"The secret to David McTaggart's success is the secret to Greenpeace's success: It doesn't matter what is true, it only matters what people believe is true.... You are what the media define you to be. [Greenpeace] became a myth, and a myth-generating machine."

The cynical description of the organization Greenpeace comes not from some right-winger annoyed at the excess of the environmentalist movement but from Paul Watson, cofounder of Greenpeace and now the director of a rival ecology group, the Sea Shepherd Society.

Watson, who left Greenpeace in 1977, was talking about how the organization grew from a ragtag band of hippies to the largest environmental organization in the world, with a membership of 5 million and offices in 24 countries. Not the least ingredient in this success was the clever myth-creation referred to by Watson.

Under its recently departed guru, David McTaggart, 59, the $157 million (1990 revenues) Greenpeace became a skillfully managed business, mastering the tools of direct mail and image manipulation - and indulging in forms of lobbying that would bring instant condemnation if practiced by a for-profit corporation. Ironical, this, considering that McTaggart marketed Greenpeace as very much the nemesis of the powerful multinational corporation.

The mythic image is of a band of young daredevils hanging off a refinery smokestack or thrusting themselves in the path of the whaler's harpoon. This image has made a mighty impression. Greenpeace Germany, for instance, second-largest branch operation after Greenpeace U.S.A., had revenues last year of $36 million and 700,000 members, of whom 320,000 permit Greenpeace to automatically debit their bank accounts annually for the dues of 50 deutsche marks ($30).

But all is not peaceful in the inner workings of Greenpeace these days. The myth is fraying a little around the edges. Beginning this spring, German publications have carried revelations of millions of marks of donations being funneled into Greenpeace savings accounts rather than used to fight pollution.

Greenpeace underwent a major shakeup on Sept. 2 with the announcement by its international headquarters in Amsterdam that David McTaggart had resigned as chairman after 12 years in the post. Replacing him was Helsinki civil rights lawyer Matti Wuori, 46; McTaggart became honorary chairman and says he will spend his time, among other things, on helping the Soviet Union clean up its environment. The timing was interesting, to say the least. There is some reason to believe that Wuori was brought in as a Mr. Clean to scrub Greenpeace's now somewhat bespattered image.

Who is this somewhat mysterious David McTaggart, regarded by many as a near saintly figure? McTaggart's skillful image manipulation begins with his own life story. There is the official version, as told in the 1989 book, The Greenpeace Story, and repeated over the years in many newspaper and magazine stories about the organization. According to this official version, McTaggart was once a successful real estate executive who saw the light at age 39 and decided to save the planet.
This version is myth. People who knew McTaggart in his earlier life say he was a failed real estate promoter who left investors and relatives in the lurch and departed before his projects failed (see box, p. 176). Gertrude Hubertry, mother of the third of McTaggart's wives, and one of several people who lost money with him, remembers him as a ruthless businessman. "David once told me that when you want something badly enough, you have to be willing to do anything to get it," she says. "Anything."

One thing he wanted badly was the leadership of Greenpeace. In 1979 a fierce fight broke out between the Vancouver operation and loosely affiliated rivals in the U.S. over the use of the Greenpeace name. By then McTaggart was active in Greenpeace's European operation, and he was famous for having been beaten by French agents when he tried to interfere with a French nuclear test. The Vancouver founders filed a lawsuit to win control of the name. Many say it was an open battle between David McTaggart and cofounder and president Patrick Moore. Moore had the support of the Canadians, but the U.S. and European affiliates were squarely in McTaggart's camp. McTaggart emerged in 1980 with the chairmanship of Greenpeace International. Moore remained head of the Greenpeace Canada affiliate.

Of course, the millions of people who gave money and allegiance to the myth knew little of this internecine battling. There's a paradox here. Outfits like Greenpeace attack big business as being faceless and responsible to no one. In fact, that description better fits Greenpeace than it does modern corporations that are regulated, patrolled and heavily taxed by governments, reported on by an adversarial press and carefully watched by their own shareholders. There's little accountability for outfits like Greenpeace. The media treat them with kid gloves. Press Greenpeace and it will reveal that McTaggart's salary was $60,000, but it won't say anything about any other forms of compensation - something a U.S. corporation would be compelled to reveal in its proxy statements.

While affiliates like Greenpeace U.S.A. and Greenpeace Germany have their own boards, the real power and much of the money belong to the international organization, which until his resignation was ruled by McTaggart from his olive farm in Perugia, Italy and/or the Greenpeace office in Rome.

Amsterdam has the power because of all the cash upstreamed from the 12 most prosperous national organizations, which must pay a kind of royalty for use of the name. The royalty is set at 24% of their net take from fundraising. Power is further consolidated at the center as no national office can start a campaign without the approval of the international council.

How has Greenpeace used this power? Ruthlessly. There is a kind of ends-justify-the-means mentality at work here. Greenpeace pressured the University of Florida into firing marine biologist Richard Lamberti in 1986. Lamberti's offense: doing research that required tissue samples from whale organs, research that Greenpeace had decided wasn't scientifically useful. Greenpeace made the preposterous claim that Lamberti was just a front for commercial whalers. Lamberti, now at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, says his research was aimed at identifying whale diseases. Greenpeace's tactics, he says, included trucking protesters to the campus and flying over football games with banners that said "U of F stop killing whales."

