

catastrophe” (372) exposed in Galicia by Austrian authorities who failed to address mounting civil crises (*Galicyski Eksodus* [2020]).

Fahey grounds this history through the personalities he follows, like Herman Lieberman, the social democratic parliamentarian who left Vienna for Przemyśl on November 1, 1918, to join the new city council in anticipation of Polish independence. Lieberman then represented the city in the Second Polish Republic’s Sejm before escaping to England, serving as the justice minister of the Polish government-in-exile, watching from afar as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Line divided Przemyśl along the San River between Germany and the USSR. Yet, in such a sustained and obvious treatment of Lieberman and social democratic politics in Przemyśl, there are noticeably few voices of the unskilled laborers, construction workers, and lower-ranking enlisted soldiers who made the garrison town and its politics what they were. John Fahey’s *Przemyśl, Poland* is nevertheless a well-researched, easily readable microhistory, heavily supported by archival sources from the State Archive in Przemyśl, the Austrian State Archive in Vienna, and the Central Military Archives in Warsaw. Those interested in the histories of Austria-Hungary, Poland, Ukraine, the First World War, and social military history will find this an insightful study.

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## **Desert Edens: Colonial Climate Engineering in the Age of Anxiety**

**By Philipp Lehmann. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2022. Pp. x + 244. Cloth \$39.95. ISBN: 978-0691238289.**

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Drawing on the now-considerable historical literature on declensionist environmental narratives that developed in the context of European colonial expansion, Philipp Lehmann explores how growing concerns about desiccation, environmental degradation, and climatic shifts generated significant anxiety and debate from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century among German and French planners, explorers, architects, and geographers. He argues that this led some of them to propose ambitious engineering projects designed to ameliorate landscapes, to address these issues and to promote settlement for Europeans, in the case of Africa, and for Germans, also in the case of eastern Europe. However, the projects that Lehmann describes, with the exception of those in eastern Europe, were never realized. As Lehmann himself admits, this forces him “to stay in the realm of ideas” (9) and does not allow him to assess local responses and consequences or economic, social, and political contexts in any empirical sense. This book’s inclusion in a series entitled *Histories of Economic Life* is therefore somewhat curious, because this is really an intellectual history and one primarily concerned with exploring how French and German planners wished to press technologies into the service of new utopian “environmental imaginaries.”

The book consists of seven chapters and an epilogue. Chapter 1 examines nineteenth-century concerns about climate shifts and how the Sahara desert became a central focus of research and fascination for Europeans. Lehmann highlights the work of the German explorer Heinrich Barth, who never reached the “airy heights of nineteenth-century

heroism" (21) achieved by David Livingstone and Henri Duveyrier, but who was followed by the better-known botanist Paul Ascherson and geographer Gerhard Rohlfs. Chapters 2 and 3 focus on a geoengineering project proposed to alter the climate and landscape in North Africa. It was put forward by a French military officer and geographer, François Roudaire, who in the 1870s and 1880s proposed creating a sea in the desert by cutting a channel from the Mediterranean to the Sahara, where he claimed a sea had once existed in the past. He believed it would improve the climate and bring prosperity to a region that had undergone significant decline. The proposed project attracted some attention, even the enthusiastic support of Ferdinand de Lesseps, the engineer of the Suez Canal, but it soon foundered as a result of a lack of official support, scientific criticism, and technical flaws. However, Lehmann argues that the Sahara Sea project deserves our attention because it showed a new confidence in the power of technology to transform the environment. It is surprising that Lehmann does not explore the reforestation and marram grass plantation projects that were actually implemented in North Africa and which drew support from the French colonial administration, as these initiatives were intended to increase rainfall, address the anxieties caused by climatic extremes, and improve the colony's prosperity in order to attract European settlement.

Chapters 4 and 5 examine a project that was quite different, as it appeared to be more political and social in its purpose, as Lehmann suggests. It had less to do with climate engineering, even if it was also hydrological in nature like the Sahara Sea project. It was proposed by the German architect Herman Sörgel in the 1920s. Entitled *Atlantropa*, it involved the building of a giant dam at the Strait of Gibraltar as well as other, smaller dams, which would expand areas of land along the coast while linking the African and European continents more closely, and it promised to open up new areas of settlement (for Europeans) by lowering the level of the Mediterranean Sea. Most importantly, it was an energy project and promised to create an enormous hydroelectrical infrastructure that would provide almost endless energy far into the future. While the project generated interest in Germany and some northern European countries, it was short-lived, like the Sahara Sea project, and it was criticized for being politically unrealistic. Ultimately, it gained little practical traction.

