From Red to Green? The Relationship between Democratic Opposition and Environmentalism in the Hungarian People's Republic and the GDR

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Abstract

The fact that environmental movements played a major social and political role in the late socialist period throughout the Eastern Bloc has been documented within several local contexts, but has rarely been explored comparatively. This thesis looks towards a better understanding of the Hungarian environmental movement, particularly the Danube Circle, by placing it in an asymmetrical comparison with the East German *Umweltbewegungen.* Further to this, it analyzes the concepts of political ecology which formed part of the intellectual background of the environmental movements in Eastern Europe but which never came to the fore explicitly. This has important consequences beyond proving the obvious point that environmentalism did not mean the same thing on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Firstly, it points towards entanglements and negotiations between ecological critiques in these very different contexts. Secondly, it leads us to a better understanding of dissident politics in East- Central Europe in the period leading up to the regime change. This work goes on to argue that environmentalism and political opposition in Hungary were closely connected, but that one should not be reduced to the other. Instead, it should be read as a shifting platform of disparate concepts and traditions that converged for a short time to challenge the regime (but which subsequently went separate ways). By drawing on insights from the study of social movements and engaging in a comparison, the thesis looks to explain its unlikely success.

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This work is dedicated to Fanni and to my friend Derek.

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Introduction

> The anguished protests against the power-station planned near Hainburg speak of desiccation both of land and of life, of a maternal *amnion* drained and sterilized, of the muddy primordial jungle of the *Auen* that would vanish forever.[1]

The river Danube is still looked upon today as a life-giving connection between East and West, although with the increasing importance of roads and motorways, it is no longer as relevant for transporting people and ideas from one part of the continent to the other. Today, the river carries tourists, those who are in no great rush to reach their destination, rather than business and trade, and the river is navigable across the entire continent from Rotterdam to the Black Sea. Through the building of canals, dams and sluices, the flow of the river has been regulated, made safe and profitable for human use, although the huge projects by which this has been achieved have rarely been described unanimously as wonders of engineering and progress. In fact, on ecological as well as economic grounds, the efforts to bring the Danube under human control have been the subject of much criticism.

Debates on ecological terms about the role of the river have only emerged as wider social and political discussions in the second half of the 20th century. These debates have had a formative influence on Green politics in the countries that the Danube passes through on its way to the Black Sea, both east and west of the former Iron Curtain, and they are my focus in this thesis. Debates about the river Danube, more specifically the movement against the hydroelectric works at Hainburg, were the cornerstone of Green politics in Austria, for example. The writer and great champion of 'Central Europe' Claudio Magris witnessed this protest movement first hand, a movement that would also have a decisive influence on the Hungarian ecological movement. The very concept of 'Central Europe', in fact, was essential to the discussion about the Danube dam. In Hungary, as well as in other countries of the Eastern

[1] Claudio Magris, *Danube* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1989), 37.

Bloc, the rise of ecological criticism and awareness seemed to coincide with, or in some accounts bring about, the decay of 'actually existing socialism.' The very same changes invited new models of regional, national and social solidarity. For the states on the Danube, one of the options, based in the Habsburg heritage, was a revival of 'Central Europe.'[2]

As several observers and historians have remarked, 'the revolutions of 1989 do not fit easily into any preconceived notion of revolutionary change in Europe.'[3] Most remarkable was the lack of violence and open calls for revenge, but there are also some other exceptional features of the 1989 revolution across the region. From the *Umweltgruppen* of East Germany to the *Society of Ecoglasnost* in Bulgaria, ecological groups appeared to be challenging the Communist state by forming around concepts related to the environment. The momentum that these groups managed to build in the late period of the Communist regime has been described at length elsewhere.[4] However, these accounts often worked within a very simplistic framework that associated the state with ecological neglect and any movement on an ecological platform to be, by definition, confronting the state. In this thesis, I aim to revisit these conclusions and to provide a more complex, and historically more sophisticated, analysis of the stakes involved in the ecological debate. The revolutions of 1989 were in many ways conscious rejections of fierce revolutionary rhetoric and its earth-moving projects that had defined so much of the 20th century. By exploring in detail how environmentalism could

[2] For an analysis on the way that this relates to the ecological discussion, see: Daniela Neubacher, 'Mitteleuropa von unten. Transnationalisierung von Protestbewegungen am Fallbeispiel Duna Kör' [Central Europe from Below: Transnationalization of Protest Movements- the Duna Kör as a Cast Study] in Réka Szentiványi, Béla Teleky (eds.) *Brüche-Kontinuitäten-Konstruktionen: Mitteleuropa im 20. Jahrhundert* (Vienna: New Academic Press, 2017).

[3] Stefan Auer, 'The Revolutions of 1989 Revisited' Eurozine 14.06.2004, accessed 06.06.2018, https://www.eurozine.com/the-revolutions-of-1989-revisited/.

[4] Barbara Jancar- Webster, *Environmental Action in Eastern Europe: Responses to Crisis* (Armond, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1993); Joan DeBardeleben (ed.), *To Breathe Free- Eastern Europe's Environmental Crisis* (The Woodrow Wilson Center Press, Washington D.C. 1991); Anna Vári and Pál Tamás: *Environment and Democratic Transition: Policy and Politics in Central and Eastern Europe* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993).

become a successful dissident strategy in different national and regional contexts, we may come to a more comprehensive picture of this exceptional 'ecological' feature of the 1989 revolution.

The East German environmental movement will function as an asymmetrical intra-Bloc comparison to the primary object of my research, the Hungarian Danube movement. In both cases, the ecological movement can be called successful because it pushed the regime to its rhetorical and argumentative limits, which I demonstrate in chapter two of this thesis. I do not consider the fact that no strong 'Green' position emerged in the Roundtable discussions or in the immediate aftermath of the Revolution as a damning verdict on the ecological movements. In the *Realpolitik* of the post-communist states, ecological concerns were forced into the background of the political scene, yet in the late 1980s they enjoyed a large following.

A very broad set of questions about resistance and opposition, the emergence of youth- and counterculture as well as East-West relations has emerged from scholarship on the East German ecological movement, resulting in a wealth of memoirs and scholarly monographs.[5] Most important for my comparison with the Hungarian environmentalist movement will be the fact that in Hungary, in contrast to the GDR, the democratic opposition (at least in Budapest) has been understood as an almost exclusively secular phenomenon.[6] In East Germany, the environmental debate emerged from, and was carried by, the Protestant Church. The importance of the Church in this context and the ways in which this related to the formation of a democratic opposition is comparable perhaps only to the Catholic Church in Poland. Seen within a regional comparison, the Hungarian Churches played a minor role within the

[5] Cf. Maria Nooke, *Für Umweltverantwortung und Demokratisierung: Die Forster Oppositionsgruppe in der Auseinandersetzung mit Staat und Kirche* (Berlin: Ch.Links, 2008); Michael Beleites, *Dicke Luft- Zwischen Ruß und Revolte: Die unabhängige Umweltbewegung in der DDR* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2016); Wolfgang Rüddenklau, *Störenfried*: *DDR-Opposition 1986-1989. Mit Texten aus den Umweltblättern* (Berlin: Verlag BasisDruck, 1992).
[6] Máté Szabó, 'Systemkritik im ungarischen Dissidens: Politische Diskurse der Opposition' [System Criticism amongst Hungarian Dissidents: Political Discourses of the Opposition] in Wolfgang Eichwede, Jan Pauer (eds.). *Ringen um Autonomie: Dissidentendiskurse in Mittel- und Osteuropa* (Berlin: LIT Verlag: 2017).

democratic opposition. In order to uncover the roots of the environmental movement, we have to look elsewhere.

Following scholars such as David A. Snow,[7] I pay attention to the framing of the ecological issue. To my knowledge, no work on the ecological movement in Hungary has been produced which is based on both knowledge of the local context and this methodological approach. The Hungarian environmental movement is the only example where the question of national minorities and the ecological issue was so closely intertwined. This was due to the perceived effect that the building of the Danube dam would have on Hungarian communities in Slovakia. This dynamic will be explored in detail in the first chapter of this thesis. For now, we should note the key difference that the national question played no role on the ecological movement, or within the wider democratic opposition, in East Germany.[8] These factors have a strong effect on the way in which the Green movements evolved to pose a challenge to the state. Most of the literature on the movement has focused on the fact that the power of the Green issue was 'more symbolic than real'[9], but I take this conclusion to be unsatisfying. A study that is sensitive to the context from which the ecological movements emerged will be able to answer the question why the environment enjoyed such symbolic power.

For reasons that I explore in the second chapter of this thesis, the ecological movements emerged from the fringes of the democratic opposition in both Hungary and East Germany. Indeed, this peripheral nature of the 'Green' position made it exceptionally relevant because it brought together different parts of the opposition. While more narrowly focused scholarship must satisfy itself with the conclusion that this peripheral status made the movements less important than they first seemed, this study shows that the ecological question was extremely

[7] David A. Snow, 'Framing Processes, Ideology and Discursive Fields' in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements,* ed. David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule and Hanspeter Kriesi (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007): 380- 412.
[8] Christian Joppke, *East German Dissidents and the Revolution of 1989: A Social Movement in a Leninist Regime* (London: MacMillan, 1995).
[9] Barbara Jancar- Webster, *Environmental Action in Eastern Europe,* 4.

relevant for a brief time before the regime change exactly because of its existence at the fringes of the political discourse. As some of the members of the Danube Circle have noted, the success of the Danube movement was unexpected.[10] The movement managed to draw people that otherwise did not identify with the 'official opposition' into the streets and towards a 'political' position, a development that the artist Axel Braun documented in his 2016 exhibition entitled 'Some Kind of Opposition' held at the Open Society Archives in Budapest.[11] With a range of archival materials, Braun's installations explored the way in which an 'oppositional' phenomenon emerged from the protests against the dam, a movement that developed from the fringes of the democratic opposition but also broke with it in important ways.

As recent scholarship on the topic has emphasized, work on nature-society relationships must take us across national borders into wider regional and historical contexts.[12] Although the history of hydropower stretches back to the first water-powered mills, the production hydroelectricity on a grand scale had become a realistic possibility only in the second half of the 19th century. The power-generation schemes on the river Danube in Central Europe, meanwhile, are projects of the immediate post- Second World War period. The production of cost-effective energy was the driving force behind these projects, although the energy that they would generate would go on to cover only a fraction of the energy requirements of the post-war reconstruction. These enormous projects would not only provide energy once completed, but they would also provide work for a considerable period and could become the symbols of industry, co-operation and new beginnings. The hydroelectric schemes and canals on the

[10] Gábor Pajkossy and István Rév, interviewed by Viktor Vida, *A Duna Kör Emlékezete,'* [Memories of the Danube Circle] 2006. (OSZK- 1956-os Intézet Oral History Archive, 847/I).

[11] The materials collected by the artist for this exhibition have been an important source of inspiration for this thesis. Cf. Axel Braun, 'Some Kind of Opposition.' Accessed 05.06.2018. http://somekindofopposition.org/

[12] Cf. Stephen Milder: *Greening Democracy: The Anti-Nuclear Movement and Political Environmentalism in West Germany and Beyond, 1968- 1983* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

Danube in Bavaria and Austria are as much a testament to this industrial spirit as the Romanian-Yugoslav co-operation on the Iron Gates Power Station.[13]

In both Western and Eastern Europe, the works on the Danube in the post-1945 era speak volumes for the technical and economic optimism of these years. The idea of a 'complex ecosystem' would surface only much later, which is not to say that it did not exist as a concept, but rather that it was a secondary concern that could always be 'managed'. Human societies were being rebuilt and transformed, and so was the natural world. Of course, the damming and regulation of rivers such as the Danube was not an entirely new idea, indeed making the Danube navigable in the Balkans was already part of the program of great reformers such as Count István Széchenyi.[14] The use of the hydroelectric potential of the river, and the technical resources required to build projects of such scale as the Iron Gates, however, had only become a realistic goal by the late 1950s. Neither was the will to transform nature only a goal of the Socialist countries, although a utilitarian view of nature, and some of its most monumental endeavors, would later be associated almost exclusively with 'actually existing socialism'.

The political investment in large-scale infrastructural projects has an important 'natural' component and the harnessing of the power of rivers is one of the best examples for this. As well as providing electricity and work for the population, the mastering of the natural world for the common good played an important symbolic role. In the early 20th century, the construction of hydroelectric works was often understood in terms of bringing a people into step with the processes of modernity. The direction of development took human beings *away* from nature and *towards* progress, away from the graft of the earth towards the motions of electric energy. Although the river-diversion projects of the Soviet Union are the best-known

[13] Hydroelectric works were built by Österreichische Donaukraftwerke and Donau Wasserkraftwerke AG (Germany) 1956- 1992. Iron Gates I and Iron Gates II were constructed in 1964 and 1977.
[14] 'It would be futile to expect streams to regulate and link themselves spontaneously. Human efforts, great efforts concerted and guided by true science are needed to accomplish this' István Széchenyi, 1830 quoted in *The Gabcikovo Nagymaros Project* (Budapest: Aqua Kiadó, 1988).

examples of the will to triumph over nature, projects in China and North America are testament to the same belief in progress at the cost of the environment. All of these contexts offer opportunities to study the relationship between political and historical ruptures and the building of projects that shattered all previous conceptions of scale. The idea that 'communism is Soviet government plus the electrification of the whole country'[15] is often taken to be representative of the projects in the Soviet sphere of influence. However, we can explore changed relationships between human beings and nature at points of historical revolution, renewal and progress in many other instances.

I.1. Methodology

Defining the limits of the Danube movement is one of the difficulties that this study comes up against. We are faced with a wide variety of different interest groups which all saw themselves in connection to the Danube issue.[16] Further to this, we have to distinguish between the Danube Circle (*Duna Kör*), the grouping of younger Budapest dissident intellectuals which grew out of the meeting of the Committee for the Danube (*Bizottság a Dunáért*) at the Rakpart Klub in January 1984 and the Danube Movement (*Duna mozgalom*) which should be used as a collective term for all the groupings which attached themselves to the Danube cause. Considering my comparative case in East Germany does not make these methodological questions any easier. The ecological movement began within the Protestant Church but not all of its adherents were actually religious, it included many people from the earlier Peace Movement but its trajectory was also quite different, as I show in chapter two. The movement

[15] Ronnie D. Lipschutz and Judith Mayer, 'Environmentalism in One Country? Global Civil Society and Nature in Hungary.' In *Global Civil Society and Global Environmental Governance: The Politics of Nature from Place to Planet* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), 129.
[16] The flyer calling for protests against the dam in October 1988 (*'Gátszakadás!'*) is signed by more than 30 different interest groups (HU-OSA- 300- 40- 1: 277/3).

had a strong following in the urban centers but also some regional manifestations.[17] Neither in my primary case not in my comparative one will I be able to offer definitive boundaries to the ecological movements. Instead, I will analyze the stakes of different groups in the ecological debate.

