3. The three countries concerned are the USA (debt reduction of ten per cent), Switzerland (ten per cent) and France (one per cent).

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Environmental Movement and Social Change in the Transition Countries

Barbara Jancar-Webster

The environmental movement in ECE has undergone profound transformation: the movement has shifted from being a mobilising agent for populist protest against the totalitarian of the Communist regime and in its place has emerged pragmatic, goal-oriented professional organisations. Western aid agencies and environmental peer groups have had a strong influence on this transformation. The transformation has brought advantages to environmental NGOs. However, it has also resulted in a loss of the local perspective, with its distinct modus operandi and bottom-up input, and this has impoverished political discourse in the transition states.

The environmental movement in East Central Europe (ECE) has undergone profound transformations since the heady pre-democratic days, when Hungary’s Danube Circle could call out thousands to protest the construction of the Nagymaros Dam and pressure the Communist government to abrogate its obligations under the agreement with Czechoslovakia to share in building the complex hydropower system. For some, the transformed nature of the environmental organisations bespeaks the end of the symbolic populist protest against what the Czechs termed the totalitarian of the Communist regime. In its place is seen the emergence of a pragmatic, goal-oriented professional organisation that, under the tutelage of its Western peers, aims to influence policy decisions like its environmental counterparts in the West. For others, including the author, the inability of the pre-democratic movement, with its wealth of local experience, unique perspective on politics and distinct modus operandi, to conserve these characteristics in the transition period has impoverished political discourse in the transition states. In their search for security and identity, the ECE governments have opted either to imitate their Western counterparts, or have sunk into the quicksand of authoritarian nationalism to consolidate political power. This article attempts to trace the impact of the transformation process on the environmental movement and concludes with some thoughts on the future direction of the ECE environmental movements.
The Pre-Democratic Environmental Movements

Although environmental movements emerged in each of the ECE countries at the end of the Communist period, they developed differently in each country. The contacts between the various groups both within and between countries was extremely limited. Eastern Europe’s communication system was a product of the 1930s and 1940s. The abolition of censorship came slowly and at different times, with Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania the last countries to abolish it in 1989.

Some groups like those in the Republic of Slovenia in the former Yugoslavia, and the Hungarian and Polish environmental organisations, had substantial contact with Western environmental NGOs, most notably with German and Austrian greens. The international contacts of the environmental groups in the other countries, particularly Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria, were much more limited. Some environmental groups embraced a strong nationalist agenda, and eventually merged into the broader nationalist movement. The Baltic, Ukrainian, Slovak, and Moldovan environmental groups are cases in point. Some groups developed as a specific protest movement, with a specific ideology and approach, such as the Slovenian greens. In the freer climate of Poland, environmental groups openly recruited members. Some environmental groups declined the dissident protest path, preferring to act within the established order and effect change from within. The most notable example of this type of organisation was the Czech Ecological Section of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. Finally, in all the countries, the government-sponsored conservation organisations, the Society for the Conservation of Nature, continued to operate more or less down to the end of the Communist period, and continues to function in a slightly modified guise to this day. These societies were apolitical from the start and have continued to remain apolitical.

The significance of the growth of environmental groups prior to 1989 resides in the fact that they were grass-roots social initiatives. To use Vaclav Havel’s term, these groups represented the rebirth of civil society in states where free spontaneous interaction between individuals outside the government-sponsored institutions was rigorously and strongly discouraged. They were able to organise because the environment had never been put on the black list as a subject for public discussion. Environmental protest started in Poland in 1980, when environment activists succeeded in getting the big aluminum mill outside of Krakow closed down. From Poland, environmental protest spread throughout the region. Revelations of ecological crisis or of some gigantic government project harmful to the environment precipitated public response and calls for the end of the Soviet imposed order. The Chernobyl disaster revealed the extent to which the ruling regimes had compromised the health and welfare of their citizenry, in turn strengthening the development of environmental groups.

In Czechoslovakia, air and water pollution were the catalysts of protest. In February 1987 some 300 people from the Chomutov District of North Bohemian Region signed a letter sent first to the Chairman of the district National Council and then to the Czech Prime Minister and President of the Communist Party complaining about an inadequate warning system to alert people to an increase in air pollution in the district. On 11 November 1989, just a week before the student demonstration in Prague which ended the Communist regime, there was a protest demonstration against living conditions in the North Bohemian town of Telvice, where coal mining had turned the land into a moonscape of craters and made the air unbearable. In the preceding weeks, a determined group of women called the Group of Czech Mothers staged demonstrations in the streets of the capital against the quality of water. Water quality had so deteriorated that infant formula could no longer be made with tap water.

In East Germany, the Evangelical Church became the protector of small disparate environmental groups such as the green network Ark. The 1989 pursuit of emigration by East German youth through Hungary dominated the international mass media. However, as young East Germans were climbing over embassy walls in Budapest, others were gathering in huge numbers in the smelly industrial cities. At the mass-candlelit rally in Leipzig in 1989, environmental pollution was elevated to a major political issue.

In Hungary, the environmental issue that mobilised the country against the Communist regime was the controversy generated by the government’s insistence on co-operating with its Slovak partners in a gigantic hydroelectric power project that called for the construction of a dam at Nagymaros (see Jancar-Webster [1991, 1993] for more details), situated on the beautiful Danube Bend where the river turns at 90 degrees from its eastward course and flows south. In October 1988, on the anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, the square in front of the Hungarian Parliament building was filled with some 40,000 demonstrators. The wide popularity of the issue enabled the anti-dam movement to pioneer non-violent methods of protest. Through the distribution of handbills on the street, small local demonstrations, demonstrations of women and children at the dam itself, and other methods, the ecological movement developed and taught large numbers of people democratic methods of action.

