Essays – *peer-reviewed*
Edited by Gaetano Di Tommaso and Angela Santese
https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-2752/18212

USAbroad – Journal of American History and Politics. Vol. 7 (2024)
ISSN 2611-2752
https://usabroad.unibo.it/

Russell E. Train: The Man Behind Nixon's Environmental Diplomacy

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Submitted: October 3, 2023 – Accepted: February 1, 2024 – Published: April 18, 2024

Abstract

Russell Train is currently regarded as the pioneer of American environmental diplomacy. He contributed, as Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality, Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and first special presidential envoy for the environment, to putting environmental protection at the core of the American political agenda, giving adequate attention to the weight of public opinion and the claims of the increasingly influential environmental movement. He harnessed the environment primarily as a concrete tool for détente, raising awareness about the issue and encouraging effective countermeasures to start dealing with the adverse effects of human-induced pollution.

Keywords: Cold War; Environmental Diplomacy; Russel Train; Richard Nixon.

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> There can be no thought of a retreat into isolationism. [...] Isolationism in today's interdependent world is the road to disaster. The United States has an overriding self-interest in helping find acceptable solutions to the world's problems. Failure to find those solutions will exact an enormous price, not just from others, but in terms of the ultimate security and well-being of our own country. [...] Never in history has the opportunity and the need for U.S. leadership in world affairs been more critical.
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> (Russell E. Train, Testimony before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, May 5, 1976)

1 The Dawn of the Environmental Decade

As the Sixties drew to an end, Richard M. Nixon became the thirty-seventh President of the United States of America. The Sixties witnessed the emergence and consolidation of environmental movements and organizations as a consequence of the evident environmental degradation stemming from the unrestrained economic growth that had characterized America since the early Fifties.[1]

According to poll data enclosed with the report submitted in December 1968 to the President-elect by the Task Force on Natural Resources and the Environment, chaired by the well-known environmentalist Russell Train,[2] the environment was now a public concern and pressing political issue to which the administration should give high priority.[3] So it was. Though ignored during his election campaign, which mainly focused on a return to law and order and a "peace with honor" in Vietnam,[4] Nixon acknowledged the magnitude of the issue and the potential dividends environmental protection could pay in the medium-to-long term, both at home and abroad. A concrete action on the environment could provide a considerable basin of votes to the President,[5] counterbalancing the effects of the Vietnam quagmire. Simultaneously, it would strengthen America's credibility and appeal on the international stage, imposing its leadership on an emerging global public concern, likely to overcome ideological contrasts and become a catalyst for détente.[6] Finally, with the environment popular among European critics of American intervention in Indochina, and given a looming Earth Day with a leftist profile as the brainchild of the democratic Senator Gaylord A. Nelson and a young Harvard student and activist, Denis A. Hayes,[7] Nixon realized he could wait and see no longer, hence, he took the offensive.

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1. Kirkpatrick Sale, *The Green Revolution: The American environmental movement, 1962-1992* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 23–24. For an overview of the origins and the evolution of the American environmental movement, see D.T. Kuzmiak, "The American Environmental Movement," *The Geographical Journal*, 157 (1991); Scott Dewey, "Working for the Environment: Organized Labor and the Origins of Environmentalism in the United States, 1948-1970," *Environmental History*, 3 (1998); Charles T. Rubin, *The Green Crusade: Rethinking the Roots of Environmentalism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998); Hal K. Rothman, *Saving the Planet. The American Response to the Environment in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc, 2001).

2. The task force consisted of twenty environmentalists, academics and corporate executives. See Flippen, *Nixon and the Environment*, 21.

3. Report, Natural Resources and Environment Transitional Task Force, Dec 5, 1968, Folder "Task Force Reports, Transition Period,1968-1969," BOX 1, Transition Task Force Reports, White House Central Files (WHCF), The Richard M. Nixon Presidential Material Project (RNPMP), in J. Brooks Flippen, *Nixon and the Environment* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012) 21–22.

4. Flippen, *Nixon and the Environment*, 19.

5. The Gallup polls and White House polls clearly indicated how public opinion was developing a rising environmental consciousness. For example, while in May 1969 only 1 percent of the public considered important protecting the environment, in May 1971 that figure increased to 25 percent. In addition, during Nixon's first term in office, in 1970, 53 percent of the people regarded environmental quality as the most important concern for the nation, Byron W. Daynes, Glen Sussman, *White House Politics and the Environment. Franklin D. Roosevelt to George W. Bush* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2010), 69.

6. J. Brooks Flippen, "Richard Nixon, Russell Train, and the Birth of Modern American Environmental Diplomacy," *Diplomatic History*, 32 (2008): 614.

7. Adam Rome, "The Genius of Earth Day," *Environmental History*, 15 (2010): 196–197.

On January 1, 1970 in front of the cameras the President signed the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), a symbolic move giving birth to "the environmental decade" that, in Nixon's words, "will be known as the time when this country regained a productive harmony between man and nature."[8] The bill, actually a creature of the Democrats Muskie and Jackson, included the creation of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) within the Executive Office of the President, tasked with advising and assisting him while coordinating all federal environmental programs and monitoring agency compliance.[9] To chair it, proving to the public that his commitment to the environment was sincere, Nixon appointed Undersecretary of the Interior, Russell Train, a Republican conservationist with an unquestionable environmental background. Former head of the transitional task force on the environment that warned the President-elect of the political threat represented by the environment, Train was personally chosen by the newly appointed head of the Department, Walter J. Hickel, to mitigate critics on his bad pro-development and oil-friendly reputation matured during his mandate as Governor of Alaska.[10] In retrospect, that would be a turning point.

2 An Environmentalist in the Executive Office: Russell Train's Environmental Diplomacy

Train became a committed conservationist after two safaris in Kenya that convinced him to found The African Wildlife Leadership Foundation, leave his federal judgeship at the Tax Court, and chair The Conservation Foundation by 1965.[11]

His single year at the Interior was quite fruitful. Train developed positive and bipartisan relationships at Capitol Hill, as well as strong friendships that, over the years, would prove to be of key importance. Resolute, pragmatic and ambitious, in his first cabinet experience he tried to press the environmental agenda from within the executive branch, occasionally clashing with Hickel.[12] At the Interior, he had also the opportunity to represent the U.S. in international affairs for the first time. Sent as representative of the Department to a regular joint U.S.-Japan cabinet meeting in Tokyo, in 1969 with the Minister of Fisheries, Hasegawa, he signed the Northern Pacific Fisheries Agreement.[13] On this occasion, meeting with Emperor Hirohito and Empress Nagako, Train outlined some serious environmental problems affecting the two countries, laying the groundwork for effective and continued environmental cooperation between Washington and Tokyo.

After Congress passed the NEPA in 1969, Train asked Ehrlichman—Nixon's chief domestic advisor and the mind, along with his aide John C. Whitaker, behind the wide-ranging environmental legislative agenda announced by the President on February 10, 1970—to run the CEQ.[14] Nixon's placet was a foregone conclusion. He was convinced by the idea of leveraging a solid image of an environmentalist within the Executive Office, taking the lead in environmental protection at home and abroad. His

8. Richard Nixon, Statement about the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, January 01, 1970, APP, to be consulted at: https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/statement-about-the-national-environmental-policy-act-1969; Jacqueline Vaughn Switzer, *Environmental Politics*, 20.

9. Flippen, *Nixon and the Environment*, 50–53. On Nixon's environmental legislative action see Byron W. Daynes, Glen Sussman, *White House Politics and the Environment*, 74–76.