One of the shortcomings of previous scholarship on the Danube movement in Hungary and the environmental movement across Eastern Europe is that it was not sensitive to the changing political landscape during the 1980s. Only with a knowledge of the context does the position of diverse groups within the larger debate make sense. However, this is not something which has plagued only the environmental groups. As Stefan Auer has shown in his reflection on the 1989 Revolution, 'dissident intellectuals and their ideas were not at the centre of scholarly attention before and (not even) after the collapse of communism.' 'Against this background', Auer continues, 'the most plausible explanation for the revolutions of 1989 was to see them as 'catching up revolutions', revolutions which simply allowed the societies behind the former iron curtain to catch up with the rest of Europe in its never-ending march towards modernity.' [18] The same logic has dominated in the study of environmental movements, paying little attention to the evolution of dissident ideas or the changes within social movements. In this narrative, catching up with Europe meant working for a better natural environment. The afterlife of the Danube story, as in the case brought to the International Court of Justice in 1997 by Hungary and Slovakia[19], proved that there were clear limitations to the revolutionary hopes of 1989: the old socialist agreement still had to be kept. The symbolic status of the dam remained but the short-lived consensus amongst the political opposition dissipated.

[17] Nooke, *Für Umweltverantwortung und Demokratisierung*.
[18] Auer, 'The Revolutions of 1989 Revisited'.
[19] See: 'Gabcikovo-Nagymaros Project (Hungary/Slovakia): Overview of the Case,' International Court of Justice, accessed 01.06.2018. http://www.icj-cij.org/en/case/92.

Historians and sociologists, as well as scholars in the environmental sciences, were intent on finding signs of the 're-emerging civil society' in the green movements. In many of these cases, the environmental movement and the democratic opposition were taken to be the same phenomenon in different guises, or one was understood to function as a cover for the other. This mode of investigation was often the result of a lack of local knowledge of the political landscape coupled with a simplistic model of 'the state versus the people'. The Communist state, seen as an *Umweltsünder* almost by definition, was found to be weak on ecological issues, a question that those critical of the regime exploited. Of course, there were environmental problems of enormous scale in the People's Republics, problems that had intensified since the 1970s, but the assessment that 'Eastern Europe had become an ecological disaster zone of dying rivers and barren forests, grimy cities, crumbling monuments and disease ridden humans'[20] is an exaggeration. In any case, this alone does not explain the popularity of the environmental movement.

The extent of environmental damage was often unknown to the ordinary citizen. Even if it was being researched, publication of results was strictly controlled. This scarcity of information is perhaps truer of the GDR than it is of Hungary, where there was a growing body of research from the 1970s (although publication was still tightly controlled). In Hungary, the environmental movement would emerge out of expert circles and mainly around the issue of the Danube dam. In East Germany on the other hand, small local circles could establish themselves through networks supported by the Evangelical Church, which enjoyed a degree of autonomy under the regime. Any social movement in this context, including the 'Greens' had to be protected by institutions or sponsors tolerated by the regime. In East Germany, the Church played this role, while in Hungary the Academy of Sciences and associated research institutes were places where criticism was to some degree tolerated and expertise on environmental

[20] Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf), 364.

problems, in the areas of biology and hydrology related to the Danube, for example, could develop. These institutions were tolerated to an extent and they enjoyed a special status, but they also fulfilled the purpose of keeping potential dissidents under control. Communication between the different management levels of the institution often determined the course of a debate.

This points to an area which needs to be explored here, namely the 'political opportunity structure' available to those that challenged the state. We have to distinguish, as Hanspeter Kriesi has done, between 'open' and 'closed' structures of opportunity, and examine why some fields offered opportunities for political organization while others did not.[21] However, the conceptual vocabulary of 'open' and 'closed' opportunity structures, more applicable to a liberal democracy, needs to be used with caution.[22] Since at least the late 1970s, as Tony Judy has noted, the socialist state seemed to have failed in its project to 'absorb' civil society;[23] movements based around environmentalism or peace and disarmament existed in a grey- area which was '*of* the party state but not necessarily *for* it,'[24] including groups such as the Patriotic People's Front (*Hazafias Népfront*). With this being the case, it is difficult to think of 'cultural' and 'social' issues, apparently free of 'politics', in the rigid terms of a 'political opportunity structure' while, on the other hand, the term is not entirely redundant. However innocuous a topic (such as the environment) may seem, 'the very fact of organizing petitions, meetings and protests *outside* the official sphere is an act of political independence of which the state *must*

[21] Hanspeter Kriesi, 'Political Context and Opportunity,' in David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule and Hanspeter Kriesi, *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 67-90.
[22] Cf. Leonard Schapiro (ed.) *Political Opposition in One- Party States* (London: Macmillan, 1972).
[23] Tony Judt: 'The Dilemmas of Dissidence: The Politics of Opposition in East- Central Europe' in Ferenc Fehér and Andrew Arato: *Crisis and Reform in Eastern Europe* (Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick and London: 1991), 269. Italics in Original.
[24] Barbara J. Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe: Citizen Intellectuals and Philosopher Kings* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2002), 145.

disapprove.'[25] It is important, therefore, to examine how the state disapproves and how this affects the symbolic aspect of single-issue social movements. As Judt goes on to note, 'the Danube Circle and other such groups found themselves on the receiving end of severe official disapproval.'[26] I explore this development in detail in chapter two of this thesis in order to understand how the Danube could become such a powerful cultural symbol.

The scholar of social movements Sidney Tarrow has addressed this symbolic dimension of action in order to move beyond the simplistic conclusion that all meanings (from which political action arise) are in some sense constructed. He asks: what is the relationship between symbol formation and underlying conflict of interest in turning contention into movements? Do movements start from the changing terrain of interest and conflict, using and modifying cultural materials as a costume aimed at animating their supporters?'[27] As a 'cultural material', nature itself is rich in meanings, and Tarrow's insights are a useful tool for understanding environmental movements. Following David A. Snow, he writes that movements '*frame contentious politics*' condensing the 'world out there.'[28] This focus on negotiable meanings of a movement has been used to great effect by Ingrid Miethe on the opposition in the GDR, for example.[29] I hope to show that such an approach is also fruitful for our understanding of a single-issue movement such as the Danube controversy. Sidney Tarrow goes on to argue that movement solidarity depends not only on 'framing' but also on 'defining collective identities', marking the limits of 'we' and 'them.' As a third element, he considers the 'shaping of emotions', particularly upon perceived acts of aggression.[30]

[25] Judt, 'Dilemmas of Dissidence,' 255.
[26] Ibid, 271.
[27] Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 107.
[28] Ibid, 142.
[29] Ingrid Miethe: *Frauen in der DDR- Opposition: Lebens- und kollektivgeschichtliche Verläufe in einer Frauenfriedensgruppe* (Opladen: Leske und Budrich, 1999).
[30] Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, 143.

The socialist state itself produced symbols and rhetoric in abundance. As Christian Joppke has written, '[in] Leninist regimes, legitimacy is based not on rational procedures but on charismatic action.'[31] Symbols and slogans dominated the public space, and dissidents often re-framed those very same slogans. Contentious objectors, for example, who were a dissident force in the GDR from the 1970s, were challenging the self-pronounced *Friedensstaat*. One of the famous slogans of the State in response was that 'peace must be armed' ('*Der Frieden muss bewaffnet sein*'). Even though I will not export the concept of a 'Leninist state', which Joppke uses to talk about East Germany, to Hungary in the 1980s, I share his focus on the State and the opportunities that it afforded to dissidents. This emphasis has been missing from the work on the ecological movement so far, a deeper understanding of the political and social developments in Hungary during the 1980s. As László Kontler has written, '[the] disaffection of the general public was creeping, rather than bursting, into the atmosphere of the 1980s in Hungary', and to explain the subsequent developments we have to keep the economic, moral and political crisis in sight.[32] Any slogans or pretense of socialist optimism was more likely to seem false rather than be interpreted as a serious symbolic challenge; the State's claim to legitimacy, rational or charismatic, had long disappeared. The field of political opportunity, meanwhile, was open to a range of actors, many of whom engaged directly with the Danube movement.

Recent scholarship on the Hungarian case includes the environmental groups as the most visible amongst the new social movements[33] and explores their role within a fragmented opposition scene.[34] Both Donatella della Porta and Barbara J. Falk offer accounts based on a

[31] Joppke, *East German Dissidents and the Revolution of 1989*, 4.
[32] László Kontler, *A History of Hungary: Millenium in Central Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 459.
[33] Donatella Della Porta, *Mobilizing for Democracy: Comparing 1989 and 2011* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 214.
[34] Falk: *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe.*

wealth of local scholarship that emerged during the 1990s in order to develop more complex models of the divergent forces for change existing in Hungarian society, and both attach due importance to the green movement. This thesis aims to add to the depth of these comprehensive works while also claiming that the environmental movement functioned as common ground for the fragmented democratic opposition. The Hungarian ecological movement was a single-issue movement, focusing on the fate of the river Danube. While other minor ecological initiatives did exist, they paled in comparison to the Danube issue, which gave the movement global exposure, amongst the Hungarian émigré communities as well as the wider public. Particularly in Western Europe, where Green parties were already established on a national level as well as in the European Parliament, the demonstrations against the Danube dam resonated widely. From at least the middle of the 1980s and after the protests against the Hainburg dam in Lower Austria in particular, the movement had become international in scope.

The dam that was to be built on the Danube was a symbol of the old regime, which was attempting to maintain itself by courting Western investment. The popularity of the movement was partly due to the fact that the State had lost all legitimacy, indeed, the Danube issue caused a split even within the Party ranks, where the lines between hardliners and reformers were already quite clear.[35] In East Germany, on the other hand, the political situation was quite different. As Christian Joppke has argued one has to come to the conclusion that '[w]hereas Eastern European dissidents gradually abandoned the hope of a reformed communism and this prepared and anticipated the revolutions of 1989, East German dissidents continued to lead a struggle for reform, rather than the end, of communism.'[36] Whilst this conclusion can be debated, it is indicative of the very different political circumstances in these two contexts.

[35] Ibid, 139- 141.
[36] Joppke, *East German Dissidents and the Revolution of 1989,* vii.

By building on protestant-inspired social and ethical questions, the environmental movement in the GDR encouraged participation in discussions concerning the welfare of citizens and the organization of society.[37] The intellectual center of the movement was the *Kirchliches Forschungsheim* in Wittenberg. This insight combined some of the insights worked out by the Club of Rome in its 1972 publication *The Limits to Growth* with the theme, based in protestant theology, of humankind's stewardship over creation. These two influences form the intellectual basis of the movement throughout the period discussed here. In the GDR, the environmental movement had a broader social basis but did not emerge as a large-scale movement, due partly to the fact that the control of the state security over grassroots organizations was physically more effective. In Hungary, the Danube issue was central to the public discussion, for reasons that I will go on to explain, and it resulted in public protests of unprecedented size in October 1988.

I.2. Reflection on Sources

The series of Oral History interviews conducted by Viktor Vida in 2006 with members of the Danube Circle form an important part of my analysis when I come to consider how the Circle evolved and with what models for political action it worked. For the roots of the Danube controversy, I turn to the articles published by its founding figure János Vargha, in publications such as *Valóság* and *Új tükör* as well as in the samizdat journal *Beszélő*. Some of my information on the Circle comes also from the personal papers of János Vargha which have recently been deposited at the Open Society Archives in Budapest, and which I have assisted in ordering. In this case, I have had to combine the role of archivist and researcher. While the

[37] Ehrhart Neubert, *Geschichte der Opposition in der DDR 1949- 1989* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1997), 446.

holdings are published in the catalogue of the Archives, the collection is still not fully processed and the location of materials is given as accurately as possible. For the wider context and international resonance of the Hungarian ecological movement I have used the plentiful materials of the Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty Research Institute, also held at OSA.

My research in the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security has led me to some conclusions about the relationship between environmentalism and other leading issues within the democratic opposition from the point of view of the state, which I present in Chapters 1 and 2. In this case, I am working with only the highly 'processed' category of materials, the *Napi Operativ Jelentések Informaciói*, (Information of Daily Operative Reports) sent to the Ministry of the Interior. The infiltration of environmentalist groups by agents of the State Security and the identity of such agents is not a part of my investigation here. Neither does it form a part of my investigation into the East German environmental groups. In this case, too, I have limited myself to internal memoranda for information purposes that reveal the development of the ecological debate, i.e. the attack on the state, as seen by the state itself.

Chapter 1: Towards an East- Central European Political Ecology

This chapter introduces the Danube project itself and the articles critical of the dam, written by the biologist and founder of the Danube Circle János Vargha in publications such as *Valóság* and *Új Tükör*. Several members of the Danube Circle have cited the *Valóság* article as one of their inspirations for initially taking part in the activities of the Group.[38] By the time of the foundation of the Circle in early 1984, Vargha was publishing in samizdat journals such as *Beszélő* under a pseudonym and the regime had taken a stronger stance on the issue, especially after the critical report from the Academy of Sciences, which I also discuss here. In 1981, however, the year in which these articles were published, Vargha, a recently qualified biologist from the University of Szeged, was taking part in the scientific studies of the Danube and could still publish in well-read cultural journals. His analysis of the project combined a historical approach to the plans with the technical expertise to challenge some of the facts with which it was optimistically being advertised. Amongst the established circles of the democratic opposition, meanwhile, Zoltán Endreffy challenged the other enormous project that had been conceived in the years following the Oil Crises: the nuclear power plant at Paks. Endreffy's criticism combined some of the ideas put forward by thinkers of the New Left who had turned towards political ecology, such as André Gorz, with the ideas of István Bibó. The Bibó *Festschrift* was a 'critical symbolic and strategic move'[39] for the political opposition, creating a space where both the Budapest-based intellectuals and the populist writers such as Sándor Csóori and Gyula Illyés joimtly commemorated Bibó. Endreffy's piece, *'Atomenergia, demokrácia, decentralizáció'* ('Nuclear energy, Democracy, Decentralization') was the only contribution to the collection which can be called ecological in its outlook. His contribution to

[38] Pajkossy (2006); Rév (2006).
[39] Falk, *Dilemas of Dissidence*, 135.

the Bibó *Festschrift* included the insights of thinkers such as E.F. Schumacher and Ivan Illich on decentralization and specialization in order to criticize the nuclear power project.

In the third part of this chapter, I offer a comparative perspective on the emerging ecological criticism in Hungary by considering the roots of environmentalism within the GDR, which were in the ethical and social discussions being held within the Protestant Church. Initially, the debate centred on the tension between science and faith, for which a large delegation from the GDR travelled to the 1979 Conference on 'Faith, Science and the Future', held at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. From this, an ecological critique developed which considered the importance and possibilities for democratic participation in the socialist state.