1988 was also a key year for the ecological movement in Bulgaria. Air pollution in the town of Ruse on the Danube river had reached such proportions that it threatened the health and life of the resident population.
The source of the pollution were huge chemical plants on the Romanian side of the river. Public protest forced the Bulgarian government to take up the matter with the Romanian government. Out of this local protest movement came the first autonomous environment group: the Independent Committee for the Protection of the Environment. By 1989, groups had formed in virtually every large Bulgarian city. At their head was Etklagnost, established in early 1989. In October and November of that year, the organisation sponsored a series of protests in Sofia on the occasion of the Helsinki Conference on Environmental Cooperation. The subsequent imprisonment of the demonstrators contributed in no small part to the fall of the Zhivkov regime [Baumgartl, 1995].

The environmental movement played a more ambiguous role in Yugoslavia. One of the major successes of the late 1980s was a nationwide effort, primarily led by scientists, to rescind a federal government decision to build a hydroelectric plant at the Tara River Canyon, one of the wildest and most scenic canyons in Europe, preserved under the United Nation's 'Man and the Biosphere' programme. A second success was the stop-nuclear-power movement initiated by a Belgrade student in 1989, which spread across the republics, resulting in the federal legislature's vote for a moratorium on nuclear power until the year 2000 [Joncar-Webster, 1985: 1992a; 1993b].

Instances of transrepublican environmental co-operation were rare in the Yugoslav Federation. Although environmental groups did organise in each of the former republics, the environmental movement put down its deepest roots in Slovenia. The forerunner to the Slovenian greens was started in the late 1960s by a daredevil group of students. It moved to the forefront of the democratic agenda in the mid-1980s, and in 1989, without official approval, declared itself a party. In the 1990 elections, the Green Party allied with DEMO, the coalition of national democratic forces, and won. In joining DEMO, the Slovenian environmental activists were seen by groups in the other republics, as primarily proponents of Slovenian nationalism and their experience was not transmitted to the other republics. Suspicion between the environmental activists in the different republics was very high. Each group feared penetration by the secret police, and tended to see police collaborators in the faces of its counterparts in the other republics. As a result, the democratic tactics developed in the anti-nuclear movement and among the Slovenian greens did not produce a pan-Yugoslav environmental movement. When the Communist regime collapsed in Yugoslavia, the environmentalists remained in their national groups. Their deep-seated distrust of one another made them incapable of mobilising a cross-national following that might have saved the tottering federation and prevented the destruction that followed.

The 1990 Elections

During the 1980s and especially after 1986, the Eastern European environmental groups played a leadership role in the demands for political change and in developing constructive methods to bring about that change. In 1989, the Eastern European movements also played a key role in publicising environmental degradation and demanding environmental remediation. In 1990, the region held its first democratic elections. However, when the results were in, the saliency of environmental concerns did not translate into a green victory at the polls. The environmental issue did not prove to be significant enough for the greens to win on an independent issue. Greens fared best when they joined a coalition, preferably the leading coalition. In Poland, no green party organised, and there was no green ticket. All of the party platforms, however, had a green section, and candidates with a green agenda were elected to the Sejm from the different parties. In Hungary, the Czech Lands and Croatia, where green parties formed, the greens were accused of harbouring too many ex-Communists and concealing their true agenda. None of the party candidates obtained the required five per cent of the votes to qualify for a seat in parliament. Czech ecological groups did run several candidates registered under the winning Civic Forum and these individuals were elected. The three per cent electoral rule in Slovakia enabled the greens to obtain six of the 150 seats in the Slovak National Council. In Bulgaria, Eklognost registered with the winning Bulgarian Union of Democratic Forces and obtained fifteen seats in the Bulgarian assembly of 400 deputies. In East Germany, the Greens won eight seats. In Romania, the Romanian Ecological Movement (REM) founded in December 1989, supported the winning coalition, called the National Salvation Front, and won twelve seats in the Assembly and one in the Senate. The rival Romanian Ecological Party, founded six days after the REM, joined the opposition coalition and won eight seats, bringing the total green representation in the Romanian legislature to 20 seats in the 396-member Assembly, and one in the 119-member Senate. Shortly before the elections, the self-constituted Green Party of Slovenia joined the DEMOS coalition. The alliance resulted in the greens winning 8.8 per cent of the popular vote, or 13 per cent of the DEMOS vote. This was the highest percentage of votes cast for green candidates over the whole of Eastern Europe [Kusić, 1990]. The victory of the greens gained them eight seats in the Political Chamber, eight seats in the Communal Chamber and one seat in the Chamber of Working Deputies of the then Slovenian legislature. In the executive branch, a green shared in the Presidency, a second became Vice-President of Parliament, and a third became Vice-President of the Executive Council of the Government. There were three green-sponsored ministers.
Although the 1990 elections failed to demonstrate strong popular support for green candidates and parties, each national legislature had its small number of pro-environmental deputies. Their presence would have placed the greens in a relatively strong position to influence the new transition governments. However, when the author interviewed in Hungary, the Czech Lands and Slovakia in the summer of 1990, she found environmental activists and officials very pessimistic about the ability or interest of the new governments to adopt, not to mention implement, the necessary environmental remediation measures. Pessimism regarding the public’s commitment to environmental protection was also widespread. In a word, on the morrow of the elections, ECE’s environmental movements were in disarray.

