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U.S.-USSR Cooperation in Environmental Policy

Dr. Gary Waxmonsky*

I am a political scientist which, as any lawyer will tell you, is the twentieth century equivalent of an alchemist. I do, however, wear two hats. One bureaucratic in nature, managing the Bilateral Cooperative Program in Environmental Protection, and the other somewhat more scholarly, as a Soviet affairs Ph.D. and someone familiar with the Soviet literature on environmental policy. I am not a lawyer, and therefore, not qualified to comment in depth on the effect of the specifics of Soviet legislation. However, I would like to do two things today: first, address the broad trends that we have observed in Soviet environmental policy over the years, and second, to speak very briefly on the Cooperative Program which I spend my professional life managing. I would like to share with you a few interesting facts about what is currently going on in U.S.-Soviet environmental cooperation.

Briefly, on the first topic, I think it is fair to say that *glasnost*, or openness, was a demonstrable trait of the environmental agenda in the Soviet Union long before it became *au courant* in other aspects of the Soviet domestic scene. There is a tradition of very open, extremely ingenuous and striking investigative reporting on environmental problems in the Soviet press which goes back at least as long as the eight years I have been in Washington. Indeed, I think this can be traced back to somewhere during the mid 1970s and has reached a very intriguing level as of late under the Gorbachev reforms. This is clearly an interesting field and will remain so for quite some time. I can only share Marshall Goldman's as-

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assessment that in this particular realm *glasnost*, be it in this society, in Soviet society, or in any other, is indeed critical. We are dealing here with an interdisciplinary problem which has descended over the past twenty years onto societies and bureaucracies which are not well organized to deal with such problems, and are not organized nor prepared to respond in policy terms to such interdisciplinary dilemmas. We have clearly seen this in the American response to the environmental agenda. I think the fact that we have seen so much interesting material in the Soviet press over the years on environmental issues speaks positively to the seriousness with which the Soviet Union addresses these problems. There is a downside to it though: the more these kinds of issues are addressed in the open press, not just the technical press, the less they tend to be addressed in administrative and judicial terms. It will be interesting to see whether the years ahead will witness any diminution in the volume of the environmental problems covered in the popular press, accompanied by an increase in judicial activity. One very interesting aspect in the coverage of Soviet environmental problems in recent months is a prejudice against large nature transforming projects. The idea which is starting to become prevalent, is that perhaps we just do not know enough about how nature works to be able to take on projects such as diverting part of the flow of major rivers or proceeding with breakneck hydroelectric projects. This theme has become quite pronounced in the Soviet press over the last year.

Looking to the future, one can only note with interest the official rumors of a "Soviet Environmental Protection Agency" (EPA). If such an entity does emerge, we can look for several specific developments as indicators of the effectiveness of this entity. One would be an in-house research and development capability. This is an advantage of the U.S. EPA in comparison with many other environment policy organizations around the world. Without an in-house research arm, it is very difficult to maintain the credibility of monitoring data. Effective environmental regulation is impossible unless you know where the problem is originating and who, or what is responsible. In order to regulate you must be able to monitor the envi-

ronment. That is why environmental monitoring is a very important pastime in the Hydromet Organization which we deal with under the Bilateral Program. Good monitoring and good quality assured data will be absolutely critical in any expansion of the Soviets' regulatory effort in the environmental realm.

We have also heard mention today of low "ecological culture" on the part of officials in the Soviet judicial system. I think that speaks to the importance of training, of integrating environmental curricula into universities, not only in law faculties but across disciplines. I also find interesting what Professor Kolbasov often refers to as the ecologization of the economic mechanism — bringing environmental policy to make greater economic sense in the Soviet context. I think this is a very critical development and certainly one worth watching, perhaps also one worth focussing on in terms of our Bilateral Cooperation.

Let me move then into the question of what is going on now in terms of our Cooperative Program. You have seen here today obviously one manifestation of a much larger program. We have exchanged in the past eight years — approximately 2200 American and Soviet specialists in different areas of environmental science and policy. In addition to Dr. Kolbasov and Mr. Galyatin, there are two other Soviet environmental delegations in the country at this time: two specialists working on water quality models in a laboratory in Athens, Georgia, and two Soviet seismologists, specialists in earthquake prediction, working in California. Several U.S. specialists have just returned from Moscow where they discussed the scientific underpinnings of the stratospheric ozone depletion problem. Right now in Vienna, at an international session of the Coordinating Committee on Protection of the Ozone Layer, a number of countries are moving toward an international agreement which will include limitations on the production and use of chlorofluorocarbons. I believe that U.S.-Soviet cooperation in environmental protection has advanced our two countries' understanding of each other's positions, and will facilitate the process of international consensus formulation on this very important problem.

We heard talk this morning about nature preserves and national parks. We are planning to send a delegation of American specialists, headed by the Deputy Director of the National Park Service, to the Soviet Union in May to resume a dialogue on management of national parks and urban recreation zones. We are also in the process of organizing an initiative on environmental education. Two university professors are scheduled to go to Moscow next month to meet with officials of the Ministry of Higher Education and other interested Soviet organizations. This is but a small portion of the joint activity planned for this year. In terms of the future, there is considerable potential for U.S.-Soviet cooperation on hazardous waste research and management. The two sides have also begun to discuss integrated environmental management studies, which would look at a region in the U.S. and an analogous region in the Soviet Union. This particular effort is in its very inchoate stage but we see considerable potential there. Ecological risk assessment is another area which we are hoping to bring into the ambit of U.S.-Soviet cooperation along with economic applications of various managerial approaches to environmental policies, such as bubbles, emissions trading, and cost-benefit analysis. There is a potential for taking techniques developed in one country and applying them regionally on an experimental basis in the other country.

I was very happy to hear Dr. Goldman's warm comments about this Program and his surprise at its having existed for so long. I can only say that it has existed and has thrived by virtue of the dedicated efforts of people like Nick Robinson, Dinah Bear, Kristine Hall, and Dr. Kolbasov and despite the efforts of bureaucrats like myself, I think this program of cooperation in environmental protection has a rich future.