

Gagged in Britain - Free in Russia

By CELIA DUNCAN

Staging an unprecedented anti-nuclear protest against the British government on Russian soil, an international team from the environmental organization Greenpeace chained themselves to the British Embassy railings on Monday morning.

Although Greenpeace has been active in Russia for three years, Monday's protest was its first peaceful demonstration held in Moscow. Wearing Union Jack gags and with a banner reading "UK: PROLIFERATE

FREE SPEECH NOT PLUTONIUM," supporters protested against a possible court injunction being taken out by British Nuclear Fuels Limited (BNFL) against a demonstration planned by the organization at the British Reprocessing plant, Sellafield. The plant produces plutonium, a highly radiotoxic element that is one of the most efficient materials for making nuclear weapons.

Having recently returned from Krasnoyarsk 26 in Siberia, where a similar reprocessing plant was closed in mid-construction following public opposition, the head of Greenpeace

Russia, Dima Litvinov, commented on the irony of "being able to demonstrate in the former Evil Empire but not in the mother of democracies, the UK."

With plans to open a new processing plant, "THORP" later this year, Britain looks set to exceed the 110 tons of plutonium currently produced annually in the CIS. Inspired by this data, Greenpeace's original idea was to dump 110 tons of sewage (20 truck loads) in front of the Embassy gates; due to possible environmental complaints the organization opted for the protest, a cleaner alternative.

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After an hour-long vigil, Thomas Schultz and Shaun Burnie from Greenpeace International spoke to Sir Brian Fall, the new British Ambassador. Fall promised to communicate their concerns to the British government prior to the court case on the same day. If Britain remains committed to continuing the production of plutonium for civil use, the risk to the environment is destined to increase above its already unacceptable current levels.

In England Greenpeace has already earned itself a reputation in the courts, notably last year when BNFL sued it for blocking an outflow pipe at Sellafield. The prospect of additional fines poses a serious financial threat to the continuing existence of the organization's British office.



NICK STUBBIE

Chained to the Embassy

Among the multinational group of supporters at Monday's demonstration was US-born Russian pop-star Joanna Stingray. "I'd worked for Greenpeace in the US," she explained, "and hav-

ing lived in Moscow during pre-glasnost days the concept of freedom of speech is especially important to me." Joanna is currently working on a "Greenpeace-rock" track alongside other Russian stars including Boris Grebenshikov, Brigade S and Alisa. The record is due to be released this October.

Another Greenpeace demonstration was scheduled to take place on Wednesday June 17 outside the American Embassy. In view of the relaxed atmosphere currently prevailing in Russia, protesting here may well be an easier means of fighting for a cause than at home. Following the success of gags and chains on Monday, such unusual methods of attracting attention may flourish in a country until now more accustomed to mass meetings on Manezh Square. ★