Subsequent elections did not reverse the greens’ downward political path. As public concern turned to basic survival issues of food, clothing and jobs, many people who had previously been active participants in environmental organisations became instead preoccupied with the tasks of daily living. Many environmental groups that were dependent on a single charismatic personality fell apart when that one person moved on to other interests. In groups dominated by scientists, recruitment of scientists into the government made it impossible for the group to continue. This was the case with the Ecological Section of the Czechoslovak Academy of Science. Public money for even the well-established conservation organisations dried up and there was no money at all for the newer activist groups.

Perhaps the major cause of dysfunction among the environmental groups was their distrust of one another. This distrust operated within and between groups. With the collapse of the Communist Party, bureaucrats who had once held prestigious positions in the youth organisations found themselves out of a job. Many saw the environmental movement as an opportunity to save their livelihood and quickly joined what looked to be the most successful groups. Many groups had already been penetrated by informers. Those activists who had risked their lives and possibly careers in the Communist period were not eager to share the fruits of victory either with the informers or what they perceived to be the Communist turncoats. In Slovenia, the old generation of green activists told me that they only trusted those with whom they worked and no one else, least of all, environmental groups in the other republics.

Thus, not only was the rapid drop in interest in environmental issues a cause of the greens’ loss at the polls. Lack of trust enabling routinised communication between the groups precluded the possibility of the groups uniting in a single political movement. However, hindsight suggests that even if the groups had been able to unite, the environment still would not have risen to the top of the public-policy agenda in the transition states.

The Legacy of the Collapse of Communism

Several factors prevented and continue to prevent the re-emergence of mass-environmental concern in ECE. These factors derive directly from the legacy of Communism and the Communist world-view. The first of these is what might be termed ‘the victory of the one alternative’. As long as the Soviet Union was alive, it was possible for reasonable people to argue over the merits of socialism versus capitalism, and, as in the case of the Slovenian greens [Jancar-Webster, 1993a: 202–4], develop a third alternative. The collapse of the Soviet Union with hardly a whimper left the ideological field empty of any alternative save a ‘free-market democracy’. Driving the transition to the Western model of development was the desire on the part of all the ECE countries to join the European Union and NATO. Membership in the former seemed to offer economic and political security, while membership in the latter offered military security from Russia. Furthermore, membership in the EU held out the promise to these countries that they could take their place as rightful members of Europe, contributors to European culture, with a right to the lifestyle and benefits accruing to the European status.

The arbiters of membership in these two institutions lay outside the ECE region. As a result, the leaders of the transition countries found they had relatively few options in the transition process. If they desired to ‘go West’, their main task was to bring their country’s political, legal and economic infrastructure into line with EU demands. Membership of NATO was much less assured. But if membership was ever to be achieved, it required the formation of democratic institutions and the creation of a Western-style professional military subordinated to a civilian government and the rule of law. While the Baltic countries, Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary have responded relatively easily to this external stimulus, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, not to mention the countries formed from the former Yugoslavia, have had more problems.

Another aspect of the choice of non-alternative is the relative poverty and, in some cases, economic instability of the transition countries. The arbiters of aid and assistance are once again the European Union, individual Western countries, including the United States, and international lending institutions, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. All of these give aid with very specific requirements. Aid to the ECE was the first in the world to be required to have an environmental component. Given the severity of environmental degradation in the area, the environmental requirement is objectively to be welcomed. It ensures that environmental management cannot be totally forgotten in the interests of economic development and at the same time provides a solid, international set of criteria by which
environmental remediation can be evaluated and implemented. But the environmental mandate imposes costs and performance criteria that are not regularly imposed elsewhere in the world and tends to make economic decisions that impact on the environment even more politically sensitive than they might otherwise have been. A case in point is the viability of nuclear power. For now the discussion is not merely between the rulers and the ruled. Foreign nuclear-power plant manufacturers and fuel providers are also stakeholders in the decision. The cold war may be over, but in the battle to expand the use of nuclear power in ECE, Czechs and Russians line up on one side, and French, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the Canadians and Americans on the other.

The second factor in the low visibility of environmental issues in ECE today is the desire of the large majority of its populations to live the consumer lifestyle of Western Europe. That lifestyle includes not only the increased purchase of automobiles, preferably of Western European origin, but the demand for Western products complete with plastic wrap and packaging. As the author has written elsewhere [Jancar-Webster, 1992b], to argue that a person does not need a car, convenience appliances, a high level of consumption and easier access to energy is counter-productive in ECE today. ECE societies have been too long subjected to scarcity and deprivation. Integration into Europe ineluctably means an improved living standard along Western European lines.

For the peoples of the region, transition has brought increased insecurity into their lives, and an increase in negative attitudes towards elected government and its institutions. As events quickly proved, the adoption of the outward forms of democracy could not conceal the poverty grab by the former Communist nomenklatura. The names of the institutions or enterprises might be different, but with few exceptions, the nomenklatura remain in power in every country in ECE. Popular participation in the emerging democratic structures remains low. Scepticism is the preferred response.

