

### The Identity of 'Boris Komarov'—at Last

One of the most dramatic books about pollution in the USSR was *The Destruction of Nature in the Soviet Union*, by 'Boris Komarov', which first appeared in Russian in 1978—published by Possev Verlag, an emigré publishing house in Frankfurt, West Germany. Word of the impact of the book spread rapidly.\*

The big unknown about the book was the Author. Who was Boris Komarov? Was this a bit of CIA disinformation or was it a legitimate Soviet citizen or possibly an emigré? Obviously Possev knew in Germany, but they were not talking. Thus when the ultimate American publisher, M.E. Sharpe, Inc., of White Plains, New York, was considering whether or not to publish the book, one of their editors contacted me and asked me if I thought the book was legitimate. He had no idea, nor did I, of who 'Komarov' was.

Reading through the Russian version, I concluded that the book was legitimate and was not written by the CIA. It was the correct conclusion. We now know who the Author was. In fact, he has come to the Russian Research Center at Harvard and given us a seminar. His name is Zeev Wolfson. He is now a resident of Israel, working as senior adviser for the Israel Environment Protection Service. He is also involved in part-time research projects for the Soviet and East European Research Centre of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

Mr Wolfson wrote the book while in the Soviet Union, and the manuscript was secretly taken to the West for publication. Some of the Soviet Union's more eminent

dissidents were involved in the transfer of that manuscript. They read it and felt it should be published.

How did Mr Wolfson obtain the information that he utilized? From 1970 to 1977 he worked for educational TV programmes in environmental and biological departments in the Soviet Government. This provided him with many opportunities to visit some of the sites which he described in the book, and especially the natural preserves. Working in the media this way provided him with the access to many unpublished documents, as well as an opportunity to meet with people who were knowledgeable about the Soviet environment.

In addition his travels, both in the Moscow region and to the different hunting preserves, gave him an opportunity to see some of the abuses that he describes in the book. For example, he was in the Kuzyl-Agach game preserve in February, 1968, when the hunting party which used the preserve as their private hunting lodge moved in and destroyed the game that he describes. His contact with officials responsible for the natural game preserves also provided him with conditional information about other private poaching and hunting parties.

Mr Wolfson stayed in the Soviet Union until 1981, when he emigrated. That was after the book was published in Russian, and indeed after an American version appeared in 1980. Mr Wolfson did take a risk in publishing the material that he did. But his book has helped to shed light on the Soviet Union and its handling of environmental problems, and we are grateful to him for his insight and courage.

MARSHALL I. GOLDMANN, *Associate Director  
Harvard University Russian Research Center  
Archibald Cary Coolidge Hall  
1737 Cambridge Street  
Cambridge  
Massachusetts 02138, USA.*

\* See the review, by Anthony Stover, of the English Edition, which we published in *Environmental Conservation*, 8(4), pp. 335-6, 1981, and the remarks of the present Author, to whom it was passed for comment, which we published on page 268 of the same issue.—Ed.

### Ramdeo Medal Awarded to Dr S. Dillon Ripley

Dr Sidney Dillon Ripley, 2nd, Emeritus Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, is the recipient of the fifth Ramdeo Medal for Environmental Science, of the Indian Environmental Society. Dr Ripley, 72, is a noted biologist, ecologist, educator, Museum administrator, and ornithologist. He has studied extensively the birds of Far East, and has been involved in Indian ornithology for the last five decades. Dr Ripley is also Co-chairman of the Festival of India Committee, inaugurated by the Prime Minister of India on 20 June 1985, in Washington.

Dr Ripley is indeed a highly decorated person, being a Commander of the Order of Merit of the Polish People's Republic, and an Honorary Knight Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. He has also received honours from the Governments of Spain, Denmark, Thailand, France, and Belgium, the Gold Medals of New York Zoological Society and of the Royal Zoological Society of Antwerp, the Swan Award for Outstanding Services in the Arts, the Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the Golden Ark in the Netherlands, the Thomas Jefferson Award from the American Society of Interior Decorators, the Medal for Distinguished Achievement from the Holland Society of New York, the order of the sacred Treasure of Japan, and the Delecour Medal of the International Council for Bird Preservation. He has also received honorary degrees from 13 universities and col-

leges, including the University of Cambridge (England), and George Washington University in the United States.

Dr Ripley is a renowned ornithologist, having pursued the subject from his school days. Since 1926 he has led a number of ornithological expeditions, in particular in southern Asia—including India, Nepal, and Bhutan. He has published a number of treatises on ornithology, including (with Dr Salim Ali) the multi-volume Handbook of Birds of India and Pakistan. His contribution in organizing Natural History Museums has been enormous.

The Ramdeo Medal for Environmental Science was instituted by the Indian Environmental Society in 1980 from an endowment by students of Professor Ramdeo Misra, of Banaras Hindu University, in recognition of his great contribution to Indian Ecology. The first Medal was awarded to Dr Michael Royston, in 1980, for his contribution in the field of Environmental Impact Management, the second was awarded in 1982 to Dr M.S. Swaminathan, Director General, International Rice Research Institute, Manila, for his outstanding contribution in the field of Agriculture and Environment, the third one in 1983 to Dr T.N. Khoshoo, Director, NBRI, and now Secretary, Department of Environment, India, for his significant Research on Energy from Plants and Management of Environment, and the fourth one to Dr Mostafa K. Tolba, Executive Director, UNEP, for his outstand-