded by another six months in the Reich Labour Service. The Nazis also reinstated the affiliation of military and forestry careers. The reformed regulations for the forest service in the German Reich of 1942 stipulated that a minimum of 50 % of all positions at the intermediate level (*gehobener Dienst*) and 90 % of all positions at the lower level (*mittlerer Dienst*) were to be filled with candidates who had served in the military for 12 years and then attended a military forestry school to prepare them for the forest service.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Hasel 1985b, p. 438.

<sup>32</sup> Verordnung über die Ausbildung für den höheren Forstdienst vom 11. Oktober 1937, RGBI I S. 1129 (also reprinted in *Allgemeine Forst- und Jagdzeitung* 1938b, p. 32).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Orth 1938 and 1942.

APPENDIX II:  
THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST GLEICHSCHALTUNG OR 'COORDINATION' OF  
FORESTERS AND FORESTRY

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**1933**

30 Jan	Hitler appointed Chancellor
1 Feb	<i>Reichstag</i> dissolved
3 Feb	Hitler gives a secret speech to senior officers, laying out the quest for <i>Lebensraum</i>
4 Feb	Presidential 'Decree for the Protection of the German People' suspends civil rights
22 Feb	SA, SS, and Stahlhelm form auxiliary police forces
28 Feb	After the <i>Reichstag</i> fire, presidential 'Decree for the Protection of People and State' declares state of emergency, giving Hitler emergency powers
5 Mar	<i>Reichstag</i> elections. NSDAP wins 288 of 647 seats
8 Mar	Interior Minister Frick announces the establishment of concentration camps
21 Mar	'Day of Potsdam': Hitler and Hindenburg meet at the tomb of Frederick the Great
21 Mar	'Malicious Practices Law' prohibits criticism of the regime
21 Mar	'Special courts' established
23 Mar	'Enabling Act' transfers legislative powers to the executive for a period of four years
31 Mar	'Interim Law for the Co-ordination of the <i>Länder</i> (provinces) with the <i>Reich</i> ': the powers spelled out in the Enabling Act are effectively extended to the <i>Länder</i> level
7 Apr	'Law for the Restoration of a Professional Civil Service' allows for the dismissal of oppositional and Jewish civil servants
7 Apr	'Law for the Co-ordination of the <i>Länder</i> with the <i>Reich</i> ': <i>Reich</i> places 'Governors' at the head of <i>Länder</i> governments
1 May	NSDAP membership frozen
6 July	Hitler announces end of the 'national revolution'
14 Jul	NSDAP formally declared the only political party
22 Sep	'Hereditary Farm Law' limits possession of farms to those of 'German blood'
30 Nov	Gestapo created
1 Dec	'Law to Ensure the Unity of Party and State'

**1934**

- 1 Jan 'Law for the Reconstruction of the *Reich*' eliminates *Länder* parliaments
- 18 Jan '**Law against Forest Devastation**' prohibits cutting of stands less than 50 years old
- 30 Jun 'Night of the Long Knives' purges internal party opposition and neutralizes the SA
- 3 Jul '**Law for the Transfer of Forestry and Hunting Affairs to the *Reich***': Göring made *Reichsforstmeister* in the rank of a minister
- 2 Aug After the death of Hindenburg, Hitler assumes the office of President. Army swears oath of allegiance to Hitler
- 19 Aug Hitler proclaims himself *Führer*
- 13 Dec '**Law for the Protection of Racial Purity of Forest Plants**' requires all seeds to be certified and demands the "eradication of stands of poor race" in order to "eliminate the threat of inferior offspring."

**1935**

- 13 Jan Plebiscite in the Saar region in favour of rejoining German *Reich*
- 17 Mar Re-introduction of conscription
- 26 Jun '**Reich Nature Conservancy Law**'
- 12 Jul '**Decree for the Transfer of Some Responsibilities from the *Reich* Food and Agriculture Ministry on the *Reich* Forest Office**'
- 15 Sep 'Nuremberg Laws'
- 16 Oct '**Law for a Marketing System in Forestry and the Timber Industry**' concentrates all aspects of forestry and forest industry under the auspices of a central planning agency

**1936**

- 7 Mar German troops re-occupy the demilitarized Rhineland
- 24 Aug Two-year compulsory military service introduced
- 20 Oct '**Decree for the Joining of Forestry and the Timber Industry**'
- 1 Nov Axis Berlin-Rome
- 7 Dec '**Decree for the Increased Supply of Wood as a Raw Material**' gives the *Reichsforstmeister* the right to determine the annual cut in private forests
- 15 Dec '**Decree for the Augmentation of Timber Cuts**'

**1937**

- 30 Jul '**Decree for the Increased Supply of Saw Wood**' restricts the uses to which timber may be put
- 5 Nov Hitler introduces the Commanders-in-Chief to his plans for war in pursuit of *Lebensraum* (Hossbach memorandum)

**1938**

- 4 Feb Hitler assumes personal command of the military
- 11 Mar Annexation of Austria
- 1 Oct Occupation of Sudetenland

**1939**

- 31 Jan **'Decree for the Increased Supply of Raw Materials from Forest By-Products'** empowers the *Reichsforstmeister* to control the production of forest by-products in private forests
- 15 Mar Occupation of the remaining Czechoslovakia
- 23 Mar Germany occupies Memel territory
- 23 Aug Secret Nazi-Soviet agreement to partition Poland
- 1 Sep Invasion of Poland
- 5 Sep **'Decree for the Establishment of a Reich Office for Wood'**
- 7 Oct Himmler made *Reich* Commissioner for the Strengthening of Germanism
- 8 Oct Incorporation of western Poland into *Reich* as *Reichsgaue* Danzig-Westpreußen and Posen (later renamed Wartheland)

**1940**

- 9 Apr Invasion of Denmark and Norway
- 31 May **'Decree for the Structure of a Reich Forest Administration'**
- 10 May Invasion of Holland, Belgium, and France
- 18 May Incorporation of parts of Belgium into *Reich* (Eupen, Malmedy, and Moresnet)

**1941**

- 6 Apr Invasion of Yugoslavia and Greece
- 22 Jun Invasion of the Soviet Union
- 17 Jul Rosenberg made *Reich* Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories

**1942**

- 22 Apr Central Planning introduced to manage allocation of raw materials and energy

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