These two aspects, the externally imposed conditions of European membership and popular expectations of reaching Western standards of living, create a dilemma for the transition governments. To stay in power, they need to assure economic development and integration into the global market, while at the same time, guaranteeing a social safety net during the transition. Environmental problems are nowhere seen as a high priority and only remain on national policy agendas because of external pressure.

Seen in this perspective, the legacy of Communism is more than a collection of environmentally dangerous ‘hot spots’, undrinkable water, polluted and unbreathable air, deforestation, and high rates of environmentally-induced diseases. For the transition governments, a principal legacy is the fixation on economic development above everything else. This pursuit of growth cannot merely be seen as the persistence of Marxism. One has only to look at the newly industrialised countries of South-East Asia to realise that the fixation on growth is a more widespread phenomenon. However, the promise of Marxism-Leninism was precisely that it provided not only a more efficient but, more important in the current situation, a more just path to growth than did capitalism, based on the selfish interests of private property ownership. Everywhere in the former Communist countries, income inequalities are becoming daily more visible. The message of the reconstituted Communist parties in electoral campaigns has not changed since the transition. Capitalism is selfish, profit-oriented, and cares little for the worker or the person in the street. Under socialism everyone works and no one goes hungry. The resurgent Communists pluck a responsive popular cord when they blame the ‘capitalist’ tools that attempt to correct the disastrous economic policies of the old regime in the interests of economic restructuring (price liberalisation, privatisation, and monetary discipline), for the collapse of production, the rise in crime, and inflation [Aslund, 1993].

The other side of the fixation on economic growth is that the majority of the new leaders are becoming increasingly committed to market reforms, not least because they are among the chief beneficiaries. Privatisation has resulted in many former Communist enterprise directors and managers becoming owners and managers of the newly privatised industries. These new owners are acquiring the profit incentive and reaping the benefits of the emerging market economy. However, they were raised with the old attitude, ‘growth first, protection later’. Environmental pollution is seen as the price one must pay for economic development (see Szacki et al. [1993: 11–12]). Lacking a clear understanding of how the pursuit of economic growth without adequate environmental protection can in turn lead to a reduction in growth, the managers of the newly privatised enterprises are more disposed to repeat the earlier mistakes of the Western industrialised countries, particularly those associated with an end-of-pipe approach to environmental management. To be convinced that there can be no trade-offs between the environment and the economy, the new elite has not only to learn that win-win strategies are possible, but to see successful examples in practice.

It has to be emphasised that there is virtually no precedent in the region for the successful integration of environmental protection and economic development. Given their education and training, many administrators do not understand the importance of the environment to economic development, and without a push from the public, environmental protection gets little consideration. As before, environmental practitioners tell the author that their opinions are consistently not taken into consideration in policy decisions.
When an international panel evaluated progress on the environment in ECE in 1995 at Visegrad, the conclusion was that environmental reform was low on the area's political agenda. In the words of the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) Executive Director, Stanislav Strinigi, 'Some people feel that the environment must entirely be dropped from the reform agenda until the economy recovers' [REC Press Release, Oct. 1995].

Despite this rather negative assessment the reader should not infer that no progress has been made in environmental remediation or that governments in the region have consistently behaved negatively towards the development and implementation of programs designed to promote sound environmental management. One of the outcomes of the UNCED Conference at Rio de Janeiro in 1992, for example, was the co-operation and development by 18 of the former Communist countries of two important types of documents: the first was entitled Guidelines on Integrated Environmental Management in Countries in Transition; the second was the elaboration of national environmental action plans (NEAP) for every country in the region, describing the country's main environmental problems, and identifying policies, institutional measures and investments to address them, based on the guidelines [REC, 1994a]. The region now has in place a coordinated strategy for addressing environmental remediation.

A few countries have also been successful in reducing pollution within their borders. While some may say that pollution reduction is primarily the result of lower production, Cole, however, has argued that this is not the case with Poland. He attributes Poland's success to three factors: national investment in pollution control through the collection of pollution fines; improved legislation and enforcement; and competition leading to technological innovation in what he terms the 'new buyers' markets [Cole, 1993].

The Transformation of the Environmental Movement

The absence of strong government leadership places much of the onus for environmental protection with the public. This, in turn, requires public concern. The classic remedy for public indifference is education at all levels and ages: in schools, among the NGOs, environmental practitioners, managers and national leaders. Financing of educational, as well as environmental remediation programs, was originally expected to come of the Environmental Funds which all the former Communist countries agreed to set up in accordance with guidelines adopted at a conference in Jablonna, Poland in 1995 [OECD, 1995]. The Fund's financial resources come from

the collection of fines and penalties from polluting industries, and the amount collected depends on the effectiveness of environmental monitoring and the management of the environmental project cycle [Pezko, 1995]. Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, and the Slovak Republic, had, by the end of 1994, successfully raised almost US$500 million. While a significant sum, it is not sufficient to cover programme demands. Poland leads the way in its use of environmental funds, paying for almost half of its environmental expenditure through the Fund. However, the effective implementation of the Environmental Action Programmes (EAPs) depends on foreign financing, from such lending institutions as the World Bank, the EBRD, PHARE, USAID and other national donors, particularly the Scandinavian countries and Germany.