1.1. Reframing the Danube: Geography, History, Ecology

The first article that was explicitly critical of the Gabčikovo-Nagymaros project was published in November 1981 in the journal *Valóság* by biologist and journalist János Vargha. The article, with the title 'Ever Further from the Truth: Historical Documents on the Gabcikovo-Nagymaros Barrage System' (*Egyre távolabb a jótól: Dokumentumok a Gabčíkovo-Nagymarosi vízlépcsőrendszer történetéből*) is a historical overview of hydroelectricity and dam building in post-war Hungary and explores the question of ecological issues related to the dam in the historical context of the socialist state since 1945.[40]

Dam building played an important part in the reconstruction effort after the war even though the geographical conditions of the country are generally not favorable to the building

[40] János Vargha. *'Egyre távolabb a jótól : Dokumentumok a Gabčíkovo-Nagymarosi vízlépcsőrendszer történetéből*,' *Valóság* 24, no. 11 (1981): 1–23.

of hydroelectric works. The loss of lands after the Treaty of Trianon meant that the mountainous regions of southeastern Europe where the building of hydroelectric works would have been more effective no longer belonged to Hungary. Neither the Danube nor the Tisza have a significant fall in altitude along their course through Hungary, which makes it difficult to create the necessary height differential required for the production of electricity through turbines. The artificial creation of such a differential by a series of canals would have severe effects on the surrounding agricultural lands and would endanger drinking water supplies. Stretches of the Tisza where hydroelectric dams had been built in the early 1950s already suffered from severe problems by the 1980s. The main aim of these dams, the only large-scale constructions of the type in Hungary, was not the production of electricity but protection from floods and enrichment of the surrounding fertile agricultural lands. The dam at Békésszentandrás on the Kőros (under construction from 1936- 1942) was a project of the Horthy era with the goal of rice farming on the Hungarian plain. The other large-scale dam, at Tiszalök in the county of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, was under construction in the early 1950s. The nearby camp for political prisoners, run by the State Security (*Államvédelmi Hatóság*) contributed towards the work.[41]

As Vargha shows in his article, the idea of building a hydroelectric dam in the Danube Bend at Nagymaros- Visegrád was also a product of the early 1950s, overseen by the same chief engineer, Emil Mosonyi.[42] The possibilities for building large-scale hydroelectric dams in Hungary were severely limited, but the most significant limiting factors, mainly ecological concerns, would not deter engineers in the era of fast-paced industrialization. The 'scientific'

[41] 'Internálótábor Tiszalök 1951-1953,' [Internment Camp Tiszalök 1951-1953] Historical Archives of Hungarian State Security. Accessed 21.01.2018. http://www.munkataborok.hu/hu/tiszalok

[42] Mosonyi is one of the giants of modern European hydrology. Even though he played an important role in October 1956, his enormous expertise made him too valuable to lose his position permanently. Leaving Hungary in 1965, he worked in Karlsruhe and was one of the chief architects of the Rhein-Main-Donau Kanal, a project with a contentious history of its own.

assessment of 'ecological problems' was, under an orthodox Marxist system, to be derived from the laws of dialectical materialism as expounded in Soviet political theory. Interference in the natural world was subject to the basic laws of physics and the damming of a river merely required the most thorough application of these same laws.

In his historical analysis, Vargha showed that the concept of an 'ecological problem' that emerged only in the 1970s was anachronistic when applied to the scientific atmosphere of the post- war years, but even if the concept of an 'ecological problem' did not exist in the 1950s, the problem itself certainly did. The floodplains of the Tisza in northeastern Hungary, which Vargha studied, were suffering from severe problems thirty years after the dams at Tiszalök were constructed. However, the consequences that the dam would have on the river and the surrounding wetlands were a minor issue for the engineers that had constructed the dams. Just as the power of nature could be harnessed through scientific expertise, it had been argued, her minor problems could be mastered by ingenious local interventions.

Vargha quoted at length from the proceedings of the June 1951 conference on 'The Hydrological Questions of Barrage Dams on the Danube and Tisza Rivers' (*A dunai és tiszai vízlépcsők létesitésének hidrologia kérdések*) chaired by the Soviet engineer L.A. Eliava, an expert on run-of-the-river power generation. Eliava had designed the hydroelectric works on the Kura River (*Mtkvari*) in Tbilisi and travelled to Budapest to deliver his verdict on the Tiszalök power plant under construction in North-East Hungary, one of the most important elements of the first Five Year Plan (1950-1954). Vargha quotes from the address by corresponding member of the Academy Gyula Hevesi during the June 1951 conference:

> This conference is evidence of the fact that our specialists are increasingly recognizing the importance of the use of criticism and the Marxist dialectical method, which gives

> them a powerful weapon to defend their conclusions against all improper and pseudo-scientific attacks. [43]

Through his historical analysis, Vargha showed that the chances of a balanced assessment of ecological problems were as slim in 1981 as they were thirty years earlier. The limits of science and pseudo-science, he argued, were as rigid as they had been under the darkest years of state socialism. After the signing of the Budapest Agreement in September 1977, the Gabčikovo-Nagymaros Project was celebrated as the harbinger of fortunes for the country and critical voices were few.[44] The potential ecological dangers could be offset by investment into local infrastructural projects, it was argued, and the benefits of easier navigation, cheap electricity production and growing tourism far outweighed any dangers to the environment. No evidence from the natural sciences could be brought to bear against the ideology of the state, no longer arguing with recourse to the Marxist dialectic, but with other equally pragmatic methods.

In another article, published in the cultural magazine *Új Tükör,* Vargha criticized the technocratic optimism of the engineers. The Gabčikovo- Nagymaros project, originally thought out in the 1950s, was being revived for a new age when oil was no longer an unlimited resource. Even if the Marxist dialectic was no longer a guiding influence for the natural sciences in the planning process, the language of modern management had replaced it. Vargha quotes from the National Water Board's vision for the long-term complex infrastructural development ('*A*

[43] *"Ez a konferencia azonban tanúságot tesz arról, hogy szakembereink egyre inkább felismerik a kritika és a marxista dialektikus módszer alkalmazásának jelentőségét, amely hatalmas fegyvert ad kezükbe igazuk megvédésére, mindennemű helytelen és áltudományos támadással szemben." '*A dunai és tiszai vízlépcsők létesítésének hidrológiai kérdései: Az 1951 június 19-20-án megtartott akadémiai hidrológiai konferencián elhangzott előadások és hozzászólások' [Hydrological questions of the installation of hydroelectric works on the Danube and Tisza: Papers and Comments from the hydrological conference at the Academy on 19th- 20th June 1951] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1952) quoted in Vargha, *Egyre távolabb,* 1981.

[44] '*Fejlődő hajózás, új vízerőművek, novekvő idegenforgalom'* ['Better shipping, new hydroelectric plants, growing tourism'] *Népszabadság* 14.10.1976 (HU- OSA- 300- 40- 1 # 275/3).

vízgazdálkodási nagy létesítmények hosszú távú fejlesztésének koncepciója') on the Danube project. The complied statistics seemed very convincing, but the damage that the dam would cause to the environment and the danger it posed to water supplies were being largely ignored.[45]

The plans for a barrage dam system in the Danube Bend with the goal of electricity generation were revived with added urgency in the wake of the Oil Crises of the 1970s. Engineers from the region, in cooperation with Soviet specialists, planned a barrage dam system with two main parts, one on Slovak territory at Gabčikovo and the other 120 kilometers downriver at Nagymaros in Hungary. The two cooperating countries would undertake the work jointly and split the energy produced equally between them. However, due to the enormous scale of the project, construction of the dams was postponed several times until the representatives of the People's Republic of Hungary and the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic signed an agreement on cooperation in Budapest in September 1977. Besides the production of renewable energy, the dams would make one of the most dangerous stretches of the Danube, the waters between Nagymaros and Visegrád, more easily navigable. The positive effects that this would have on trade and tourism in the region were important parts of the plan.

With the completion of the Rhine-Main-Danube Canal in Bavaria (under construction between 1960 and 1992), a great European waterway would connect the Baltic and the Black Sea. This would make it possible to sail across the continent from Rotterdam in the Netherlands to the Romanian Black Sea coast port of Constanta. The Danube was to become 'the dustless highway of the European people'[46] and the work on the stretch between Bratislava and Budapest would fully integrate Hungary into the European waterway, bringing all the benefits

[45] János Vargha: '*Vízlépcső vagy Dunaszaurusz?'* ['Hydroelectric Plant or Danube-Saurus?'] *Új Tükör* 18 (1981), 6-8.
[46] *'Az európai népek por nélküli országútja'* [The Dustless Highway of the European People] Népszabadság 10.10. 1977 (HU- OSA- 300- 40- 1; 275/3).

of trade and tourism.[47] While the electricity produced by the barrage system was the most important aspect to the project, the better navigability of the Danube across the European mainland was also a positive development. Ministers György Lázár and Lubomír Štrougal signed the Budapest Agreement on 16th September 1977 and it sealed the cooperation of the socialist states in fulfilling these goals. Soviet technical assistance was to play an important role in the building of the dam, as it had done during the planning stage, a planned cooperation that received due attention from the West. Radio Free Europe's monitoring unit took note of the 'inter-state socialist division of labor' that had been agreed by the Hungarian- Soviet Inter Government Committee for Economic and Scientific Cooperation and was to begin already in the period of the fifth Five-Year-Plan (1976-1980).[48]

After the signing of the Budapest Agreement in 1977, the technical details still had to be worked out. The treaty of cooperation had been signed hastily and experts of the *Országos Műszaki Fejlesztési Bizottság* (National Technical Development Commission) were needed to deliver the utilization plans for the Danube (*A Duna távlati komplex hasznosítási terv*). The finer details that were still to be discussed included the impact of the world economic crisis on the building of the Gabčikovo-Nagymaros project, the energy needs of the country until the turn of the millennium, the role of the river as an international border as well as the consequences for the natural environment.[49] János Vargha had been part of the commission, but represented the only dissenting opinion on the development. Ecological issues, in as much as they were discussed at all, were not the concern of those who had planned the dam. Experts convened in the city of Győr in April 1979 to discuss the effects that the dam would have on

[47] By 1978, Hungary was being visited by 12.5 million tourists annually. Cf. Kontler, *A History of Hungary*, 442.
[48] 'Inter- State Socialist Division of Labour,' Radio Free Europe Monitoring Unit (HU- OSA- 300-40- 1, #275/4).
[49] *Országos Műszaki Fejlesztési Bizottság* [National Technical Development Office] '*A Duna távlati komplex hasznosítási terv'* [Prospective Plan for the Complex Utilization of the Danube] (OSA 353-1-1).

the environment, a question of particular importance because of sewage treatment in the cities upriver from the capital. With a 100km stretch of the Danube being flooded in front of the dam, sewage would be pushed back into the city of Győr in adverse weather conditions. Details such as this still had to be worked out and conflicted with the official announcements that nature would be enriched by the new development.

Even though key issues remained in the way of the project, the project had taken on enormous political significance. Construction on this scale provided work for thousands of people throughout the country. It provided opportunities for the locals to increase their income by renting out accommodation and the natural beauty of the region would be complemented by the new developments. The worker's accommodation would later be converted into holiday resorts once the dam had been completed, creating a waterside paradise to rival Lake Balaton. If those who kept weekend houses in the region, mainly middle-class citizens of Budapest, would experience temporary disturbances due to the construction work, they would enjoy the benefits of a redeveloped waterfront once the dam stood. Critical views on the dam, meanwhile, remained within the bounds of smaller publications and literary journals such as *Valóság.* Although these publications circulated amongst a wide readership, they did not pose a real counterweight to the official version of events published in *Népszabadság* and other important dailies.

The Gabčikovo-Nagymaros was an enterprise of enormous scale not only for the Hungarian state, but it was also a European project and a positive symbol of the socialist regime long before it would come to stand for a state in decay. After the signing of the Budapest Agreement in 1977, ecological problems relating to the dam still had to be assessed in detail. Experts met again in Budapest in 1980 in order to discuss the local issues arising from the construction. While they disagreed on the consequences that the dam would have on the surrounding area, the questions about ecological problems were pushed further into the

background. It was the report by the Presidential Interdisciplinary Problem Commission of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (*Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Elnökségi Interdiszciplináris Problémabizottság*), issued in late April 1983, which would have more profound consequences for the debate. The report concluded:

> The value of the Danube in Hungarian thinking and in the country's economy has grown, it carries several values and meanings. It means that Hungary is open towards Europe- the West and the East equally- for the free exchange of goods, ideas and people. It signifies respect for national values, and the rejection of national exclusivity; attachment to the country and to the wider homeland of the Danubian area; and the twofold good intentions of self-respect and cooperation. It follows from this logically that for us the Danube is more than just a cheap source of energy and a shipping lane. It is far more, it is the symbol of our orientation towards Europe, the natural and historical framework of Hungary's existence.[50]

The Academy's Interdisciplinary Problem Commission, a panel which included the historian Peter Hanák, had approached the Danube question in a radically different way by going beyond its scientific mandate and addressing the 'natural and historical framework' of Hungary. This reflected a strong change of course from the question of cost-benefit analysis or finding piecemeal solutions to impending ecological problems. Even if the Academy Report had not been explicitly critical of the dam, it had certainly framed its conclusions in a critical way.

In ordinary circumstances, the Academy was place where politically unreliable individuals could be expected to carry out their research projects away from university students, where critical intellectuals could be kept at arm's length and on a living wage, as László Kontler has summarized:

> While [the Academy's] intertwining with the political hierarchy and its representation of the official ideological priorities was quite clear, research was more or less free even in the social sciences (publication, of course, was a different issue), and many gestures showed that the regime was keen on maintaining an image of academic liberty.[51]

[50] 'Unfinished Past: The Gabcikovo- Nagymaros Project , 1953 and Now,' *East European Reporter* 1, No. 1, Spring 1985 (HU-OSA- 300-40- 1; 275).
[51] Kontler: *A History of Hungary*, 448.

The authors of the report had made use of their 'academic liberty' by seeing the river as a 'symbol of Hungary's orientation towards Europe'. The Report was subsequently ignored, it was not published in Hungary and the Academy would have no further say on the matter, but its publication shows how important the opposition to the Danube dam had become for the intellectual subculture around the Budapest universities and the Academy of Sciences. It showed also how issues of the natural environment would be re-framed to address concerns of 'national' and 'European orientation'.

