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The New Subversives - Czech Environmentalists after 1989

Petr Jehlicka

INTRODUCTION

Between the 1980s and late 1990s the Czech environmental movement has developed from two official national conservationist groups, which were recognized by the communist regime and which in their activities overlapped with more independent initiatives, into a complex network of diverse groups. Early in this past decade the standing of the environmental movement shifted from champions of democracy and esteemed reformers to elements dangerous to democracy. A cosy arrangement by which the movement was essentially integrated in the state environmental administration disappeared overnight when environmentalists were purged from state institutions following the 1992 general elections. The second half of the 1990s witnessed further diversification of the Czech environmental movement, its professionalisation and also moderation of the means it employs to pursue its goals. Environmentalists also refocused from “small” to “big ecology” - today this movement addresses the whole range of environmental issues. Most recently, to many observers they have once again taken up the role of pioneers of civil society.

BRONTOSAURUS HAS SURVIVED: THE CZECH ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT BEFORE NOVEMBER 1989

Apart from about 2,000 dissidents concerned mainly with human rights - signatories of Charter '77 - who posed an outright political challenge to the undemocratic regime, the only other outlet of a serious protest against some practices of the communist regime, was what would, using the contemporary vocabulary, be referred to as the environmental movement. However, the term has to be used with caution. First of all, throughout the 1970s and most of the 1980s, there were hardly any groups other than nature conservationists. Second, as Tickle and Vavrousek (1998) point out, these groups were still tied, albeit often loosely, to the state apparatus. Third, until the second half of the 1980s, activities of all existing environmental organizations were related to what the communist aparatchiks labeled "small ecology" as opposed to "big ecology". Unlike "big ecology", that is decision making processes on strategic and politically charged issues that were reserved for the Communist Party and state administration, “small ecology” meant activities which from the Communist Party's view were harmless and non-political. At least initially, in the early 1970s, the regime saw little danger to its legitimacy in citizens' participation in nature conservation. Hence, environmental organizations were typically engaged in cleaning water streams of rubbish, looking after protected areas, disseminating knowledge on functioning of ecosystems and educating young people in ecology in strictly scientific terms. A leading Czech sociologist Hana Librova similarly assesses the situation a decade later:

The goals pursued by humble and devoted activity of nature protectors were, on close inspection, in a fundamental contradiction to the government's orientation on extensive economic growth that was later replaced by the effort to maintain status quo of citizens'

consumption at any cost, including devastation of the environment and natural resources...At a practical level and measured by actual results of [Czech nature protectors'] work, their activity was foolish. Czech nature protectors were seeking to save individual plants, register ant-hills and prevent amphibians from being run-over by cars when they migrated across a road. At the same time, government policy was capable of turning vast tracts of the country into desert by a single stroke of the pen (Librova in Vanek 1996: 42-43).

It is estimated that in the late 1980s the membership of a single organization - the Czech Union of Nature Protectors (*Cesky svaz ochrancu prirody; CSOP*), which was the largest Czech environmental group, was about 26,000 (Kundrata 1992). This is a figure that far exceeds the most optimistic estimates of the combined membership of Czech environmental groups in 2000. At present *CSOP* has, after recovering from a major membership crisis of the early 1990s, 8,000 members out of whom about 3,000 are children and young people below the age of eighteen. The standing of *CSOP* in the context of Czech environmental movement has changed too. While the Union, or more precisely, some of its several local branches, was by far the most important actor of the Czech environmental movement in the 1980s, it has been keeping a low profile in the course of the 1990s in comparison with more media oriented environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that concentrated on campaigning and political lobbying. It has been only recently when the Union, under the new and young leadership, adopted a more active and in the Czech context innovative approach to nature conservation. For instance, in 1999 *CSOP* started a pilot project aimed at testing the feasibility of land trusts as means of effective protection of small territorial units that would engage local people in nature conservation.

The first Czech environmental organization officially established after the 1948 communist coup was *Tis*. It formed in 1969 when the Association for Nature Conservation broke away from the National Museum Society. *Tis* occasionally went beyond the usual nature conservation activities of the time. According to Vanek (1996:34) in 1971 *Tis* sent a letter to the president of Czechoslovakia criticizing the government's intention to build a hydropower plant in a landscape protected area and its members read extracts from Rachel Carson's book "Silent Spring" on the Czechoslovak Radio. *Tis* eventually succumbed to the pressure of the Communist authorities that demanded that this organization beyond its direct control would "voluntarily" disband itself. *Tis* officially ceased its activities in December 1979.

