

# Natura 2000: Prince Philip's eco-dictatorship for Europe

by Alexander Hartmann

Imagine for a moment that we are in the year 2020. Will magnetically levitated trains connect all major population centers of Europe with one another, and with southern and eastern Asia, Africa, and perhaps even—through Siberia and Alaska—with the American continent? Will we double the productivity of our agriculture using modern technology and thus end hunger all over the world?

Not if the decisions of the environmental ministers of the European Union are to be interpreted as the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) demand. If these organizations get their way, economic activities will be confined to islands in a huge ocean of environmentally protected areas, and the Third World's misery will be cast in stone.

All activities not compatible with the "aim of environmental protection" would be forbidden in these areas. Permitted would be—with many restrictions—hunting and fishing, "low-intensity" agriculture, gathering of wild fruits and firewood, "traditional" handicrafts, and tourism.

Spread over the 150 pages of the IUCN's study "Parks for Life," there are only six photographs depicting human beings: an old woman weaving textiles with a hand loom ("traditional handicrafts"), a Polish farmer in a horse-drawn carriage ("traditional farming"), Greek fishermen in their small boats, an old woman carrying a load of firewood on her back, children in a "nature park" undergoing conservationist indoctrination ("environmental education"), and a group of environmentalists demonstrating against the Gabčíkovo hydroelectric plant in Slovakia (which has been proven to be a boon to the environment; see *EIR*, Jan. 6, 1995). All the other pictures show "nature untouched by man."

Nobody can claim that these activities are economically viable. They represent a step back into something worse than feudalism. The number of human beings who can afford to go on holidays—and thus to finance the standard of living of those in the areas affected by "conservation"—will be just as small as the number of persons with aristocratic titles who are represented on the boards of the environmental "multinationals" in a remarkably high percentage, starting with the WWF's chairmen, Prince Philip of Great Britain and Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands.

Such a vision is to be realized by the European Union's Natura 2000 program, which was enacted in 1992. Most Europeans have never heard of this program, and for good reason: When it was voted up by the EU's Council of Ministers, it was classified as a "legal act with no need to be published." Obviously, somebody wanted to keep the number of the initiated relatively small, not the least because this program will greatly affect the economic and infrastructural development of Europe, and thus cause resistance to it.

## A precedent: the Rathenow bird protection area

The problems caused by the Rathenow bird protection area for the construction of the magnetically levitated train line which is to connect Hamburg and Berlin, are just a taste of what is in store once the Natura 2000 program has been completed. As early as April 1979, the EU issued what is called the "bird directive," mandating conservation measures for the habitats of rare or endangered bird species. Based on this bird directive, about 210 protected bird habitats have been created in Germany alone. In these areas, the bird habitat management is administered according to the rules mandated by the European Commission's bureaucracy.

That's why the IUCN, which is funded by the WWF, rejoices in its study "Parks for Life": "The European Union . . . is the only supranational law-making body in the world and the only regional body to which nation states have surrendered significant elements of their sovereignty. . . . If a member state does not implement a Directive, the European Commission can take that state to the European Court of Justice."

That might well happen soon. Some argue that the construction of a high-speed maglev train line is not compatible with the aim of protecting the environment in this area. Avoiding the area near Rathenow, in the state of Brandenburg, protecting the grand bustard, or measures to safeguard the protected area might well cost up to DM 100 million (\$67 million), and the special permission required from the European Commission is not at all secured. A legal case before the European Court would be costly in terms of both money and time.



## Bremen government falls over Natura 2000

The Natura 2000 program of the European Union made headlines in Germany in February, when the governing coalition in the state of Bremen, the smallest among the 16 member states of the Federal Republic of Germany, fell apart over the implementation of the environmentalist directive. This coalition had been formed by the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Free Democratic Party (FDP), and the Green party.