While the media were enthusiastically recording Greenpeace staffers dodging harpoons from Zodiac inflatable dinghies, McTaggart was helping to pack the International Whaling Commission.

The commission was formed in 1946 in a treaty among whaling nations to prevent the overhunting of whales. The most closely affected nations were Japan, Iceland, the Soviet Union and Norway, but membership in the commission was open to any country that was willing to pay an annual fee of roughly $20,000 to $30,000 plus
the cost of sending its representative to meetings. According to Francisco Palacio, a former Greenpeace consultant on marine mammals, he and McTaggart, working with their friends, came up with a way to bend the commission to the Greenpeace view that there should be an outright ban on whaling.

The whale savers targeted poor nations plus some small, newly independent ones like Antigua and St. Lucia. They drafted the required membership documents for submission to the U.S. State Department. They assigned themselves or their friends as the scientists and commissioners to represent these nations at the whaling commission. For instance, Palacio, a Columbian citizen based in Miami, arranged to be the commissioner from St. Lucia. The commissioner from Antigua was Palacio's friend and lawyer, Richard Baron, also from Miami. McTaggart's friend Paul Gouin, a Moroccan-born French expatriate living in Nassau, Bahamas, served as commissioner from Panama. According to Palacio, the Greenpeace-inspired commissioners enjoyed an annual all-expenses-paid ten-day trip with a $300-per-diem perk to attend commission meetings. Palacio says the group paid to fly a U.N. ambassador home to talk his government into going along with the plan.

Between 1978 and 1982, Palacio says, the operation added at least half a dozen new member countries to the commission's membership to achieve the three-fourths majority necessary for a moratorium on commercial whaling, which passed in 1982.

This project cost millions, says Palacio, including the commission membership payments picked up on behalf of cooperating members. "In membership fees the payments amounted to about $150,000 [a year], and then we had all the grease money throughout the years," says Palacio. The Frenchman Gouin, then in his 30s, was the angel, funneling the funds through a Miami-based "foundation" called the Sea Life Resources Institute. Where did Gouin get that kind of money? From trading investments, he says.

Greenpeace campaigns, like the save-the-whale one, often seem open and almost spontaneous. But they are carefully orchestrated, beginning with a network of investigators who collect tips from government officials, truck drivers and sympathetic employees at corporate targets of Greenpeace antipollution campaigns. One insider says that the intelligence gathering includes a clandestine operation in Zurich, a point that Matti Wuori denies. This much is clear: With its network of contacts, Greenpeace has turned itself into a vigilante group - vigilant in enforcing antipollution laws, but acting as judge and jury whenever it decides that government enforcers aren't forceful enough. That little of this is widely understood is not surprising. A sympathetic press has always been a Greenpeace ally.

Greenpeace's biggest fundraiser was a tragic event that Greenpeace didn't plan at all. In 1985, French government agents, attempting to thwart a Greenpeace obstruction of nuclear testing, blew up Greenpeace's ship *Rainbow Warrior* in Auckland, New Zealand. Photographer Fernando Pereira, who was on board at the time, was killed. The incident brought instant martyr status to the organization.

Greenpeace was not slow to exploit the publicity. Between 1985 and 1987 Greenpeace U.S.A. revenues tripled to $25 million.

But the martyrdom was somewhat sullied by allegations that Pereira was allied with terrorists. A German intelligence official says that German and Dutch intelligence agencies had files on Pereira describing him as a "contact" of a political front man for the terrorist Second of June Movement gang, and as a contact with the Soviet KGB in planning antinuclear missile protests in Western Europe.

Greenpeace denies these allegations, and says that the stories of the terrorist connections are fabrications planted
by a French foreign security agency trying to take the sting out of the ugly event in Auckland.

The truth on that score may never be known, but Greenpeace reaped huge publicity dividends from the tragedy while the police allegations got scant attention in the media. When unfavorable publicity does surface, Greenpeace frequently takes to the courts. In the last year Greenpeace has filed suits against three German publications that have said things about Greenpeace it didn't like. Feeling free to criticize others, Greenpeace does not seem to feel others have the right to criticize it.

Reykjavik, Iceland-based independent filmmaker Magnus Gudmundsson can testify to this. Gudmundsson's 1989 documentary *Survival in the High North* shows the struggle between hunting peoples of the far north and environmentalists. It paints a dismal picture of welfare dependency and rising suicide rates among the hunting populations of Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Island, where the seal hunting business was devastated after the successful campaign by Greenpeace and animal rights groups to ban sealskin imports to Europe.

Gudmundsson's film reexamines evidence produced in 1986 by award-winning Danish journalist Leif Blaedel, which shows that one propaganda film used by Greenpeace was faked by using paid animal torturers. Blaedel cites gruesome scenes in the film *Goodbye Joey*, which Dirranbandi, Australia, court records had confirmed were faked by its producers. These scenes, he reports, were staged by paid kangaroo shooters who were later fined for torturing kangaroos for the film. Court documents confirm that the film's fraudulence was a matter of public record in 1983, three years before the last known time Greenpeace Denmark sent it out on request - to Blaedel himself. Greenpeace media director Peter Dykstra says Greenpeace stopped distributing the film in 1983, when it discovered the film's "integrity problems."

