

The Nuclear-Free Future Award 2011

Berlin, 10 April 2010

Laudatio for

Nadezhda Lvovna Kutepova and Natalia Manzurova
Russia

In the category "R E S I S T A N C E"

It is a privilege and a pleasure for me to honour today two distinguished Russian women, Nadezhda Lvovna Kutepova and Natalia Manzurova

A privilege, because their merits are outstanding as you will discover with me during this short presentation.

A pleasure, because it is always pleasant to make the acquaintance of people who share your own beliefs, vision and action.

But my pleasure is somehow shaded by sadness. Sadness because of the numerous Japanese victims of the Fukushima disaster. Sadness also because many opinion leaders and decision makers throughout the world are seemingly not capable or not willing to admit that nuclear power is not a sustainable option.

President Medvedev declared: "*We must work to increase public confidence in nuclear industry worldwide*". He and Prime Minister Putin step up efforts to conclude export reactor contracts with Turkey and Belarus. They insist on further construction of power plants in Russia, instead of moving to stress test or to shut down Russia's oldest power plants.

But let's turn to the two distinguished ladies we are honouring here today.

The year Nadezhda Lvovna Kutepova was born in Ozyorsk, early 1972, I was National Secretary of the Belgian federation of the environmental organisations. We were among the first to take a holistic view on the environment, linking nature conservation with urban planning, with protection of the architectural and cultural heritage, with action against water, air, soil pollution, waste and noise, and with all issues related to energy sources, production and use. There is indeed *Only One Earth!*

At the same time, in March 1972, the first report to the Club of Rome "*Limits to growth*", was publicly presented at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C. It was going to be translated into 35 languages and sold in 10 million copies all over the world.

Yet, in spite of this alarming, well documented and scientifically sound report all countries in the world – whether capitalist, socialist or communist – pursued their triumphant road built on the paradigm of economic growth and energy consumption without limits. Government leaders said that the world needed more material production, more natural resources, and more energy to clean up the environment and eradicate poverty, the worst of all pollutions. Oil and nuclear energy took a particular place in the environmental debate.

In the eighties and nineties the anti-nuclear movement had been successful - to a certain extent - in increasing public awareness. The breakthrough of the Greens in many European countries contributed to some changes on the political agendas and in energy policies.

Far too modest, as we now all realise. After the Copenhagen conference on climate change and global warming, the nuclear industry was boosted again. It was presented as the alternative to carbon based energy...

When I read Nadezhda and Natalia's biographies I was deeply impressed by their total commitment to the protection of human health and the environment.

25 years after the Chernobyl disaster we have many a good reason to pay a tribute to the relentless efforts of both women defending the right of citizens to a healthy, sustainable and hence nuclear free future.

In 1999 Nadezhda founded a social ecological organization called "*Planeta Nadezhd*" (The Planet of Hopes) in Ozyorsk, a closed city. There are ten Russian closed nuclear cities, called ZATO, with a special admission system. State institutes of the Federal Security System strictly control this city, where the largest production facility – Mayak – is located. Mayak is the place of the first known nuclear accident in 1957.

The mission of the "*Planet of Hopes*" is to foster the process of environmental protection and ecological education based on the right of citizens to a healthy environment and to ecological information. It is to restore the rights of the citizens who have suffered from environmental pollution and accidents; to contribute to the democratisation of civil society in the closed cities of Russia, including protection or restoration of the rights of the citizens who were born there.

The Planet of Hopes became a member of the Dutch organization called "*Women of Europe for the Common Future*". A rewarding recognition of the merits of Nadezhda, who pursued her action for a better environment in the subsequent years.

In 2000 she participated in negotiations between antinuclear organizations and the American government in Washington DC, in the activities organized by the Alliance for Nuclear Accountability in Seattle and the UN antinuclear organisations meeting in New-York.

Her organisation held a regional survey on public opinion about importing the spent nuclear fuel into Russia, in those cities where nuclear facilities are located.

In 2001 she initiated and conducted a project called "*Closed Cities as A territory of Hopes*", established a Civic Parliament and set up a special training course for NGO's from closed cities.

Many among us know that opposition to nuclear industry is often dangerous, even when it is peaceful. When, in 2002, Nadezhda participated in an antinuclear protest action on the Red Square in Moscow on the occasion of the Chernobyl anniversary she was arrested together with other demonstrators.

This harassment did not discourage her. In 2003 she organised the defence of human rights in the closed cities.