The state's environmental department, led by Ralf Fu/s of the Green party, had turned in to the European Union's environmental department a list of areas within the city limits, where one or more species considered to be rare or endangered can be found, as mandated by the EU's directive. These areas add up to nearly 18% of the state's area. This was done as a purely administrative act, without even consulting the other departments of the city's Senate.

Among the areas registered as habitats for birds was the Hemerlinger Marsch, which the other parties intended to develop as a business and industrial area, to create jobs in a city where one out of seven workers goes without paycheck, and to generate income for the city's nearly bankrupt treasury. When Sen. Claus Jäger (FDP), who leads the economics department of the Senate, learned that Fu/s's department had turned the area into a habitat for birds, he charged Fu/s with violating the state's con-

stitution. He pulled his party out of the government coalition, and left Mayor Klaus Wedemeier (SPD) without a majority. All parties agreed to hold elections in May, instead of September as scheduled, while the Senate withdrew the list of habitats from the EU for the time being.

This move by the liberal Free Democrats can only be understood on the background of recent developments in Bremen and in Germany as a whole. While the Green party continues to gain votes in the traditional liberal constituency of "yuppies," an anti-Green revolt is building in the "silent majority." When a pro-industrial splitoff of the SPD, called Work for Bremen, was formed with the intention to run in the state's elections in the autumn, which could gain the support of the pro-industrial part of the electorate and up to 12% of the votes, the FDP was in serious danger of losing its deputies in yet another state. In state elections in 1993 and 1994, the FDP lost parliament status in 9 of the 16 states of Germany.

By leaving the coalition, the liberals tried to profile themselves as pro-industrial, which, given their anti-industrial "free-trade" policies, is a bad joke. Even their opposition to the EU's habitat directive may be phony: The directive leaves no scope for the Senate to determine which areas are to become protected areas; the Senate merely has to turn in a list of habitats. The EU's bureaucracy will then issue a list of habitats which have to be designated as protected areas, whether the Senate of Bremen says yes or no. Indeed, Prince Philip's World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) has already announced its intention to sue the Senate of Bremen for not implementing Natura 2000, with a high probability of success.

—Alexander Hartmann

### How does Natura 2000 work?

Natura 2000 is much more comprehensive than its predecessor, the bird directive, which since 1992 has been integrated into Natura 2000. In June 1992, the European Commission decided to protect the habitats of many other species in addition to birds, and even special landscapes like alpine lakes, wandering dunes, and river flood plains. Included in the "directive for the protection of natural habitats and of wildlife animals and plants" is a list of (currently) 467 species of plants, 71 invertebrate species, and more than 200 vertebrate species. More species can be added to this list at any time, if the European Commission deems it necessary.

The European Union has decided upon a strict timetable for the implementation of this program. In the first two years—i.e., until last summer—EU member-nations had to "adapt their national legal system to the directives." By June 1995, the member governments are to submit a list of areas to the European Commission of all areas where any of the

listed species exist.

The express intent of the directive is to protect not only areas which are protected already in one form or another—such as national parks, nature parks, landscape protection areas, biosphere reserves, wetlands of international importance, etc.—but to include other areas, which until now had not been protected.

If all areas where rare or endangered species exist or which qualify as "protectable natural habitats" are put under protection, a large part of the EU's territory will be put under the administration of the European Commission in regards to zoning rights. EU member-states will be "disowned" of their own territory.

### Interpretational dispute

There is an ongoing dispute among the German states and the newly created Federal Environmental Office as to how to interpret the directive. Some of the states have not

registered any areas at all, and some only very limited areas. The state of North Rhine-Westphalia has only registered the area of Lake Möhne, which is only 0.03% of the state's territory. Bavaria has only registered very limited areas, too. The state of Baden-Württemberg has registered more than 270 areas, but they add up only to 0.44% of the state's surface area. Most states have only registered areas which are already under protection anyway.

