

Secrecy vs. the Need for Ecological Information: Challenges to Environmental Activism in Russia

by Thomas Jandl

NOWHERE IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND NATIONAL SECURITY CLEARER THAN IN THE case of weaponry as a polluter. Even within this category of environmental threats, there is a hierarchy. At the top, both in terms of environmental priorities and international security, are weapons of mass destruction. They represent not only classic environmental problems—health hazards and threats to species—but also create an obstacle to economic well-being. Plus, they tend to affect neighboring nations to the same degree as the country on whose soil they are produced or stored. Nuclear, biological, and chemical accidents are truly global polluters, through transportation of contaminants in ocean currents and in the atmosphere.

Both East and West are grappling with their Cold War legacies, and more specifically with the cost of safeguarding and storing nuclear waste. In the prevailing economic situation, the obstacles to dealing adequately with the Cold War heritage are even more significant for Russia than the West.

It is in this context that the Norwegian NGO, the Bellona Foundation, initiated its analysis of the Soviet Cold War legacy on and around the Kola peninsula. Two major reports—*Sources of Radioactive Contamination in Murmansk and Arkhangel'sk Counties*, and *The Russian Northern Fleet: Sources of Radioactive Contamination*—resulted from this effort. The reasons for focusing on this region are not solely environmental. Norway's interest in the Northern Fleet's nuclear legacy stems from the country's vicinity to the storage sites and is thus as much inspired by national security as by pure environmental concerns. This issue has transcended like few others the realms of classic environmental problems and related health hazards, moving into the fields of diplomacy and international security. Russia reacted strongly to Volume II of the report, arresting co-author Alexandr Nikitin.

This article will, through the Nikitin case, explore how an individual environmental organization ventured through the minefields of international security and diplomacy, forging obvious as well as unlikely alliances along the way. For environmental organizations, there are two lessons to be learned: One, the increased mixing of national security issues with environmental concerns makes it more dangerous to work in the field by widening the range of problems environmentalists can encounter. Two, environmental groups have to build relationships in a much wider range of areas than environmental policy alone. Bellona USA's fax list includes the state department, the national security community, the international affairs community in Congress, the congressional human rights caucus, and a group of opinion leaders in the areas of democratization and economic transformation from a planned to a market economy.

There is also a lesson to be learned for politicians and national security specialists. While the globalization of trade is hotly debated, the spreading of environmental problems into the commons—the oceans and the atmosphere—is well under way. The separation of these international environmental cases from international security policy, for semantic or ideological reasons, invariably comes back to haunt us. The earlier these problems are addressed in international negotiations, the better.

THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

With the end of the Cold War, questions pertaining to the degradation of the global commons, transboundary pollution, and the depletion of resources of importance to neighboring nations have become more prevalent topics of international discussions than nuclear annihilation. Few debate the merits of this change in priorities. The probability of a nuclear strike against American soil is more remote than ever. By contrast, the risk of an

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environmentally disastrous accident as a consequence of Cold War activities is much higher than previously known—or admitted.

Environmental and national security concerns become most directly intertwined when the military and its activities and systems create the environmental hazard. The inadequate storage of nuclear weapons and other contaminated materials raises questions of how far secrecy in military affairs can legitimately be maintained.

A large amount of nuclear and chemical hazards

exists, in the form of actual weapon systems (warheads, bombs, mines, etc.), related items such as nuclear submarine reactors, and other contaminated materials. The U.S. Departments of Energy and Defense are wrestling with these problems, and more specifically the cost of decommissioning nuclear waste. The world's largest defense contractor, Lockheed Martin, is unable to fulfill its contract on agreements that require cleaning up a contaminated storage site in Idaho Falls. The cost vastly exceeds the 1994 estimates of \$179 million: for a single site of low-level materials, cost estimates now

A CHRONOLOGY OF THE NIKITIN CASE

5 October 1995: The FSB, Russia's federal police, raids the Bellona office in Murmansk and confiscates all research materials. Bellona employee Alexandr Nikitin is questioned.

5 December 1995: The Ministry of Defense forms an expert committee to evaluate information in the Bellona report with respect to state secrets revealed therein. The committee declares it is not competent to evaluate the sources for the information.