However, by the government decision the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic was delegated a task to establish a new conservationist organization that would replace *Tis*. The new, officially sanctioned organization - *CSOP* - was established in September 1979. The *CSOP*'s official task was "to develop ideo-educational and propagandistic activities aimed at winning masses for nature conservation and protection of the environment along the Communist Party line" (Vanek 1996:41). The top hierarchy of *CSOP* was composed of *nomenklatura* cadres. Many *Tis* members, unaware of the official goals with which *CSOP* was charged by the authorities, joined the new organization. In fact, they had no choice if they wanted to continue their conservationist work.

Before 1989 the movement as a whole was still predominantly marked by technocratic and scientific, and hence partial solutions that centred on locally manifested environmental pollution threatening human health. As Kundrata (1992) pointed out "one has to take into consideration the fact that since the 1950s, at least 90 per cent of university graduates

received a highly specialized education not based on a holistic or global approach". For a small but growing circle of groups and individual activists, however, environmental issues had their causes in economic and political conditions.

Several groups in *CSOP*, especially in the latter half of the 1980s, became engaged in activities that transcended the field of small ecology and that led to cooperation with some independent (and illegal) groups. The case in point here is the publication of the "ecological bulletin" *Nika* which was the official magazine of the Prague City Committee of *CSOP* and which, in the course of the whole 1980s, dared to enter into a direct confrontation with the Communist Party's line over some environmentally controversial projects. *Nika* printed not only articles by its staff editors and occasionally under false names articles by "ecological dissidents", but also by members of the Ecological Section of the Biological Society of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences.

The only legal environmental organization that perceived and approached environmental problems explicitly as "big ecology" issues was the Ecological Section (*Ekologická sekce*) of Biological Society of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. This professional environmentalists organization evolved from a group of friends and colleagues, most of whom held jobs in various institutes of the Academy of Sciences and was in a close contact with some dissidents from Charter '77.1 In its peak in 1989, the membership of the Section reached 400. As most members of the Section worked as researchers in the Academy of Sciences, they enjoyed a privileged access to environmental data, most of which were treated by the regime as top secret information. The Section's activities largely consisted of organizing seminars and lectures that were open to the public. It also prepared a number of expert reports commissioned by various government institutions. However, the Section's single act that had a significant impact on the politicisation of the environment in communist Czechoslovakia was the leaking of the "Report on the State of the Environment in Czechoslovakia"2 to Charter '77 in 1983 and its publication by the Western press in 1984.

The fact that the material was published in the Charter '77's *samizdat* periodical *Infoch* left the communist authorities relatively complacent due to its limited impact on the public. However, its appearance in *Le Monde*, *Tageszeitung* and *Die Zeit* as well in the Radio Free Europe broadcast infuriated the authorities. The casualties among the Section's members were limited though. Only the distributor of the original 20 copies of the Report Jaroslav Stoklasa was forced to change his employment and move from Prague to České Budějovice (Vanek 1996:69). Moreover, the progressive group within the party was put on a defensive.3 The Report certainly facilitated an increased international pressure on the Czechoslovak government to embrace the environment as a legitimate issue and in this way helped to strengthen the position of Czech environmentalists *vis-a-vis* the communist authorities. From the mid-1980s a number of Western delegations raised the issue of environmental pollution in the communist Czechoslovakia and thus contributed to gradual transformation of the environment in an international issue.

The feature, in which another major environmental group of the 1970s and 1980s - *Hnutí Brontosaurus* (Movement Brontosaurus) - resembled *CSOP*, was the cleavage between its top level that was controlled by nomenklatura cadres of the Socialist Union of Youth (*Socialistický svaz mládeže, SSM*) and its most attractive activities conducted by ordinary members. Each group of Brontosaurus volunteers was formally part of a local *SSM* branch (Bouzková 1999). However, in reality, this relationship can be best described as "arms-length" (Tickle and Vavroušek 1998). Brontosaurus's roots date to 1973 when several young people, members of *SSM* in the Academy of Sciences' Institute of Landscape Ecology in

Prague, who were influenced by ideas of the 1972 UN Conference on Human Environment, started a campaign under the slogan "Brontosaurus has not survived....." aimed at ecological education (Bouzková 1999). Brontosaurus could count on almost 10,000 volunteers in its heyday (Kundrata 1992).⁴