In addition to monies for 'capacity building' and educational purposes received from the large international and national lenders, the NGOs have benefited from the attention paid them by the international environmental movement and by democratic institutions. These include the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWFN), IUCN, UNEP, Environmental Partnership, and the Open Society, Danish and Baltic environmental NGOs (the Clean Coalition Baltic, the Danish Center for Alternative Social Analysis, and the Norwegian Bellona Foundation, and the European Union, such as through the PHARE and TACIS Democracy programs). Coordination of the many projects and programmes sponsored by these institutions is provided by the most inclusive of the regional organisations, the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC), located in Budapest, Hungary. Founded in 1991, with a US$1 million grant given by the then President, George Bush, by 1994 the REC had received financial pledges of ECU 15.25 million. On the list of donors, the largest are the European Union, the United States, Japan and the Netherlands. Major private donors, such as the David Suzuki Foundation in Vancouver, BC, the Amaliegruppen in Copenhagen, the German Marshall Fund, as well as the European Union have representatives on REC's Board of Directors.

Out of these funds, the REC operates a carefully structured grants programme designed to concentrate on the development of an effective environmental NGO network. To achieve this goal, REC identified five main areas of concentration: training, capacity building, encouraging contacts between isolated NGOs, supporting independent initiatives and raising public awareness of environmental issues [REC, 1994a: Introduction].

The REC programme includes, for example, a grants programme, information exchange and 'personal capacity building' projects. The grants
programme is most germane to our discussion because aside from information exchange, it is the major vehicle for NGO network development. The grants programme to NGOs administers two types of grants: the ‘earmarked grants’ and the local grants. The first year the REC initiated what it called the ‘unearmarked’ system. This was a system of ‘learning by doing’, of direct contact with the NGO by an REC representative working with the NGO to develop management skills. By 1993, 82 projects were completed. The system was subsequently changed to an ‘earmarked’ system, whereby the NGOs were asked to identify the most important problem areas from their perspective. These were collapsed into five areas and grant monies were ‘earmarked’ for each section. The five priority topics in 1995 were nature conservation, pollution prevention, sustainable agriculture, NGO institutional development, and environmental education. The local grants are grants up to US$5,000 to NGOs to help NGO institutional development. The money has been spent on operating expenses, training and educational activities, local projects and local events.

There is a large difference in the application for the ‘earmarked grants’ and the local grants. The local grant programme is administered by the local offices and applications are made in the local language to the local centres. Advisory boards of five to seven members are established to evaluate applications in countries where there are local offices. The boards are rotated regularly, and one of their tasks is to keep the REC main office apprised of local needs. Behind the local grants programme lie four REC assumptions: most NGOs lack basic skills to prepare projects and manage their organisations; the quality of projects needs to be improved; there are insufficient funding sources to support NGO projects; and ECE governments will support NGO development and activity.

The ‘earmarked’ grants award money up to ECU 20,000 and are highly competitive. Application procedure is formal. The NGO must apply within one of the five priority topics, there is a deadline, and applications must be made in English. The application involves the writing of a Project Concept paper in which the NGO identifies its needs in relation to the five priority topics, describes its planned actions, its known or potential co-operative partners and the estimated need of financial support. The project proposals are then given to an independent expert panel which together with REC grant professionals, evaluates them and determines the grantees. The winning NGOs are invited to a Winners Meeting to meet each other and the members of the REC grants team responsible for monitoring their projects. At the termination of the project, the NGO is required to write a formal final report. Among REC’s assumptions in the development of this very formal procedure are that NGOs need to overcome a strong anti-organization bias. NGOs are reluctant to co-operate with each other and give up their newly acquired identity. Lack of cooperation partly stems from limited funds for travel and competition for funds.

The REC grants programme has been described in some detail because the procedures the Center has developed are ones that are familiar to any Western scholar or profit or non-profit institution seeking funding. From this author’s experience, grant applications from civil society organisations are frequently turned down or not given adequate attention in the USA because the English may not be fluent, or the grant writer has had insufficient experience in grant writing to write the proposal in such a way as to catch the review committee’s attention. One may well ask: how many people in ECE know sufficient English or knowledge of administration or science to write a grant of this complexity, even with REC help?

A similar type of grants project application procedure is utilised by the other large international environmental NGOs. There are some small differences. The Rockefeller Foundation’s LEADS Program aims to provide experience and training for government, business and NGO leaders. The WWF, the IUCN, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, and the Bellona Foundation have their special areas of interest. The first two have a conservation agenda. Greenpeace and the Bellona Foundation are particularly interested in nuclear issues, the latter in nuclear waste in the Arctic. These organisations thus tend to seek out experts or NGOs interested in working with them on their project, rather than asking the NGOs to identify their needs. The conservation projects of WWF and IUCN necessarily involve the recruitment of local scientists and specialists to cooperate with WWF or IUCN experts. NGOs are primarily drawn in where contact with the public and educational projects are involved. WWF, for example, has been a leader in the protection of the Danube River through its ‘living waters’ programme. It provided support, for example, for the Danube Blues protest against the Nagymaros Dam at the end of the 1980s and is currently supporting local NGOs who are against any further dam construction. With foreign funding driving the NGOs as it is driving the entire transition process, it is not surprising that the organisation, activities and responses of the NGOs reflect the concerns and practices of their sponsors. As a result, the environmental NGOs of the late 1990s are far different creatures than their predecessors of the 1980s, not least in terms of their priorities and interests.

