



The Right Livelihood Award

for outstanding vision and work on behalf of our planet and its people

Michael Succow (Germany)

(1997)



Michael Succow

...for his commitment to safeguard natural eco-systems and areas of outstanding natural value for future generations.

Michael Succow was born in 1941 and graduated in biology from the University of Greifswald in 1965, where he became scientific assistant. He became involved in nature conservation and started the organisation Florenschutz, for which he organised a conference in Czechoslovakia in 1972.

In 1969, because of his sympathies with the Prague Spring, Succow left his post at the university, but continued working on nature conservation issues at home and abroad. With perestroika in 1989 came Succow's opportunity. Appointed as a deputy minister in the first post-Communist government, working with his colleagues Knapp, Freude and Jeschke, a system of six biosphere reserves and five national parks was set up during the last months of the GDR. Since then the four colleagues (SKFJ) have worked hard to safeguard and extend the areas of nature conservation, being prominent in the (not always successful) struggle against destructive industrial developments (e.g. the Baltic Sea Autobahn, mass tourism infrastructure on Rügen Island, and extending the Elbe river bed). In 1990 Succow was awarded the Lina-Haehnle-Medal for German Nature Conservation and was made Vice-President of the organisation Naturschutzbund (NABU) Deutschland.

Then followed an extraordinary period, still ongoing, when the 'Gang of Four' (SKFJ) travelled all over the former Soviet Union, and some other countries, helping to advise the new governments on land use and setting up biosphere reserves and national parks. These include seven in Georgia, covering a third of the country and others covering a third of Mongolia. They have also been involved in establishing programmes in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, setting up three World Heritage Sites in Russia as well as reserves in Russia and Belarus. In all this work Succow and his colleagues have sought to build up environmental NGOs in the relevant areas and to ensure the full participation of the local population.

By now back at the University of Greifswald as a Professor, Succow has developed a new integrated curriculum for teaching land use and sustainable development and he is developing the first partnerships with universities in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. The University of Greifswald is setting

up an ambitious new international programme "to prepare landscape ecologists for the challenges of the 21st century".

As a member of the expert advisory committee to the Federal Environment Committee, Succow has helped design a general reform of land-use policies in Germany, which would promote an environmentally sound agriculture, limit urban areas, establish wilderness, bring economic and social stability to rural areas and redirect EU subsidies to ecologically productive services.

Succow and his colleagues have also lobbied for ecologically sensitive land use in their home states of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Brandenburg. In North-eastern Germany they have developed one of the most ecologically sensitive land use policies in the world. The biosphere reserves of Spreewald and, even more so, Schorfheider-Chorin, have already become showcase areas for organic agriculture, sustainable forestry, sensitive tourism, near-city recreation and the build-up of 'flowering landscapes' in the former GDR.

Quotation

"Our task is to consider and plan for a sustainable management of all land and sea so that they carry as much as possible of the world's genetic and ecological riches through the pressures of the next century into what we must all hope will be a stable and sustainable world beyond."

Michael Succow

RIGHT LIVELIHOOD
AWARD FOUNDATION