Brontosaurus was engaged in a range of activities, the most popular of which were summer camps that started in 1975. Participants worked there as volunteers for two weeks, yet the demand highly exceeded the number of available places. Only about a tenth of applicants were allowed to participate. Brontosaurus also organized photographic and cartoon competitions about environmental problems. This loose movement also managed to extend its activities to the international level. In the mid 1980s Brontosaurus group from Charles University in Prague linked with *ELTE* club in Budapest, *Ekotrend* from Banská Bystrica in Slovakia and *Polski klub ekologiczny (PKE)* in Cracow and established the first truly international East European environmental organization. In 1989, but still under the reign of the Communist Party, Brontosaurus organized a mass gathering of young people in the Sumava mountains to which the central committee of *SSM* invited a Czech emigrant and then German Green Party MP Milan Horacek, as a guest speaker. People from the Ecological Section and even some Charter '77 signatories also took part in this event. The fall of the communist regime was in the offing.....

After November 1989 Brontosaurus broke off its bonds with *SSM* and established itself as an independent organization. Unlike in the 1980s, the organization is almost absent from the media coverage, but it has carried on with its traditional activities aimed at environmental education of young people mainly at summer camps. As a member of the Brontosaurus leadership concluded his recent article, Brontosaurus may have lost some of its influence in society, but not necessarily its relevance (Vnenk 1999).

Several independent environmental groups were founded in the final year of the old regime. The first was Prague Mothers (*Pražské matky*) established during a smog alert by women alarmed about the health of their children in winter 1988/89. The second group, established in September 1989, that gradually evolved from a *CSOP* local branch took the name Children of the Earth (*Deti Zeme*) and from its inception aspired to be a Czech branch of Friends of the Earth. However, it was another group emerging in 1989 that later on became the Czech member of this international organization. This was Rainbow Movement (*Hnutí Duha*) founded in Brno by secondary school students in summer 1989. All three groups have experienced a dynamic development in the 1990s and the last two have become the backbone of today's Czech environmental movement.

In the final year of the communist period, these groups, and *Pražské matky* in particular, on several occasions dared to take their protest against the neglect of environmental deterioration to the public domain. Thus the environmental protests became part of a new wider phenomenon in the communist Czechoslovakia - open confrontation with the communist power in the form of mass demonstrations. As Slocock (1996) noticed, groups such as the Ecological Section and *CSOP* provided the framework for critical evaluation of the communist regime's environmental performance which eventually led many individuals into more overt forms of involvement in dissident movements. Environmental political mobilization was an important part of the wider movement that in November 1989 eventually brought down the communist regime in Czechoslovakia.

THE VELVET REVOLUTION

Although the extension of the phrase "green velvet revolution", appropriately coined by Podoba (1998) for the course of revolutionary events in Slovakia, to the Czech environmentalists' role in the November 1989 would be a little far-fetched, "it is also clear that [Czech] environmentalists played a significant role in the growth, organization and politics of the new 'official' opposition" (Tickle and Vavrousek 1998).

It often escaped commentators' attention that several demonstrations centred on unbearable smog situations that regularly occurred in Northern Bohemia each autumn, took place a week before the Prague student march of 17 November 1989. A 16-year old apprentice put up posters around the North Bohemian town of Teplice that called on fellow citizens to gather on 11 November and protests against "the inhuman attitude of leading figures of the political apparatus" (Vanek 1996:131). Between 800-1,000 people protested against air pollution wearing masks and demanded clean air and healthy environment for their children. Demonstrations in Teplice continued for the subsequent three days and had a domino effect across Northern Bohemia. Similar demonstrations were called and prepared in five other North Bohemian cities for the period between 15 and 21 November.

However, before these demonstrations could reach the full scale, events in Prague led to the almost instant collapse of the regime in the country. Here too, environmentalists took an active part in the revolution. The single person who became probably the most influential figure was the co-chair of the Ecological Section (*Ekologická sekce*) Josef Vavrousek who "quickly assumed a prominent role within the Civic Forum, chairing the 'Programme Commission' responsible for strategic policy development" (Tickle and Vavrousek 1998). He made sure that environment figured among the most important issues which Civic Forum wanted to address. In the wake of the November revolutionary days a number of environmental groups emerged. However, it was the Green Party that almost instantly became the main manifestation of popular Czech environmentalism.

