actors in the drama of Occupied Germany. As a gifted writer he has been able to make all this into a book so uncommonly good it is difficult to do it justice. 

THE BAD EARTH:
ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION IN CHINA
by Vaclav Smil
(M. E. Sharpe, Inc. [Armonk, N.Y.]; xvi + 245 pp.; $25.00/$13.95)

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Any analysis of China's current environmental problems must begin with an acknowledgment of the severe constraints imposed by the country's geologic history. No other large, populous nation has so much of its territory in mountains, high plains, and plateaus and, consequently, so small a fraction of easily cultivated farmland. Geographic features combine to cause cold, dry outflows of the Siberian anticyclone in the winter, monsoonal flows in the summer, and serious droughts or floods every single year.

This harsh natural setting has been made worse by centuries of misuse. Wholesale deforestation and abuse of water resources have aggravated soil erosion, desertification, and pollution. Whether it was impoverished peasants cutting wood for fuel and shelter or an emperor having timber harvested to build fabulous palaces, millennia of environmental insults have taken an enormous toll.

Thirty-five years ago Mao Zedong proclaimed that a new China had been formed, a China which, among its other leaps forward, would reverse centuries of environmental degradation. In The Bad Earth, Vaclav Smil, geographer at the University of Manitoba and China scholar, contends that no such reversal has taken place. On the contrary, "a mixture of some excellent intentions and notable achievements with much casual neglect, astonishing irresponsibility, and staggering outright destruction" has accelerated the deterioration.

Smil's basis for this assessment is the news accounts and articles that have been appearing with increasing frequency—and an increasing sense of urgency—in domestic Chinese publications.

Deforestation continues to be the most critical problem, and one that influences many others. Despite much-publicized new plantings, notoriously poor management has crippled reforestation. And old practices continue: Accounts portray a destruction comparable to the disappearance rates in the worst-affected forests of the poor world. As one participant told a nationwide conference on forestry: "According to the estimate based on the actual annual rate of reduction, by the end of this century there will be no trees to harvest."

Deforestation invariably increases erosion of topsoil, reducing crop yield. Most of the eroded soil is deposited in rivers and lakes, blocking outlets, lowering storage capacity, and elevating the dangers of severe flooding, which in turn causes more erosion. Drawing on official figures and numerous scientific sources within the country, Smil estimates that between 1957 and 1977 China lost a stunning 30 per cent of the hardly abundant total farmland it had at the beginning of that period. He comments: "This farmland, capable of sustaining some 200 million people (the equivalent of both Germany, the United Kingdom, and France, put together!), is gone—while China's population grew during that period by about 300 million people."

Smil's thorough description of the activities that are destroying physical resources in China will be of value to everyone concerned about widespread and potentially catastrophic abuse of the environment. Less useful is his analysis of its underlying political determinants. For Smil, the pervasive state ideology that accompanied the Communist regime made a bad situation worse. The doctrines of rapid industrialization and increased grain production at any cost only intensified the disastrous resource management practices common before 1949. As the quality of land, air, and water grew steadily worse, an unresponsive bureaucracy and frequently brutal suppression of all criticism made desperately necessary reforms impossible. His political analysis might even be applicable to environmental decline and disaster in the Soviet Union, but it provides no model for the scores of ecologically damaged countries on the planet whose political ideologies differ sharply from China's and from each other's.

Smil's discussion of water resources in China illustrates forcefully the usefulness of his analysis of the activities that have led to the torrent of ecological abuses worldwide. Groundwater is being overused in many parts of China, threatening the availability, cost, and quality of water, leading to severe sinking of the surface as water is extracted, and affecting many coastal areas with salt-water ingress into freshwater aquifers. Sewage pipes serving major cities are old and undersized. And surveys show that most rivers and streams are polluted, including all the major ones; the Ba He in Beijing is so contaminated with industrial waste that it once caught fire and burned. Despite striking differences in geology, history, climate, industrialization, population density, and, most pertinent, in political institutions, the United States too is plagued by each of these problems.