6 February 1996: Alexandr Nikitin is arrested by the FSB and accused of espionage for his work on the Bellona Foundation's report on *The Russian Northern Fleet: Sources of Radioactive Contamination*, an environmental document about radioactive waste in Northwest Russia.

27 March 1996: The Constitutional Court rules that Nikitin's attorney does not have to request security clearance as suggested by the FSB.

11 April 1996: Nikitin is indicted, but the text of the indictment remains classified.

24 June 1996: The Ministry of Defense forms a second committee. The results mirror the findings of the first. The Ministry of Atomic Energy sets up a committee. This committee finds no state secrets in the Bellona report. The Ministry of the Defense Industry forms a committee, which finds it is not competent to respond to the questions posed by the FSB.

17 July 1996: The Environment Committee of St. Petersburg concludes the report has no relevance to environmental problems in the region.

August 1996: Amnesty International adopts Nikitin as the first prisoner of conscience since Andrei Sakharov. The International Helsinki Committee sets up a Nikitin commission. The UNHCR reviews the Nikitin case.

17 September 1996: A Ministry of Defense committee finds that the damages caused by Nikitin are \$1 million.

30 September 1996: The FSB bases its charges against Nikitin on secret Defense Ministry decrees. The Russian Constitution holds that no citizen may be charged with laws that have not been duly published.

10 October 1996: Bellona employees are denied visas to Russia to prevent participation in the defense of Nikitin.

19 October 1996: The Bellona report is banned in Russia; the first book to be banned in the post-Soviet era.

11 December 1996: The Deputy Director General of Public Prosecution orders Nikitin's release from pretrial detention.

14 December 1996: The FSB falsely claims the case was already in court and Nikitin cannot be released. The Prosecutor's office insists. Nikitin is released.

10 February 1997: The Council of Europe begins to investigate the human rights violations in the Nikitin case.

23 April 1997: Another Ministry of Defense committee is formed. No conclusions yet.

9 September 1997: The FSB files final charges based on secret decrees and laws that entered into force when Nikitin was in pretrial detention. The FSB removes files documenting the false information given to the Procurator on 14 December 1996, but is later ordered to restore them.

12 November 1997: The FSB's chief investigator in the Nikitin case, Boris Utkin, is dismissed and replaced.

28 November 1997: Nikitin holds a press conference in Moscow. This marks the first time Nikitin is allowed to leave his internal exile in St. Petersburg since his arrest.

24 January 1998: The FSB presents Nikitin with a new set of charges; the sixth since the beginning of the case. Although based on one additional decree, the entire accusation is still based on secret and partly retroactive decrees issued by the Ministry of Defense.

5 March 1998: Twenty-two members of Congress urge Vice President Gore to raise the Nikitin case with Russian Prime Minister Chernomyrdin during the Gore-Chernomyrdin meeting in Washington. This is the third congressional letter on behalf of Nikitin sponsored by Rep. David Skaggs (D-Colo.).

10 April 1998: Procurator General Yuriy Skuratov extends the investigation into the Nikitin case for an unspecified time.

are in the \$600 million range (Mintz, 1997).

The American experience offers a good indicator about the challenges in Russia, where the government has to deal with an even larger number of submarines, bombers, and missiles than the Pentagon and DoE. In addition, Russia's economy is in transition. Even the most optimistic assessments do not suggest that Russia will be able to pump as much money into its cleanup program as the United States. At present, Russia falls far short of funding even the most basic needs. In the immediate future, it is clear that the cost of a reasonably safe cleanup of Russia's nuclear waste must be underwritten by the international community.

To increase the world's interest in confronting this "Russian" problem, the Bellona Foundation initiated its analysis of the Soviet Cold War legacy on and around the Kola peninsula. In 1994 and 1996, Bellona published two volumes of a report on nuclear contamination in northwestern Russia (Nilsen & Boehmer, 1994; Nilsen, Nikitin & Kudrik, 1996). The reasons for focusing on this region are not primarily environmental; Norway's interest in the Northern Fleet's nuclear legacy stems as much from the security aspect of the problem as from pure environmentalism.