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE GREEN PARTY

The high degree of political mobilization connected with the formation of the Green Party has by now fallen into a near oblivion. However, it was the Green Party rather than environmental groups that immediately after the November 1989 political upheaval became the champion of the environmental cause in the Czech Republic. Founded as the first political party after the demise of the old regime - only four days after the pivotal student demonstration on 17 November 1989 - it attracted wide support and ranked high in pre-electoral opinion polls in 1990. Its press release claimed that the party had 5,200 members and 11,000 signatures supporting its legalization (Jehlicka and Kostecky 1995). The intriguing fact, that was little noticed at the time though, was that the Prague founding circle secured an office space including the equipment necessary to run a newly established party so quickly. This was a time when other nascent political parties had no resources at all. It is now established that the origin of the Green Party in Prague was connected to the Communist regime's secret police. Local groups that later formed the Green party consisted of people who were unknown to environmental activists involved in the pre-November 1989 environmental movement.

The initially massive popularity of the Green Party was reflected both in the media coverage and in results of opinion polls. For instance *Mlada fronta* daily reported at the end of January that the Green Party had 15,000 members in the Czech Republic. A month later, during the founding congress of the Green Party, the same newspaper put the number of its

members at 80,000 nation-wide. As far as the opinion polls were concerned, the Greens maintained a stable 11 per cent support from February until the run-up to the first free general elections. However, in the June 1990 parliamentary the party did not manage to overcome the five per cent electoral threshold to enter the Czech or the federal Czechoslovak parliament. As funding derived from the electoral performance is the main source of income for most Czech political parties, Greens' financial decline was a logical consequence. The lowest point in the short history of the Green Party came with the 1996 general election in the Czech Republic, when the party did not secure enough financial means to field its candidates.

The Czech Green Party stood for what was under the communist regime regarded to be a radical environmental agenda. Its typical features were strong emphasis on local pollution of air, water and soil and articulation of environmental demands with public health claims (van der Heijden 1999). The Czech Greens found their electoral support primarily in industrial areas particularly affected by environmental pollution. This is the opposite pattern to that found in some West European countries such as Germany and Britain, where areas most devastated by "old" industrialization manifest relatively low environmental concern, whether it is indicated by membership in environmental NGOs (Cowell and Jehlicka 1995) or by the vote for green parties (Jehlicka 1994).

A research project on the Czech Greens conducted in 1992 and 1993 showed that the belief that the Green Party's activity contributed to the improvement of people's health was the second most important factor for joining the party thus confirming that in the Czech Republic environmental problems were generally understood as human health related issues (Jehlicka 1998). The leading figures in the Green Party were former medical or veterinary doctors and polytechnic graduates.⁵ As such, this party had little resemblance to West European Green Parties of the time. It embodied a value orientation that Eckersley (1995) calls human welfare ecology that was associated with the rise of Green Parties in Western Europe in the 1970s.

The murky origin of the Prague branch of the Party, the absence of publicly known and credible people in the ranks of the Greens, and an unanimous refusal of rest of the environmental movement, whether traditional nature conservationist organizations or new campaigning groups, severely undermined the credibility of the Green Party. Its chances in the political arena were further undermined by the fact that all political parties, left and right, by the time of the first general elections adopted most of the Green Party's agenda aimed at cleaning up the environment as a pre-condition for reducing risks to human health.

ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT BETWEEN 1989 AND 1995: FROM CHAMPIONS OF DEMOCRATIZATION TO EXTREMISTS SUBVERTING DEMOCRACY

The first effect of the arrival of democracy on the environmental movement was a massive brain drain to newly founded state environmental institutions. It is no wonder then that a remarkable feature of the first 'enthusiastic' period after 1989 (November 1989 - mid-1991; see Jehlicka and Kara [1994] for more details) was the close relationship between state officials and activists from non-governmental environmental groups. The Czech Ministry of the Environment (MoE), for instance, both initiated the Green Parliament composed of representatives of almost all environmental groups in 1990 and granted it a status of a consultative body.

Fagin (1994: 489-490) so summarized the situation following the departure of leading activists from environmental movement to the state administration:

After the revolution of November 1989 the new administration was composed of dissidents and activists many of whom had been involved with ecological groups. The degree of overlap between the new political regime and NGOs was particularly evident in the Ministry of the Environment at the federal and republican levels: Josef Vavrousek, the federal Minister, and Bedrich Moldan, Czech Environment Minister had both been members of the Ecological Section of the Biological Society which was part of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences....Others such as Dr Jaroslav Stoklasa, responsible for compiling data on the state of the environment in the early 1980s, were now working within the Ministry.

