



UNITED KINGDOM MISSION
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

845 THIRD AVENUE
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022

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Assistant Under-Secretary
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FCO

Dear Duncan,

TIME ENVIRONMENT CONFERENCE

I was the guest of Time magazine at an environment conference at Boulder, Colorado from 10 to 12 November. It was a most interesting occasion.

// 2. The purpose of the conference was to gather material for a special edition of Time magazine on the environment to be published in mid-January 1989. For this purpose Time brought together a nice blend of politicians, professors and experts on environmental matters from 11 countries, installed us half way up the Rockies in Boulder, and gave us a substantial agenda. A list of the participants is enclosed. I also enclose a copy of my keynote address on the first evening. The conference divided into 4 working groups: on pollution problems; on bio-diversity; on wastes; and on climatic change. I co-chaired the group on climatic change. At the end, following a Ditchley-like formula, the working groups reported and plenary discussions took place. This was followed by a session on the political aspects for environmental problems presided over by a panel consisting of Senator Al Gore (Tennessee), Senator Timothy Wirth (Colorado), Brice Lalonde (French Secretary of State for the Environment) and myself. Finally Fyodor Morgun (Chairman of the Soviet State Committee for Environment Protection) and Vasali Peskov (Pravda) presided over a session on the Soviet environmental protection programme. Time magazine now has the unenviable job of reducing all this into its special January edition.

3. Although little new was said during the conference, it provided a remarkable opportunity for the participants to discuss environmental issues, and to measure their relative strengths over two days debate. I will not attempt an assessment (it should emerge in the special edition of Time), but you might like a word or two on the political performers:

/- Senator



- Senator Gore showed rare technical mastery of the issues, and gave an excellent account of himself throughout. Although he described himself as the ex-next-US President (you will remember that he lost to Dukakis in the Primaries), he clearly has presidential ambitions for next time. The environment is his speciality. During the next 4 years I think we will hear a lot more from him about it. Senator Wirth tended to follow in Gore's wake.
 - Brice Lalonde was the founder and President of the French branch of Friends of the Earth. He told me that his dislike of party politics was such that he had aborted the creation of a Green Party in France. To his surprise Michel Rocard had asked him to join the Government as Secretary of State for the Environment in the Prime Minister's office. He had so far found it a strange experience. He told me that whereas he got a lot of support from the French civil service, he found his fellow politicians short-sighted and self-serving, and he was determined to keep his distance from them. At the conference he did well in terms of clarity and honesty (speaking good English throughout), but his blows were too glancing to be effective. I liked him as a leprechaun-type figure who followed his own instincts.
 - Fyodor Morgun was a warm hearted Ukrainian out of a 19th century novel. He took us behind the scenes in describing his battles to establish the State Committee for Environmental Protection in Moscow, and exuded enthusiasm and determination to succeed. Indeed at one point his minder from Pravda told the conference that Morgun's newness to the job meant that he did not understand all the difficulties, bureaucratic, industrial and other. Rather like Petrovsky at the United Nations, he kept up a fountain of new ideas, some more practical than others, and told us how desperately his country needed our friendship and support in carrying through reform. Over lunch he enlarged on his difficulties to me, and spoke of the cultural shock in arriving - for the first time - in the United States.
4. If you want any more information please let me know. For the rest I suggest you buy a copy of the mid-January edition of Time.

Yours ever

Crispin Tickell

Crispin Tickell

cc: (with enclosures)
Chanceries: WASHINGTON, PARIS, MOSCOW
Dr D J Fisk, Chief Scientist, DOE

NOTES FOR ADDRESS TO TIME MAGAZINE ENVIRONMENTAL CONFERENCE

BOULDER, COLORADO: THURSDAY 10 NOVEMBER 1988

By Crispin Tickell

I once attended an occasion at the Royal Institution in London when the members, dressed in black tail coats and starched white shirts with butterfly ties, awaited the arrival of the distinguished archeologist Louis Leakey. As the clock struck nine piercing notes, Professor Leakey, dressed in an open necked bush shirt, marched from doors behind the stage, mounted to the podium and gazed at the eminent gathering before him. "Animals", he said, "let none of you forget that you are animals".

It was a useful reminder. We have a long history, going back thousands of years of thinking otherwise. From the earliest recorded days, people have placed themselves apart from and superior to other living things. It went with the idea that the world had been created over seven days three or four thousand years ago; and on it many interesting philosophical and theological notions were built. In fact the frontier line of distinction between a human being and any other creature has become more and more fuzzy over the years. Even birds shape and use tools. But we still congratulate ourselves on our souls, and we still talk about conquering nature.

Many efforts were once made to show that nature was created solely for human convenience. William Byrd of Virginia thought

had proved the point in 1728: singing birds were designed to "entertain and delight mankind"; apes and parrots were "for man's mirth"; and horseflies were to enable men to "exercise their wits and industry to guard themselves against them".

We now think differently. The problem is not whether we are superior to nature, or that nature was designed for our convenience. It is that we have become so successful a part of the natural order that we risk disrupting it. We have adapted ourselves to cope with the hottest jungle or the coldest ice cap; we have changed the face of the land to suit our needs; we have coped with the worst diseases, and raised average life expectancy from less than 40 years in paleolithic times to over 70 today; we have changed the genetic inheritance of plants and other animals to meet our food requirements; and we face no serious challenge from any other animal species. In short we enjoy the luxurious opportunities of a species in rapid expansion.