So far, the Russian Northern Fleet has taken out of operation approximately 130 nuclear submarines. Approximately 150 more will follow within the next half decade under the second part of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START II). A total of 18 percent of all nuclear reactors in the world are located on the Kola Peninsula, giving the area the distinction of accommodating the highest concentration of nuclear materials worldwide. Solid radioactive waste is stored in eleven facilities along the Kola coast. All are full, and at several sites waste is stored openly in drums or containers without any protection against the elements or theft. There is no intermediate or permanent storage site in the area. In fact, all waste is supposed to be shipped to the Mayak reprocessing plant in Siberia. At the rate the trains are going, the transportation of the existing waste would take more than fifteen years, without even taking into account the newly decommissioned submarines that will add to the nuclear wastepile over the next years. In addition, the Mayak plant is not capable of accommodating all the waste, and would be overwhelmed if all the material supposed to be reprocessed were really to arrive. The abysmal state of the rail system makes it highly unlikely that all the waste will go through Mayak.

In addition to the solid nuclear materials, liquid waste is stored in unguarded concrete containers. Since the 1997 federal budget for the first time did not include money for container maintenance, Russian experts have publicly stated that winter frost will cause already existing cracks to widen and cause leakage of low-level radioactivity next spring (Nilsen, 1997). The government's response was to tighten laws on state

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secrecy. Scientists who want to measure radioactivity around these containers next spring will do so at the risk of being accused of espionage and treason.

To exacerbate the problem, only 35 percent of all funding for the Northern Fleet's nuclear safeguard work was actually allocated to the navy. Most of the money was used to cover salaries and pensions. Bills go unpaid for long periods of time. At one point, a storage facility commander had to send an armed platoon to an electric power plant to restore at gunpoint the power supply for the essential cooling systems. The facility had not paid its electricity bills (Jandl, 1995). The director of the Atomic Icebreaker Fleet in Murmansk, who is also responsible for some of the on-board storage of radioactive waste, calls the storage policy of the Northern Fleet "fraught with disaster" (Roukcha, 1997). Policymakers must therefore think of the implications of a START III treaty where more submarines were taken off line without assuring proper funding of the cleanup after dismantlement.

With all the makeshift storage facilities along the coast of the Barents Sea, within a 100-mile radius of the Norwegian and Finnish borders, environmental risks are inevitable to Russia's neighbors as well. An accident will have catastrophic consequences not only for hundreds of thousands of Russians, but also for those in neighboring states. In addition, any accident will impact the Barents fishing grounds, and, through water streams and ice movements, can potentially transport radioactive particles all across the Arctic to places as far away as Alaska. The issue has thus transcended, like few other environmental matters, the realms of classic environmental protection and related health hazards, diplomacy, and international security. The questions come down to these: how much access to military facilities can an international organization demand in the name of global interests? And if the West funds the cleanup effort, doesn't the West have a right to see what its money is funding?

The Russian reaction to Volume II of the Bellona

report has added an unintended fourth realm: human rights and democracy. Russian security police arrested one of the contributors to the report for alleged national security breaches. Since that time, Bellona has forged alliances with groups not traditionally known for environmental work, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Similarly, traditional environmental groups have added human rights to their line of work, as exemplified by the Sierra Club's Human Rights program and, albeit not by choice, Bellona through the defense of its employee, Alexandr Nikitin.

THE SWING OF THE PENDULUM

In the period of 1989 to 1991, Russia was in a state of euphoria. Everyone wanted to talk to westerners, journalists, scientists, or environmentalists. After decades of secrecy decreed by the authoritarian communist regime, the door had opened and the tides of change seemed to sweep a country eager to catch up on interaction with like-minded foreigners.

Between 1991 and 1994, Russia knew no rules. The old order was dead, and nobody had bothered to replace it with a new one. Not surprisingly, the remnants of the old days tried to hold on. After 1994, the old guard had reorganized itself sufficiently to clamp down on the new-found liberties. The Federal Security Service (FSB) interviewed Bellona's Igor Kudrik about his work on the problems stemming from the storage of nuclear fuel from the Northern Fleet's submarines in the Kola region. At first, there were no allegations about telling state secrets, only questions of loyalty and nationalism. Why would a son of Russia work with foreigners? Not coincidentally, the only Bellona employees ever harassed by the FSB are the two Russian nationals on the staff, Kudrik and Nikitin. Kudrik had to leave Russia and now works for Bellona in Norway.