In the middle of the 1990s Slocock (1996) described Czech environmental network as a compact and relatively cohesive network with its roots in professional environmentalist organizations tolerated under the former regime, such as the Ecological Section and voluntary organizations like *CSOP*. Although many former activists turned officials were later removed from the top posts, this network remained almost intact throughout the 1990s. For the most part of the decade *CSOP* enjoyed a privileged access to the Ministry of the Environment and its funds earmarked for support of environmental NGOs. Society for Sustainable Living (*Spolecnost pro trvale udrzitelny zivot, STUZ*) formed by Josef Vavrousek in 1992 that in some respect, mainly by its membership and type of activity (seminars, public discussions, publishing reports) resembled Ecological Society (*Ekologicka spolecnost*), also exerted, due to its personal contacts, a considerable degree on influence on the MoE and became an important part of the Czech environmental policy network.

Apart from this network with its roots in a more distant past, Czech environmental movement of the early 1990s consisted of new groups, such as *Hnutí Duha* and *Deti Zeme*, that were founded shortly before the November 1989 upheaval and that quickly adopted Western campaigning know-how. This type of activity, by standards of Czech political culture entirely unconventional, encountered hostility in all quarters of the society and turned out to be counterproductive. Furthermore, due to their financial dependence on Western sources (foundations, partner organizations), these groups could easily be portrayed by their opponents as pawns in hands of foreign interests and their activity as a foreign intervention into domestic affairs.

Borrowing the term from Patocka (1999: 16) the activities of most of the new NGOs established around 1990 and operating at the national level, could be described, with some degree of simplification, as „students happenings“ that were designed to draw the general public's attention to various environmental issues. However, following the 1992 general elections, Czech ENGOS, or at least those with the more radical agenda, gradually came to realize that it did not suffice to bring problems to light and that their methods should reflect their effort to achieve concrete changes. As by 1992 the cosy relationship between ENGOS and the state administration was over, some groups and most notably *Hnutí Duha* and later also Greenpeace (that was established in Czechoslovakia in March 1992), began to employ a repertoire of activities that fell in a broad category of „civil disobedience“. As this was the time of the growing influence of western ENGOS on their Central and Eastern European counterparts, Czech environmental groups were restructuring their activities towards campaigning that also included direct actions.

Two determined campaigns featuring direct actions defined the Czech environmental movement of the first half of the 1990s and at the same time significantly contributed to the alienation of the movement from large sections of the general public unaccustomed to

confrontation as a strategy of environmental groups. Annual blockades of the construction site of the nuclear power plant Temelín, however symbolic due to low number of participants, which were part of the anti-nuclear campaign were in many ways counterproductive. Blockades were regarded by the majority of the media and citizens alike as emotional and completely irrational actions. In a technocratic society as the Czech one that highly values scientific but value-free rationality and hard data, this was a fundamentally damaging accusation. While the Temelin cause remains open in 2000 and Czech ENGOs are still campaigning against the plant to be phased in, another major battle of the early 1990s was quickly resolved and although the ENGOs lost, they could claim at least a moral victory. Several ENGOs, initially Greenpeace and later few other including *Hnutí Duha*, joined forces to save a North Bohemian village Libkovice. As so often during the former regime, the inhabitants of the village were forced to leave their houses and were provided with flats in nearby towns, because the village was located on brown coal deposits. The difference this time was that Libkovice was to be erased from the surface under the new democratic government. ENGOs cooperated with those Libkovice citizens who refused to be evicted and tried to save the village by all sorts of means ranging from photograph exhibitions to tying themselves to buckets and bulldozer blades. Eventually they lost the battle as all Libkovice citizens were moved out and most buildings were pulled down. However, ENGOs celebrated a moral victory, although it was a very sour victory. Few years later the environmental groups' arguments were proved correct. As most experts and all ENGOs that took part in this confrontation had argued, the destruction of the village was completely unnecessary. The edge of the open cast mine has never reached the former village due to unfavourable mining conditions underneath.