There are clearly positive and negative aspects to the current ECE NGO dependency on foreign donors. On the positive side, there is no doubt that environmental NGOs have staged a remarkable renaissance in the past three years. While the vast majority of pre-transition groups fell apart and new NGOs have taken their place. In its Directory of Regional NGOs published in 1994, REC lists some 1,700, operating in 13 countries. There is now
a large network of environmental NGOs in ECE that are replicating the behaviours and practices of their international peers, as they are being integrated into the international environmental movement. The more internationally known organisations, such as Ekoglasnost in Bulgaria, the Green Circle and the Rainbow Movement in the Czech Republic, and the Polish Ecological Club, survived the transition, becoming coordinators or umbrella organisations for the emerging local environmental NGOs. On the negative side, the vast majority of pre-transition groups fell apart and new NGOs have taken their place. Of those that disappeared, perhaps the saddest case is the Slovenian Greens. The NGOs’ inability to sustain their momentum helps explain why REC and other international organisations were able so quickly to assume the lead in defining the scope, activities and practice of the transition NGO network. With its primary definition outside the region, the transition process has required of the NGOs three fundamental shifts in attitude and behaviour. These are: (1) the shift to democratic institutions; (2) the shift from protest to constructive lobbying; (3) the necessity for professionalism.

The Shift to Democratic Institutions
The shift to democratic institutional structures and practice is far from completed in ECE. Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary seem to have advanced the farthest, while Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Croatia appear to be in the early stages of the process. If institutions are to function democratically, they have to be accessible and responsible to their constituents. The concept of constituency is not intuitive, but develops in relation to the perceived relevance of voters to securing an individual’s election. The public too has to believe that its participation in decision making will have an effect on the decisions that are actually made. For both government officials and the public participant, the situation involves learning a whole new set of rules of the political game. The importance of legislative procedure and rules has had to be fully grasped. And most of the new rules have not yet been written.

To learn democratic procedure, the ECE environmental groups have had to seek help from the democratic West. As the REC white papers emphasise, education is seen as a key factor in making the ECE environmental NGOs more effective, in mobilising the public and in changing the attitudes of government officials to be more responsive to public input. Organisations like REC, the Bellona Foundation and Greenpeace willingly organise educational workshops that focus on the specifics of proper and effective lobbying and organisation. To become an effective lobbyist has meant that the former unstructured freewheeling NGO environmental movement has had to reshape itself into more permanent organisations. Restructuring has meant overcoming one’s distrust of rival NGOs and learning to develop successful strategies and tactics in co-operation with them. It has meant launching educational campaigns to influence public attitudes and develop public sensitivity to environmental issues. The largest and most successful already have a small permanent staff that is available for lobbying efforts. REC’s local grants programme and programmes funded by the Open Society have developed in response to the need for training in democratic procedure. A citation from REC’s own analysis of ECE NGO behaviour is relevant here:

The NGOs exhibit a particularly strong anti-organizational tendency and anti-hierarchical tendency. While this has prevented bureaucratization and permitted a high degree of flexibility and dynamism, the resistance to building more structured organizations limits the degree to which environmentalists can expand their constituencies and become effective in fundraising and advocating on matters of public policy. Another factor influencing NGOs’ behavior is a deep distrust of centralized agencies and the feeling that ‘professional’ and larger granting organizations monopolize information and aid [Rec. 1994a: 2].

Nothing more needs to be added to this description to see the total attitudinal shift required of the NGOs, if they are to remake themselves in the image of their foreign donors. Transformation and change may indeed be necessary. But until all the democratic institutions are in place, such as full public access to information, legal rules for interaction with the legislative and executive branch of the government, and NGO standing in the legal system has been clarified, the NGOs perhaps are right in distrusting hierarchies, centralised agencies and large organisations. The foreign donors argue that professionalisation, organisation restructuring and democratisation leads to a larger, more effective role for NGOs in decision making. But many NGOs are still struggling with the question: ‘What’s in it for us? Why should we participate?’

The Shift from Protest to Policy-Making
The demands of democracy have forced the movements to become more focused, more politically sophisticated in the Western sense and policy-oriented in their actions. Underlying the environmental protests of the Communist era was a profound public distrust of the Communist system. Environmental decay came to symbolise the ghastly consequences of the regimes’ megalomania and lack of concern for the public welfare. Under the conditions of democracy, elected officials become (at least in part) instruments to carry out the will of the electorate. The public is no longer a
helpless bystander in the games of the powerful. Rather, each person is obliged to unite with like-minded individuals and make demands upon the government that are in his/her interests. If cynicism is the proper attitude for the person living under Communism, positive activism is more appropriate for the person living under democratic institutions. The shift from protest to positive participation cannot be made overnight, because it demands a fundamental shift in attitude towards the nature of government. The new NGO must now see itself as an integral part of the decision-making process. It must study existing legislation with a view to utilising it to the NGOs' benefit and work to propose new legislation where existing legislation fails to meet NGO requirements.

Most of the ECE public has not made this shift; most continue to distrust elected officials as they continue to distrust like-minded groups. Trust in the government takes time to build and comes only if its efforts are perceived as beneficial to the individual voter. Given the economic disarray, political corruption and social anxiety created by the collapse of Communism, it is not surprising that few people from ECE express great confidence in their elected officials.

On their part, the elected officials have not given their constituents much cause for confidence. The 1995 amendment to the Bulgarian Environmental Protection Act is a case in point. In November 1989, as the old regime was falling apart, activists from *Ekolognost* staged a large demonstration in Sofia protesting the water-diversion project from the Rila Mountains. The police used nightsticks and clubs to break up the demonstration, resulting in many injuries. The protests appeared to have made their point. When the Communist government fell, the new government stopped the project and passed the Environmental Protection Act requiring Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) on all projects having an impact on the environment.

