

## 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