

NOTES, NEWS & COMMENTS

Renewal of Environmental Exchanges Between United States and Soviet Union

One happy result of the November Summit Meeting in Geneva between President Ronald Reagan and General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev was a decision to renew the environmental protection exchange between their two countries. Originally agreed to in 1972 at the Summit Meeting between Richard Nixon and Leonid Brezhnev, the environmental protection exchange agreement was perhaps the most fully developed of all the joint programmes that evolved in the years of 'detente'; there had been relatively little bureaucratic nitpicking and remarkably fruitful results. In other words the environmental exchange arrangement had stood in sharp contrast to almost all the other exchanges that were developed in the eight years or so during which such exchanges flourished.

It was not only that the arrangements were relatively amicable, but they were also serious in intent and produced some interesting joint results. In the period from November 1976 to November 1977, for example, there were approximately one hundred joint activities. These included working-group meetings, conferences for specialists on different areas of cooperation, symposia—and, most significantly, joint testing of equipment and verification of research methodology and joint experimentation and expeditions. Specialists were sent to the partner country and worked on site. Some examples of such activity include joint projects in experimental gas desulphurization at Severo Donetsk, which was compared with a similar project in Boston, Massachusetts. In much the same vein a joint project involved the management of water-quality in the Great Lakes and Lake Baikal. Furthermore, in the field of earthquake prediction, American specialists were allowed

to set up and employ for monitoring their own seismic equipment in the Nurek Reservoir SE of Samarkand, while a Soviet team monitored some seismicity in Central California with thirty seismometers of the type used by the Soviets in their Garm region.

In all there had been eleven areas of interaction and activity: (1) Prevention of air pollution; (2) Prevention of water pollution; (3) Prevention of pollution related to agricultural production; (4) Enhancement of the urban environment; (5) Protection of Nature and the organization of preserves; (6) Protection of the marine environment from pollution; (7) Biological and genetic effects of environmental pollution; (8) Influences of environmental changes on climate; (9) Earthquake prediction; (10) Arctic and subarctic ecological systems; and (11) Legal and administrative measures for protecting environmental quality.

In 1977, it was decided to extend the agreement for five years, until 1982. Unfortunately, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan caused the United States to terminate this and other exchange agreements. With the resumption of summit discussions, the decision has been able to resume such exchange, and presumably the results will be as fruitful if unpublicized as they were before.

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Plan to Reverse Destruction of Tropical Forests Released by International Task-force

An international task-force, organized by the World Resources Institute, has presented a 56-countries' plan for 'arresting and ultimately reversing' the destruction of tropical forests. The task-force's three-parts' report, *Tropical Forests: A Call for Action*, is sponsored by the World Resources Institute, The World Bank, and the United Nations Development Programme. It was released recently in Washington, DC, and New Delhi, India.

The nine-members' task-force consists of Professor Paulo Nogueira-Neto (Secretary of the Environment, Brazil), Dr T.N. Khoshoo (former Secretary of the Environment, India), Khubchand G. Tejwani (Land-use Consultants International, India), Sir Charles Pereira (former Head, East and Central African Agricultural and Forestry Research Organizations; Former Chief Scientist, Ministry of Agriculture, England, UK), Pedro M. Picornell (Executive Vice-President for Planning, Paper Industries Corporation of the Philippines), Thomas Michael Apsey (President and Chief Executive Officer, Council of Forest Industries of British Columbia, Canada), Salleh Mohamed Nor (Director, Forest Research Institute, Malaysia), John Spears (Senior Forestry Adviser, The World Bank), and Dr Robert E. Buckman (Deputy Chief for Forestry Research, United States Forest Service, Washington, DC, USA).

The task-force recommends public and private investment of \$8 thousand millions (American billions) over the next five years in forestry and related agricultural activities to begin reversing tropical deforestation and its devastating impact on people and the environment. Of this amount, \$5.3 thousand millions would be directed to the 56 most critically affected countries, for which specific investment proposals are presented in the report.

'The plan we are releasing... offers both grounds for hope and a basis for action,' said James Gustave Speth, President of the World Resources Institute, a Washington-based policy-research centre focusing on development and resource issues. 'Its great value is that it moves, beyond documenting the problem, to proposing concrete solutions. It is not just about trees, but about people and their prospects for a better life.'

In India, Dr T.N. Khoshoo, former Secretary of the Environment and a member of the task-force, said: 'The deforestation occurring in the tropics today is one of the great tragedies of our time. It is a classic example of a Third World problem which the industrial nations cannot afford to ignore.'

The report marks the first time that major development assistance agencies and nongovernmental organizations have agreed on solutions addressing tropical deforestation, Mr Speth said: 'These sums are small in relation to the benefits they will realize for the world's developing countries. They can stimulate economic growth and reverse dangerous threats to the Earth's environment.'

The Foreword to 'The Plan' (the first part of the above-cited report) starts by pointing out that 'Throughout history, [tropical forests] have been essential sources of food, fuel, shelter, medicines, and many other products. They sustain people and their environments by protecting soil and water resources and providing habitat for an estimated 50% of the world's plant and animal species.' It is likely that tropical forests also influence regional and global climate.

Every year, however, more than 27 million acres (11 million hectares) of tropical forests—an area larger than