The main ideas of environmental extremism

In the 70s, in the 20th century United States of America, a new type of violence, which had for its background a philosophy of life, a violence which may be described, in the most general way, as one aimed at the defence of the national environment. (Somewhat later, this problem was also to affect the most developed countries of West Europe). In the subject literature, the phenomenon of such “pro-ecological” violence is described most frequently as ‘ecological terrorism’ (eco-terrorism) or, somewhat more mildly, as ‘ecological extremism’. The ideological basis for this form of violence is provided by a collection of ideas usually described by a quite vague term, ‘radical ecology’. The author of this article aims at several objectives; to explain what is ‘radical ecology’, to show in what manner it has emerged and developed, and to present its most extreme manifestations, as well as some of the social and political consequences that may be derived out of it. The article closes with deliberations on the impact of radical ideas on the development of pro-ecological violence.