But Bremen and Mecklenburg-Pomerania have surrendered whole nature parks and biosphere reserves, areas adding up to nearly 18% of their territory, to the EU. The state of Brandenburg—surrounding the city of Berlin—has registered 12 areas, the limits of which have still to be clarified, but which will add up to at least 15% of the state's territory. While a large part of the areas registered by Mecklenburg-Pomerania, Schleswig-Holstein, and Lower Saxony are offshore areas and shallows on the North Sea and the Baltic Sea, Brandenburg has registered whole nature parks. Originally, nature parks were to serve as recreational areas for the human population. The Federal Environmental Office is now trying to negotiate a uniform line among the states, and will certainly use the precedents of Bremen, Mecklenburg-Pomerania, and Brandenburg to mount pressure on the other states to follow suit.

But even if a reasonable compromise can be worked out among the states, one can certainly expect that the European Commission will not be satisfied. Denmark, for example, has registered 22% of its land already, Belgium more than 14%. Spain and the Netherlands have registered high percentages. Thus, the European monarchies have a pioneer role in the movement back to a new feudalism, and "in the interest of an assimilation of the European environmental laws," other nations will be pressured to follow their example.

If they do not, the EU's directive explicitly allows for the European Commission itself to register areas in member-states not registered by the state's government, if it "learns" about the existence of "protectable species" in this area. As a last resort, a national government can issue a veto against the inclusion of a specific area on the list of protected areas at the Council of Ministers.

Based on these national lists, the European Commission will then issue a list of protected areas of European importance. These areas must then be put under protected status by the year 2004. This is what the Brandenburg government referred to, when public protests were raised especially by farm organizations after the state government proclaimed its intent to protect 10% of the state's area as nature protection areas (which are submitted to stiff protection rules), and an additional 30% as landscape protection areas (which have a relatively lower protection status). A spokesman for the state's governor, Manfred Stolpe, said they were just following international treaties and decisions of the European Union. A large part of these protected areas is to be managed as national parks, nature parks, or biosphere reserves, for

which a separate administrative entity has been created. Usually, environmental protection is to be administered on the county level. A large part of these areas will then be registered as a "habitat" with the European Commission.

### **A coherent network of protected areas**

Natura 2000 further demands that the "protected areas" are to form a "coherent network." What does that mean? An information sheet issued by the Environmental Directorate of the European Commission reads: "This conception of a network presumes connections between the protected areas. This can be linear structures (hedges, wooded riverfronts, traditional field boundaries), or swamps, ponds, little forests or fallow grounds, which can serve as resting places or retreat areas for wildlife species." The city of Berlin, surrounded by Brandenburg's nature parks, would be an island again—much like in communist times.

The same is true for every other major population center in Europe. Brandenburg is just a precedent which all the other regions of Europe are to follow. Avoiding the protected areas—which in the case of the Hamburg-Berlin maglev line would still be possible, if costly—would become absolutely impossible. Wherever you go, you will always—and repeatedly—have to cross the "natural corridors" of Natura 2000, whether you want to build rails, roads, power lines, or pipelines. And in every instance, an exemption from the environmental rules would have to be agreed upon by the European Commission. If there is a "green" ideologue among the bureaucrats responsible for such cases, or someone who believes in the British geopolitical doctrine that Germany and eastern Europe should never be allowed to integrate economically, because this would diminish the political influence of Great Britain, it is easy to guess which way the decision will go. To appeal to the European Court will take up the time and money urgently needed to develop eastern Europe.

### **Which policy will prevail?**

Fortunately, the last word has not been spoken yet. The final list of areas to be protected has not been issued, and public resistance to such a decree can still be mounted. But even more important, the EU itself has policy statutes that contradict Natura 2000. For example, the EU summit in Essen in December 1994 decided to go forward with 14 great trans-European infrastructure projects, which form a "trans-European network." When the projects enter the planning stage, there will be a conflict within the EU bureaucracy, between the supporters of infrastructure development and those favoring a feudal, medieval society. This will force a decision at the highest political level.

If this decision should go in favor of Natura 2000, this will necessarily lead to the economic and political disintegration of Europe and the EU, with disastrous economic and social consequences.