1.2. Nuclear Power and Democracy: Political Ecology in the Bibó *Festschrift*

Although the official position after the Oil Crises was that Hungary would continue to rely on the apparently inexhaustible oil reserves of the Soviet Union, greater energy independence was a vital goal and an alternative was needed urgently. The Paks nuclear power plant on the Danube in southern Hungary (commissioned in late 1982) and the Gabčikovo-Nagymaros barrage dam were the two large-scale projects with which the government looked to develop domestic energy production.

In Zoltán Endreffy's contribution to the 1979 Bibó *Festschrift,* 'Atomenergia, demokrácia, decentralizáció' ('Nuclear energy, Democracy, Decentralization'), the philosopher criticized the development of nuclear power from an ecological standpoint. Even if nuclear energy was a clean and safe option for energy production, he argued, the centralizing force of such gigantic projects pointed towards a larger problem.[52] Building on the theories of Ivan Illich and Ernst Friedrich Schumacher, Endreffy emphasized the difference between massive nuclear plants and smaller, decentralized forms of energy production. Due to its size, technical specification and its need for enormous investment of capital, nuclear power only

[52] Zoltán Endreffy*: 'Atomenergia, demokrácia, decentralizáció*,' in *Bibó emlékkönyv*, ed. Pál Réz (Budapest+ Bern: Századvég Kiadó, Európai Protestáns Magyar Szabadegyetem, 1991), 269-281.

increases the power of the technocrat. The worker is pushed into the passive role of consumer and bystander, relinquishing his autonomy and unable to control, or even understand, the process. 'The concentration of power leads to tyranny', Endreffy wrote, 'and that is why the eternally actual task of politics is the reduction of the concentration of power.'[53] His inspiration here comes from the Bibó manuscript *Az államhatalmak elválasztása egykor és most* ['Separation of State Powers in the Past and Present'], Bibó's lecture of January 1947, the text which introduces the 1979 *Festschrift.* Endreffy employs Bibó's ideas on the division of powers to build up his ecological critique, quoting Bibó's claim that the disruption of the concentration of power can be achieved by building opposed centers of self-consciousness.

Endreffy finds a practical extension of Bibó's ideas on the division of powers in Schumacher's concept of a decentralized economic model in the latter's treatise of unorthodox economics, *Small is Beautiful*.[54] Schumacher had preached a 'Buddhist economics' of smaller scale, influenced by the Indian philosopher J.C. Kumarappa, instead of the gigantic efforts of modern industry.[55] His theories on modern economic development were similar to those of the philosopher and Roman Catholic Priest Ivan Illich, whose work *Tools for Conviviality*[56] and *Deschooling Society*[57] Endreffy also cites here. Illich examined the role of technocratic elites in modern societies and the over-specialized knowledge that was being forced upon people, who had lost all autonomy and practical skill. As an alternative, Illich proposed a radically de-centralized model of education, which would bring about a new, less institutionalized society.

In his criticism of the development of nuclear power in general, and the Hungarian plans for Paks in particular, Endreffy uses an original mixture of ideas. He uses the ideas of

[53] Endreffy, *'Atomenergia, demokrácia, decentralizáció'*, 280. The translation is my own.
[54] E. F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered* (London: Abacus, 1992) [1972].
[55] Ibid, 59.
[56] Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).
[57] Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).

Schumacher and Illich, but he also complements his reading of Bibó's thesis on the division of powers with concepts of political ecology developed by André Gorz, an important theoretician coming from the New Left who looked to fuse democratic socialism with ecology. Gorz saw the idea of 'self-limitation' in an industrial society as 'the only non-authoritarian, democratic way towards an eco-compatible industrial civilization.'[58] Even though capitalism had almost destroyed traditions of self-sufficiency, the traditions could still serve as a basis for a new, 'eco-social project.'[59]

The destruction of a basis for sufficiency is not a trademark of capitalism, however, but of industrial society in general, as Endreffy notes. Under both capitalism and socialism, modern technical and economic development began by separating the producers from the means of production and dismantling their economic and cultural self-sufficiency.[60] As a counter-weight to this force of centralization and destruction of traditional forms of life, Endreffy does not envision an eco-social project as such, but he returns to the ideas of István Bibó. Using Bibó, he writes that the pressure of moral proof on power ('*a hatalomnak erkölcsi igazolásra való szorítás'*) can technically be achieved by the de-centralization of power into smaller units and the division of power into individual spheres of responsibility. The technocratic drive towards gigantic projects that require immense amounts of expertise and specialized skills, such as nuclear energy, were the direct opposite of such a functional and balanced division of power, as Schumacher had also argued.

Endreffy's political ecology, inspired by Bibó, was also a religious and ethical position. In many ways, this religious basis of the ecological critique is already present in the work of

[58] André Gorz, 'Political Ecology: Expertocracy versus Self-Limitation,' *New Left Review* 202, (November- December 1993): 64.
[59] Ibid, 65.
[60] Endreffy, *'Atomenergia, demokrácia, decentralizáció,'* 278; Cf. Zoltán Endreffy, 'Ökológiai konfliktusok etikai megitélése' [Ethical Considerations in Ecological Conflicts] in *Katolikus Szemle* 10 (1987).

the Ivan Illich, whose ideas he reflects on here. In a wider sense, it also plays an important part in Schumacher's critique of modern industry, especially in his counter-argument against gigantism, based on 'Buddhist economics.' The destruction of traditional life forms, which plays an important part in the ecological critique, would also become central to the Danube movement for the populist contributors to the Bibó *Festschrift*. While this conversion of diverse positions will be in the focus of my next chapter, I will now turn towards the roots of an ecological critique within the East German environmental movement, who would be inspired by the Hungarian movement by the middle of the 1980s, as Michael Beleites, a key figure in the East German movement, has written. Beleites writes that while at the beginning of the 1980s, decisive impulses were coming from the West, at the end of the 1980s, the East German movement was looking to the East for inspiration, especially to Hungary and the Baltics.[61] The beginning of the ecological movement, however, were quite different in the GDR, were the frames of critique were coming from a Protestant- inspired ethics and turning towards broader social questions.

1.3. The Roots of Environmentalism in the GDR- Critical Participation under Socialism from a Christian Perspective

An event of crucial importance for the ecological movement in East Germany was the 1979 Conference on 'Faith, Science and the Future', held at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The World Council of Churches organized the conference, and a large contingent from the GDR was sent to engage in the discussions. Although intensive debate of social and ethical issues had begun to take root in the GRD church since the beginning of the 1970s, the Boston Conference moved the terms of the debate further in the direction of wide participation and the potential for grassroots action.[62] One of the most eagerly discussed questions at the Boston

[61] Beleites, *Dicke Luft*, 38.
[62] Neubert, *Geschichte der Opposition*, 447.

Conference was the question of nuclear energy, which had not been addressed in the East German churches up to that point.

Under the auspices of the Federation of Evangelical Churches in the GDR (*BEK-Bund der Evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR*), the discussions taking place within the Evangelical Church found a wider readership through a series of working papers, which took on the specific question of Christian responsibility for the future of humanity and the fate of the natural environment.

As the central organ of the East German secret service noted, the new turn towards 'non-religious' themes were a symptom of the growing crisis in which religious life found itself in an era of scientific and technological progress. In an informational paper titled '*Angriffe auf die Politik der SED gegenüber den Kirchen der DDR und Versuche ihres Mißbrauchs durch den Gegner*', the central organ of the State Security sets the new turn of the Churches towards social issues in historical perspective:

> It is also, but by no means exclusively, a symptom of the worldwide crisis in which religion and theology find themselves that in an age of turbulent scientific, technical and social progress, which threatens to diminish their influence, the churches are turning towards secular issues, including non-religious themes and people.[63]

Several working groups, amongst them *Kirche und Gesellschaft* at the *Forschungsheim Wittenberg*, were involved in the preparation of conference materials, and it is from work in

[63] *‚Es ist auch, aber keineswegs ausschließlich ein Ausdruck der weltweiten Krise, in der sich Religionen und Theologie befinden, daß sich die Kirchen in einem Zeitalter stürmischen wissenschaftlich-technischen und gesellschaftlichen Fortschritts, in der ihr Einfluß eher zurückzugehen droht, auch weltlichen Fragen, auch nichtreligiösen Themen und Menschen zuwenden.'* Dokument Nr. 5: Angriffe auf die Politik der SED gegenüber den Kirchen der DDR und Versuche ihres Misbrauches durch den Gegner' ['Attacks on the polticial position of the SED by the GDR churches and attempts by the enemy to misuse them'] Richard Schröder et al, ‚Der Versuch einer eigenständigen Standortbestimmung der Evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR am Beispiel der „Kirche im Sozialismus"' in Deutscher Bundestag, *Enquete Kommission ‚Aufarbeitung von Geschichte und Folgen der SED-Diktatur in Deutschland*, Vol. 6/II, 1298.

these circles that some of the later critical reports on the state of the environment in the GDR materialized. In his treatment of the Boston Conference, Ehrhart Neubert has highlighted the contribution made by Heino Falcke, head of the committee *Kirche und Gesellschaft.* Falcke's paper, 'Critical Participation under Socialism- Problems of Science and Technology from a Christian Perspective' ('*Kritische Partizipation im realen Sozialismus- Probleme von Wissenschaft und Technik aus christlicher Sicht*'), introduced three new aspects to the ecological question. Firstly, the GDR belonged to the Economically More Developed Countries and was obliged to show solidarity with the countries of the 'Third World'. Secondly, that only in a society open to dialogue would the necessary freedom and responsibility of scientific investigation serve its proper function. Thirdly, that the motivation for action should come not from a fear of environmental catastrophe, but from hope and 'resistance against fatalism.'[64]

Falcke's conclusions were expanded upon in the publication *Kirche im Sozialismus.* The destruction of nature, and the forward march of science, had caused irreparable damage. It could only be countered, however, when every person can take his or her part in the decision-making process of a society. Only in such circumstances could human beings become ethically mature (*ethisch reif*). In the best proselytizing tradition, this required teaching the masses ('*ein massenpädagogischen Prozeß*') and ultimately, the opportunity for democratic participation.[65] In what ways this clashed with the doctrine of democratic centralism of the Leninist state remained ambiguous.

In this ethical and social dialogue, ecological activism and democratic participation are only intertwined when the size and complexity of daily work is suitable for the human being. The massive scale of modern industry, and the high level of specialization that was required in order

[64] Wolfgang Büscher, 'Geschichte als Denk- und Spielraum' in *Kirche im Sozialismus*, 10 (1984). Reproduced in Neubert, *Geschichte der Opposition*, 447.
[65] Neubert, *Geschichte der Opposition*, 447.

to understand and participate in it, pushed the human being away into unavoidable fatalism. The task of science, therefore, is to develop technologies on a human level rather than to drive them towards ever-greater size, which one day not even the experts would be able to understand or control. This obsession with size and efficiency was destroying the natural world, but also the human being on a physical as well as a spiritual level. Work provided spiritual nourishment as long as it was meaningful, as long as the human had some relationship with the process of labor and an understanding of the work in which she was taking part.

The most complex process, and the one most likely to get out of hand, was nuclear energy. The theologically based discussions taking place at the *Kirchliche Forschungsheim Wittenberg* tackled these questions directly. Indeed, the *Forschungsheim* would become a trans-regional center for ecological thought throughout the GDR. [66] As its director at the time Hans- Peter Gensichen wrote, the declaration of ecological bankruptcy on the part of the GDR regime in 1982 (in the form of a decision to keep environmental data secret) placed the onus for research in this area on the ecological circles within the church.[67] One of the most widely read publications was a report on uranium mining in the GDR, which was written by Michael Beleites, titled *Pechblende- Der Uranbergbau in der DDR und seine Folgen,* published by the *Forschungsheim.*

On the one hand, the *Pechblende* text deals with the very complex nature of nuclear energy by presenting it to a non-expert audience. On the other, it question the use of nuclear energy in the *Friedenstaat* and the need for nuclear weapons as a *Friendssicherung*, for the sake of 'defense' ('*zur Realisierung der Landesverteidigung'*).[68] The publication pointed towards the empty

[66] Peer Pasternak, *177 Jahre- Zwischen Universitätsschließung und Gründung der Stiftung Leucorea: Wissenschaft und höhere Bildung in Wittenberg 1817-1994* (Wittenberg: Stiftung Leucorea, 2002), 79.
[67] Hans- Peter Gensichen: 'Das Kirchliche Forschungsheim Wittenberg in den 80er Jahren', in *Heimatkalender Lutherstadt Wittenberg und Landkreis Wittenberg* (Lutherstadt Witenberg: Drei Kastanien Verlag, 1999), 46-52. Reproduced in Pasternak 2002, 80.
[68] Michael Beleites, *Pechblende*, 57.

rhetoric of peace on the part of the state, as well as exposing the environmental consequences of uranium digging. When we consider the way in which technology is approached in the *Forschungsheim* circles, it become clear that those critical of the advances in science and the effect which this had on nature were not advocating for a pre-industrial ideal. As Gensichen writes in the introduction to *Pechblende*, opposition to nuclear technology comes not from a moral distancing against technology that had mastered the art of splitting the atom. Opposition comes rather from the technical side itself, from the realization that we have not completely mastered the consequences of splitting the atom. The act itself, from which immense energies are unleashed, Gensichen writes, is revealed to be a singular and completely unsatisfying ability (‘*eine nur sehr punktuelle und völlig unzureichende Fähigkeit*’).[69]

[69] Ibid, ii.

Chapter 2: Blue Waves and Green Crosses: The Beginnings of an Environmental Movement

In this chapter, I turn from a focus on the intellectual roots of the ecological movements in Hungary and East Germany to their evolution into social movements. The members of the Danube Circle were moving on the fringes of the democratic opposition and their relationship with the dissidents was complex. As the Danube movement became more important, the members of the Circle had to negotiate their position within this field. The Hungarian environmentalist movement emerged in Budapest, within the dissident scene, but it should be understood as a separate part within that field. Institutionally, it found support both within the Academy of Sciences and its associated research institutes and within the established democratic opposition.

Ecological issues moved onto the agenda of the political opposition because, as András Bozóki has remarked, 'the environmental organizations had no similarities to political parties… they did not fight for a multi-party system but for clean air and clean water and their critique of the regime was not based on any classical political ideology.'[70] While the ecological issue was free of ideological content, it was intertwined with the issue of minorities and the national question in Hungary. As I show in this chapter, this impetus came from within the Circle itself and it had a strong effect on the way in which the state would react to the growing criticism.