Chapters 6 and 7 explore another kind of political and social project that took place in the heart of Europe after the German occupation of the *Ostland* during the Third Reich. This is a project that was implemented in a very real sense, even though it too was short-lived and was, like the Sahara Sea and the *Atlantropa* proposals, a colonial project. It was shaped by the German landscape architect Heinrich Wiepking-Jürgensmann, who worked directly with Heinrich Himmler after 1941 and who saw the German settlements in the East as essential to upholding German culture and European civilization. At the heart of the project was the environmental transformation of Nazi-occupied areas in the East. Like settlers, explorers, and colonial administrators in North Africa, German planners were concerned about *Versteppung*, the deterioration of the environment through the advance this time of the steppe, not the desert, and they wished to employ measures that included land reclamation projects and water engineering to Germanize the landscape and to make the East ripe for German settlement.

This book is based on a wide range of materials. The German sources and the two unrealized engineering projects that have been largely neglected heretofore will be of particular interest to environmental historians, historians of colonial North Africa, and historians of the Mediterranean. It is therefore regrettable that the book lacks a bibliography. Whereas Lehmann argues that what the Sahara Sea, *Atlantropa*, and resettlement planning projects in the East during the Third Reich have in common is that they were all climate-engineering projects, the projects were very different in their impetus, emphasis, and nature, and climate was not at the core of all them. (For this reason, the epilogue on global desertification and global warming, which takes climate concerns up to the present, seems somewhat disconnected from the rest of the book.) The more salient thread that connects the engineering

projects that Lehmann describes – even if two of them never saw the light of day – was the use, or potential use, of modern technology in the form of hydrology, land reclamation projects, and plantation and reforestation by colonial states to address perceived environmental degradation and “to create productive landscapes for the benefit and habitation of non-indigenous populations” (4). This reader wondered why Lehmann did not consider his three cases of colonial engineering in the context of the broader historiography on large-scale, state-initiated engineering projects, many of which originate in the early modern period. This would include the work of, among others, Chandra Mukerji or James C. Scott who have analyzed utopian schemes to improve nature and the human condition in different parts of the world as well as responses to these schemes, how they were carried out and often went awry. Their work suggests that “nature inside our heads is as important to understand as the nature that surrounds us” (9), as Lehmann argues, citing William Cronon, but to assess both apocryphal environmental narratives and the real or imagined power of large-scale engineering projects designed to transform the environment, we must also have a sense of empirical realities on the ground.

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## The Invention of Marxism: How an Idea Changed Everything

**By Christina Morina. Translated from the German by Elizabeth Janik. New York: Oxford University Press, 2022. Pp. 560. Hardcover \$37.99. ISBN: 978-0190062736.**

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In the years from roughly 1885 to 1914, Marxism came to dominate European socialism. Karl Marx had died in 1883, but his memory was fresh, and his works were, for the most part, an alluring continent ripe for discovery. Friedrich Engels preserved the living link to the movement’s founding drama and tirelessly propagated his and Marx’s ideas right up to his death in 1895. A cast of energetic younger men and women seized on these ideas, repeated them, extended them, and sought to translate them into political practice. Advocates of Marx and Engels won seats in the parliaments of western Europe, commanding positions in the labor movement, and dominance over eastern Europe’s revolutionary diaspora. In her fascinating and important book on these years, Christina Morina frequently calls this the golden age of Marxism. But it was a triumph plagued by ambiguity. After all, the same years are often denigrated as a period of “orthodox” or, even worse, “vulgar” Marxist thought. Marxist orthodoxy had hardly established itself – if it ever really did – when it was severely tested by revisionism around 1900, a strain that foreshadowed the bitter breakdown of the Second International in the opening weeks of World War I, the schism between social democracy and communism in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution, and even the splitting of theory from practice exemplified by the emergence of “Western Marxism” in the 1920s. Regardless of how one assesses this period, it is unquestionably the pivotal time when Marx went from being a person to a *Zeitgeist* – to echo W. H. Auden on another great modern figure – and his thought was transformed into a powerful ideology and a worldview capable of structuring people’s emotional and intellectual relations with the world.