On 8 February 1995, an almost identical demonstration against the diversion project took place in the town of Sapareva Banja where construction was to resume at the foot of the Rila mountains. Once again, the police beat up the protesters among whom were local leaders and a Member of Parliament. The activists demanded an international investigation, but none occurred. In March 1995, to avoid further disruption, the Bulgarian parliament voted an amendment to the Environmental Protection Act.

The *Ekolognost* memo asking for international investigation of the incident stated that 'the same violence [that occurred in 1989] happened in an effort to restore a part of the same project'. The Bulgarian activist might well wonder whether the transition had changed anything, given that protest was greeted by the authorities with the same violence as before.

The Bulgarian government is not alone in its attitude towards public demonstrations or attempts by interest groups to modify policy. The Polish parliament has also passed a measure excluding projects vital to the national interest, such as the construction of highways, from the necessity of doing an EIA. Even a government that has appeared to be proceeding more rapidly through the transition process, like the Czech government, aroused concern among environmental NGOs as to the impact its 1995 ‘NGO’ law would have on the activities of environmental NGOs. In effect, the law states that non-governmental organisations are to become more financially independent and less dependent on the Czech government for funding. The environmental NGOs correctly wondered whether that meant that the public funding they had received to date would be cut off.

Another problem in the transformation of environmental NGOs from protesters to participants in decision making is the fact, in virtually all the countries, that enabling legislation is far from complete. Some environmental legislation dates back to the Communist period and has not yet been rewritten. Other newer legislation makes some provision for public participation, particularly in the EIA process, but omits any formal NGO role in legislation. Where there is enabling legislation, participation varies both between and within countries. Influence at the local level appears to be more consistent and more effective than at the national level, as local officials experience a more direct relationship with their constituents than do those at the national level. An intuitive reading of successful environmental NGO actions suggests that action is more effective at the local level as well. The huge demonstrations supported by the international organisations against construction of nuclear power plants have done little to change official attitudes. In every case, whether it be the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, or Lithuania, the national government has pursued nuclear construction in the face of strong NGO opposition. Appeals for international NGO solidarity have had no effect. What is more, the governments are pursuing construction not necessarily with safety as their highest concern. The decision of Slovakia to accept the Czech and Russian offers at Mochovce, and the Bulgarian interest in a similar Russian offer are cases in point. Once again, the lack of response from elected officials does not augur well for confidence building between the voters and their representatives.

A Western lobbying group or NGO might look at NGO activities in ECE and argue that the local NGOs are going at politics the wrong way. But Western help puts the local NGOs in a dilemma. In extreme cases, Western sponsorship and training risks the sponsor and the agent being labelled a 'Western agent', as the Russians labelled the Bellona Foundation and Vladimir Nikitin. Given past experience and practice under Communism, there is little doubt that learning Western modes of political behaviour is
learning foreign behaviour. The adaptation or integrating of foreign experience into local practices raises the whole question of how far adaptation can go without becoming what might be unkindly labelled ‘international green imperialism’.

On the other hand Western support and training makes it possible for NGOs to gain access to new technology, including computers and the relevant software to go on-line and access a network, such as Hungary’s Green Spider that started up in March 1993. Communication facilities such as these are essential for the coordination of environmental NGO efforts, at both the domestic and international levels.

But this Western support and training risks alienating members of grassroots organisations, especially those that have little or no opportunity to become computer literate and who may feel intimidated by the directives and programmes emanating from the international organisations. Once again, the past intrudes on the present. During the Communist era, the only participants at organised meetings were the bureaucratic appointees of an officially recognised group. While citizens of all countries now have the theoretical right of free assembly, the fact remains that representatives of those environmental NGOs with access to foreign financing and training in appropriate organisational and political behaviour are most likely to be engaged in networking, including attending national and international meetings. There exists the worrying prospect of a gap developing between grass-roots organisations, on the one hand, and, on the other, national NGOs working with the international organisations.

A final aspect of the requirement for more public participation in national decision-making is the issue of maintaining NGO independence from national politics as well as international politics. The Western international environmental organisations have their agenda, the national governments have theirs, and when they do not coincide, the NGO is forced to choose. If its leadership is a paid bureaucracy, more likely than not it will side with the national government to retain its credentials. Such participation in policy-making forces the NGOs to become deeply involved in politics, an activity that was considered dirty and inappropriate for a committed environmentalist during the Communist era. For those born under Communism, the threshold between contamination and participation has yet to be fully delineated.

The Shift to Professionalism and Expert Knowledge

With the need to be involved in policy making comes the need for accurate information and the need for the NGO representatives to act in a professional manner. It can be argued that information was so limited in Communist times that education by experts is today essential to the expansion of public awareness of environmental problems and public participation in NGOs. How else can an NGO be informed enough to take on local government let alone the national legislature? The REC discussion of its grants programme stresses the progress many NGOs have made in becoming more professional (REC’s word) both in grant writing and in day-to-day administration. Environmental policy-making under the Communist regime relied heavily on experts who exerted the most sustained pressure in their quiet lobbying behind the scenes. Today the increasing reliance on expertise, coupled with the promotion of professionalism among NGO leaders, stands in sharp contrast with the popular spontaneity of the pre-democratic NGOs. If primary responsibility for problem solving remains with the experts, there needs to be a very good reason why the ordinary citizen in the street should get involved in NGO activity just to push a solution advocated by experts. There may be even less reason to get involved when the process of involvement is externally prescribed and directed.