10. J. Brooks Flippen, *Conservative Conservationist: Russell E. Train and the Emergence of American Environmentalism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 63.

11. Russell E. Train, *Politics, Pollution and Pandas: An Environmental Memoir* (Washington D.C.: Island Press, 2003), 42–49. On Fairfield Osborn Jr.'s contribution to the emergence of a global ecology see Henry Fairfield Osborn Jr., *Our Plundered Planet* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1948) and Thomas Robertson, "Total War and the Total Environment: Fairfield Osborn, William Vogt, and the Birth of Global Ecology," *Environmental History*, 17 (2012).

12. Train, *Politics, Pollution and Pandas*, 70–71.

13. Ibid, 66–67.

14. This agenda, the flag of Nixon's environmental commitment, included a thirty-seven-point program: twenty-three major legislative proposals and fourteen new measures, Richard Nixon, Special Message to the Congress on Environmental Quality, February 10, 1970, APP, to be consulted at: https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/special-message-the-congress-environmental-quality.

instructions to Train, once appointed to the head of the CEQ, were clear: He had to "carry the ball" and "get the administration out front on the environment."[15]

The actual outset of Nixon's environmental commitment coincided with his first Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union, on January 22, 1970. For the first time in history, a U.S. President overtly underlined the importance of improving environmental quality in a State of the Union Address, asserting that economic growth was desirable only if it enhanced quality of life.[16] At least from a domestic perspective, the coherence of these words proved faulty by 1972, given a drastic shift in Nixon's approach on the environment in the aftermath of his re-election.[17]

However, the environment remained solidly at the core of Nixon's foreign policy agenda. In the President's mind, environmental advocacy abroad was an effective tool for pursuing détente and establishing fruitful ground within which to hold dialogue with the East without alienating its conservative base. Conversely, a strong domestic environmental commitment was crucial in assuring credibility for the U.S. leadership on the international stage.[18] Nixon was extremely aware of this, and that is why, from 1970 to 1973, he assigned almost full responsibility to the CEQ and the EPA for dealing with environmental policy. This allowed Train, appointed by the Nixon EPA's administrator in 1973, to carry forward environmental protection at home and take the lead in international environmental diplomacy, essentially supplanting the State Department in this field.[19]

That said, it is worth noting that Nixon's environmental diplomacy laid behind the traditional American exceptionalism that made environmental protection a new crucial mission, part of a revised "manifest destiny" aimed at securing health, peace and prosperity on Earth. This new environmental crusade at international level was essentially meant to project American moral and spiritual leadership around the world, in order to bolster Washington's allure in its confrontation with Moscow on the basis of a new dimension that would go well beyond the mere image of the U.S. as a political, economic and military superpower.[20]

A potential political expedient to impose America's moral leadership on the global stage was identified in the NATO Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society (CCMS). The brainchild of Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a former liberal Democrat hired in the President's cabinet at the beginning of the administration, the CCMS was officially proposed by Nixon at the commemorative session of the North Atlantic Council on April 10, 1969, in occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the founding of NATO.[21] This ambitious proposal can be considered the first step of Nixon's environmental diplomacy, as its underlying goal was to pair global environmental action and the most powerful military alliance to foster East-West dialogue on a global public issue within a multilateral framework.[22] The CCMS was also a pragmatic response to the political ferment that was raging at the end of the Sixties in a large number of NATO countries. Many Western European allies were witnessing anti-war

15. Flippen, *Nixon and the Environment*, 52.

16. Richard Nixon, Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union, January 22, 1970, APP, to be consulted at: https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/annual-message-the-congress-the-state-the-union-2.

17. James Morton Turner, Andrew C. Isenberg, *The Republican Reversal: Conservatives and the Environment from Nixon to Trump* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), 37–39. In his third environmental message in 1973, concerned by other priorities emerging from Watergate scandal and the oil crisis following Yom Kippur War, Nixon put aside environment, essentially declaring that the nation had won its environmental campaign, Richard Nixon, State of the Union Message to the Congress on Natural Resources and the Environment, February 15, 1973, APP, to be consulted at: https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/state-the-union-message-the-congress-natural-resources-and-the-environment.

18. Russell E. Train, "The Environmental Record of the Nixon Administration," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 26 (1996): 193.

19. Ibid. However, at CEQ, Train always deferred to the State Department on the foreign policy aspects of his initiatives, developing a strong working partnership with it and enjoying the support of Christian Herter Jr. and his staff, Train, *Politics, Pollution and Pandas*, 121.

20. On American exceptionalism related to environmental advocacy in the Cold War era, see Thomas Robertson, " 'This is the American Earth:' American Empire, the Cold War, and American Environmentalism," *Diplomatic History*, 32 (2008).

21. Memorandum (hereafter Memo) from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, Washington, June 2, 1969, Foreign Relations of the United States (hereafter FRUS), 1969-1976, Volume E-1, Documents on Global Issues, Doc. 287, 1969-1972.

22. Jacob Darwin Hamblin, "Environmentalism for the Atlantic Alliance: NATO's Experiment with the Challenges of Modern Society," *Environmental History*, 15 (2010): 57.

protests against Washington's involvement in Vietnam, with several governments maturing a certain detachment.[23]

In his message on U.S. foreign policy for the 1970s, Nixon invoked the need for international cooperation to tackle environmental problems. This cooperation, however, firstly required technological exchange, education and cooperative research among industrialized nations, the most affected by environmental degradation and main ones responsible for pollution.[24] The CCMS was also designed for this purpose. Set up by the North Atlantic Council in November 1969, under American diplomatic pressure, the works of the Committee were built around individual "pilot projects" led by a "pilot country," along with other nations ("co-pilots") willing to cooperate. The projects, the results of which were open to all countries, including developing and Communist ones, covered a vast array of environmental issues, ranging from air pollution to disaster assistance.[25] In a letter to Moynihan, while he was still at the Interior, Russell Train positively welcomed the President's initiative on the CCMS, while realistically suggesting "to initially restrict its programs to manageable proportions."[26] After the first meeting of the Committee, held in December 1969, Nixon transferred the responsibility to monitor its works to the CEQ, with Train replacing Moynihan as the U.S. representative in Brussels.[27] His first diplomatic mission as head of the American delegation was to increase consensus around the CCMS, indeed a U.S. creature, encouraging high-level meetings to address environmental issues.

Nonetheless, Train soon realized that he had to come to terms with the latent skepticism of most European allies. The Western partners' coolness towards the CCMS came from several reasons. First of all, they resented the White House's tendency towards unilateral action on behalf of NATO, rejecting its protagonism and leadership.[28] Secondly, there was a common belief that a military alliance was not the appropriate forum for an international effort in the environmental field. Moreover, a part of Western European reluctance stemmed from the fact that a number of international organizations, primarily the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), were already active in the field, and that many allied governments had few environmental experts to send to take part to international activities.[29] Finally, anti-war protests and environmental concerns came together in Western countries as, since the early 1960s, the U.S. had been using defoliants and herbicides in Indochina, destroying vast wildlife areas to make strikes at the Viet Cong easier. This inevitably undermined Nixon's credibility on environmental advocacy.[30]

Despite these initial reservations and the ambivalent stance of some governments, especially Great Britain, Train was determined to increase support for the CCMS by acknowledging its annual plenary sessions as an opportunity for the U.S. to raise awareness of international environmental issues, strengthening its soft power in a multilateral framework while promoting its own interests. To this purpose, he never hesitated to wave the Nixon card. It became usual procedure to see the President in the Oval Office before attending international meetings. These informal sessions essentially gave Train broad room for maneuver in summits, enabling him to speak on behalf of the Chief Executive to influence decisions.[31] Over the years, this made him the U.S. President's personal environmental emissary in international relations, effectively contributing to forging Nixon's image abroad as an

23. Linda Risso, "NATO and the Environment: The Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society," *Contemporary European History*, 25 (2016): 506.