Greenpeace has tried to silence Gudmundsson, with demands for injunctions and/or damages in the courts of Iceland, the U.K. and Norway. Gudmundsson has spent about $40,000 in legal fees so far.

If Greenpeace's ends justify such means, what are these noble ends? It's impossible to say precisely, though unmistakable is a hatred of business and free markets. Greenpeace U.S.A. Executive Director Peter Bahouth told the newspaper *In These Times* in April 1990: "I don't believe in the market approach.... It results in treating toxics or pollution as a commodity.... When companies have a bottom line of profit you won't have them thinking about the environment."

German environmental consultant Joseph Huber, talking about militant elements in Greenpeace Germany, sums up an informed outsider's view: "These Greenpeacers do not know what they are longing for. But they do feel the strong need to protest the perceived destruction of the earth by industrialism and capitalism. The Marxist elements are interspersed with a new kind of romanticism and anarchism."

There is nothing in environmentalism that says it has to be statist and antimarket to work. The Bozeman, Mont.-based Political Economy Research Center, for instance, endorses a property-rights approach to solving environmental problems, and even the mainstream Environmental Defense Fund favors marketable pollution permits. But Greenpeace, at least the pre-Wuori Greenpeace, would have no truck with the free market. Its philosophy is that pollution is a sin, not a cost, and should be outlawed, not taxed - even if that means shutting down industry.

Robert Hunter was a cofounder of Greenpeace and to some its spiritual leader. He is now an environmental filmmaker based in Toronto. In 1979 he wrote a chronicle of Greenpeace, *Warriors of the Rainbow*. It says: "Machiavellianism and mysticism alike played their parts in the shaping of the consciousness [that Greenpeace]
expressed. It embodied at times a religious fervor, at other times a ruthlessness that bordered on savagery.... Corruption and greatness both played their part and both took their tolls."

Ruthlessness and religion are a combustible mixture, the more so when combined with an absolutist certainty. Greenpeace gives research grants but doesn't fund research on cleaning up toxic or nuclear wastes. Why? Greenpeace says its role is to prevent pollution rather than cleaning it up. It seems that finding solutions to the safe disposal of such wastes undermines the Greenpeace objective of eliminating the industrial processes that create the waste.

Greenpeace U.S.A. recently commissioned a report from forestry expert Randal O'Toole on the economics of the U.S. timber industry. O'Toole concluded that eliminating government subsidies to the U.S. Forest Service and allowing it to charge recreation fees would reduce the Forest Service's incentives to overcut trees. According to O'Toole, Greenpeace didn't allow publication of the study's recommendations under its name. Says O'Toole, "I had the feeling that someone higher up in Greenpeace didn't like my conclusions."

In its money-raising literature, Greenpeace often invokes its allegiance to the nonviolent rhetoric of Mahatma Gandhi and the Quaker notion of "bearing witness." But Gandhi believed passionately that good ends do not justify evil means; Greenpeace's devotion to this ideal is questionable.

Take, for example, its support for Earth First, an eco-terrorist group whose methods would have horrified Gandhi - and whose co-founder, Michael Roselle, is now on Greenpeace's payroll. It is famous for driving spikes into trees, which can injure sawmill workers. (Roselle says Earth First now "discourages" tree-spiking.) When a car bomb explosion led in 1990 to the arrest of two Earth First members injured in the blast, Greenpeace formed an alliance of environmental groups that paid their bail and private investigation fees. Roselle, still an Earth First member, offers the theory that the Earth Firsters were innocent victims of attempted murder by anti-environmentalists. No charges were filed.

It seems clear that Greenpeace's benign image and name, so redolent of goodness, are a cover for a disdain for capitalism. Not surprisingly, international board member Susan George and military expert William Atkin used to work at the notoriously leftist Institute for Policy Studies.

In many of its utterances, Greenpeace is less an institution dedicated to saving endangered species than it is an advocate of a Big Brother who would run the world the way Greenpeace insiders would like it to be run. This is clearly spelled out in an editorial in the March/April 1990 issue of Greenpeace magazine. The editorial compares Eastern Europe's command economies to the West's "savage capitalism." Mindless of the environmental devastation caused by socialism, the editorial concludes: "From a purely ecological perspective, the two competing ideologies were barely distinguishable." That outrageous statement would hardly sell in the newly freed countries of Eastern Europe, although Greenpeace has recently opened two offices there, but in the pampered West it apparently finds believers.

Can Greenpeace's new chairman check this anticapitalistic fervor and bring Greenpeace into the mainstream of environmentalism? Matti Wuori seems to be serious about infusing his more moderate views into the organization - and he plans to create an internal audit unit. But to the extent that he curbs Greenpeace's worst tendencies, Wuori risks damaging the reputation for militance that has done so much to build Greenpeace's myth.