The Danube movement was successful because it could form a collective identity that brought together a divided political opposition. Like the East German movement, it was a new

[70] András Bozóki, 'Die demokratische Opposition in Ungarn: Selbstbild, Identität und politischer Diskurs' [The Democratic Opposition in Hungary: Self-representation, Identity and Political Discourse] in *Ringen um Autonomie,* ed. Eichwede and Pauer. 218-307.

phenomenon within the opposition in the sense that there was little connection to the critical Marxist heritage. As Sidney Tarrow argues in his study on *Contentious Politics*, 'people engage in contentious politics when patterns of political opportunities and constraints change, and then by strategically employing a repertoire of collective action, creating new opportunities, which are used by others in widening circles of contention.'[71] This insight is important for the environmental movements because taking part entailed less risk than being associated with the democratic opposition.[72] This chapter explains the changes in political opportunities and constraints which allowed the environmental movement to establish itself within the opposition.

In my East German comparative case, meanwhile, the environmental movement materialized from similar circles as the earlier peace movement. The relationship with the Church, however, developed very differently for both movements. While the peace movement often combined socialist and biblical content, the environmental movement did not lean on socialist imagery or the Marxist tradition. The environmental issue, which seemed peripheral and less politically loaded, thus became ever more relevant as a sphere of oppositional activity.

2.1. Water as a Cultural Symbol- The Origins of the Danube Circle

The Interdisciplinary Commission of the Academy of Sciences had encouraged further research into the ecological consequences of the dam building project and had argued that it should be postponed in its 1983 report. Other committees, which were bring hastily set up, and which were mainly staffed by bankers and economic experts with an interest in the project, argued

[71] Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, 28-29.
[72] Bozóki, 'Die Demokratische Opposition in Ungarn', 260.

that the project should be continued.[73] The Report of the Academy of Sciences had been compiled by a committee including historians and architects,[74] including Károly Perczel who would also play an important part in the debates which led to the Danube movement. The Report had maintained that the Danube was a part of Hungarian history and identity, (‘*a magyar történelem formáló Duna’*) but was not made public and only appeared abroad in *East European Reporter*.[75] Meanwhile, debates on the dam were being held at the Budapest universities, organized by student ecological societies.

The Danube project was moving ahead slowly, due in no small part to the financial situation of the Hungarian state, and the issue remained only peripheral on the Hungarian dissident scene. Expert opinions were still being compiled, and as Tamás Fleischer has written in his overview of the Danube movement, ‘the water management authorities felt as if they had won the battle.’[76] Debates were being organized, with János Vargha and Károly Perczel arguing against the deputy director of the National Water Management Office.[77] The defender of the project pulled out shortly before the scheduled time, and by the middle of the year 1984 it was clear that ‘political support [for the dam] was not enough to defend the construction in open, ‘democratic’ debates.’[78]

The Danube Circle was founded in this period of ‘information embargo’, after a speech of János Vargha. Vargha’s articles, now published under a pseudonym in *Beszélő,* placed

[73] Tamás Fleischer, ‘Jaws on the Danube: Water Management, Regime Change and the Movement Against the Middle Danube Hydroelectric Dam,’ *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 17, no.3 (1993): 433.
[74] ‘Tanulmány készítő bizottság tagjai’ [Member of the Panel for the Paper]: Sándor Szalai, István Láng, György Egyedi, György Fekete, Péter Hanák, András Levai, György Osztrovski, Károly Perczel, Lajos Szántó. HU-OSA- 353- 1-1.
[75]‘Unfinished Past: The Gabcikovo- Nagymaros Project, 1953 and Now,’ *East European Reporter* 1, no. 1 (1985).
[76] Fleischer, ‘Jaws,‘ 432.
[77] Cf. ‘Duna Kör Hírei: Erről tárgyalni sem szabadna...‘ [News of the Danube Circle: This Should Not Even be Debated…] *Beszélő* 1, no.14 (1985).
[78] Fleischer, ‘Jaws,’ 433.

greater emphasis on the political consequences of the dam. The Hungarian minority living on the other bank on the Danube would be affected by the building of a large canal, diverting waters towards the turbines at Nagymaros. The status of the river as an international border would also change and the Hungarian minority community would bear the consequences of lower ground water levels on the Slovakian bank. Vargha places this ecological concern within a wider geo-political framework. The plans of František Palacý, ideologist of the Czech national movement, for a united Czechoslovak Danubian state were important in order to grant her access to the sea. The Czechs, surrounded by ethnic Germans, would thus be able to connect to their Slavic kin. The efforts of T.G. Masaryk, the later President of Czechoslovakia, reflected this strategic goal when in October 1914 he marked out the borders of Slovakia, leaving only the *Csallóköz* region to the Hungarian minority and allowing the Czechoslovaks access to the Danube at Bratislava and Komárom. These strategic regional goals of the Slovaks formed an important part in the Paris Peace Conference, the Proceedings of which Vargha quotes from in his article, '*A Nagy Szlovák Csatorna*' (The Great Slovak Canal), published in early 1984.[79]

A Report circulated amongst the management level of the Budapest Technical University criticized the 'nationalist' tone taken by Vargha and the opponents of the Danube project and noted with some concern the effect that this had on 500 or so students present at the debate.[80] My research into the Archives of the State Security Services has shown that

[79] Kien Péter [János Vargha], 'A Nagy Szlovák Csatorna.' [The Great Slovak Canal] *Beszélő* 1 no. 9 (1984).

[80] 'Feljegyzés a Nagymaros- Gabcsikovó vízlépcső épitéséről rendezett 1984. március 26-i vitáról Dr. Polinszky Károly, a BME rektora részére' [Memorandum on the debate about the Nagymaros-Gabčikovo dam held on the 26th March 1984, for the attention of Dr. Károly Polinszky, Rector of BME] : '*Elhangzott, hogy Trianon óta mi történt hogy a Duna átkerült a cseh oldalra, hogy a kormány megállapodás csak egy papír... nacionalista érzelmei is kifejezésre jutottak hogy 'mi lesz az uzemvíz csatorna körüli csehországi falvakkal' stb... Mindvégig érzékelhető volt, hogy a közönség érzelmileg a vízlépcső ellen fellépőkkel azonosult'* ['The issue of the diversion of the Danube onto the Czech side ever since Trianon came up, and that the government agreement is just a piece of paper. Nationalist feelings also came to the fore on 'the fate of the Czech villages around the canal' etc. All the while the sympathies of the audience for those against the dam was palpable'] (HU-OSA- 353-1-1).

operative steps were put in place to stop some of these debates from happening.[81] Furthermore, the debates were seen as a site of hostile activity because of the Czechoslovak connection. The critics of the Nagymaros project, by approaching the question of the former Hungarian territory on the opposite bank on the river were brought into connection with the Czech-Hungarian dissident Miklós Duray,[82] who had been in contact with the signatories of Charta 77 and been arrested in November 1982 because of oppositional activities.

The charge of 'nationalism' was being levelled at opponents of the dam and the difference between 'ecological' and 'political' problems seemed to disappear, both from the view of the state as well as from the perspective of those in opposition. The fact that critics of the project had been sidelined in the debate during the lengthy 'information embargo' in which studies and opinion papers were being commissioned made the Danube issue into a more contentious topic. Without claiming that Vargha's reflections of Czechoslovak geopolitics was a 'nationalist' text, we have to note the emerging importance of the national question in the Danube movement and the way in which national and ecological concerns began to combine in the movement. Seen within the context of the political opposition, the question of national minorities was a particularly contentious topic. Nationalism took 'a cultural form when articulated in public',[83] as Tony Judt summarized in his 1991 text on the importance of nationalism as an oppositional issue. 'The Communist era is frequently seen as one instituted and dominated by outsiders, the nation itself is posited as a victim of non-Hungarian forces.'[84]

The question of nationalism has been placed in relation to the 'urbanist/populist' debate, which Judt outlines as the 'choice between conservative social arrangements and a more urban,

[81] 'Különböző állami és társadalmi intézménzekben lezajlott viták, megakadálzoyott rendezvényeket' [Debates held in various state and social institutions]- ÁBTL 2.7.1. NOJI- III-III- 45/78/10/11/1985.
[82] 'Belső ellenséges elemek tévékenysége' [Activities of hostile internal elements] ÁBTL 2.7.1. NOJI-III-III- 45/78/10/9/1985.
[83] Tony Judt, 'Dilemmas of Dissidence,' 276.
[84] Ibid, 276.

egalitarian, industrial social system.'[85] Both the concerns of the urbanists and the populists were represented in the Danube movement and the issue began to be covered increasingly in *Beszélő*, co-edited by János Kis and Miklós Haraszti. The turn towards ecology as well as towards the concerns of the national minorities has been understood by Barbara J. Falk as strategy of 'coalition building'[86] with the populist wing by the political opposition grouped around *Beszélő*. The 'Green' issue was not only something that everyone could broadly agree on, but it could also bring people into the movement who otherwise might not take the risk of being associated with the opposition. The relationship between the democratic opposition and the growing importance of environmentalism was complicated, as we can see in the foundational period of the Danube Circle.

A meeting at the University of Art and Design (*Iparművészeti Főiskola*) in February 1984 led to the foundation of the Circle.[87] The group formed around experts in ecology and hydrology, János Vargha and János Tóth, and the journalist Iván Bába, as a discussion group on the Danube question. One of the principal questions in this early period was to what extent the Circle should align itself with the 'official' political opposition in order to achieve its goals.[88] As we have noted already in connection with the 'nationalism' charge, the question of the dam was being pushed towards the political opposition. It was clear to the founding members of the movement that they would be more effective, however, if they kept some distance from the political opposition and the dissident intellectuals around *Beszélő*. The Danube question was an issue with which it would be possible to reach a wider audience beyond the intellectual subculture of the capital.[89]

[85] Ibid, 276.
[86] Barbara Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence*, 137.
[87] Pajkossy, 3.
[88] Rév, 5.
[89] Pajkossy, 10.

In order to understand this dynamic of 'opposition' we must consider the atmosphere in which the political opposition existed at the time of the formation of the Danube Circle and the emergence of a new kind of 'ecological' criticism. As György Dalos has noted in his analysis of the emergence of political opposition in Hungary, the relationship between the state and the democratic opposition was determined by the supposedly 'liberal' climate in Hungary at the time. He reads the passivity of the Hungarian authorities (especially towards those who has signed the declaration of solidarity with Charta 77) as a signal to the West: 'we are liberal, was the message, and if we don't look liberal then that is down to pressure from abroad [the Soviet Union]'[90]. This 'liberal' attitude was, of course, dictated by the economic situation and carefully negotiated by the local oligarchies. However, as András Mink has written in his history of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, the open atmosphere of Budapest in the run-up towards the CSCE Cultural Forum of October 1985 had its limits.[91] In this stand-off between the state and the political opposition, the environmental criticism of the Danube Circle offered a new opportunity to move beyond the farcical lip-service to Human Rights and uncensored public expression. The issue of the dam was a chance to test the limits of some of these commitments, which had been put to paper at Helsinki in 1975 and would be entertained at the Cultural Forum in 1985. It was also an issue that had the potential to spread beyond the familiar circles of democratic opposition, which determined both the way in which the Danube debate would evolve and the way in which the authorities would react.

Founding members of the Circle Gábor Pajkossy and István Rév have also seen the emergence of the Circle in this context of political stalemate. Their personal recollections

[90] György Dalos: *Archipel Gulasch- Die Entstehung der demokratischen Opposition in Ungarn.* (Bremen: Donat& Temmen Verlag, 1986), 38.

[91] András Mink: *The Defendant- the State: The Story of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee* (Budapest: Hungarian Helsinki Committee, 2005).

reveal the fact that the environmental issue was a novel opportunity to affect political change.[92] Following on from this, two important factors have arisen from the recollections of the protagonists, as divergent as they might seem- the example of Poland on the one hand, and West Germany on the other. The Solidarity Movement in Poland, with which Rév was personally familiar from travels in 1981, had shown that some form of 'grassroots' activism had a chance to succeed, despite the fact that the country was now under martial law.[93] The success of the ecological movement in Germany, and the accession of *Die Grünen* into the *Bundestag* after the federal elections of 1983, which Pajkossy had witnessed firsthand, showed that a social movement could effectively be built around ecological issues.[94]

As opposed to the German movement, the Hungarians were 'the Blues' (*a kékek*) rather than 'the Greens'. The logo of the Danube Circle (blue waves on a white background, designed by the Inconnu artists collective) proclaimed its connection towards water as a cultural symbol and the Danube as the great river of Central Europe, and the question of colors is more than incidental. Even if some of its inspiration came from the Greens of West Germany, the cultural and geographical symbolism with which it worked was different. As Rév has noted, the color green would be resonating with German connotations and would surely lead to confrontations with the regime.[95]

These confrontations would materialize in the course of late 1984 as the Danube Circle circulated a petition throughout the country that would receive considerable attention from abroad as well as at home. *Der Spiegel* (borrowing from its own West-German political vocabulary) reported a 'protest- wave of the Greens', while the Parisian daily *Libération* noted that the pianist-composer Zoltán Kocsis, the writer Sándor Csoóri and Olympic champion

[92] Rév, 5.
[93] Rév, 9.
[94] Pajkossy, 10.
[95] Rév, 11.

András Balczó had all signed the petition.[96] However, it was not only well-known public figures who had signed, but close to 10'000 citizens in total, of which several thousand were confiscated by the police[97], leaving 6068 signatures to be handed over to the Hungarian government when it convened on the 13th and 14th November 1984. From November 1984, we can begin to see the Danube Circle as a social movement rather than a fraction of the Budapest dissidents as the Danube question entered into a new phase.

BBC correspondent Judy Dempsey reported that '…in the early stages of these protests, the Hungarian authorities reacted by allowing some dissenting views to be published in the official press. But in recent months, realizing the scope of this enormous protest, the authorities have taken a tougher line, generally publishing only the official views and confiscating several of the petitions circulating throughout Hungary today.' [98] The most important data from the petition, conclusions of a 'sociological investigation' where later broadcast on Radio Free Europe.[99] It revealed that of the 6068 signatures finally submitted, 3550 were those of Budapest residents, 640 from the Danube Bend region and several hundred from the cities of Debrecen, Miskolc, Eger and Pécs. Furthermore, the statisticians supplied a breakdown of the signatories by age and profession, drawing the conclusion that the dam project had met resistance throughout all of Hungary and amongst all levels and sectors of society. Formerly, signing petitions was the business of intellectuals and artists, such as the 250 people who in 1979 had signed an expression of solidarity with the Czechoslovak group Charta 77. The broadcasters investigating the petition took to the airwaves to prove that this was no longer the case and that

[96] 'Protest of Hungarian Greens' RFE Research and Information Section (HU-OSA- 300-40- 1; #275/2).
[97] 'Intézkedés: Aláírásgyűjtések akadályozást' [Procedure: Hindrance of Signature Collection] ÁBTL 2.7.1. NOJI- III-III- 45/78/16/1985.
[98] 'Protest against Danube Dam' RFE Research and Information Section (HU-OSA- 300-40- 1; #275/2).
[99] 'The Second Public Opinion', 05.10.1985 (HU-OSA- 300-40- 1; #275/4).

a large number of people, rather than a few dissident scientists and intellectuals in Budapest, opposed the building of the dam.