Nadezhda, who graduated in 1990 from a medical college and had been working as an emergency scrub nurse for 2 year, majored successfully nine years later in sociology and political science at the Ural State University in Ekaterinaburg.

No surprise that she took the initiative of the first large sociological research on an ecological theme in the closed city. A research forbidden by Federal Security Service and for which she was prosecuted.

The list of her titles, functions and achievements is impressive, from representative of the international ecological group "Ecodefence" in Ozyorsk to delegate at the World summit of sustainable development in Johannesburg and leading a series of court cases such as the refusal of access to the closed cities, the protection of the rights of widows of the liquidators of the nuclear accident in 1957, the "*prenatal liquidators*", the Muslyumovo people, the compensation for victims of radiating failures.

Together with lawyers of the European Human Rights Advocacy Centre she is currently representing 105 citizens of the Russian Federation at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

Besides all these activities she writes articles in Russian and English for publications and websites and found the time to raise four children.

What remarkable achievements! What a remarkable woman!

Natalia Manzurova is not with us today, at least not physically. But she is in our hearts. Her biography, her profile and her action are very impressive.

Her father - a nuclear physicist - and her mother - a dosimetrist -, were assigned to work in a secret town where nuclear arms are made. It was not their choice. Natalia grew up and went to school in this closed city. As many other children at that time she was a member of the communist youth organizations Pioneers and Komsomol. After graduating from university, she was assigned to work in Siberia. Fate brought her back to a closed city, where she worked work as a research assistant in a scientific institute set up after the nuclear accident in 1957. In top secrecy. Most unfortunately she was abandoned by her husband with a one- year-old child. She had to face all difficulties of a single Soviet mother, including no possibility to establish a new family.

Then the terrible Chernobyl accident happened. The Soviet government compelled Natalia, and her parents, to volunteer for the clean-up of the accident. She worked in Pripjat and Chernobyl for 4, 5 years, being witness of much grief and with great difficulty in directing 1.000 people. However, her Soviet upbringing stated "*first think about the homeland and then about oneself*". Her duty did not allow her to leave. Her child lived with the grandmother. When the grandmother died, Natalia found herself again as a single mother with a small daughter. Working as a nuclear plant engineer she suffered severe diseases, even clinical death. The result was that she was fired from work and left with a miserable pension. The Chernobyl law about occupational diseases did not apply.

With the Perestroika, conditions did not improve for her. No pension, nothing to eat. Natalia had to sell books, clothes and collect bottles to buy food. Her daughter, then studying, had to work and take care of her sick mother. But her faith in God, her courage and her obstinate action helped her to survive.

When civil movements start developing in the country, Natalia creates the Chernobyl Union, working when not in bed, striving for better health. She studies. She seeks to get financing for the Union. With an internship in the USA as a civil rights defender, she begins to work at international level. But Russia retreats from democracy: many human rights and environmental organizations are closed. Natalia takes an initiative on Human Rights Persecution. Her disease relapses. Cancer of the thyroid gland is diagnosed and she undergoes surgery.

Natalia has put her experience of a nuclear accident in writings entitled *"How to avoid stepping on the same rake"*. She made an analysis of radiation accidents and the Russian model to eliminate damages and losses. It fully reveals the corruption of power and the zero-cost of human life. Her work should help people who live in the countries with the nuclear production to know what to expect and what to do. It shows also the story of the resettlement of the Russian village Muslyumovo - the dirtiest village. More than 50 years people lived there, eating every day contaminated radioactive food.

There have been several radiation accidents in Russia. Every time the Government has carried out the same scheme: resettlement, financial compensation, "burial" of the settlement, environmental monitoring and monitoring of the health of the victims. But always with corruption, mistakes because of the ignorance of previous experiences, negligence, bad behaviour to people, no adequate compensation or legal recourse for proper compensation.

Natalia was a witness of three of these accidents, doing analyses. She likes to talk about it, as well as about the "renaissance" of the nuclear industry and how it threatens people and nature. Also about the radioactive wastes brought into Russia from other countries and about the risk of radioactive disposal sites and their threat to our descendants. She is currently addressing an Appeal from Russian and international civil organizations to Chancellor Angela Merkel concerning the export of radioactive waste from Germany to Russia.

Natalia puts the right questions about the failures at Mayak and Chernobyl and their consequences for the ecology, the climate and the people.

Natalia and Nadezdha deserve the Nuclear Free Award 2011 for their resistance.
And our deepest gratitude.

Mark DUBRULLE
Member of the Club of Rome
President CoR-EU
The Club of Rome EU Chapter