24. Richard Nixon, First Annual Report to the Congress on United States Foreign Policy for the 1970's, February 18, 1970, APP, to be consulted at: https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/first-annual-report-the-congress-united-states-foreign-policy-for-the-1970s.

25. Risso, "NATO and the Environment," 514.

26. Flippen, *Conservative Conservationist*, 82.

27. Train, *Politics, Pollution and Pandas*, 151.

28. Hamblin, "Environmentalism for the Atlantic Alliance," 60.

29. Research Study (REUS-7) prepared by the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, April 14, 1970, FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume E-1, Documents on Global Issues, Doc. 296, 1969-1972.

30. Hamblin, "Environmentalism for the Atlantic Alliance," 61.

31. It was Nixon himself to encourage Train to invoke his name when interacting with foreign officials. See Train, *Politics, Pollution and Pandas*, 122.

environmental leader.

By 1973, when Train left the CEQ, the CCMS had fourteen projects underway, each including a group of nations cooperating on common environmental problems. They increasingly shared expertise, knowledge and technology in different environmental sectors. Train felt that the results were quite optimistic. The general attitude of the allies was good and more constructive, as the direct interaction turned out to be a significant factor in fueling their interest in environmental matters and their support of the CCMS.[32] The goal of making the CCMS a catalyst able to generate action by member countries, either individually or multilaterally, was generally achieved.[33]

Train's last contribution to the CCMS dates back to October 1976. Mentioning a report released in September by the National Academy of Sciences on ozone layer depletion and its consequences on human health, he raised the issue of the chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) in the environment, warning the regulatory systems of the NATO countries if CFCs were found to be damaging the ozone layer. Moreover, he suggested convening an international convention dealing with the problem, and scheduled an international meeting to be held in Washington in 1977 in order to discuss potential governmental actions.[34]

Train's diplomatic activity became more intensive in 1972. Several months before the Stockholm Conference, scheduled for June, President Nixon and Canada's Prime Minister, Pierre E. Trudeau, signed the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, which committed the two countries to a gradual and significant reduction in the wastes being discharged into the lakes. The genesis of this landmark agreement belongs to Russell Train. In early 1970, Nixon made him the chairman of a task force mandated to report on the pollution of the Great Lakes. By June 1970, Train had set up a joint working group with his Canadian counterpart, the Secretary of State for external affairs Mitchell W. Sharp, to assess the feasibility of a joint action program tasked with reducing the high concentration of phosphates in the lakes, responsible for their eutrophication. Sharp insisted on discharging the same amount of pollutants in the lakes, so as to respect the fifty-fifty formula of the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909.[35] Train realized that this would be a burden that the U.S. could not afford, given the magnitude of its industry and population. Such a division would mean a decrease in productivity, not to mention the high costs that treatment implied, and so he worked towards a compromise. In June 1971, Train and Sharp agreed in principle on a program to restore and preserve the Great Lakes ecosystems. The deal, hailed by both as "a historic first step between two countries sharing a common environmental problem," consisted in setting the same water quality standards to be achieved by 1975 and outlined a number of mutual objectives, including the building of sewage treatment plants and the phase-out of phosphates, as well as the monitoring of thermal pollution, pesticides and wastes.[36] Officially formalized in 1972, it was a clear example to the world of how bilateral cooperation could deal with environmental issues of mutual concern. Even though the final terms of the agreement did not fully reflect those drafted by the U.S.-Canada joint working group, in 1976 Train declared that the efforts to clean up the Great Lakes represented "one of the greatest success stories in American history."[37] Nevertheless, the heyday of American environmental diplomacy was yet to come.

3 An Avenue for Détente: The U.S.-USSR Environmental Agreement

Ahead of Nixon's historic visit to Moscow, scheduled in May 1972, Train foresaw a window of opportunity to catalyze détente, Nixon's obsession. The environment was an area of common concern, and the Soviet Union was an environmental disaster. There were no effective governmental bodies to tackle

32. Flippen, *Conservative Conservationist*, 125.

33. Memo from Acting Secretary of State Johnson to President Nixon, Washington, August 24, 1970, FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume E-1, Documents on Global Issues, Doc. 299, 1969-1972.

34. Train, *Politics, Pollution and Pandas*, 152–153.

35. Ibid,123–124.

36. Ibid, 124.

37. Flippen, *Conservative Conservationist*, 115.

critical environmental issues such as water pollution, air pollution and soil erosion, dramatically affecting the Soviet economy and the health of Soviet citizens.[38] Therefore, Train wrote to Kissinger and the State Department stressing the potential mediatic scale of a U.S.-USSR environmental agreement announced in the framework of the SALT negotiations. Such a landmark achievement would concretely support dialogue with the Kremlin, assuring Nixon of a substantial domestic political payout prior to the elections. The White House's go-ahead was followed by Train's appointment as head of an interagency task force to explore potential areas of cooperation with the Soviets on the subject. The report of the task force suggested the administration should exchange scientists and organize bilateral conferences aimed at implementing joint environmental projects and programs.[39] To Nixon, it was evident that Train was the right person to stimulate the USSR's bilateral environmental commitment, so he tasked him with setting the ground for a deal.

Train had only two meetings with the Soviet Ambassador to the United States, Anatoly F. Dobrynin, but the most decisive was the first one. During an informal lunch in Washington, the Soviet diplomat accepted a draft agreement—almost entirely devised by the American side—including eleven areas of bilateral cooperation, ranging from air pollution to earthquake forecasting, and a joint committee to implement its terms. The key points of the bilateral agreement committed the parties to constant dialogue by various means, including joint working groups of experts, technical symposia, pilot projects and exchange visits.[40] Given Dobrynin's good disposition, it was a promising step towards détente. On May 23, 1972, in Moscow, Nixon and the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, Nikolai V. Podgorny, signed the U.S.-USSR Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Environmental Protection. To Train, it was a "new ballgame with the Soviet Union."[41] Indeed, it was only the beginning of Train's effort in pushing the Soviets on the ground of environmental protection.

In order to sign an implementing agreement and foster regular contacts with the Kremlin, Nixon immediately designated Train to lead the American delegation of the joint committee ahead of its first session scheduled for September, in Moscow.[42] Considering the importance of the meeting and the fact that Train had little experience in interacting with the Soviets, Nixon wanted to meet him personally in the Oval Office before the delegation's departure to instruct him over the proper conduct to hold with his counterparts. A seasoned statesman, Nixon took care to explain to his special environmental envoy that the American delegation should constantly praise the Soviets due to their inferiority complex. In addition, he advised "to do a lot of sightseeing because the Soviets really want to show things off."[43] Train abided by the Chief Executive's guidelines and, once in Moscow, he gave proof of his diplomatic skills. Before and during discussions on a large number of joint projects with his counterpart, the Soviet academic E. K. Fedorov, he praised the Soviet delegation for their willingness to cooperate and their kind hospitality. The official Moscow summit was then enhanced by trips across Russia, visits to the Kremlin, to several monasteries and cathedrals, to the Bolshoi Ballet and art galleries, as well as an invitation to attend a session of the Supreme Soviet where Train heard Khruschev and Brezhnev's tailor-made speeches about pollution.[44]

Turning to the substance of the meeting, in the final twenty-page memorandum of implementation, Train and Federov agreed to joint studies on thirty bilateral environmental projects concerning, among others, oil pollution, pesticides, animal conservation and forestry. Federov hailed the end-

38. Ibid, 125.

39. Ibid, 126.

40. Memorandum of Conversation, Washington, March 3, 1972, FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume E-1, Documents on Global Issues, Doc. 318, 1969-1972.