Events in neighboring Austria would have enormous consequences on the fate of the Danube in Hungary. December 1984 saw the occupation of the Hainburger Au, a floodplain of the Danube in Lower Austria, where a hydroelectric station was planned. The occupation, in which around 3000 protesters were confronted by 700 police personnel, became the decisive event for Green politics in Austria. The clearing of the protesters from the Au resulted in serious injuries to more than a dozen people, and the images of police beating protesters, later also screened in Hungary,[100] lead to wider public support for the Green cause throughout the region. Initially the proposed dam at Hainburg had received little attention in Austria outside of dedicated circles of environmentalists, but the movement received increased media attention by carrying out a number of stunts[101] as well as by attracting well-known public figures to their cause. Notably, ornithologist Konrad Lorenz, winner of the 1973 Nobel Prize, lent his support, so that the signature-collection in March 1985 was done to support the motion for a Konrad Lorenz Referendum (*Konrad Lorenz Volksbegehren*). Out of an action of several thousand protesters on the Hainburger Au, many of whom spent Christmas 1984 camped there, grew a broader social opposition to the dam which garnered more than 350'000 signatures in support of a referendum on the issue of the hydroelectric works on the Danube. Considering this, the Danube Circle had already published an appeal for support to Austrian citizens in Vienna in late 1984.[102]

[100] Csillag, Ádám, *Dunaszaurus*. (1988) Accessed 05.04.2017 https://vimeo.com/15330203.
[101] The Animals Press Conference (*Pressekonferenz der Tiere*), the *Medienereignis* of 1984 in Austria. A group of youth leaders and local council members appeared dressed as the local wildlife.
[102] 'A Duna Kör Hírei: Felhívás az osztrák közvéleményhez,' [News of the Danube Circle: Appeal to Austrian public opinion] *Beszélő* 1, no. 14 (1985).

The Austrian success story provided a practical example for environmental activism in Hungary, although the success of the Hainburg protests would mean that the company commissioned to build the Austrian dam moved their operations to Hungary, where a referendum on the issue was highly unlikely. The *Österreichische Donaukraftwerke* had already signed a preliminary consulting and planning agreement with the Hungarian company OVIBER (*Országos Vízügyi Beruhazási Mérnöki Konzulens*) in 1984, as the Austrian magazine *The Trend* reported.[103] The project itself was taking on cross-border dimensions as the environmental activists were making contacts abroad. The environmental protest in Hungary gained a wider audience in Germany, especially after they had received the Right Livelihood Award in October 1985. János Vargha travelled to Bonn in December of the same year, with the content of his speech leading the Hungarian State Security Service to believe that a similar action to the one on the Hainburg plain of the previous winter was being planned in Hungary.[104]

In January of 1986, the members of the Danube Circle organized a press conference and publicized a 'Budapest Statement' of environmentalists jointly signed by German and Austrian Greens as well as the members of the Circle.[105] They presented their plan to hold an international walk on the Danube in the following month. When in February of 1986, a delegation of Austrian greens arrived in Budapest in order to take part in the protest walk along the Danube, the event was stopped by rigorous police action.[106] A number of Austrians were

[103] 'Gabcikovo-Nagymaros,' *The Trend, Das Österreichische Wirtschaftsmagazin* 8, May 1986. HU-OSA-300-40-1 #275/9.
[104] 'Ellenséges Propagandatévékenység' [Hostile propaganda activities] ÁBTL 2.7.1. NOJI- III-III/I-249-250/ 5/ 1985.
[105] 'Budapest Agreement' (HU-OSA- 353-1-1 #24).
[106] 'Ideológia, politikai diverzió' [Ideological, political diversion] ÁBTL 2.7.1. NOJI- III-III- 27/ 8/ 1986 II. 4.

taken into custody but released the following morning, leading to further news coverage of the event internationally.[107]

The meetings of the Austrian, German and Hungarian environmentalists led to the foundation of the Greenway Network, the news of which was not only covered in the Western media, but also reached ecological circles as far away as the region of Forst in Brandenburg on the German- Polish border, as Maria Nooke's work on the local environmental groups has shown.[108] Few members of the East German environmentalists could receive visas to take part in the meetings of the Greenway Network, and those that were able to attend have since been revealed to have worked for the *Staatsicherheitsdienst*.[109] Nonetheless, as Michael Beleites notes, the Greenway Network functioned as a model for the *Arche Netzwerk*, which was established by the dissident Carlo Jordan[110] in East Berlin in 1988. The *Netzwerk* aimed at a trans-regional coordination of ecological groups throughout the GDR, exchange of information amongst the many groups that were active on a local level.

2.2. The Formation of the *Umweltgruppen* in the GDR

Whereas the Peace Movement in East Germany had emerged through grassroots initiatives that had subsequently found support within the church, the theoretical discussion of the ecological problem emerged exclusively from within the church itself,[111] as the BEK working papers and the importance of the World Council of Churches Conference in Boston shows.[112] Both within

[107] 'B-Wire: Hungarian Police Break Up Environmental Protest.' Parallel Archive. Accessed 01.06.2018. http://www.parallelarchive.org/document/4310.
[108] Nooke, *Für Umweltverantwortung und Demokratisierung*, 169.
[109] Beleites, *Dicke Luft*, 39.
[110] Founder of the *Umweltbibliothek* in the *Zionskirchengemeinde* of East Berlin and frequent contributor to the samizdat paper *Umweltblätter*.
[111] Neubert, *Geschichte der Opposition*, 446.
[112] See: Chapter 1.

the Catholic and the Protestant Church since the 1960s, a strong discourse had emerged within the churches on the global concerns facing humanity.

The dialogue between the various institutional levels of the church developed in a much more productive way than it had in the Peace Movement.[113] As Michael Beleites has written, the potential for conflict between the leadership of the Church and the grass-roots organizations was high.[114] The popularity of the Peace Movement lead to some conflict within the Church and leading figures repeatedly insisted in public statements that the Church was not oppositional (*'kein Oppositionslokal'*) and distanced themselves from any kind of oppositional activity.[115] In the case of the environmental movement, on the other hand, there was less discord.

This has to be understood in connection with the loaded symbolism of the Peace Movement, combined its biblical slogan *Schwerter zu Pflugscharen*, taken from the Old Testament Book of Micah, with Soviet imagery. The logo, which was printed onto badges, clothes and banners was a reproduction of the famous Yevgeny Viktorovich Vuchetich work that the Soviets had given as a gift to the UN in 1959. The ecological movement, in contrast, relied only on biblical sources and never attempted to re-appropriate Soviet imagery. Its symbol, made for the *Evangelische Kirchentag* in Dresden in July 1983, was a green glazed cross made of ceramic, the wearing of which was combined with a green oath.[116] This was a new development within the GDR dissident scene and did not clash rhetorically or symbolically with the state in the same way that the Peace Movement had done, which was taking on the *Friedensstaat* at its own game and with some success. The state responded strongly to the challenge of the Peace Movement. In the case of the environmental movement, on the other

[113] Neubert, *Geschichte der Opposition,* 446.
[114] Beleites, *Dicke Luft*, 27.
[115] Neubert, *Geschichte der Opposition,* 355.
[116] Beleites, *Dicke Luft*, 92.

hand, it would be difficult to imagine what form such a counter might have taken. The solution to the problem on the part of the state, as Hans- Peter Gensichen explained, was to make environmental issues a state secret and to establish a monopoly on information that was gradually broken down with the emergence of works such as Beleites' *Pechblende*.

The informational material of the State Security on the Peace- and Environmental Movements within the Churches shows the difference in response quite clearly. The memorandum on '*Kirchenfragen*', circulated to all actors of the state within the churches, took a very clear position on the use of the *Schwerter zu Pflugscharen* motif, emphasizing its symbolic content and the relationship in which this act stood to the external threat:

> It is precisely the use of 'Swords to Ploughshares' symbol that characterises the demagogy of the initiators of pseudo-pacifist activities in the GDR. This symbol, borrowed from the Bible, signifies the common vision of the future for communists and Christians, according to which humanity may reach the state in which swords can be forged into ploughshares by way of general and total disarmament. To proclaim this vision of the future as the current task in the GDR, however, means to negate the dialectic of the peace efforts of the socialist state and the defence capability necessary in the face of external threats, to demand a disarmament of socialism and to call into question the active peace policy of the socialist states, which is based on the only possible principle of equal security.[117]

While the Peace Movement aligned itself more closely to Communist symbols and traditions, it was also perceived as challenging the state directly, as this quotation shows. The report

[117] *,Gerade die Verwendung des Symbols „Schwerter zu Pflugscharen" kennzeichnet die Demagogie der Initiatoren pseudopazifistischer Aktivitäten in der DDR. Dieses der Bibel entlehnte Symbol entspricht der gemeinsamen Zukunftsvision von Kommunisten und Christen, wonach die Menschheit auf dem Wege der allgemeinen und totalen Abrüstung den Zustand erreichen möge, in dem Schwerter zu Pflugscharen umgeschmiedet werden können. Diese Zukunftsvision als aktuelle Tagesaufgabe in der DDR zu proklamieren heißt aber, die Dialektik der Friedensbemühungen des sozialistischen Staates und der angesichts äußerer Bedrohung notwendigen Verteidigungsfähigkeit zu negieren, eine Entwaffnung des Sozialismus zu fordern und die aktive Friedenspolitik der sozialistischen Staaten, die auf dem einzig möglichen Prinzip der gleichen Sicherheit beruht, in Frage zu stellen.*' Dokument Nr. 5: Angriffe auf die Politik der SED gegenüber den Kirchen der DDR und Versuche ihres Misbrauches durch den Gegner' ['Attacks on the polticial position of the SED by the GDR churches and attempts by the enemy to misuse them'] Richard Schröder et al, ‚Der Versuch einer eigenständigen Standortbestimmung der Evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR am Beispiel der „Kirche im Sozialismus"' in Deutscher Bundestag, *Enquete Kommission ‚Aufarbeitung von Geschichte und Folgen der SED-Diktatur in Deutschland,* Vol. 6/II, 1312.

continued by assessing the situation in the following way: the environmental movement, also organized within the Church, was making use of the general apocalyptic mood, propagated by groups from the West and its media, in order to call attention to the dying forests.[118] Its claims were moderate in comparison. Another, perhaps more important, break with previous dissident activity was the fact that the ecological movement maintained its distance from the Marxist revisionist tradition.

As Ehrhadt Neubert notes, the critical Marxist and the environmentalist position clash on the question of progress. The radically future-orientated view of revisionist Marxism is not compatible with the unavoidable conflict between ecology and economics set out by political ecology.[119] Besides this theoretical distinction, it was important that established critical Marxists such as Robert Havemann, who had supported the Peace Movement with original contributions, rarely made contributions to the ecological discussion.[120] Intellectually, the Peace Movement was a new departure and one that was based only within the Churches. The only critical Marxist who took on ecological thought and made it a central part of his political position was Rudolf Bahro. Bahro's critical Marxist phase informed his later ecological outlook, as I go on to show. However, his 'Green turn' took place only in the Bundesrepublik, in entirely different political circumstances.

[118] 'Im Interesse des Waldes?' [In the interest of the forest?] Schröder, ‚Der Versuch einer eigenständigen Standortbestimmung', 1313.
[119] Neubert, *Geschichte der Opposition*, 446.
[120] Ibid, 446.

Chapter 3: Searching for the Context

By the middle of the 1980s, when environmentalism had established itself as a critical discourse and environmental groups appeared in the Eastern Bloc, the importance of critical Marxist opposition was diminishing. Although we cannot use Marxism as a label for particular thinkers and we have to stay sensitive to changes in the frames of political opposition, we can note that many representatives of the critical Marxist tradition, in both Hungary and East Germany can be found amongst the supporters and thinkers of environmentalist movements. Most significant of these thinkers is Rudolf Bahro, East German dissident and subsequently founding member of *Die Grünen* in West Germany. Within the broadly defined Danube movement in Hungary, we can identify the editors of *Beszélő,* János Kis and Miklós Haraszti, who both had roots in critical Marxism. An older generation of Marxist thought is represented here by András Hegedűs, former Prime Minister of Hungary before the 1956 Revolution and founder of the Institute of Sociology, perhaps the only remaining 'Marxist' by the 1980s, while most of the democratic opposition had shifted towards liberalism and, to some extent, ecology. [121]

While political ecology in the West owed much to the remnants of critical Marxist thought, in the environmental movements in the East it is almost entirely absent. In this sense, Zoltán Endreffy's contribution to the Bibó *Festschrift* remains an isolated case. Amongst the ideas of the Danube Circle and within the wider Danube movement, political ecology inspired by thinkers of the New Left such as André Gorz and Ivan Illich, is missing.

Gorz's theory of a 'post-industrial proletariat', as I will go on to show in this chapter, was a strong influence on the ecological movements in France and Germany, and the political

[121] Máté Szabó, 'Systemkritik im ungarischen Dissidens: Politische Diskurse der Opposition' in Wolfgang Eichwede, Jan Pauer: *Ringen um Autonomie: Dissidentendiskurse in Mittel- und Osteuropa* (Berlin: LIT Verlag: 2017), 198.

parties that developed out of these movements. His concept of the post-industrial revolution, a revolution based in, and necessitated by, the ecological crisis, emerges in conversation with East European Marxists such as Rudolf Bahro and Marc Rakovski (the pseudonym of János Kis and György Bence). This chapter presents the entanglements between political ecology and Marxism, the shift from 'Red' to 'Green', on both sides of the Iron Curtain, while in the conclusion that follows, I reflect on the ways in which this changes our assessment of environmentalism and political opposition in Hungary.

3.1. Human Rights, the Environment and the Challenges of Development

The Helsinki Accords of 1975 affirmed the fact that research into the problems of the natural environment had the potential to be a topic of broad agreement across the blocs. Under the heading 'Co-operation in the Field of Economics, of Science and Technology and of the Environment', the Accords highlighted the important point that tackling environmental problems would take some co-operation between states.[122] There existed after 1975, at least in form, an international agreement on questions concerning the natural environment, but this had not begun at Helsinki. If the 1975 Accords were important from the point of view of Human Rights, they were of small importance for environmentalists.

The 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment was the first of such large-scale conferences, but it had been boycotted by the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact nations because of the exclusion of East Germany, which was not yet a full member of the United Nations. However, more serious disputes than this emerged, especially between the developed industrial countries of 'the North' and the developing countries of 'the South'.