At that time, the FSB paid visits to numerous activists. On one occasion, the office of the newspaper *Moscow News* was ransacked after the paper published the research of Vil Mirzoyanov, a scientist, on chemical weaponry. Russia had just signed the chemical weapons convention. Mirzoyanov got off easily. There was no written law on state secrets at that time, and *Moscow News* was an influential paper. Nevertheless, after the incident Mirzoyanov decided to move to the United States. But Bellona bore the brunt of the security apparatus' wrath, maybe because Nikitin's "betrayal" of the motherland weighed heavier due to his military past. He was a former navy captain. In 1995, a state secrecy law was passed, and in 1997, the law was amended to give the FSB sweeping powers to decide, without proper judicial review, what information on nuclear weapons and nuclear storage and safety, should be deemed secret.

The pendulum had swung full circle from Soviet authoritarianism to quasi-libertarian freedoms of in-

formation to post-Soviet restrictions on information whose publicity is explicitly protected in the Constitution. Bellona got caught somewhere in the middle, after having worked in Russia throughout the post-communist era.

Bellona learned many valuable lessons in the course of this case. The key ones are discussed below. For small environmental groups as well as grassroots activists in Russia, the key question is, how can one continue the work without the support of a western group with relatively deep pockets and international friends? The obstacles and opponents appear overwhelming. Based on the Nikitin experience, Bellona will set up an Environmental Rights Center in St. Petersburg. A joint venture with the Russian civil rights group, Citizens' Watch, the Center will support Russian environmentalists with legal problems, and also serve as a clearinghouse for contacting like-minded international groups and activists as well as the funding community. Small groups with niche issues are important, but they cannot survive in a perilous environment. They need, just as Bellona did in the Nikitin case, coalitions and support groups to stand up to an overpowering state security apparatus.

LESSON ONE: IT'S ALL POLITICS NOW

The environment once presented a less contentious area where the military superpowers could seek cooperation, but it is now increasingly the realm of diplomatic, political, and even military players. With the demise of their Cold War patrons in the East or West, smaller nations have fewer geopolitical restraints against going to war with one other. The same is true for internal strife. Resource scarcity is considered by some to be a contributory cause of displacement of millions of people and subsequent armed conflict. NGOs, such as the World Resources Institute, study the connection between resource availability, migration and conflict. Universities have opened departments for similar research. One of the first and best-known environment and security researchers, Thomas Homer-Dixon, drove home the point of the interplay of these fields in an interview in 1995—less by what he said than where he said it: he appeared in *Defense News*, one of the defense industry trade papers (Homer-Dixon, 1995).

While resource scarcity could be identified as an economic issue traditionally related to national security, Bellona's work in Russia is based on pollution, albeit pollution stemming from military nuclear reactors. Hence, the lesson could be simple: stay away from military issues and you are safe. Two problems become evident, however. First, the military nuclear complex represents an enormous environmental hazard, both in NATO and in the former Warsaw Pact nations. Simply declaring it off-limits to inspection and criticism

would create an unacceptable national security risk for populations in the nuclear countries themselves, as well as in nations in close range of a nuclear storage facility or weapons production site. Second, the new Russian law on state secrets is so broadly worded that, in theory, activists or NGOs could be accused of breaching national security laws if they simply measure the radiation levels around civilian "nuclear power installations and special physical installations which have significance for defense" (Law on State Secrets, 1993). While Russia, of course, has a right to protect its national security, this definition of security infringes on other countries' own environmental safety and, given the power of the atom, touches on global security concerns. Furthermore, the law directly contradicts the Russian Constitution, which states that no condition endangering the health of the population can be kept secret.

