

# Contra Costa Sun

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Neno Duplancic

## European pollution may bring state jobs

By Sandra Ann Harris

Staff writer

Staggering quantities of toxic waste in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union may be cleaned up under the direction of an Orinda man who returned from a California trade mission last week.

Neno Duplancic of International Technology (IT) Corporation spent two weeks meeting with high-level officials and appearing on television in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Hungary and the Soviet Union at the invitation of California Lieutenant Governor Leo McCarthy.

"They need any help they can get. There are (toxic) sites scattered all over Eastern Europe. They're a 1,000 times more difficult than what we have here," said Duplancic, who estimated clean-up costs at \$8 billion over the next 10 years.

In Czechoslovakia, for example, 6 million cubic yards of hazardous waste has been piled up in a volcano-shaped dump. On top there is a lake of hazardous liquid waste, said Duplancic.

Near Budapest, a large amount of mercury has seeped into the ground water.

In Eastern Germany, chemicals from a steel factory have contaminated the ground water, and chemicals left over from a chemical factory that was formerly on the site have also polluted the area.

## POLLUTE

From Page 1

Duplancic, who was born and educated in Yugoslavia, is a civil engineer for IT Corporation in Martinez and directs engineering design and implementation of closures of hazardous waste sites. He has lived in Orinda for two years with his wife, Vera, who is expecting their first child in April.

The trade mission was an outgrowth of a conference in Los Angeles held two months ago titled: "Environmental Issues in Eastern Europe and Central Europe and Opportunities for California Business."

McCarthy, who is chairman of the California's Commission for Economic Development, sees these countries as a business opportunity for California, which is feeling the pinch of a decline in defense spending. The focus of the mission was to introduce California industry to the emerging market economies of these Eastern European nations as well as discuss environmental problems and solutions.

"It's a golden opportunity to place the resources of these defense indus-

tries in the large environmental market," said Duplancic, whose company plans to bid on clean-up projects he visited in Germany, Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

"Every country has its own problems and has to have its own approach," he said, citing East Germany and Czechoslovakia as examples.

"Although both countries are very polluted, the way the clean-ups will be implemented will be very different," he said.

The cash infusion from West Germany to East Germany following the recent unification will give clean-up efforts a "jump-start" and, according to Duplancic, the toxic waste sites should be stabilized within two years.

In other countries like Czechoslovakia the process will be undertaken much more slowly, because funds are not available.

"It's clear that in none of these countries is the environment a top priority," he said.

In Berlin, the new capital of a unified Germany, Duplancic discussed new environmental technology with the German Federal Environmental Ministry.

In Czechoslovakia, Duplancic met with President Vaclav Havel to discuss solutions to the country's staggering environmental problems

that need to be quickly mitigated. He also appeared on Czech television to discuss the country's environmental challenges.

In Hungary, the delegation met with the U.S. Embassy's Commercial Officer David Hughes to discuss growing business interest in joint ventures as well as corresponding environmental regulation and liability questions for foreign investors.

In Yugoslavia, Duplancic observed environmental destruction that continues to be a major problem in Yugoslavia's modernization program and participated in two days of high-level talks.

In Moscow, Dr. Abel Aganbegyan, author of perestroika, showed California trade delegates how reforms are shaping the Soviet marketplace and how government officials are coping with major environmental issues.

"It was a quite exhausting trip," Duplancic said.

Duplancic was born and educated in Yugoslavia. In 1979, he received his undergraduate degree in civil engineering from University of Split in Yugoslavia. In 1984, he earned his master's degree from Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pa. In 1986, he received his Ph.D. from the University of Split.

See POLLUTE, Page 2