The short period between 1990 and 1992 when attempts were made for integrated pollution control and when more advanced principles such as the principle of prevention were employed, was followed, starting with June 1992 when the second general elections were held, by a new period during which many progressive features were abandoned. What was previously seen as a necessary first step towards fundamental improvement of the state of the environment - clean-up and installation of end-of-pipe technologies - suddenly became the ultimate goal of pollution control policy. The Ministry of the Environment lost many of its newly gained competencies and environment again became a discrete policy area.

To document an almost anecdotal dimension of the U-turn of Czech environmental policy in the course of the 1990s it suffices to say that the notion of sustainable development became completely banned from official government documents despite the fact that it frequently appears in Czech environmental legislation that was passed just a few years earlier. To the right-wing government of the new prime minister Vaclav Klaus and to him personally, integrated environmental policy presented a glaring example of a much loathed state interventionism in the free functioning of market forces based on newly introduced private ownership.⁶ This anti-environmental crusade was endorsed by the majority of the media.

The anti-environmental campaign culminated in 1995. Similarly to the Communist controlled media in the mid-1980s accusing environmentalists of being threats to the progress of society, in February 1995 Czech environmentalists appeared on a list of subversive elements which was drafted by the state intelligence services. Apart from environmentalists, other groups on the list of subversive elements were skinheads and Communists. Typically, it was the new campaigning groups that were included in the list: Greenpeace, *Deti Zeme*, *Hnutí Duha* and *Animal SOS*. In addition to the accusation of being a threat to the well-being of society that was reminiscent of the past, this time environmentalists were also portrayed as a

threat to democracy. Thus, over only slightly more than five years environmentalists went through a paradoxical transformation from being one of the major proponents of democracy to one of its major threats (Fagin and Jehlicka 1998). After a massive wave of protests both from foreign and domestic bodies and individuals, state authorities were forced to remove environmental organizations from this list.

Given how small and weak Czech environmental NGOs were at the time of this campaign, its intensity and scale was striking. In 1994 and 1995 Fagin (1996) carried out research based on interviews with staff of the main offices of several environmental groups in the Czech Republic. He found out that Greenpeace in large towns and regions relied on an average of between 10 and 20 activists, the majority of whom were students or people under 25 (Fagin 1996:141). This means that the total number of Greenpeace supporters were unlikely to exceed 500. Of *Deti Zemì*, Fagin (1996:152) says:

Membership of *Deti Zeme* increased from 60 in 1989 to approximately 600 in 1994, of which approximately 80 are active. The 90 per cent of members who play a passive role in the organization pay subscriptions and receive regular information about current campaigns and activities. The vast majority of members are students, and people under 25.

Another proof of the very weak position of these environmental NGOs, directly stemming from their tiny membership, was their financial insecurity and dependence on external sources, mainly on Western foundations. For instance, in 1994 Greenpeace Czechoslovakia had a budget of 220,000 USD, out of which the contribution of Czech and Slovak members was less than two per cent. The rest was a transfer of money from Greenpeace International (Salek 1994). *Deti Zeme* did better, as their income from membership fees was 12 per cent in 1994, 37 per cent coming from services offered by the organization and only 40 per cent of their annual income was covered by Western foundations. The rest (11 per cent) were grants from the Ministry of the Environment on specific projects (Fagin 1996:155).

By the mid-1990s (and after six or seven years of existence) the new NGOs still had a small membership and very little support in society which was, beyond student circles, confined to several dozen intellectuals (writers, actors, journalists, actors and academics). Their activities were seriously hampered by lack of financial means, for most of which they depend on Western donors. At the same time, however, they were becoming professional organizations adopting organizational structures and campaigning methods developed by Western NGOs.

The backlash of the establishment against environmental groups coupled by little response to their activities by the society certainly shook their confidence.⁷ In any case, apparently the lesson taken by the Czech environmental movement as whole was that it should adopt a more moderate behavior, especially as far as the means by which they pursued their goals were concerned. As a result, direct actions were almost abandoned as most activists believed that they gave rise to the majority of bad press these groups received.