The Russian side claims that the broad wording of the state secrecy laws allows all sorts of existing international cooperation projects to continue. Indeed, these laws are not aimed at U.S. military officials who help their Russian counterparts comply with arms control treaties, such as START. State secrecy restrictions will probably not be invoked against Pentagon officials who bring millions of dollars in Cooperative Threat Reduction money, better known as Nunn-Lugar funding (*Post-Soviet Nuclear & Defense Monitor*, 1997). These restrictions will not stop the work that the Russian side is interested in pursuing. But they will put a hold on private watchdog groups and individuals in research facilities who, through their work, try to make their power plant, town, oblast, or country a better place to live. And the restrictions might be used as a means of applying pressure on foreign officials when disputes arise during the implementation of a cooperative project.

Bellona has a large number of friends in the Kola region, mostly researchers and academics who used Bellona's help to continue their important work. In turn, they helped Bellona to gather information for the first systematic analysis of nuclear waste in the area and its storage conditions. These researchers and activists are now put in a situation of legal limbo. They no longer know for sure what they can do and what could land them in jail.

Alexandr Nikitin was the first to be targeted for going too far. Bellona, as his employer, supports Nikitin's claim that he broke no law. Bellona has, in cooperation with Nikitin's legal team, prepared documentation to show that his activities are fully covered by common law and the constitution, which spells out unambiguously that all information pertaining to severe public health risks cannot be kept secret, and that every citizen with knowledge about such hazards must bring them to the public's attention (Gauslaa, 1996, Gauslaa, 1997). But Nikitin learned about these risks as a navy captain. By speaking out, he broke the

military's *omerta*, similar to the Mafia's unwritten code that you never criticize your own, whatever the consequences.

LESSON TWO: FORMING NEW COALITIONS

The "military secrets" Bellona's report revealed were the storage conditions of old, decommissioned submarine reactors and spent nuclear fuel of a generation of years past. It is difficult to believe Russia feels threatened by revelations of this kind. In fact, the nuclear materials as analyzed in the Northern Fleet report are of so little importance to the nation's defense that Russia is trying hard to get rid of them, but cannot afford to do so. Clearly, the driving force behind the obstinate FSB prosecution of Nikitin is elsewhere. Indeed, one military source told a western expert traveling in Russia that the Northern Fleet does not have a problem with Bellona's work. Its issue lies with Nikitin and it is personal.

While the navy may want to punish a whistleblower, the FSB has more rational motivations. Briefly disbanded in the new Russia, the KGB was revived as the FSB, with the goals to fight organized crime, prevent terrorism, and perform counter-espionage functions. The Russian mafia has proven to be beyond the FSB's reach. Chechnya has hurt its reputation as an anti-terrorism force. It needed a success on the espionage front. The navy's angry reaction to Nikitin's role in the Bellona report was an opening. In two years of investigations, the FSB has not been very successful in bringing to light illegal behavior. But too many participants in this legal drama have staked their careers on the Nikitin case to let it go. So they delay, in the knowledge that going to court with the evidence that is available would lead to certain defeat. When Procurator General Skuratov dismissed the chief investigator, Boris Utkin, and replaced him with an official with no prior participation in the case, he took the first step towards a fair review. Only an investigative team with no personal stake in a conviction can bring this case to an end.

The case has even wider implications than Alexandr Nikitin's personal fate. The FSB's activities mirror the behavior of security forces in many nations in their interaction with inconvenient opposition groups. The environment is often a point of contention between those in power and those without power. Grassroots action starts most frequently over issues of vital importance, such as the use of land in a subsistence community, or a parent's fight against unsafe nuclear storage which threatens a child's future.

Of course, aside from these merely personal issues, there are also philosophical questions pertaining to democracy, the rule of law, and basic human rights. The Nikitin case touches on all of these. It is thus not surprising that throughout the fight for a fair trial or a dismissal, Nikitin and Bellona have worked with many

non-environmental constituencies. Bellona has talked to many a U.S. senator or representative with no love lost for the environmental movement. *Dear Colleague* letters circulated in the House and Senate received wide bipartisan support, and no clear ideological current is discernible among the signatories. Senator Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) is as supportive as Senator Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.)—two gentlemen undoubtedly on the opposing ends of the political spectrum. In the House, defense hawk Representative Curt Weldon (R-Pa.) has helped as much as environmentalist Representative David Skaggs (D-Colo.). Vice President Al Gore has taken up the Nikitin case in private with then Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, while Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien has done so in public.