The intensity of concern recently expressed inside China seems to have provoked some serious attempts to arrest the dramatic decline of the physical environment. But the situation is grave, and Smil is justifiably skeptical about the chance of success in the face of awesome population pressures, lack of essential infrastructures, pervasive inefficiencies, and the "unpredictable ever-twisting Party line."

If these encumbrances can't be overcome and the decline of the environment reversed, China's reach toward prosperity will be doomed to failure. Perhaps the lesson that China offers the United States, virtually
Newton Koliz

Canada and the United States are the very best of friends. Indeed, each is the other's best friend among nations. These two statements are so without dispute, at least in the U.S., that hardly anyone here gives them a moment's thought. Yet, while largely agreeable to these sentiments, the people up north, as Charles Doran points out in his perceptive and very sensible new book, have a rather different fix on their relationship to their very large friend to the south. For instance, where most of us down here scarcely give the people up there much thought, most of them up there mightily resent being taken for granted. Or, while they see serious disagreements with us over basic policies and goals, we see petty obstructions they put in the way of getting done what needs to be done. Or when they say to us (rightly), "You need to respect more our autonomy and our individuality," we reply (rightly), "But you people have made out awfully well for such a small and powerless country so near a large and powerful one. Consider Lithuania or Scotland or, more recently, Afghanistan."

These and other cross-purposes clearly inhibit a closer, more mutually satisfying relationship. In order to overcome them, Professor Doran argues, the two nations need to work out a consensus, a sharing of purposes and goals, a partnership.

Getting to partnership is no easy matter, since the roots of the tensions and cross-purposes are so little understood. Neither nation, in Doran's view, acts as though it is at all aware of the other's chief concern. For Canadians this is trade and commerce with the United States, since without that the Canadian economy would collapse. For the United States, much less dependent on Canada than Canada is dependent on it and much more aware of its unique responsibility as a world leader, the chief concern is Canada's place, politically and strategically, within the Western Alliance. The inevitable confusions that rise out of these different awarenesses are exacerbated by the deeper and more fundamental confusions that rise out of the differences in the psychologies of the two peoples.

"I don't understand what's the matter," the American says. "We're just alike." "You don't understand," the Canadian says. "We're really very different.

Americans tend to see Canada as a sort of extension of their own country, separate from their happy federal union only by accident of history. Canadians, contrarily, are on the whole quite happy to be separate from the federal union to the south. And they rather tend to resent being included in it even honorarily. Thus, Americans talk to Canadians about integration and interdependence. And Canadians talk to Americans about autonomy, independence, and separate national identities.

How do the two nations begin to resolve their apparent bilateral impasse? By passing beyond "bilateral" and moving to a larger perspective, Doran maintains. He asks if there is another way of looking at those recent events that have separated the two nations, one that is "more deeply informed by the evolution of history involving powers outside North America and by the contemporaneous global crush of pressures and opportunities along the East-West and North-South axes." A more international perspective would suggest that the changing structure of the international system itself may have something to do with the timing, the direction of changes, and the contradictions in their relationship.

From this angle, both countries' views of their mutual connection appear somewhat skewed by each one's perception of its own needs. Thus Americans concentrate too much on the "political-strategic" dimension of the relationship. And Canadians concentrate too much on the "trade-commercial" aspects. But in reality, Doran says, both nations need to pay most attention to what he calls the "psychological-cultural" dimension of the relationship, because it is "more determinative of outcomes" than the other two. It is in the area of feelings, perceptions, and sensitivities that the two peoples find themselves most apart. In support of this analysis the author examines in detail a number of significant U.S.-Canada policy issues, such as on the law of the sea, fisheries, the environment, and energy.

Practically, Americans and Canadians might be able to resolve their differences and move toward greater partnership if Americans could resolve to take the time and effort to learn more about Canadians—and especially about how they are different from Americans—and if Canadians could resolve to take the time and effort to learn how to do something about losing their resentment—which means learning how to rejoice more in what sets them apart and makes them special.

Anyone interested in either project will find Forgotten Partnership a helpful and delightfully lucid guide. WV.