Future Development of the Environmental Movement

For the foreseeable future, foreign direction and financial control of the ECE environmental NGOs will continue. The principal coordinating organisation will continue to be the Regional Environmental Center in Budapest. The success of international financing and foreign direction of NGO renewal is undeniable. Over the past four years, from unstructured, perhaps overly-idealistic groups of enthusiasts have been created typical Western-style professional NGOs with well-defined environmental niches. The increasing professionalism of these groups puts them in a good position to participate in environmental decision-making, if and when the legal infrastructure permits. Without international assistance, environmental NGO co-operation and activism would have been non-existent or at a much lower level. The success of REC’s programme is such that similar centres are being opened to serve the former Soviet republics.

The reconstruction of the environmental NGOs is a very important development for ECE. However, the author questions whether these professional organisations can ever mobilise the ECE populations like the old dissident movements did. The ECE publics are becoming increasingly disillusioned with the Western concept of democracy. According to the highly respected 1994 Eurobarometer Survey, public satisfaction with the development of democracy in the region was negative for all countries except the Czech Republic. Public agreement with the direction of development had dropped in all countries, with a shift from 13 per cent agreeing in Poland in 1991 to 29 per cent disagreeing in 1994. The only
three countries where there was positive agreement on the country’s direction were Albania, Estonia and Hungary. In no case did agreement represent 50 per cent of the respondents (European Commission in Gati [1996: 8–11]). The election victory of former Communists in 1994 and 1995 in virtually all countries save the Czech Republic indicates the depth of the disillusion.

To suggest that 40 years of misrule cannot be turned around in five is inappropriate. The ECE public demanded the fall of the Communist regimes because of their perceived misrule. The public had little information about the seriousness of the economic and political collapse, nor the difficulties to be encountered in efforts to remedy the situation. But the public certainly did not ask for more misrule. People were also largely ignorant of problems afflicting the Western democracies. Once the novelty of contact with the West wore off and the problems became visible, the promises of democracy no longer seemed as bright. The perceived attractions of employment and social stability of the Communist era returned in all their nostalgia.

The great strength of the pre-democratic environmental movements was that they were all indigenous. Western contacts and Western help came after the movements were up and running. The great weakness of the development of NGOs today is that they are organised, nurtured and sustained by the West in the name of democracy building. Should public opinion radically turn, the environmental NGOs would find themselves isolated and out of touch. Empowerment is not a push from above. If the public is to become empowered, the move needs to come from the grassroots level, to arise from ordinary people.

In a telling article, the former Polish dissident, Adam Michnik, describes the 1995 electoral victory of the former Communist Party in Poland as the ‘velvet restoration’. Comparing the elections to the French restoration of the monarchy after the fall of Napoleon in 1815, he writes: ‘The revolution had grandeur, hope and danger. The restoration is the calm of a dead pond, a marketplace of petty intrigues and the ugliness of the bribe, [just as the] fall from Bonaparte to what happened afterwards was a fall from being into nothingness [Michnik, 1996: 14–15].’

If the environmental NGOs merely imitate their foreign benefactors, they will surely develop the appropriate institutions for lobbying and pressuring their national governments and perhaps learn to co-operate and integrate their programmes at the regional level. However, in doing so, they are likely to be absorbed by the EU, which has pledged ECU 4.42 million and has given ECU 4.08 million. The US has pledged ECU 4.2 million and has given ECU 2.5 million. Japan has pledged ECU 3.5 million and has given that amount. Japan’s donation is part of a special Japanese Fund designed ‘to strengthen cooperation between the government of Japan and REC to help develop market-based solutions to environmental problems’ (Japanese Special Fund, REC: 1995: 19). The Netherlands has pledged ECU 901,000 and given ECU 851,000.

The descriptions of the REC programmes and the grants programmes in particular, as well as the citations, are taken from REC [1994a: ‘Earnmarked Grants’, ‘Local Grants’].

All the country reports in the REC white paper [REC, 1993] unhesitatingly admit that the major source of funding for NGO activities is foreign.

NOTES

1. The ECE governments understand the EU position very well: ‘It would be an illusion to expect that the welcome approach of the West towards the post-communist countries is motivated by anything else than by their concrete particular interests and by the space for manoeuvring between the internal and external dimensions of these interests’ [Hymer 1995: 15].

2. From 1990 to 1994, the EU has pledged ECU 4.42 million and has given ECU 4.08 million. The US has pledged ECU 4.2 million and has given ECU 2.5 million. Japan has pledged ECU 3.5 million and has given that amount. Japan’s donation is part of a special Japanese Fund designed ‘to strengthen cooperation between the government of Japan and REC to help develop market-based solutions to environmental problems’ (Japanese Special Fund, REC: 1995: 19). The Netherlands has pledged ECU 901,000 and given ECU 851,000.

3. The descriptions of the REC programmes and the grants programmes in particular, as well as the citations, are taken from REC [1994a: ‘Earnmarked Grants’, ‘Local Grants’].

4. All the country reports in the REC white paper [REC, 1993] unhesitatingly admit that the major source of funding for NGO activities is foreign.
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