Everything is in a name. Bellona showed good political instinct when the organization—despite the founders' wild days as youth activists—embarked on a pragmatic path, building coalitions rather than shocking and alienating. The group is committed to environmental protection and unashamed of calling itself an environmental organization. But by addressing environmental protection in a scientific way, Bellona has gained a reputation that allows its staff to talk to politicians who would not normally interact with most other environmental organizations. Greenpeace, just to name one, has done important work in bringing environmental concerns to the attention of a mass audience. Greenpeace also performs a wide range of serious academic research on environmental issues. Nevertheless, its reputation is one of sensationalism, regardless of the merits of a specific report or campaign. In the Nikitin case, Bellona has managed to paint a picture of general, international political interest over the green background upon which it operates. Broad support was easier to obtain on such a foundation.

Amnesty International has adopted Nikitin as a prisoner of conscience, and Human Rights Watch is working the case from its Moscow office. The Sierra Club's human rights campaign is working hard on the issue, and democracy groups and former dissidents support Nikitin from within Russia. Many de facto U.S. officials support Bellona by taking the banned Northern Fleet report to Russia or using its analysis and numbers in their argumentation. The report is the first and only book to be banned in post-communist Russia. Prominent Russians, like former Yeltsin science adviser Alexey Yablokov, are openly supportive of Nikitin and Bellona.

No environmental group can take on the Russian security apparatus. This is why environmental organizations will have to forge alliances with other organizations to increase their leverage. Bellona's cooperation with a host of human rights advocates, supporters of democratization and economic conversion in Russia, and international relations experts, is an early model of this new coalition. It has been made neces-

sary by the move of environmental issues into the dangerous politico-military realm. And, NGOs remain small and relatively powerless vis-à-vis a totalitarian system. Russia appears to have turned the tide towards a democracy and the government is not indifferent to criticism. But the Nikitin case is only the beginning.

MONEY TALKS

To break the indifference some nations exhibit to political pressure, or to improve the effectiveness of lobbying from the NGO side, coalitions should include players from outside the field of talkers and thinkers. Money talks, and most authoritarian regimes stay in power because it is financially attractive for the despots. Nigeria is a case in point. The military regime would not hold on if the oil revenues did not go right into the elite's pockets. When environmental activist Ken Saro-Wiwa was sentenced to death, he received support from the highest political and moral dignitaries around the globe. Nevertheless, Saro-Wiwa was hanged. It is more likely that Nigeria would have let Saro-Wiwa go if Shell's president Cornelius Herkstroter had made his company's financial support of the Nigerian government contingent upon adherence to basic human rights.

Bellona therefore works with industry to create a coalition between a public policy goal on the one hand—environmental protection and nuclear safety—and financial interests on the other. The cleanup needs in northwestern Russia are enormous and Western companies should get a large share of contracts due to their know-how and technologies. The delay now is political. How can the U.S. and European governments overcome differences over work share and supervisory authority; how can the West's concerns over liability in case of an accident be taken into account; how can funding be made available in a climate of increasing skepticism towards foreign aid? Bellona and other NGOs will tell lawmakers why this issue is important to national security. Industry will be better in convincing a congressional representative that cleanup funding for nuclear storage sites in Russia is not a waste of money. American technology exports are creating jobs at home, while at the same time making the world a safer place to live—both in terms of disarmament and the environment.

Companies like Lockheed Martin, Westinghouse, General Electric, and Babcock and Wilcox are the best lobbyists for the economic message in the United States. Furthermore, they possess more financial resources and have fewer restrictions than NGOs when lobbying Congress. French, British, Norwegian, and Swedish nuclear cleanup companies are focusing on the business opportunities presented by the Russian storage mess. On this issue at least, environmentalists and businesses are natural allies. Should environmentalists go

to bed with the "enemy" called the nuclear industry? Business is pragmatic enough to work with NGOs that in past times have chided the industry for its practices. Environmentalists should be pragmatic enough to work with business when the environmental bottom line shows a change for the better. That does not mean that environmental NGOs should look the other way over abuses by their new partners elsewhere. It just means that where interests overlap, environmentalists should stretch out their hands. When interests clash, NGOs will speak up as always.