THE SECOND HALF OF THE 1990s: STRUGGLE FOR RECOGNITION AND FINANCIAL SECURITY

Preparation of reports by hired experts, lobbying in the parliament, close cooperation with sympathetic journalists and a better use of the existing laws became increasingly favoured methods of NGOs' activities in the second half of the 1990s. This change gradually

started to deliver results. Environmental NGOs and their activities now enjoy much more positive coverage in the media and some leading activists became popular participants in TV and radio debates. It is obviously difficult to establish to what extent this is the result of the intentional self-moderation effort and to what extent it is the result of the learning process on the side of journalists. There is also a small but growing circle of usually young politicians who are sympathetic to the environmental movement. The two major national NGOs, *Hnutí Duha* (now the Czech branch of Friends of the Earth) and *Deti Zeme* also transformed themselves into well organized and relatively effective organizations. The environmental movement as a whole has gone, although to various extents, through three major shifts (Jancar-Webster 1998):

- ! the shift to democratic institutions;
- ! the shift from protest to policy-making;
- ! the shift to professionalism and expert knowledge.

In my view these shifts have two more dimensions:

- ! the shift to diversification and specialization of environmental movement accompanied by increased ability of communication and mutual support;
- ! the shift towards a more global perception of environmental problems and their complex nature embedded in social, economic and political practices.

Unlike Hungary, or until recently also Slovakia, there are groups in the Czech Republic that operate at the national level (*Deti Zeme* and *Hnutí Duha*), that combine what used to be called in the past "big" and "small ecology". Labor within these groups is divided between the center of these groups that usually focus on political lobbying, cooperation with experts including lawyers, publication of newsletters and magazines as well as with their foreign counterparts and local branches (that usually enjoy a large degree of autonomy) that deal with locally or regionally significant environmental issues. Greenpeace also operates at the national level, but does not fit the same category of NGOs as it does not have local chapters. All three organizations lead long-term and quite sophisticated campaigns on specific issues, such as energy, forestry, protection of landscape, quarrying of minerals and the like. The campaigning skills and ability of Czech environmental movement to exert significant influence was best documented in 1999 by the largest campaign to date that focused on the question of the continuation or halting of the construction of Temelin nuclear power plant. Although environmentalists lost this battle, very few people expected the advocates in the government of the plant to win by a very narrow margin. The government's vote was 11 in favour of continuation of the construction against 8 who opposed it (for more details see Axelrod 1999).

There are other groups that are present in certain regions and lead regionally campaigns focused on all sorts of regionally significant issues. Typical examples of this type of organizations are Friends of Nature (*Pratele přírody*) in Usti nad Labem who concentrate on protection of the Labe river valley, and Old Protectors of the Jizerske Mountains (*Starí ochranci Jizerských hor*) in Liberec whose main concern is the replacement of the spruce monoculture in the mountains with a biologically more diverse forest. Another NGO of this type is South Bohemian Mothers (*Jihoceske matky*) who have been relentlessly fighting the construction of the nuclear power plant Temelín throughout the 1990s.

However, there is also a growing number of environmental organizations specializing in education. These groups run "houses of eco-education". They provide teaching for school classes or other groups of children. At least one example of an "ecological institute" exists in the Czech Republic. This is *Veronica* in Brno, which is formally still part of the *CSOP* but developed in a unique establishment that could be described as the institute of applied ecology. *Veronica* publishes a periodical aimed at nature conservation, carries out applied research centred on landscape ecology and provides consultancy on household ecology to the general public. *STUZ*, with its privileged access to state environmental institutions despite its quite radical views, is a rather unusual environmental group.

What has remained unchanged though, despite the above described major transformations, is the dependency of Czech environmental groups on foreign sources of funding. It has been only very recently that NGOs realized that they have to look for an alternative source of funding, because most Western foundations that provided finances for NGOs in Central Europe in the past decade have considerably reduced the amount of funding or completely withdrawn from the region. An alternative, domestic source of money in the shape of a special fund that was set up several years ago during the process of privatization in order to provide funding for non-profit activities, failed to benefit environmental groups. Out of six categories of potential beneficiaries of this fund that was disbursed in 1999, environmental groups were the least successful applicants. As a consequence, most of the groups have recently launched campaigns aimed at recruiting as many people as possible as their regular fee-paying subscribers. Greenpeace claims to have tripled the number of their supporters over a year period so that is now between 4,000 and 5,000, whereas *Hnutí Duha* estimates the size of its fee-paying membership at 500 and the number of supporters of *Deti Zeme* slightly exceeds 300.

Environmental groups' ability to open the increasingly closed political system and effectively challenge it via legal proceedings and the use of EIA law has recently made them the most visible and influential part of civil society. However, while the major mainstream environmental groups have become increasingly content with their higher status and degree of recognition in the society, a more radical current of activism mixing environmental, social and political issues under the banner of movement against globalization, has emerged outside the established circles of semi-institutionalized NGOs. Two major manifestations of this more radical movement were Global and Local Street Parties that took place in Prague in the past two years and that attracted far more young people than anybody had expected.