This very success represents the first of the three major problems now facing us: the sheer multiplication of human numbers. My compatriot Malthus had a word or two to say about this 150 years ago. People who laughed at him then and since may now reflect that his predictions were only a matter of time. In the past populations have gone down as well as up. The black death probably destroyed more than a third of the European population 500 years ago, and the population of Mexico fell by more than half after the Spanish Conquest. But in 1930

There were two thousand million people in the world, and by 1975 that figure had doubled. Short of a major catastrophe there will be over six thousand million by the end of the century. With human beings have come their domestic plants and animals. These too have grown in vertiginous fashion.

This brings me to our second major problem: the rest of the environment. In the temperate areas of the world, a sort of regional balance has been reached. In those countries industrial development grew out of a preceding agricultural revolution which sustained a vast increase in population and the spread of cities. The land was broadly fertile, water was regular and plentiful, resources were rich and varied, and damage could over time be put right. That is not so elsewhere in the world. In desert or tropical countries few of these conditions exist. With vulnerable and delicate ecosystems, leached soils easily destroyed, too little or too much rain, and limited resources, these countries, except for those endowed with oil, are poor. Rising population makes them poorer. To try and imitate the industrial countries without the necessary resources would lead in many cases to further impoverishment.

But even if some of us have the resources, with the tricks of wealth generation, and others have not, no-one until recently has even begun to look at the effects of the changes we have made to the total environment. For many, including me, a critical moment was the publication of those first pictures of the earth from space. The fall of sunlight on our dappled blue

Planet - the water planet - in the darkness of space brought the beauty, the preciousness and the vulnerability of the earth. Some first regarded Jim Lovelock's theory of Gaia - life as a single organism - as poetry rather than science; but nearly all acknowledged that he had hit a vital psychological point: the interconnectedness of life, the infinite complexity of its manifestations, its ability to maintain or even create the circumstances in which it can flourish, its fundamental unity.

We can now see more clearly what we have brought about: changes in the surface of the land, with damage to other species, from trees to insects, from mushrooms to elephants; changes in the quality of the sea and the chains of life within it; and changes in the chemistry of the air which has led to holes in the ultra-violet shield, acid deposition in areas down wind of industry, and the prospect of a global warming which would re-deal the cards of climatic advantage. Population, waste disposal, bio-diversity, and climatic change are the central themes of this meeting.

The effects of change are nearly always painful in the short term. It is an easy prediction that in the next 15 years and beyond governments, particularly those in poor countries, will be struggling with every kind of political, economic and social strain.

This brings me to the third major problem confronting us. With more people competing for fewer resources and polluting those that there are, there must clearly be heightened risk of conflict within and between countries, and new movements of population. The perils of nuclear war have been and are still real. With the new use of chemical weapons and the wider growth of technology, particularly in missile development, our capacity for self destruction seems ever increasing. Few have yet taken seriously the implications of a rising flux of refugees. The industrial countries should not regard their frontiers as impermeable. Nor can they ignore the conflicts of others less fortunate than themselves. People in trouble may come to look back on the present as a golden age when the major industrial countries gave up their ideological arguments, when cooperation in dealing globally with global problems became possible, and when the United Nations came into its own in seeking to regulate the health of the planet.

How then should we proceed? If we are to avoid or at least mitigate our problems, we need above all to bring about changes in the mental outlook of members of our species. People often say that no-one can change human nature. It depends on how we define it. In fact no animal is more adaptable than man. We have only to look at our capacity for change in the past. Mental outlooks can vanish in a generation. Ours are just as ephemeral and just as capable of adaptation, indeed more adaptable with modern communications. I remember that one of our conference participants Edward Wilson once described common

sense as "that overrated capacity composed of the set of prejudices we acquire by the age of eighteen". We need sense as well as common sense.

Two adaptations are required. First we must engender greater respect for the earth and the tiny part of it - the bloom on the skin of the apple - in which life exists. This in turn means that we must look at all change with an eye to its longer term consequences. There is no better example of long term folly for short term gain than the destruction of tropical rain forest. All development must be sustainable. Secondly we must engender greater respect for each other in our diversity. The multiplication of human beings breeds contempt for individuals and individual values. Setting group against group, or nation against nation, has the effect of dehumanizing those whom we do not know or understand.

Perhaps the single most important management issue relates to energy. Industrial countries consume energy at a rate never before known, and demand rises everywhere with expectations. It seems clear, but may still need saying, that current methods of generating energy - the unrestricted use of fossil reserves, the combustion of fuel wood, the drowning of more land for hydro-electricity - carry penalties for this and future generations which are unsustainably high. We are not used to looking at economic or any other problems in this way. Yet if we do not do so we could turn into one of those dead end species which ultimately suffer the fate of the bacteria which multiply themselves to extinction on the Petri plate.

Often it needs the shock of a disaster to make people change their minds. Let us hope that this time it will not be necessary. For our success is such that we have to consider doing what no other species has done before to manage our total environment. The question is not whether we and our governments like this responsibility. It is already ours.

TIME

Environment Conference

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|------------------------------|--|
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TIME

Environment Conference

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