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Report on the Central Europe-USA Workshop on Environmental Chemistry Prague, Czech Republic June 12-15, 1999

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Report on the Central Europe-USA
Workshop on Environmental Chemistry
Prague, Czech Republic
June 12-15, 1999

Background: In late 1993, shortly after the fall of Soviet Communism and the breakup of the Soviet Union, Dr. Helen M. Free, ACS President, and Dr. Paul H. L. Walter, Chairman of the Board of Directors, appealed to American Chemical Society members for financial contributions to help chemists in the former Soviet Union and Baltic countries. Several hundred ACS members responded by contributing a total of over \$12,000 to the Society's newly-created Former Soviet Union and Baltics Fund.

A special task force, consisting of Drs. Michael P. Doyle (Chair), Attila E. Pavlath and Victor Snieckus was formed to determine how the funds could be used most effectively. Dr. John M. Malin, ACS staff liaison to the task force, drafted a proposal to the National Science Foundation which led to a grant of \$129,300 to support a series of three workshops in Environmental Chemistry in the region plus a series of visits to US laboratories by young researchers from central Europe.

The three workshops were held, respectively, in Palanga, Lithuania (June, 1997), St. Petersburg, Russia (May, 1998) and Prague, Czech Republic (June, 1999). In each case a group of some 12-16 US scientists met with Central European and Eastern European (CE/EE) counterparts to discuss shared environmental problems and to propose solutions. Links that were made at first two workshops have so far led to the following results:

- A multi-million dollar project involving radionuclide cleanup at Sillamäe, Estonia, undertaken by Los Alamos National Laboratory
- Fulbright-supported exchange visits of Baltics scientists to US institutions; Student and faculty exchange programs in the Baltics with Duke University and the University of California - Irvine
- A Department of Energy project to improve the Estonian power grid
- NSF grants for basic research in Environmental Chemistry
- Interactions between Estonia and the Green Chemistry Institute
- US input into the Baltic Environmental Action Plan
- Production of new added-value chemicals in Estonia
- Creation of the "balt-env" environmental list server, based at Duke University, to facilitate communication among US and Baltic countries environmental scientists
- Visits to the US by Baltic, FSU and central European environmental chemists
- Subsequent workshops on specific environmental problems.

Report on Workshop III, held June 12-15, 1999 at Pruhonice, near Prague, Czech Republic. The workshop was organized jointly by the American Chemical Society and the Czech Chemical Society. Sixty-eight scientists attended from ten European countries and the United States. UNESCO funds supported 10 participants from Eastern and Central European countries, specifically Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and

Romania. The grant from the National Science Foundation funded participation of eleven of the fourteen scientists from the United States. Dr. Attila E. Pavlath, a member of the Society's Board of Directors, was official president of the US delegation.

The overall goals of the workshop were to

- Introduce scientists to fellow participants from other countries
- Discuss current scientific research
- Propose new collaborative projects
- Foster exchanges of technical personnel
- Develop new mechanisms for information exchange
- Suggest public policy improvements relevant to the field of environmental chemistry, including international standards for environmental data

The three-day event featured twenty-nine spoken presentations and ten posters. Ample time was provided for discussion after each paper and at the end of each morning and afternoon session. Discussion sessions reviewed the goals for the workshop and the results achieved at previous events in the series.

Summary: The participants made specific recommendations in the areas of information exchange, technical exchange and research.

□ **Recommendations for Improved Information Exchange**

- Organize an environmental workshop annually on a circulating basis in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia or Hungary
- Arrange better access to Websites by Central European participants; expand use of the WorldwideWeb and the Internet to promote environmental research in central Europe
- Encourage interaction and registry with specific environmental chemistry groups such as the Green Chemistry Institute (<http://www.epa.gov/opptintr/greenchemistry/gcinst.htm>) , International Cooperative for Environmental Analytical Education (ICEAE, Virginia <http://www.wpi.org/iceae>), the Global Environment & Technology Foundation (GETF, Virginia, <http://www.earthvision.net>) and the Regional Environment Centre (REC, Hungary, <http://www.rec.org/Default.shtm>)
- Provide Central and Eastern European scientists with access to the "balt-env" list server
- Expand the utility of ICEAE by adding reference information and links involving guidance on environmental sampling, analysis and data use. This could include government and university reports as well as out-of-print books and other materials

□ Recommendations for Technical Exchanges

- Initiate more programs for personnel exchange with the US and among Central European and Baltic laboratories
- Form a new international body using experienced environmental chemists, e.g., from national chemical societies to: a) harmonize recommendations for the QA/QC decision process and data use, and b) serve as a source of peer review and advice for national and international environmental projects that will use data from experiment as part of the decision-making process (ICEAE could be one of several support organizations)
- Promote greater interaction with the UNESCO Laboratory of Environmental Electrochemistry at the Czech Academy of Sciences Arrange UNESCO sponsorship for young chemists to work at the laboratory
- Promote exchanges of graduate students and faculty between and among CE/EE laboratories and the United States. The mechanisms could include Green Chemistry Fellowships, the ACS – Central Europe program, UNESCO exchange programs, the ACS International Initiatives program and the UN Environmental program

□ Recommendations for Research

- Develop proposals for NSF and NATO grants for common projects of CE/EE analytical laboratories, either on a project basis or by founding an international group for planning proposals for environmental projects in Central and Eastern Europe
- Make a list of environmental “hot topics”.
- Produce a list of funding sources. This would include National Science Foundation; NATO Environmental Defense Program; US Department of Agriculture; the Environmental Protection Agency; the Soros Foundation; government sources in Japan, Germany and Scandinavia; the Regional Environment Centre (REC) in Szentendre, Hungary; the Global Environment Facility (GEF); and private sources, particularly expatriates.
- Conduct an examination of quality control elements, leading to harmonization of environmental techniques/practices in Central/Eastern Europe with those in the European Union and the United States. Define common standards for measurements; validation, confirmation and specific control within accredited analytical systems
- Jointly develop expert system software based on Data Quality Objective Process as an interface to the National Environmental Monitoring Index (NEMI) methods summary database
- Develop low-cost instrumentation, particularly techniques that move analysis out of the laboratory to the actual site
- Jointly develop and validate a new portable fiber optic sensor for selected analytes and use it for real-time analysis in Central European sites – correlate the results with human exposure measurements

ACS International Activities Administrator Honored. On the occasion of the Czech workshop Dr. John M. Malin, ACS Administrator of International Activities, received two awards. The first was the Jubilee Medal of Palacky University in Olomouc, Czech Republic, recognizing Malin and American Chemical Society for facilitating the development of Chemistry and Medicine at Palacky University. The second was the Vojtech Safarik Award of the Czech Chemical Society recognizing Dr. Malin's contributions in furthering relations between American Chemical Society and the Czech Chemical Society. Dr. Pavel Drasar, Vice-President of the Czech Chemical Society, noted that this was the first presentation of the award to a non-Czech scientist.

IOCD Workshop. During the three days after the ACS workshop, most of those present continued by participating in a workshop on Analytical Laboratory Techniques, organized by Dr. Walter Benson of the International Organization for Chemical Sciences in Development (IOCD).

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John M. Malin
ACS Headquarters
Washington, DC
July 8, 1999