[122] 'Helsinki Final Act', Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 01.08.1975. Accessed 14.05.2018. http://www.osce.org/helsinki-final-act.

Colonialism and its consequences found their way into the environmental discussion. The represented nations disagreed about what the newly relevant term 'environmental protection' would mean in places where large parts of the population were still living in dire poverty. Indira Gandhi addressed the assembly in the following terms:

> The riches and the labour of the colonized countries played no small part in the industrialization and prosperity of the West. Now, as we struggle to create a better life for our people, it is in vastly different circumstances, for obviously in today's eagle-eyed watchfulness we cannot indulge in such practices even for a worthwhile purpose.[123]

Human Rights, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, made the question of development a lot more complicated than in the West's Era of Industrialization, when no such Rights formally existed. 'Many of the advanced countries of today', Gandhi continued, 'have reached their present affluence by their domination over other races and countries, the exploitation of their own natural resources'.[124] By the second half of the 20th century, when some of the former colonies had become independent nations, the new importance of the natural environment was threatening the chances, indeed the responsibilities, which these countries had to develop their industry and to alleviate the poverty in which many still lived.

The representatives of the LEDCs were arguing that 'environmental factors should not be allowed to curb economic growth'.[125] The stance of the developing countries towards the question of environmental protection was decidedly anti-colonial, causing some unease amongst the industrial countries. Several groups even addressed the environmental costs of the United States' war in Indochina. The result was that Western environmentalists were forced 'to

[123] Gandhi, Indira, 'Man and Environment, Indira Gandhi's Speech at the Stockholm Conference in 1972,' *LASU-LAWS Environmental Blog.* Accessed 09.05.2018. http://lasulawsenvironmental.blogspot.hu/2012/07/indira-gandhis-speech-at-stockholm.html.
[124] Ibid.
[125] John McCormick, *The Global Environmental Movement* (Chichester: Wiley, 1995), 121.

abandon their parochialism and begin to see environmental problems in a global perspective'.[126]

The Club of Rome, in its 1972 Report *Limits to Growth*, had set out the complexity of the global problem with unparalleled precision. The Club, staffed mainly by scientists and experts, aimed 'to promote understanding of the global challenges facing humanity and to propose solutions through scientific analysis, communication and advocacy.'[127] Its report, first published in 1971, was a driving force behind the decision to organize the Stockholm Conference and its main merit was the sophistication of its statistical analysis (the very basics of which would soon come under heavy criticism), which based its assessment of the problem that humanity faced on five distinct variables. Population, food production, industrialization, pollution and consumption of non-renewable natural resources were all growing exponentially and the conclusion was quite clear- the current rate of resource consumption was unsustainable. The post-war economic miracles would eventually run into difficulties. The Club of Rome had commissioned a team at Massachusetts Institute of Technology to run these variables through a computer model in order to understand the interactions between human systems and the resources of the earth on which they depended. It showed that the exponential growth trends could still be altered and a positive outcome depended on rapid, concerted action.

Limits to Growth had worked with computer models and its forecast was dire. However, this kind of analysis, which based its assessment on the merits of systems theory, had severe limitations. It was essentially a highly sophisticated exercise in number crunching and systems theory, taking on the economic facet of the environmental question rather than its cost to human beings.

[126] ibid, 121.
[127] Donella H. Meadows et al. *The Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome on the Predicament of Mankind* (London: Earth Island, 1972).

The German-born economist Ernst Friedrich Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics As If People Mattered*, published in 1973, worked with the same economic expertise that Club of Rome could call upon. After his travels as an economic consultant to developing countries, he brought together his ideas of appropriate scale, which challenged the dominant approach of 'the bigger the better', with the intangible notion of 'Buddhist economics'.

In contrast to modern materialism, Schumacher argued, 'the Buddhist sees the essence of civilization not in a multiplication of wants but in the purification of human character', formed through work.[128] On this, he quoted the Indian philosopher J.C. Kumarappa:

> If the nature of the work is properly appreciated and applied, it will stand in the same relation to the higher faculties as food to the physical body. It nourishes and enlivens the higher man and urges him to produce the best he is capable of.[129]

The gigantism into which the creeds of modern materialism had developed did not allow humans to engage in the kind of work that could 'nourish the higher faculties'. The problem with the economic order was not only the fact that it was being fed by resources which would one day run out, as *Limits to Growth* had shown, but that it deprived human beings of meaningful work which shapes the human character. At the 1972 Stockholm plenary, Indira Gandhi had posed the question: 'must there be conflict between technology and a truly better world or between enlightenment of the spirit and a higher standard of living?'[130] As long as aid to the developing world was limited to the crude transfer of technologies without development of education and organization, Schumacher argued, the conflict between technology and a better world would remain unsolved.

[128] Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful*, 59.
[129] J.C. Kumarappa, *Economy of Permanence* (Rajghar: Saarva-Seva Sangh Publications, 1958) quoted in Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful,* 59.
[130] Gandhi (1972).

To answer the challenges of development, on which he had been consulted, Schumacher drew on his own European expertise. He writes:

> Every country, no matter how devastated [after the Second World War], which had a high level of education, organization, and discipline, produced an 'economic miracle.' In fact, these were miracles only for people whose attention is focused on the tip of the iceberg. The tip had been smashed to pieces, but the base, which is education, origination, and discipline, was still there.[131]

The secret to the rebuilding of European economies, particularly the German economy, in which Schumacher had played his part as economic adviser to the British Control Commission immediately after the war, was in 'the base'. Interestingly, Schumacher does not well on the relationship between these three virtues in 'the base' and the spirit of German militarism that had led the world into war. Development, he continued, could not be 'an act of creation… it cannot be ordered, bought, comprehensively planned',[132] but it must proceed in small steps in order the foster the base on which its continuity depends. The wholesale export of technology without nurturing the base of education, organization and discipline would lead to the exhaustion of natural resources and the complete destruction of the environment. Schumacher was challenging both the Socialists and Western economic experts when he wrote:

> Socialists should insist on using the nationalized industries not simply to out-capitalise the capitalists- an attempt in which they may or may not succeed- but to evolve a more democratic and dignified system of industrial administration, a more humane employment of machinery, and a more intelligent utilization of the fruits of human ingenuity and effort.[133]

Education was the most powerful tool to achieve the goals of development. However, the technical knowledge that modern education looked to transmit had very little use, Schumacher argued, if it did not keep the metaphysical questions in sight, the questions that it had originally

[131] Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful*, 179.
[132] Ibid, 179.
[133] Ibid, 278.

challenged and demystified in the era of Enlightenment. Education could be useful only if it 'stayed in touch with the [metaphysical] center.' Here, Schumacher's economics moves even further towards a religious position:

> [The whole man] will not be in doubt about his basic convictions, about his view on the meaning and purpose of his life. He may not be able to explain these matters in words, but the conduct of his life will show a certain sureness of touch which stems from his inner clarity[134].

Modern education, while offering humans all the skills to exploit the resources at their disposal and a great deal else besides, offered no answers on the 'conduct of life' and led only to hyper-specialization in certain, mainly technical, fields. The result was a loss of what Schumacher calls 'inner clarity' as the most powerful ideas of the 19th century were interpreted categorically and employed ruthlessly.

While Indian philosophy was a strong influence on Schumacher's thinking about the appropriate scale of human endeavors, Catholic doctrine was another side to his economic theories on industrialization and the natural environment. 'To keep himself alive', Schumacher wrote,' [the human being] needs various goods and services, which will not be forthcoming without labour. To perfect himself, he needs purposeful activity in accordance with the injunction, "Whichever gift each of you may have received, use it in service to one another, like good stewards dispensing the grace of God in its varied forms." (1 Peter, 4:10).'[135] In articles for the journal *Resurgence*, which he occasionally edited, Schumacher returns to the

[134] Ibid, 100.
[135] Ernst Friedrich Schumacher, 'Insane Work Cannot Produce a Sane Society, *Resurgence* 5, No.1 (May-Jun 1974) quoted in E.F. Schumacher, *This I Believe, and Other Essays* (Totnes: Green Books, 1997), 71.

Papal Encyclicals, particularly *Rerum Novarum* decreed by Leo XIII[136], to address the question of labor and its relation to the complexity and size of modern industry.

3.2. Using Marx: From Political Economy to Political Ecology

For E.F. Schumacher and for other critics of modern development such as Ivan Illich, the problem of appropriate size took a central role. The strong influence of Roman Catholic doctrine can be seen both authors, indeed Illich's ideas in *Tools for Conviviality* were developed and discussed in the missionary training center at Cuernavaca in Mexico, the 'Centre for Intercultural Documentation', which he himself set up in 1965.[137] The critique of development and the ecological outlook are closely interlinked in both Illich's work and Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful*. Illich wrote:

> To formulate a theory about a future society both very modern and not dominated by industry, it will be necessary to recognize natural scales and limits. We must come to admit that only within limits can machines take the place of slaves; beyond these limits they lead to a new kind of serfdom... Once these limits are recognized, it becomes possible to articulate the triadic relationship between persons, tools, and a new collectivity.[138]

The society which Illich calls 'convivial' would be based on this 'triadic relationship'. Successful development would be suited to the technologies already at hand in less developed parts of the world, the tools would not be owned by technocratic elites but would develop on a human scale in order to give people the practical skills to survive.

This model of 'conviviality' is based on the existence of many small communities rather than one centralized society. On the one hand, it has its roots in the liberal tradition, being based

[136] Leo XIII, 'Rerum Novarum, Encyclical On Capital and Labor,' accessed 06.04.2018, http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html.
[137] Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality* (New York: Harper and Row: 1973), 3.
[138] Ibid, 5.

in tolerance and pluralism between communities and amongst their members. On the other hand, it is influenced by communitarianism.[139] It aims to find a 'middle road' between a strong emphasis on community and extreme individualism. This pluralistic, liberal element in Illich's and Schumacher's ideas had been taken up by Zoltán Endreffy in his paper on nuclear energy, democracy and decentralization in the Bibó *Festschrift*.[140]

Illich's *Tools for Conviviality* became a widely read text, also cited by thinkers of the New Left who were turning towards political ecology. André Gorz, for example, combined a reading of Marx with the ideas of Illich in his work *Ecology and Freedom*.[141] Ecology showed that 'the appropriate response to the bottlenecks and dead-ends of industrial civilization must be sought not in growth but in the limitation or reduction of material production.'[142] Rather than being an appeal along ethical lines to consume less ecology presented us with two options, as Gorz sees it. The first is Illich's 'convivial option', to conserve the ecological balance and 'favor the development and autonomy of communities and individuals.'[143] The second option is 'techno-fascism', where the necessary limits for the preservation of life will be 'centrally determined and planned by ecological engineers.'[144] Ecology a scientific discipline, Gorz hastened to add, did not exclude the second option, 'the path along which we are already halfway engaged.'[145]

To deal with the ecological problem on Marxist terms meant to develop a critique of capitalism from the mode of production rather than to see it as a mere property relationship, as

[139] Máté Szabó, *Zöldek, alternatívok, környezetvédők* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1985), 37.
[140] See Chapter 1.
[141] André Gorz, 'Political Economy and Ecology: Marx and Illich,' in *Ecology as Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1980), 14-17.
[142] Ibid, 16.
[143] Ibid, 17.
[144] Ibid, 17.
[145] Ibid, 17.

Hans Magnus Enzensberger emphasized in his essay, 'A Critique of Political Ideology'.[146] If the ecological problem was only considered as the result of capitalistic property relationships, then there would be no explanation of the (ever more serious) environmental problems that were widespread in the socialist countries, 'where the capitalist class has been expropriated.' In many sections of the New Left, Enzensberger wrote, ecology has been taken up as a rallying call against capitalism, with grave results. 'The statement that "capitalism is to blame" is correct in principle', Enzensberger notes, but it 'threatens to dwindle into an abstract negation of the existing order of things.'[147] Marxism could not be used to produce 'eternal verities' when being right 'in principle' would mean the end of human civilization.

What ecology of the techno-fascist variety was proposing, backed up by the Club of Rome which Enzensberger derides as a 'consortium of top managers and bureaucrats',[148] was that the catastrophe could be avoided 'if we take certain measures on a global scale.'[149] This ecological crash program 'smacked of conversion rhetoric' that eliminated all social components and consequences from the ecological question.[150] The coming of an ecological apocalypse was being preached, aided by the mass media in Western countries and institutions close to industry, such as the Club of Rome, while the critical potential of the ecological question was neutralized. On Enzensberger's view, the 'social neutrality of the ecological debate'- the fact that it was a common problem of the whole world, independent of class interests- was a fiction which ecology was doomed to fall into. For an effective political ecology, Enzensberger relied on Gorz's point that the productive forces must change, and not only the way that they are being used. The fact that industrial society, dependent on these

[146] Hans Magnus Enzensberger, 'A Critique of Political Ideology,' *New Left Review* I, 84 (March-April 1974).
[147] Ibid, 21.
[148] Ibid, 8.
[149] Ibid, 25.
[150] Ibid, 25-26.

productive forces, threatened the existence of human society made the matter all the more urgent, or as Enzensberger put it, '[t]he fight against the capitalist mode of production has become a race with time which mankind is in danger of losing.'[151]

André Gorz's exchange with Marc Rakovski, 'a Marxist who lives and works in Eastern Europe',[152] (the pseudonym of János Kis and György Bence), reveals the interpretation of Marx which is at the core of Gorz's ecological project. The relationship of technical knowledge to capital accumulation, Rakovski showed in *'L'Union du Capital et de la Science'* [The Joining of Capital and Science], is similar both in a capitalist and in a socialist system. The capitalist application of modern technology remains dominant in both systems, leading to the emergence of middle intellectual stratum of qualified scientists and managers.[153] Now that the growth model has become problematic, the middle class reacts against modern development by defending privilege and retreating into a romantic anti-socialism.[154] Once the tasks of the worker have been reduced to their present simplicity, a development that Marx could not have foreseen in 19th Century England, research and development increased exponentially in scale. Production has grown beyond all proportions, leading to the degradation of human relations, the lack of development of personal faculties and the environment of everyday life.[155] Through the critique of the division of labor, taking into account the development of technologies since Marx's time, one reaches the conclusion that the importance of research capable of changing the technique of production would always diminish, while research that adapts the existing technology to the demands of the capitalist production would grow.[156] From a critique of the

[151] Ibid, 22.
[152] Cf. Marc Rakovski [János Kis, György Bence], *Towards an East European Marxism* (London: Allison and Busby, 1978).
[153] In this sense, Rakovski anticipates the schema here of a *sui generis* East European socialism that he would propose in *Towards an East-European Marxism*.
[154] Marc Rakovski [János Kis, György Bence], 'L'Union du Capital et de la Science,' *Les Temps Modernes* 355 (1976) :1255.
[155] Rakovski, 'L'Union du Capital et de la Science,' 1262.
[156] Ibid, 1264.

division of labor, one could come to this conclusion, and understand its material consequences, long before the prophets of 'radical ecology' such as Gorz.