41. Flippen, "Richard Nixon, Russell Train, and the Birth of Modern American Environmental Diplomacy," 613–614.

42. Letter from President Nixon to the Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality (Train), Washington, August 4, 1972, FRUS, 1969–1976, Volume E–1, Documents on Global Issues, Doc. 327, 1969–1972.

43. Flippen, *Conservative Conservationist*, 127.

44. Train's diplomatic activity did not lack initiative. To raise publicity, during his trip to Moscow, he suggested that the White House gift two purebred Przewalski's horses, then in the Boston zoo. They were indigenous to Mongolia and the central Soviet Union and, since few remained, the Soviets would gladly welcome such a gift. Along with the gift, however, Train recommended a press release and a photo opportunity with Nixon to leverage its potential media impact. Eventually, the idea was rejected by Ehrlichman as he feared it would divert attention from Nixon to Train, Ibid.

ing of this first meeting as "a great beginning to be followed by active work for the benefit of both countries."[45] Back in Washington, having visited environmental sites of interest in the USSR, Train of course shared this optimism, reporting in a memorandum for the President that

> Our program for environmental cooperation which you initiated in May is off to an excellent start. Soviet interest seems strong.[46]

What is more, he notified Nixon of the Soviet structural weaknesses in dealing with environmental protection and conveyed Podgorny's regards and wishes for success in the coming elections, as well as his personal strong support for the environmental agreement as a significant achievement for bilateral and international cooperation.[47] The only negative factor, Train claimed, was the constant Soviet refusal to allow press to accompany the U.S. delegation on its trips, frustrating their attempt to garner publicity in the media, even though the presence of the famous actress Shirley Temple Black in the delegation played its part.[48]

By and large, it was undoubtedly a considerable outcome in the strategy of détente. Productive cooperation in a neutral field far from political and ideological contrasts would ease tensions between the two countries while reverberating its effects in other dossiers concerning direct U.S. interests, such as Vietnam. In the following years, Train became a regular visitor to Moscow, in turn hosting the Soviets when visiting Washington, and developed a friendship with Fedor's successor, the scientist Yuri A. Izrael. In his third and last meeting with Podgorny at the Kremlin, during the Gerald R. Ford, Jr. Administration, he reported the Soviet progress on dealing with environment, confirming the positive bilateral relationship in this sector.[49]

4 Heading to Stockholm: The Soviet Strategy and the Challenges of American Environmental Diplomacy

Moscow did not show the same good attitude at international level. Against American auspices, international summits on environmental protection threatened to polarize positions and undermine détente due to tensions over Vietnam and the status of East Germany. This was evident in May 1971, in occasion of the U.N.-ECE Conference on Problems Related to Environment, held in Prague. Officially downgraded to a "Symposium of experts" because of the USSR's pressure on the participation of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the summit produced no tangible progress on the environment, rather, it assumed a political tone.[50] Given the participation of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), unlike the GDR an ECE member, East Germany was invited by the Communist Czechoslovak government to take part as a "guest," a compromise to satisfy Moscow's request and forestall controversial precedents about representation.[51] In addition to the OECD and the CCMS, the ECE was regarded by Washington as a crucial multilateral forum to foster East-West rapprochement on the ground of environmental protection, and this was why every effort was made in every diplomatic venue to raise

45. Ibid.

46. Memo from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, Washington, October 9, 1972, FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume E-1, Documents on Global Issues, Doc. 331, 1969-1972.

47. Ibid.

48. Train, *Politics, Pollution and Pandas*, 128.

49. Ibid, 129–130.

50. Hamblin, "Environmentalism for the Atlantic Alliance," 63; About the Symposium of Prague, see Leonardo Gnisci, "Da Praga a Stoccolma: la nascita del multilateralismo ambientale," in *UN System. Temi e problemi di storia internazionale*, ed. Marco Mugnaini (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2023), 201–205.

51. Report of the U.S. Group of Experts on the Economic Commission for Europe's Symposium on Problems relating to Environment, Washington, July 9, 1971, FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume E-1, Documents on Global Issues, Doc. 308, 1969-1972.

the level of the conference and the interest around it.[52] Despite this, Prague represented a partial victory for Moscow and a setback for Washington. As underlined by an intelligence note, the USSR aimed to leverage Western interest on the environment in order to achieve international recognition for the GDR, to "preempt the outcome of inner-German talks" and, at the same time, create a rift within the Western bloc, notably between West Germany and the U.S.[53] It became clear to the Americans that the Soviets were not actually interested in international commitments on the environment, preferring bilateral or regional agreements, as well as convening a Conference on European Security to concretely discuss other priorities, such as the status of Berlin and the GDR-FRG dialogue.[54]

Eventually, the reiterated Soviet threat of boycotting the Stockholm Conference if the GDR was not invited, on a par with the FRG, became reality. Given the stalemate on reaching a compromise over the matter, along with Czechoslovakia and the other Warsaw Pact allies (except Romania and Yugoslavia),[55] the USSR decided not to attend the Human Environment summit of June 1972. This time, the U.S. "triangular diplomacy" did not bear fruits. To counter and ease the Kremlin's resoluteness, which threatened to jeopardize U.S. plans by eroding the confidence of a number of supporters over the usefulness of the conference, notably the Third World countries, Washington exerted pressure among its allies and within the U.N. to secure the formal invitation of the PRC in order to place the Soviets before a hard choice: promoting the recognition of the GDR at all costs or, given the Sino-Soviet rivalry, preventing the Chinese from harnessing such a potential propaganda forum.[56] Yet, notwithstanding the Chinese decision to attend the conference, the Kremlin did not change its stance.

At the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (5-16 June, 1972), Train was called to make significant diplomatic efforts to provide Nixon with salable achievements ahead of the elections and enshrine the U.S. international environmental leadership. The Swedish summit was the world's first international environmental conference and, unlike the ECE Conference of Prague, which focused mainly on the environmental problems of the industrialized nations, it had a more comprehensive and ambitious scope: to discuss the global aspects of environmental pollution, as well as the adverse effects on the environment arising from the economic growth of less developed countries (LDCs). In this regard, along with the Soviet boycott, the firm pro-development stance of the developing nations emerged in the conference preparations as another challenging factor likely to jeopardize the success of the event. To Train, the absence of the USSR could become an opportunity for avoiding the politicization of the summit, thus averting a substantial repetition of the stalemate seen in Prague. For this reason, in April 1972, with the conference in the making, in a memorandum to John Ehrlichman Train personally expressed his doubts over the possible designation of Secretary of State Rogers as chairman of the U.S. delegation in Stockholm. According to the head of the CEQ, as the

52. Telegram 27061 from the Department of State to the Mission to North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Mission to the United Nations European Office, and to UNESCO, Washington, February 24, 1970, FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume E-1, Documents on Global Issues, Doc. 291, 1969-1972.

