

CROSS COUNTRY CURRENTS

The pace of change in Central and Eastern Europe over the past three years has been dizzying: from entrenched doctrines to democratic elections, from centrally planned economies to the controlled chaos of the marketplace, from satellite states to autonomy.

Along the way, Canada's program of technical assistance, administered by the Task Force on Central and Eastern Europe, has played a continuing role in support of economic and democratic reform. And just as the nations themselves have grown and matured, so, too, have the Task Force country programs, expanding and evolving to respond to the changing needs and priorities identified by the recipient governments. A snapshot of recent activities across the region follows.

Czech and Slovak Federal Republic

World-class Canadian remote sensing technology will soon be assisting the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic (C.S.F.R.) to better manage its natural resources and protect the environment.

Remote sensing — the collection of information from aircraft or satellites — provides useful and detailed data quickly and inexpensively. In one innovative Task Force initiative, the Canadian Centre for Remote Sensing (CCRS) is establishing a remote sensing and geographic information system at the Czech Forest Management Centre. Over the course of the 18-month project, the high-tech facility will produce an atlas of forest conditions and environmental damage in the Czech Republic, a key tool for enhanced management of the region's forests. In Slovakia, the CCRS is transferring remote sensing technology to help the Slovak Commission for the Environment monitor land use, soil erosion, and surface and water pollution. To ensure that the knowledge and skills that back up the technology are also transferred, the CCRS is participating in the

establishment of educational facilities at appropriate post-secondary institutions.

Management training is another top priority in the C.S.F.R. Last year, a Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) program saw 130 Czech and Slovak managers participate in a case study to develop a privatization plan for the Czech and Slovak railway system. The group looked at every aspect of every function, from engineering to accounting and from public relations to personnel, with a view to privatization. The top 30 students then came to Canada in the fall of 1991 to learn about the competitive environment first hand, through a combination of academic training and internships with Canadian public and private organizations.

Financial managers were based at St. Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Agriculture and resource industry participants studied at the University of Guelph in southern Ontario, while public sector managers were located at the University of Victoria in British Columbia. More than 25 Canadian firms and eight government departments took part in the program, providing practical work experience internships for the managers. An outstanding success, the program will be offered again in 1992.

The Task Force is also responding to the demand for English language training in the C.S.F.R. Canada's National Film Board (NFB) is developing five videos and accompanying teacher's guides for use in English classes. Dealing with themes such as the environment, Canada and private business, each video is not only useful as a language teaching aid but also delivers a message about democracy and open markets. The videos, showcasing some of the best of the NFB's acclaimed work, will be available to schools in the C.S.F.R. through the ministries of education.

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