In response, Gorz dismissed Rakovski's critique of the division of labor as 'dogmatic', 'a symptom of the sclerosis of Marxism as it is practiced in the countries that call themselves socialist.'[157] One of the main faults with Rakovski's approach, according to Gorz, is the fact that the proletariat failed to become, and can no longer be considered as, the revolutionary class. 'The rise of productive forces, instead of 'creating the material elements for the development of the prosperous individual', has created a poorer, more dependent and more heteronomous individual.'[158] Rakovski's use of the proletariat as the revolutionary class still betrayed the outdated task of taking over the power of the state. This still worked with the set of concepts, which Gorz criticizes in his 1980 essay *Farewell to the Working Class* as 'The Working Class According to Saint Marx', which posited that the 'industrial universe would call forth a class whose members no longer worked with tools for their own narrow self-interest as individuals… [who] would be divested of all particular individuality and made into interchangeable workers, bringing into play a totality of immediately social capacities and technical powers in pursuance of immediately social effects.'[159] This, according to Gorz, is where Marxism had been stuck 'both before and after May 1968'.[160]

Marxism could be a useful tool once one 'examined critically the concept of material progress', as Hans Magnus Enzensberger had written.[161] The 'development of productive

[157] André Gorz, 'Pour une Critique des Forces Productives: Réponse a Marc Rakovski,' *Les Temps Modernes* 355 (1976): 1272.
[158] *Elle n'est pas devenue la classe révolutionnaire que prévoyait Marx faute, précisément, du développement qu'il escomptait: l'essor des forces productives, au lieu de 'créer les elements matériels pour le développement de l'individu riche', a créé un individu plus pauvre, plus depandant et plus hétéronome.* Gorz, 'Pour une Critique des Forces Productives', 1275.
[159] André Gorz, *Farewell to the Working Class: An Essay on Post- Industrial Socialism* (London: Pluto Press, 1982), 20.
[160] Gorz, *Farewell*, 20.
[161] Enzensberger, 'A Critique of Political Ideology,' 22.

forces', he emphasized, 'is not a linear process to which political hopes can be attached.'[162] The socialist revolutions of the 20th century in industrially under-developed countries had proven this point. The new historical subject, which Gorz puts forward is the 'Non-Class of Post-Industrial Proletarians', a neo-proletariat 'which has been engendered by capitalism and marked with the insignia of capitalist relations of production.'[163] The forces at work in this neo-proletariat can bring a new society into being, inspired by Illich's notion of conviviality.

A post-industrial left, according to Gorz, must extend 'self-motivated, self-rewarding activity' and 'limit as much as possible all waged or market-based activity carried out on behalf of third parties (even the state).'[164] The resulting 'expansion in the sphere of autonomy' would depend on a freely available supply of convivial tools that allows individuals to do or make anything whose aesthetic or use-value is enhanced by doing it oneself.'[165] The danger, on the other hand, is that the time freed up after the limitation of wage labor would be filled by empty 'leisure time', for which an endless supply of distractions and entertainment is already at hand. This would lead the individual to retreat into their private sphere. There are several 'convivial' ideas that Gorz proposes here for time well spent: repair, workshops, neighborhood centers, libraries and open spaces for communication and exchange.[166]

Gorz's plan for the post-industrial revolution, the ideas of decentralization and direct democracy practiced in small communities would be influential for both the French ecological movement as well as within the West German Greens.[167] Critical Marxists in Eastern Europe were still thinking about a critique of the division of labor, and in this vein, Gorz criticizes both Rakovski, as we have already seen, and Rudolf Bahro, who would, nonetheless also be an

[162] Ibid, 22.
[163] Gorz, *Farewell*, 68.
[164] Ibid, 87.
[165] Ibid, 87.
[166] Ibid, 87.
[167] Szabó, *Környezetvédők*, 41.

influence on his thinking. Although seen in many circles as a 'dissident', Gorz is quick to point out that Bahro, who had been an organization development specialist in rubber and plastic combines in East Germany, remains a committed Marxist.[168] In West Germany, he would become one of the founding members of *Die Grünen*, although he was soon relegated to the wings of the party.

The reason for Bahro's deportation from the GDR in October 1979 had been the ideas developed in *Die Alternative*, parts of which *Der Spiegel* reproduced in the West. Indeed, the book would enjoy great success. Bahro's scathing analysis of the historical development of socialism in the Soviet Union offered an 'anatomy of actually existing socialism' that revealed the bureaucratization and social stratification into which it had fallen. Under such a system, Bahro writes:

> The worker becomes the *object* of a procedure that he can only control in appearance, in its superficial immediacy, while in its systematic connection, which cannot be fully perceived without specialist knowledge, it is rather the procedure that controls him.[169]

The advances in modern industry had only made this 'alienation' worse; even the matter of rate-fixing, a standard practice in industry, was made more complicated by the fact that the rate of production depended much more on the complexity of the production process than it did on the worker.[170]

The 'avalanche of expansion in all material and technical dimensions' which 'is beginning to exhibit a runaway character', has the effect that '[w]e are feeding off what other people and future generations need for their own life', Bahro writes.[171] Profit maximization,

[168] Gorz, *Farewell*, 89.
[169] Rudolf Bahro, *The Alternative in Eastern Europe* (London: Verso, 1981), 388. Italics in the original.
[170] Ibid, 389.
[171] Ibid, 262.

as powerful a factor under actually existing socialism as it is under capitalism, will lead to environmental disasters and an inhabitable earth. At the conclusion of Bahro's analysis, he offers his alternative vision, presented in the third part of the book: '*[t]he so- called scientific and technical revolution… must be reprogrammed by a new social revolution.*'[172] The third part of *Die Alternative*, 'The Present Conditions and Perspectives for General Emancipation' would inform his political position in the *Bundesrepublik.*

By the early 1980s, at the time of the interviews collected in *From Red to Green*, he had come to reconsider some aspects of the first two parts of the book. However, if the theory that 'East European countries can be cured with a dose of Western consumerism', espoused by some Czech communists abroad,[173] was gaining ground, the third section of *Die Alternative* on the transformation of society was becoming more central to his ecological outlook. The end of capitalism was unavoidable due to the ecological crisis, and this reality would force some alliance of the socialists, who up until now had been too 'bound up by their own historical tradition'[174], with the ever broader group of ecologists, who came mainly from the middle class. Out of this, a 'new unity on the basis of an anti-capitalist economy'[175] would emerge, in which Bahro saw his task as bringing together of the two (formerly incompatible) groups, the socialists with ecologists.

Gorz quotes from this blueprint for the new revolution, presented in the third part of *The Alternative*, and sees in Bahro a revival of Marxist thought ignored in socialist societies, namely the 'extinction of political economy.' Bahro claimed, in a passage which Gorz reproduces in *Farewell to the Working Class*,[176] that

[172] Ibid, 263. Italics in original.
[173] Rudolf Bahro, *From Red to Green: Interviews with New Left Review*, translated by Gus Fagan and Richard Hurst (London: Verso, 1984), 64.
[174] Bahro, *From Red to Green*, 92.
[175] Bahro, *From Red to Green*, 120.
[176] Gorz, *Farewell*, 88.

> [w]hat people in the developed countries need is not the extension of their present needs, but rather the opportunity for self-enjoyment in their own individualized activity: enjoyment in doing, enjoyment in personal relations, concrete life in the broadest sense.[177]

While this could be part of an ecological political program for *Die Grünen* in West Germany, Bahro stressed that the question of progress in the East lay with the 'progressive elements' within the Party rather than with the independent ecological movements.[178] He was skeptical about their potential to bring about a change of the system, not least because of the fact that they were small groups operating within the Church. Nonetheless, as Ehrhart Neubert has written, a similar 'anticipatory political ecology' to that of Bahro emerged in the critical thought of Heino Falcke.[179] Although we cannot establish a direct connection to Bahro's *Alternative*, Neubert emphasizes the compatibility between the two models of subversive thought.[180]

[177] Bahro, *The Alternative*, 406.
[178] Ibid, 120.
[179] See Chapter 1, 'Critical Participation under Socialism- Problems of Science and Technology from a Christian Perspective' ('*Kritische Partizipation im realen Sozialismus- Probleme von Wissenschaft und Technik aus christlicher Sicht*') at the 1979 Boston Conference.

[180] Neubert, *Geschichte der Opposition*, 234.

Conclusions

A longer historical perspective and a focus on the traditions of democratic opposition in the different national contexts within the former socialist countries is essential to an understanding of the social movements that developed in the 1980s. This thesis has aimed to prove this by exploring the environmental movements and by examining their relationship with the opposition, which developed differently in Hungary and East Germany, the two cases that I have examined. A comparison with the East German environmental movement not only points towards the importance of nationalism and the question of minorities in the Hungarian case, but also shows how the Hungarian movement managed to unite widely disparate positions on an ecological platform. Nonetheless, despite the differences, there were connections and lines of influence between the two cases. In many ways, the Danube movement was at the forefront of a much wider development across the Eastern Bloc, which is reflected not only in the wealth of coverage that it received in the Western press but also in the fact that after the regime change, the Hungarian case was taken as prime example of ecological activism.[181] In this thesis, I have analysed why this was the case rather than taking the phenomenon of 'ecological activism' at face value. In order to deconstruct the composite set of concepts under the term 'ecology' without at the same time losing sight of its usefulness and importance in the opposition, I have placed the spotlight on the local conditions as well as keeping in mind the wider background of 'political ecology' as a global phenomenon. The global nature of ecological perspectives pushes one to think trans-nationally when studying environmental movements. In the case of the Danube movement, the trans-national element is essential, as hope to have shown.

[181] See, for example: John Feffer, 'Hungary… Goulash Ecology,' in *Shock Waves: Eastern Europe after the Revolutions*, (Boston MA: South End Press, 1992).

The appeal issued by the Danube movement in Vienna on 16th April 1986 announced to the Austrian readership that the Hungarian people had seen a victory of democracy in the Austrian movement against the hydroelectric dam at Hainburg in 1984. Now, two years later, the Austrian *Donaukraftwerke*, together with several state companies, had agreed on financing the Gabčikovo-Nagymaros scheme with the Hungarian state. The Austrian contractors had agreed to take over the cost of construction and to complete the largest part of the work. In return, Austrian would receive 'clean' electricity for the next twenty years. The readers of *Die Presse* were reminded that what looked like good business in Vienna in fact meant the final defeat for the Danube movement, and for the chances of democracy, in Hungary.[182]

A wide range of Hungarian intellectuals and public figures signed the appeal. Members of the Danube circle Gábor Pajkossy and János Vargha as well as the leaders of the democratic opposition János Kis and Miklós Haraszti, who had written the appeal.[183] The organizers of the Bibó *Festschrift* János Kenedi and Ferenc Donáth were represented, as well as (posthumously) Bibó himself. Only a month earlier, a similar appeal by writers in the Soviet Union had led to the end of plans for the monumental river reversal scheme devised in the Brezhnev years. Internationally, the ecological issue was becoming increasingly important in East-West relations. The European Parliament, where Green parties had become an established presence, called on the Austrian companies to step back from the Danube project[184] and asked 'the governments of Hungary and Czechoslovakia to reconsider or cancel the Gabcikovo-Nagymaros Dam Project in the light of the scientific findings of the Duna Kör.'[185]

[182] 'Die Presse 16. April 1986: Aufruf.' Parallel Archive. Accessed 01.06.2018. http://www.parallelarchive.org/document/4311
[183] Pajkossy, 16.
[184] 'Die Presse,' 2.
[185] Resolution of the European Parliament, 13th March 1986 (HU-OSA-40-1 #276/3).

As Tony Judt has summarized, '[w]hat began as a technical discussion within the environmentally active circles in Hungary ends as a minor *cause célèbre* in the shadow wars between government and opposition.'[186] The press offensive by the state in response was particularly nationalist in tone, highlighting the 'political goals' of the signatories, published with money from abroad.[187] The regime 'could readily use [resurgent nationalism] to mobilize popular support against a dissident minority,'[188] but the Danube movement succeeded because it could enjoyed the support of a large cross-section of the political opposition. There are, as Barbara J. Falk has noted, 'many ways to heighten the differences between the populists and the urbanists [within the Hungarian democratic opposition.]'[189] As I have shown above, the protest of the Danube movement found resonance beyond Budapest in smaller towns, beyond the democratic opposition around *Beszélő*.

Amongst the signatories of the 1986 Vienna Appeal are not only the members of the Budapest School but also the populist intellectual Sándor Csóori, which indicates the extent to which the Danube movement could function as a common platform of dissent. Political ecology in Western Europe, the evolution of which I surveyed in the third chapter of this thesis, which emerged to some extent in dialogue with the Marxists of the Budapest School, does not play a role in the Hungarian environmental movement. Some of its critical ideas are in the background of the discussion, but it certainly is not made explicit anywhere within the movement. In fact, it has some enlightening continuities with the populist- nationalist critique of Kádárist communism. Máté Szabó's overview of the populist critique is perhaps the most useful for

[186] Judt, 'The Dilemmas of Dissidence,' 271.
[187] See Bánki András, *'Szűk csoport zajos külföldi reklámmal kisért akciója*', [The actions of a small group, supported by boisterous foreign advertisement] *Magyar Hírlap*, 24th April 1986; Berecz János elvtárs, ''*A kékek' kik azok, hol vannak, mit csinálnak? Hol a türéshatár?*' ['The 'blues'- who are they, where are they and what are they up to? How long should they be tolerated?'] *Népszabadság Fórum*, 20th May 1986.
[188] Judt, 'The Dilemmas of Dissidence,' 277.
[189] Falk, 'The Dilemmas of Dissidence,' 125.

drawing this connection. The destruction of old forms of communal life, which had deprived millions of people of culture and identity had turned people into slaves. The perils of modernisation and the destruction of the family also feature strongly in this discourse;[190] Szabó's assessment of the importance of cultural and natural heritage as well as ecology within this section of the political opposition is well founded, he adds that 'Green ideas' were widespread amongst the Populist dissidents before the regime change.[191]

A close analysis of the importance of environmentalism as a dissident strategy in the 1980s in relation to other key concepts such as nationalism or the question of minorities (all of which tend to be treated separately) sheds light on the different traditions of political opposition in the Eastern Bloc. More importantly, it reveals the way in which they overlapped and anticipates how they would evolve within the context of the subsequent political changes.

[190] See Máté Szabó, 'Systemkritik im ungarischen Dissidens,' 210-211.
[191] Ibid, 212.

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