53. GDR's participation in Prague and in the following Stockholm Conference would have meant a *de facto* recognition of East Germany at international level, increasing its negotiating power in the talks with Bonn, which, in turn, would have seen its position weakened, Intelligence Note RSGN-16 prepared by the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, August 12, 1971, FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume E-1, Documents on Global Issues, Doc. 310, 1969-1972.

54. Research Study from the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, May 20, 1971, FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume E-1, Documents on Global Issues, Doc. 307, 1969-1972.

55. Report on the UN Conference on the Human Environment from the Vice-Chairman of Delegation (Herter) to Secretary of State Rogers, Washington, July 28, 1972, FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume E-1, Documents on Global Issues, Doc. 325, 1969-1972.

56. Memo from the Executive Secretary of the Department of State (Eliot) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), Washington, August 5, 1971, FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume E-1, Documents on Global Issues, Doc. 309, 1969-1972; Research Study RSGS-1 prepared by the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, January 14, 1972, FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume E-1, Documents on Global Issues, Doc. 314, 1969-1972; In January 1972 CEQ attempted to involve the Chinese in a bilateral cooperation on the environment. In a memorandum sent to Kissinger, Train suggested to explore the feasibility of cooperative projects between PRC and U.S., pointing out the growing awareness of the Chinese over environmental issues. Nevertheless, Kissinger rejected the proposal by saying that "at the present time there is little evidence of Chinese interest in environmental cooperation," Memo from Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality (Train) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), Washington, January 4, 1972, FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume E-1, Documents on Global Issues, Doc. 311, 1969-1972; Memo from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to the Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality (Train), Washington, January 14, 1972, FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume E-1, Documents on Global Issues, Doc. 313, 1969-1972.

U.S. was still involved in Vietnam, appointing Rogers to lead the delegation would seriously prejudice the environmental purpose of the summit, once again diverting attention to political matters and fueling anti-American sentiment. In addition, Train underlined that no foreign minister had been designated by any government as head of their delegation, warning of the potential impact of the so-called "People's Lobby," a group present at Stockholm intending to accuse the U.S. of indiscriminate use of defoliants in Indochina.[57] His arguments sounded quite persuasive to the Oval Office and, eventually, he was given the job. Arguably, no one else could lead and coordinate the works of the U.S. delegation in Stockholm, given Train's undisputable record and competence on the field, the potential environmental implications of the summit and its mediatic coverage.[58]

In addition to Christian A. Herter, Jr. (Special Assistant to Secretary of State for Environmental Affairs) representing the State Department, appointed as deputy head of the U.S. delegation to assist Train's diplomatic activity, at the suggestion of the White House, Shirley Temple Black was once again part of the mission, in order to capture the attention of the media on the American moves.[59] Train had to cope with two potential issues arising from the conference: anti-war rhetoric related to Vietnam and the pro-development stance of developing countries. The Swedish Prime Minister, Olof Palme, opened the conference with a welcoming speech in which he condemned the U.S. involvement in Indochina, accusing Washington of "ecocide," perpetrating environmental crimes during the conflict through bombings and the use of defoliants. Train, however, did not intend to divert attention from environment, and, ruling out a dangerous confrontational approach likely to further alienate support to the U.S. and transform the summit into a political debate, he countered Palme's invective by replying in a press conference that

> The United States strongly objects to what it considers a gratuitous politicizing of our environmental discussions.[60]

In fact, Train was focused on pragmatic matters concerning the U.S. environmental objectives and proposals on which the CEQ, Kissinger and the Department of State had been working for the past two years. As stressed by Train in a memorandum for the President:

> The overall U.S. objective for the Conference is to raise the level of national and international awareness and understanding of environmental problems and to increase national, regional and global capabilities to recognize and solve those problems which have a serious adverse impact on the human environment.[61]

In this regard, it was crucial to promote multilateral accords enforced by the United Nations and economic sanctions in order to build a solid environmental regime resting on uniform standards and measures, with the aim of heading off a competitive disadvantage in international markets for American companies already subject to tough national pollution control regulations.[62]

In his own address to the delegates, Train outlined the U.S. objectives for the conference—mostly achieved in the following months—including some ambitious landmark proposals. In addition to promoting the widespread international adoption of environmental impact analyses by nations and international organizations as part of the decision-making process along the lines of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) mandated by NEPA of 1970, the U.S. delegation supported multilateral

57. Memo from the Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality (Train) to the Assistant to the President for Domestic Affairs (Ehrlichman), Washington, April 6, 1972, FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume E-1, Documents on Global Issues, Doc. 319, 1969-1972.

58. There was a large number of non-governmental organization activity associated with the conference, not to mention public rallies organized by environmental activists and more than four hundred members of the press accredited to the summit. See Train, *Politics, Pollution and Pandas*, 134.

59. Train, *Politics, Pollution and Pandas*, 134–135.

60. Quoted in Flippen, *Conservative Conservationist*, 122.

61. Memo from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, Washington.

62. John E. Carroll, ed., *International Environmental Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 49.

commitment to preserving wildlife, specifically asking for a moratorium on the commercial killing of whales and for a convention to control international wildlife trade. Moreover, Train urged the adoption of an international agreement to control and limit the ocean dumping of wastes, the creation of a World Heritage Trust and a $100 million U.N. environmental fund to be financed by voluntary contributions from member governments. Finally, he called for regional actions to protect the environment, based on the example of the U.S.-Canada Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, and for the creation of a permanent specialized body within the United Nations to monitor and coordinate international environmental activity.[63]

A significant hurdle in the adoption of these American initiatives was represented by the underdeveloped nations. Tensions arose between them, led by Brazil, and the industrialized countries, as the former regarded environmental protection as a "rich man's game," claiming the freedom to pollute and the right to develop on a par with developed nations in order to catch up with them.[64] In his speech to the conference, Train tried to address and overcome this trade-off between economic development and environmental protection by mentioning the significant costs to health and quality of life stemming from a short-sighted pro-development approach, and advanced the forward-looking perspective of sustainable development by stressing the need to consider growth and the environment as complementary elements of the human existence:

> No longer should there be any qualitative difference between the goals of the economist and those of the ecologist. A vital humanism should inspire them both. Both words derive from the same Greek word meaning 'house.' Perhaps it is time for the economist and ecologist to move out of the separate, cramped intellectual quarters they still inhabit and take up residence together in a larger house of ideas—whose name might well be the House of Man.[65]

Turning back to the concrete results of the conference, the American objectives were eventually achieved. As underlined by Herter in a report to Secretary of State Rogers, "contrary to expectations there was no major confrontation between developed and developing countries." Rather, the summit witnessed the proactive and constructive participation of Brazil, Egypt and India, along with Great Britain which strongly backed the U.S. efforts and initiatives. On the whole, despite the absence of the USSR and the Eastern bloc, the conference was fruitful, given the general resolve of nations to cooperate in order to deal with environmental issues.[66] In a memorandum to the President, Train expressed the same positive impression. According to the chairman of the U.S. delegation, the Soviet absence had little effect on the works of the conference. On the other hand, he recognized the role played by Communist China at the summit, seeking to lead the Third World by attacking the U.S. on its status of superpower and nuclear monopolist. However, once more, Train managed to defuse potential political tensions with a measured reply to the Chinese. Ultimately, he reported that the conference was a success, considering that "The United States played a strong role and gained practically all of its objectives," underlining the importance of capitalizing on this by securing the media coverage it deserved at home.[67]

Herter and Train's assessments laid on solid ground. In addition to U.N. agencies, NGOs and organizations including FAO, UNESCO, UNDP, UNCTAD, IMF and the World Bank, delegates from

63. Train, *Politics, Pollution and Pandas*, 136.

64. Letter from the Scientific Attache (Hudson) at the Embassy in Brazil to the Director of the Office of Environmental Affairs (Herter), Washington, February 12, 1971, FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume E-1, Documents on Global Issues, Doc. 306, 1969-1972; Intelligence Note RARN-7 prepared by the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, March 2, 1972, FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume E-1, Documents on Global Issues, Doc. 317, 1969–1972; Intelligence Note REC-11 prepared by the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, May 31, 1972, FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume E-1, Documents on Global Issues, Doc. 322, 1969-1972; Hamblin, "Environmentalism for the Atlantic Alliance," 67–68.

