

OTHER NATIONS

ples. In a televised address earlier this year, a Soviet Academy of Sciences official warned that 1987's heavy spring rains and flooding could wash radioactive material into the region's water supply.

The Greening of West Germany

"From Student Movement to Ecopax: The Greens" by Hans Joachim Veen, in *The Washington Quarterly* (Winter 1987), 55 Hayward St., Cambridge, Mass. 02142.

West Germany's "Green" Party first captured international attention during the 1970s as a loose middle-class citizens' network of antihighway protesters, environmentalists, and antinuclear activists. At first politically conservative, the Greens rapidly became a catchall for stray radicals—unemployed Marxist academics, assorted anarchists and liberationists.

Today, the Greens are the nation's fifth largest party, holding office in nearly every state council. They have been represented (27 of 496 seats) in the federal parliament since 1983, and gained 15 more seats in last January's elections. Have they become a serious political force?

Veen, chief of social science at the Konrad-Adenauer Foundation in Bonn, West Germany, doubts it. Despite their growing prominence, the Greens' mistrust of institutions runs deep. So does their disdain for German traditions such as "duty, industriousness, self-discipline and material and professional success."

When polled, only 30 percent of Green Party members say they have faith in the judicial system; 60 percent of the German public does. Most Greens (two-thirds) distrust the police; the same percentage of other Germans trust them. More than half of the Greens would like to disband NATO; nearly 70 percent of Germans still support it. One in three Greens claims not to "feel free" in Germany. Only seven percent of the public at large shares that feeling.

Though the Green Party's social profile is increasingly diverse, a predictable majority are young (two-thirds under 35), well educated, and urban. Many have come from the ranks of the Social Democratic Party's left wing. Others are ex-student radicals from the 1960s, who "slept through" the Greens' grassroots days but woke up when it gained notoriety.

All Greens seem to share a sense of mental isolation that, despite its modern flavor, has deep national roots. Veen recalls what Madame de Staël, in 1810, wrote of the German mind: "an immense capacity for philosophical thought which loses itself in the indeterminate, penetrates and disappears in the depths."

This "psychological predisposition," says Veen, has enabled the most radical social critics within the Green Party to formulate the basic elements of Green ideology. However, Veen speculates that during the next few years, "confrontation with the [realities] of everyday life . . . may prove to be [the radicals'] undoing."

The Greens' most troubling political flaw, notes Veen, may be the hardest to remedy. Despite their spokesmen's advocacy of "boundless self-realization," they "lack belief in a fine new future." Without such a vision, it will be difficult for the Greens to persevere.