Ideology is dead. Pragmatism is in. Bellona has pursued the art of pragmatic environmentalism in its industry partnership program. Companies sponsor one Bellona program, while Bellona sues them in another. But why not? Defense contractors sue the Pentagon with great regularity, just to see the program managers they had just denounced as incompetent award them yet another billion-dollar contract. Bellona's approach of cooperation may not be suitable for every environmental organization, but all parties with interest in international work will inevitably have to find innovative solutions to doing business.

THE FUTURE HAS ARRIVED, LIKE IT OR NOT

Globalization is well under way. For the environmentalists, that means that if we do not change our ways of operating, we will be left in the cold. This journal will receive submissions on the global impact of CO₂ emissions reductions. There will be discussions on the exploitation of the oceans, and eventually about the use of resources in space. Every issue related to resource use will increasingly be defined in terms of national security. Trade and access to markets and resources will rapidly replace military influence and ideological infighting.

This being said, it is anachronistic that many politicians still do not understand the importance of a pragmatic approach to issues of global reach. Ideology appears to be the driver in an amendment to the successful Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction program, prohibiting funding of environmental projects. To be sure, Nunn-Lugar is a disarmament program. Yet, nobody asked for money to plant flowers. On the other hand, one potential catastrophe replaces another if nuclear submarines are decommissioned with U.S. money, but no funds can be spent on the final storage of the spent nuclear fuel from those subs.

Funding nuclear cleanup is good business in America. The nuclear industry in the United States had to survive without a domestic nuclear power plant order for two decades. Contracts will be commissioned for cleaning up and safeguarding nuclear sites. U.S. companies have made large investments and want to recoup their money. Russia is a vast market, but Russia cannot pay. Eventually the West will pick up the

tab, at the latest when the first irradiated fish are found in Alaska. This debate is reminiscent of the one that surrounds health care. Prevention is cheaper than the cure. Politicians and the public would prefer not to pay the cost of the cleanup. But eventually we will have to. The earlier we do it, the cheaper it will be and the less damage will be done in the process.

There is an additional benefit. Some Russian companies are indeed quite good at what they are doing, and they do it for much less than their Western counterparts. In one project currently under consideration, the Western partners would transfer technology to their Russian joint venture company. The Russians would produce nuclear waste storage casks for use in the Kola region. If the project works well, these casks could be used in the U.S. cleanup program as well, a mutual benefit for the Russian and American partners.

The Clinton administration, in general friendly to the idea of environmental cleanup, has not managed to prioritize the environmental legacy of the Cold War. Ken Luongo, former advisor for nonproliferation policy to Secretary of Energy Hazel O'Leary and director of the DoE Office of Arms Control and Nonproliferation, stated that "[w]hile Presidents Bill Clinton and Boris Yeltsin would publicly announce their common aims, achievement of those goals was hampered by bureaucratic staff on both sides who still harbored misgivings about the other's intentions." Luongo also blamed Congress and the administration for their "perceptions of the cooperative programs as foreign aid rather than as an investment in U.S. security." He said that the United States needed "a cabinet secretary that cares. Secretaries Albright, Cohen, or Peña need to take on this issue [of nuclear safeguards] as their own. Only then will the bureaucracy move. We've been lulled into a false sense of security because people think we've accomplished much more than we have" (Luongo, 1997).

Potential problems need to be addressed in the early stages of a project. As mentioned above, the Cold War did not leave the developers of nuclear weapons much time to ponder the environmental consequences of their work. But today, the world is safe enough to take a minute to reflect and think issues through. START III, the next round of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, needs to include provisions for dealing with the dangerous side effects of the disarmament process. There are many. Proliferation and safe storage are top priorities, but experts in different fields will add to the list. If the biggest threat to the safe storage of dismantled nuclear weapons is the social situation in Russia, then it must be in the purview of START III to address issues such as unpaid salaries for those who guard storage facilities. If environmental considerations turn out to be of importance, as most experts are convinced they will, resources must be made available to deal with them. What will history say about those who in the

name of Cooperative Threat Reduction created one threat from another, spending billions of taxpayer dollars in the process?

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