65. Quoted in Train, *Politics, Pollution and Pandas*, 136.

66. Report on the UN Conference on the Human Environment from the Vice-Chairman of Delegation (Herter) to Secretary of State Rogers, Washington, July 28, 1972, FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume E-1, Documents on Global Issues, Doc. 325, 1969-1972.

67. Memo from the Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality (Train) to President Nixon, Washington, June 19, 1972, FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume E-1, Documents on Global Issues, Doc. 324, 1969-1972.

114 nations attended the first global summit on the environment, which attracted public attention all around the world, heightening awareness on environmental issues among countries and their leaders. It was the outset of the building of a global environmental legislation, and the U.S. played a remarkable leading role. The key American international objectives advanced by Train on the conference agenda were endorsed by unanimous vote, a substantial recognition of the U.S. leadership on the environment that would pay dividends in the following international meetings. The delegates embraced the proposal of an ocean dumping agreement; a deal to regulate trade in endangered species; a ten-year moratorium on commercial whale hunting and an environmental trust fund for international research and development, the latter being a brainchild of Train. Furthermore, the conference endorsed Train's World Heritage Trust and set up the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), located in Nairobi, Kenya, tasked with monitoring changes in the global environment and coordinating environmental initiatives and programs.[68] Finally, despite China's refusal to accept the reference to nuclear atmospheric testing and its effect on the environment, the conference agreed on a declaration of twenty-six environmental principles and an action plan to implement them.[69] Ultimately, Stockholm became the birthplace of the international environmental law.

The architect of this landmark achievement was Russell Train. His work in this environmental forum was intense and decisive. Every morning, he held briefings with the entire U.S. delegation to instruct its members on how to advance American interests, listen to complaints and keep everyone abreast of what was going on and the next U.S. moves. Moreover, he personally took care to hold informal dialogues with delegates of other nations in order to mobilize support towards U.S. proposals. The Secretary-General of the conference, the Canadian environmentalist Maurice F. Strong, recognized Train's outstanding contribution, as did several members of Congress once he was back in Washington.[70] Yet the job was far from done.

5 Stockholm's Legacy: The Beginning of the Environmental Multilateralism and the North-South Divide

After capitalizing on America's leading role in Stockholm, citing it along with the Great Lakes agreement and the U.S.-USSR environmental deal as the concrete proof of the American desire to cooperate on the "common tasks of peace," President Nixon counted on Train to shore up the American environmental leadership and implement what had been obtained in Sweden. As the President's "personal representative," a few weeks after the conference, Train flew to London for the meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC). His task was to push nations to adopt the commercial whaling moratorium—a CEQ proposal—already rejected by Japan and Norway in Stockholm. At that time, a number of different great whales species had reached alarmingly low population levels, demanding immediate measures to protect them in order to allow them to recover. Furthermore, the protection of whales was then popular in public opinion.[71] However, the IWC declined Train's request for a public vote, and the moratorium did not pass as it failed to achieve the two-thirds majority. Despite this setback, Train's commitment did not go unnoticed and the *New York Times* stressed the role he played in transforming

> The moribund sessions of the Whaling Commission into a lively forum of debate between conservationists and industry supporters.[72]

68. Carroll, *International Environmental Diplomacy*, 51.

69. Flippen, *Conservative Conservationist*, 123; For a more in-depth insight into the United Nations Conference on Human Environment (UNCHE) see Michael G. Schechter, *United Nations Global Conferences* (London-New York: Routledge, 2005), 27–40.

70. Flippen, *Conservative Conservationist*, 123.

71. Train, *Politics, Pollution and Pandas*, 139.

72. *New York Times*, August 30, 1972, quoted in Train, *Politics, Pollution and Pandas*, 140. After several attempts, the moratorium was finally approved in 1982, Ibid.

In London, Train was called to implement other resolutions agreed in Stockholm. Under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Maritime Consultative Organization (IMCO), in October 1972, the conference held at Lancaster House created the Ocean Dumping Convention to regulate the marine discharge of oil and other wastes, while another convention was drawn up to deal with tanker design. Train chaired the U.S. delegation to the former and co-chaired it to the latter.[73]

In November 1972, in Paris, at the initiative of the U.S., an international conference convened by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adopted the World Heritage Convention, giving birth to the World Heritage Trust, already endorsed in Stockholm.[74] This historical outcome was indeed the result of Train's efforts. The idea of a world heritage trust dated back to the second half of the 1960s, when Train was still chairman of The Conservation Foundation. During that experience, the president of Resources for the Future, Joseph L. Fisher, approached him with the proposal for a world heritage trust to protect and preserve natural areas of universal value in every corner of the globe. Train welcomed this enthusiastically as a chance to foster international cooperation on subjects of public interest, not to mention the fact that it was exactly the kind of action that reflected his vision of the Earth as man's home, belonging to everyone. Together with Fisher, Train extended the concept to cultural, historical and natural resources, and sponsored it at the 1967 WWF-International Congress on Nature and Man in a speech entitled "A World Heritage Trust." Actually, the trust was first proposed by Train in 1965 in the Committee on Natural Resources which, chaired by Fisher, was part of the White House Conference on International Cooperation. However, the Lyndon Baines Johnson Administration took no action in this regard. After Fisher's death, Train continued to promote the proposal by using his position as CEQ chairman within the Executive Office of President Nixon. Though Nixon had no real personal interest in environmental matters, he read the polls and was very sensitive to the rising concern the American people were manifesting towards the environment.

The opportunity to meet the concerns of public opinion arose in 1971, when the CEQ was responsible for drafting the President's Annual Message to the Congress on the environment. Behind Nixon's environmental message, delivered on February 8, 1971, including the proposal to establish a World Heritage Trust ahead of the centennial of the creation of Yellowstone National Park,[75] was Train's smart hand. The rest of the work would be done in Stockholm and the upshot was (and is still today) a success for America, as it contributed to shaping its image on the global stage as protector and sponsor of world culture, safeguarding sites of worldwide value. Clearly, a soft power operation.

Equally important was the negotiation of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), in January 1973. Already endorsed in Stockholm, CITES became reality in Washington, where the conference was held under the chairmanship of Christian A. Herter, Jr. from the State Department. Once again, Train led the U.S. delegation. The aim in Washington was to draft an agreement able to avert, in the long run, the potential extinction of such products, animals and plants particularly affected by significant worldwide demand. Within this forum, Train succeeded in overcoming some of the African countries' reservations, setting up a strong convention with the help of the head of the Kenyan delegation, Perez Olindo, director of the Kenya Wildlife Service and the first university graduate from the African Wildlife Leadership Foundation's education program launched by Train in the early 1960s.[76] This was another international environmental

73. Train played a significant role in marine pollution negotiations as they were likely to affect direct U.S. interests, especially in the field of military defense. His aggressive and pragmatic approach influenced the IMCO's decision to create a Marine Environment Protection Committee as a subsidiary body with the mandate of monitoring and preventing pollution from ships, as well as being decisive in promoting the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), adopted on November 2, 1973, at IMCO, John Barkdull, "Nixon and the Marine Environment," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 28 (1998): 600–602.