CONCLUSION

Between the late 1980s and early 1990s the Czech environmental movement as a whole quickly moved its attention from targeting pollution that has in the meantime become a problem universally recognized by all quarters of the society, in part due to its role in bringing down the former regime, to much more controversial issues such as lifestyle and consumption patterns. The movement has also started to identify the economic interests that are behind environmental damage.

By and large, Czech environmental groups initially failed to realize that they function not only in a society that is not used to public participation, but which is also deeply technocratic. In such a context, environmental groups' objectives and methods easily appear as irrational and emotionally laden. This poses a fundamental barrier for further expansion of the environmental movement in Czech society. At the turn of the century, the Czech

environmental movement finds itself in a paradoxical situation. Its cognitive and policy-making capacity does not match its ability to build a sufficiently large social support. On the one hand, the skills and knowledge of most groups and individuals and their ability to influence the course of events have increased impressively over the last decade. On the other hand, the movement has failed to generate more than several dozens committed activists and several thousand supporters which means that for the foreseeable future its ability to maintain the scale of its activities is in great danger, given the withdrawal of much of the foreign sources of funding from the country.

NOTES

1. The Ecological Section initially focused on ecology in a purely scientific terms, but most participants realized that these environmental issues are inextricably economic and social issues (Vaclav Mezrický quoted in Vanek 1996). Due to personal contacts of its leading personalities, this group found a shelter in the Academy of Sciences. The Section officially started its activity within the Biological Society in March 1979.
2. The Report was commissioned by the Czechoslovak prime minister Lubomir Strougal who was by the then standards regarded as a moderate reformer. The Report provided a descriptive overview of the state of the components of the environment (air, water, landscape, forests and agriculture) and was critical of the adverse effects of environmental degradation on public health.
3. The leak of the document hit the more progressive factions in the Communist Party, however difficult it is to speak of progressive groups among Czechoslovak Communists. The Report was published in the West at a time when conservative forces in the Communist Party came up with a thesis "Ecologists - enemies of socialism" (Vanek 1996:70).
4. The origin of Brontosaurus illustrates its "split" character that was maintained during its existence throughout the communist regime. As Vanek (1996:36) reminds us, the initial motivation for this activity was a difficult situation in which the Institute found itself at the time. The Institute faced criticism for too a little political involvement, that meant in the contemporary jargon, too few members of the Communist Party and *SSM* among its employees. The director of the Institute suggested that an *SSM* branch should be established that would deal with environmental issues. The Czech central committee of *SSM* declared 1974 the Year of Environmental Protection and "Action Brontosaurus" became the flagship of it. The media owned by *SSM* joined the Action which became very popular and brought attention of many young people to the environment. It was so successful that the central committee of *SSM* decided to continue this sort of activity and officially founded Hnutí Brontosaurus as an integral part of *SSM* in 1975.
5. Other features distinguishing Czech Green Party members from their West European counterparts were much lower proportion of Czech Greens holding university degrees, much higher percentage of manual workers and a small proportion of postmaterialists among them. As far Greens with university level of education are concerned, the Czech group was dominated by graduates holding degrees in sciences and engineering (together 77 per cent) while in the Western Europe and in particular in the UK, this group is a minority among Green Party members who have university education (Jehlicka 1998 and 1999).
6. In his social anthropological study of the post-communist transformation of the Czech society, Holy (1996:158) points out that the link between free market and democracy is in

Czech society construed differently than it is usually done in the West. While in Western conceptualization, the market guarantees individual freedom of economic choice as democratic pluralism guarantees individual freedom of political choice. In the Czech conceptualization, it is not so much freedom in the sense of exercise of choice as freedom in the sense of an unconstrained expression of human nature that is linked to the concept of the market. If private property is construed as part of human nature, only a free market economy based on private ownership of the means of production offers people real freedom, for, in contrast to the planned economy, it does not constrain their natural propensity toward it.

7. Little success of NGOs' campaigns was blamed by many activists on too radical views or poor ability of NGOs to present their proposals to the media and the general public in a coherent and convincing way. For example, this topic became a subject of a polemic between two leading activists that appeared in the *Hnutí Duha's* monthly *Poslední generace* (Patočka 1995; Pinos 1995).

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