74. Memo from the Legal Adviser (Stevenson) to Secretary of State Rogers, Washington, April 27, 1972, FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume E-1, Documents on Global Issues, Doc. 320, 1969-1972; On the World Heritage Convention, see: Slatyer, Ralph O. "The Origin and Evolution of the World Heritage Convention," *Ambio*, 12 (1983): 138–140.

75. Richard Nixon, Special Message to the Congress proposing the 1971 Environmental Program, February 08, 1971, APP, to be consulted at: https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/special-message-the-congress-proposing-the-1971-environmental-program.

76. It it worth emphasizing that Train's environmental committment and activism proved decisive, especially at the beginning

cornerstone, contributing to strengthening America's global appeal and leadership as a superpower dealing with moral issues, transcending the military and economic dimensions.

Train's environmental diplomacy of course included bilateral negotiations, mostly requiring trips around the world, something he actually loved. After several attempts to involve the PRC in bilateral environmental cooperation pursuing the same strategy adopted with the Soviets, Train had to give up due to the lack of Chinese interest in the matter. Nevertheless, in Asia, Train found an alternative fertile ground for fostering environmental cooperation: Japan. In 1970, given the alarming environmental conditions recorded in Tokyo, especially in terms of air pollution, at the suggestion of the CEQ, Nixon wrote to the Prime Minister Eisaku Sato proposing a cooperative effort between the U.S. and Japan in managing common environmental issues. Train had met Sato several years before, and found he was genuinely concerned with the environmental quality of his country. After Japan's positive response, Nixon sent Train to Tokyo to meet with Sato and lay the groundwork for bilateral cooperation. It is worth underlining that this visit alone pushed the Japanese to appoint a member of the Diet, Sadanori Yamanaka, as the Prime Minister's environmental coordinator.[77] It was a first encouraging step by the Japanese side, given the country' poor environmental record and the fact that it had no government bodies or agencies effectively dealing with environmental issues.

Over the years, this meeting proved fruitful. Sato soon traveled to Washington to meet Nixon and discuss the environment, confirming Japan's positive attitude to the subject with the creation, in 1971, of an Environmental Protection Agency, following the lead of the U.S.[78] Once again, Train's diplomacy opened a broad horizon for a continuing environmental dialogue with Tokyo, furthering environmental agreements between the two countries.

Along the lines of the U.S.-Japan environmental cooperation, Train sought and obtained the same environmental commitment from several European governments, notably Spain and France.[79]

Until 1976 Train worked tirelessly to raise environmental awareness, prompting countries to concretely engage in environmental protection. He pursued dialogue and negotiations with Canada, Japan, Mexico,[80] as well as the FRG and the USSR, achieving environmental agreements with Poland in 1974 and Iran in 1976, while he was EPA administrator.[81] Despite Nixon's disengagement from the environment, in 1973 Train personally asked to lead the EPA, as running an independent executive agency would allow him to implement the President's legislative agenda on which Congress had still to act and enforce the existing environmental legislation. Contrary to expectations, the EPA years turned out to be a serious challenge to Train, as his room for maneuver was significantly narrowed by inflation and increasing unemployment that made environmental regulations the scapegoat for the economic strain. However, Train continued to perform the job started with the CEQ, consolidating the U.S. international environmental leadership, and remaining actively committed to implementing the U.S.-USSR environmental agreement, as well as representing Washington at the NATO-CCMS.[82]

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of his political career at Capitol Hill. In January 1969, he was appointed head of the transitional task force on Environment at the suggestion of his friend Henry Loomis, for several years a trustee of The Conservation Foundation and at that time deputy coordinator of the task forces Nixon ordered to set up ahead of taking office, Train, *Politics, Pollution and Pandas*, 3; Flippen, *Conservative Conservationist*, 124–125.

77. Flippen, "Richard Nixon, Russell Train, and the Birth of Modern American Environmental Diplomacy," 622–623.

78. Ibid.

79. Ibid, 623.

80. In 1974 Nixon signed a historic treaty with Mexico concerning the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act. Since the Colorado River was essential to the agricultural well-being of both countries, the treaty aimed at preserving the water supply from oversalination. See Sussman Daynes, *White House Politics and the Environment*, 81.

81. As Train points out, over the years EPA strongly influenced several countries, such as Japan, Canada, Great Britain, West Germany and Sweden, to centralize environmental management, Russell E. Train, "The Beginning of Wisdom," *The Wilson Quarterly*, 1 (1977): 97; Train, *Politics, Pollution and Pandas*, 154. It is worth stressing that the United States' attention to and active engagement in environmental issues date back to the outset of the 20th century: in 1911, along with other nations, the U.S. established the North Pacific Fur Seal Convention to regulate the hunting of fur seals; five years later, Washington signed the Migratory Bird Treaty with Canada and, in 1946, American diplomacy played a significant role in the creation of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling. See Turner, Isenberg, *The Republican Reversal*, 147.

82. In 1979, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan represented a substantial setback for détente and led the Atlantic Alliance to fully embrace its military dimension, dismissing the environmental one. Hence, the CCMS lost its function, becoming

"For the environment first, Nixon second." This is how John C. Whitaker described Train's activity at Capitol Hill from the beginning of his political career as Undersecretary at the Interior Department.[83] This portrait is even more meaningful if one considers that, after leaving the federal government in 1976, Train pursued his environmental crusade in the private and public sector. In 1982, he accepted to be part of the U.S. delegation to the Nairobi Conference on the tenth anniversary of the Stockholm Conference; with the former EPA administrator, William D. Ruckelshaus, he co-chaired the Environmentalists for Bush Committee during the 1988 Bush presidential campaign; in 1991, with the WWF, he sponsored the creation of a National Commission on the Environment (then chaired by him) to review U.S. environmental policy and work out strategies to tackle future environmental challenges; under his direction, the WWF established the "Debt for Nature Program;" he took part to the works of the "Brundtland Commission," established by the UN General Assembly in 1984; finally, he helped create several independent conservation trusts, and in 1991 was awarded the "Medal of Freedom," the nation's highest civilian honor by President George H.W. Bush.[84]

A "master politician," according to Vice President Nelson A. Rockefeller, Train was indeed a real asset to Nixon. His disposition to compromise and his genuine environmental commitment enabled him to foster bipartisan cooperation in Congress to implement Nixon's environmental agenda by the early 1970s, an agenda that he heavily influenced as CEQ chairman. He cared little about ideology, preferring to obtain immediate and tangible results to directly serve America's national interests. This approach paid dividends at home and abroad, shaping Nixon's reputation as an environmental President and determining the widespread acknowledgement of the U.S. as leader of environmental protection. Arguably, looking at Train's efforts during his mandate as the President's special environmental envoy, one could criticize his diplomacy by pointing out the lack of effective and direct involvement, especially in bilateral relations, of the developing countries, which over the years and within international conferences would express resentment towards a global environmental regime substantially built upon the need to solve the common issues of the nations of the North.

All things considered, it is fair to say that modern American environmental diplomacy reflects Train's legacy. His environmental diplomacy was inspired by idealism and realism at the same time. On one hand, he rejected the Christian-anthropocentric view of man's dominion over Earth, claiming the interrelationship between humans and nature as parts of a whole.[85] On the other hand, despite Nixon's effective detachment from the environment, Train pressed from within the Executive Office to implement far-reaching environmental legislation, as he was extremely convinced that only after shoring up strong environmental credibility at home could Washington impose its influence and leadership overseas, among policy makers as well as within bilateral and multilateral fora.[86] In this respect, he shared the traditional American exceptionalism: he thought that an interdependent world required direct U.S. engagement to address global environmental issues likely to produce massive migration flows, poverty and political instability representing, directly or not, potential threats to U.S. foreign and domestic security.[87] In parallel, multilateral cooperation and concerted efforts were of

increasingly marginal.

83. For a broad and more accurate insight of Nixon's domestic environmental policy, see John C. Whitaker, *Striking a Balance: Environment and Natural Resources Policy in the Nixon-Ford Years* (Washington: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research; Stanford, California: Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, 1976).

84. One of the most important friendships Train developed during his diplomatic environmental activity was with George H. W. Bush, U.S. liason officer in the PRC in the Seventies. In 1975, Bush's family hosted Train's in Beijing during a short visit to China planned to explore the viability of bilateral environmental cooperation with the Chinese. See Train, *Politics, Pollution and Pandas*, 145-146; Flippen, *Conservative Conservationist*, 1–2.

85. Train, Politics, Pollution and Pandas,* 324–326.

86. Ibid, 123.

87. Ibid, 328–329. In his article "The Coming Anarchy," Robert Kaplan already considered the environment a "national security issue of the early twenty-first century" and a "core foreign policy challenge," pointing out the potentially dramatic effects of overpopulation, deforestation, soil erosion, resource depletion and rising sea levels on structurally unstable regions of the globe that would eventually generate massive migration flows and group conflicts, threatening world peace and security, Robert D. Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy," *World Policy Journal*, 17 (2000); see also Thomas F. Homer-Dixon, Marc A. Levy, "Environment and Security," *International Security*, 20 (1995-1996); Thomas F. Homer-Dixon, "Environmental Scarcities and Violent Conflict: Evidence from Cases," *International Security*, 19 (1994); Gareth Porter, "Environmental

crucial importance to prevent and tackle these threats on the basis of a burden-sharing path oriented towards a sustainable development, striking a balance between economic growth and environmental protection.

In this regard, many academics share the view that Stockholm was indeed the event that marked the beginning of the current tensions in North-South relations over the environment within the U.N. and other multilateral fora, hampering any chance of concrete cooperation between the G20 and G77. One year after the conference, World Bank economist Tim E. J. Campbell argued that

> Stockholm should be remembered more for its catalytic effect on political alliances than for its environmental or scientific contributions to the world.[88]

Even though these words may appear excessively ungenerous considering the effective scale and consequences of such a conference, it is undeniable that Stockholm significantly contributed to polarizing positions on environmental protection and development. On one hand, it promoted cooperation among industrialized countries, especially on pollution issues, while on the other one, it helped bolster South-South cooperation within the G77 and the UNCTAD.[89]

6 Conclusion

In order to provide a more critical assessment of Nixon and Train's environmental engagement, it is worth placing them within the broader political framework of the conservative strategy that emerged within the Republican Party from the early 1930s. Although both old-school Republicans with conservative roots,[90] they proved to be flexible enough to adapt to the circumstances that particular historical moment required, and act accordingly.

Republican conservatism emerged in the 1930s in opposition to the regulatory State conceived by Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal, as it was deemed a threat to people's economic and political freedom. Though represented by well-known political and academic personalities such as the Senators Robert A. Taft and Barry M. Goldwater, as well as the Nobel-Prize economists Friedrich A. Von Hayek and Milton Friedman, the conservative ideology—which notably meant "law and order," anti-statism and free enterprise—did not succeed in imposing itself within the Grand Old Party (GOP) until the 1980s. Moderate Republicans, who shared with the Democrats a pro-civil rights attitude—making them particularly sensitive to social issues like environmental degradation—prevailed in a cross-party confrontation during the 1960s. Fearing that the extremist position of the conservative doctrine on social and economic issues would make the GOP unelectable, the moderates showed themselves close to people's demands, which between 1960 and 1970 mainly coincided with civil rights and the environment. Gaining substantial bipartisan consensus in Congress on such issues, 80 percent of House Republicans and 82 percent of Senate Republicans voted for the Civil Rights Act in 1964.[91] In the same year, the Republicans strongly supported Johnson's Wilderness Act, in keeping with the traditions of the GOP.

Nixon's environmental commitment moved away from this solid basis. His administration embraced environmentalism at its peak, but this soon turned out to be a mere political calculation when, after his re-election in 1972 and during the economic crisis sparked by the 1973 oil shock, he abandoned the environmental cause to focus on solving energy issues and meeting the demands of the

Security as a National Security Issue," *Current History* 94 (1995); Marc A. Levy, "Is the Environment a National Security Issue?," *International Security*, 20 (1995).

88. Quoted in Björn-Ola Linnér, Henrik Selin, "How the first global environment talks contained the shape of things to come," *China Dialogue* (2021), to be consulted at: https://chinadialogue.net/en/pollution/stockholm-1972-first-global-environment-conference-shape-of-things-to-come/.

89. Schechter, *United Nations Global Conferences*, 33.

90. A. James Reichley, "The Conservative Roots of the Nixon, Ford, and Reagan Administrations," *Political Science Quarterly*, 96 (1981-1982).

91. Turner, Isenberg, *The Republican Reversal*, 27.

corporate sector. A clear signal of this new approach towards the environment, indeed always considered by Nixon a temporary "fad" too distant from the people's real and concrete problems, was his veto of the Clean Water Act in 1972, because of its "budget-busting" costs.[92] Overridden by the Congress, with the significant support of the moderate Republicans, this law was the turning point that marked the end of a fragile equilibrium within the Party that Nixon himself aimed to preserve from his election onwards. Nixon's strategy basically hinged on striking a balance between the growth-oriented constituencies and the moderate, environment-sensitive Republican platform.

Although some scholars maintain that under Nixon the GOP became an "eco-friendly" party, he had no interest in the environment. It was a priority as long as public opinion voiced its concern about the matter. In contrast with his Republican predecessors, his action was mainly oriented to constituency and approval ratings, whereas the preservation of public resources and the well-being of future generations were merely a consequence, not the actual goal. However, this opportunism weakened Nixon's environmental policy, undermining the work of members of his cabinet including Train and Ruckelshaus, who were genuinely interested in leaving a footprint in that field. Nixon delegated every aspect of the environmental crusade to them, who actually had to work with no meaningful indications or ideas from the Chief Executive. Unlike Gifford Pinchot and Teddy Roosevelt, Train and Nixon seldom had meetings or brainstormings to discuss the environment, and when held they resulted merely in quick briefings by Train. Especially by 1972, he and other environmentalists belonging to the President's cabinet felt increasingly isolated within it, losing ground and credit as American industry regained importance in the public opinion, thus overshadowing and dismissing environmental protection. At least in domestic policy, this trend paved the way for the following Republican administrations of Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan, both against government bureaucracy and environmental regulations which could hamper economic growth.

Nevertheless, given the almost inexistent engagement of the international community in environmental matters prior to 1970 and the further positive development of a global regime of environmental law under the aegis of the United States and the U.N., it is beyond dispute that Nixon's commitment and Train's environmental diplomacy proved decisive in laying the foundations of international environmental cooperation, eventually accomplishing the American mission.

92. Ibid, 238.