

# Sakhalin Citizens' Views of Offshore Oil & Gas Development

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## Introduction

The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the demise of the Communist dictatorship raised international hopes for the development of a democracy in new Russia. However, the ensuing chaos in the country raised doubts about the prospects for a liberal society based on the Western principles of law and justice. Lawlessness is said to be as much an enduring characteristic of Russian society as contradictory tendencies toward deference to authority and resistance to it. According to Vasily Kliuchevskii, "arbitrariness of thought corresponds to arbitrariness of authority."<sup>1</sup> "The thinking man who confronts a problem which does not fit his customary outlook employs Russian common sense and says, 'I am above logic' and refuses to recognize the problem or resolve the conflict."<sup>2</sup>

It is universally held today that a democracy requires the presence of a civil society in which citizens recognize and exercise responsibilities as members of a community. It is generally maintained as well that civic consciousness includes citizens' recognition of the impact of their activities on their own environment and that of others. There is evidence that Russian citizens'

environmental consciousness has grown since the beginning of perestroika. Unfortunately, however, there is also evidence that commitment to the solution of ecological problems has waned since the early 1990s, both at the political level and at the grassroots level. As the nation has plunged into a prolonged economic crisis, most Russians are more preoccupied with their everyday concerns than with ecological issues.<sup>3</sup>

Do the citizens of Sakhalin exhibit the traditional characteristics noted above, or are they changing toward expectations of members of civil society? Do they feel they are in control of the ongoing development of oil and gas resources off their island, or do they see it as a development largely beyond their control? Do they see it as a project that brings to them greater benefits or greater harm? Will the Sakhalin shelf projects promote the formation of values and institutions that will facilitate the development of a civil society in Russia? Above all, what role do the citizens of Sakhalin see themselves playing in the development of the natural resources just off their island?

In order to answer these questions, we conducted a series of interviews in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk in August 1998 and also carried out a survey of opinions among

**TABLE 1. RESPONDENTS BY PROFESSION**

Profession	# of respondents	%
<b>NGO</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8.2</b>
<b>(of which environmental NGO)</b>	<b>(3)</b>	<b>(2.7)</b>
<b>Mass media</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8.1</b>
<b>Teacher</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>12.7</b>
<b>Business</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10.0</b>
<b>Oblast дума/administration</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10.0</b>
<b>City administration</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10.0</b>
<b>University student</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>12.7</b>
<b>University professor</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10.0</b>
<b>Scientist</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18.2</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>99.9*</b>

\*The total does not equal 100% due to rounding error.

<sup>1</sup> Vasily Kliuchevsky, *Aphorisms: Historical Portraits, Sketches*, Moscow: Mysl, 1993, pp. 25-26; quoted in Anna Vassilieva and Nikolai Sokov, *Influence of Culture on Russian Negotiating Style*, U.S. Institute of Peace-supported study, Monterey Institute of International Studies, Monterey, California 1999, chapter 2.

<sup>2</sup> Vassilieva and Sokov, chapter 2.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Miwa Ito, "Roshia no ekoroji gyosei to kyokuto," *Roshia kenkyu*, no. 24 (April 1997), pp. 60-77.

<sup>4</sup> For a full report on the 1998 survey results, see "Environmental Consciousness in Sakhalin: Background and Views on the Sakhalin Offshore Oil-Gas Development," in Takashi Murakami and Shinichiro Tabata, eds., *Russian Regions: Economic Growth and Environment*, Sapporo, Japan: Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, 2000, pp. 215-248. (Co-authored with Anna Vassilieva) (Also published in *Economic Development and the Environment on the Sakhalin Offshore Oil and Gas Fields II*, Slavic Research Center Occasional Papers No. 71, Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, Sapporo, Japan, 2000, pp. 13-46.)

Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk citizens in September-October 1998 and a follow-up survey in April-May 2000. We have summarized our findings from this project below.

### The 1998 Survey<sup>4</sup>

In September-December 1998, representatives of the Sociological Research Laboratory of Sakhalin State University and Sakhalin Environmental Watch (an environmental NGO) distributed a questionnaire we developed to 120 individuals in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk. Of the 111 completed surveys we received, 110 were valid. We first show the basic profile of the respondents in this sample in Table 1.

#### Profession

As we will note later, occupation is one of the factors that differentiate our respondents' attitudes toward the Sakhalin oil and gas projects.

#### Education

The highest level of education our respondents received is shown in table 2. It is clear that the level of education among our respondents is quite high. About 76 percent received higher education, another 11 percent currently receiving higher education. About 8 percent received technical secondary education, and another 4 percent received secondary education. One respondent has received only high school education. Unfortunately, due to the small size of our sample and the highly skewed distribution in terms of educational levels, this factor cannot be meaningfully related to our subjects' responses to our survey.

#### Age

Age is another factor of some importance, as we will note later.

### Summary of Findings

Here we will summarize our findings and offer some additional observations.

First, when we asked if they expected positive benefits from the Sakhalin offshore oil and gas development for the citizens of Sakhalin, a good majority of the respondents said they expected positive benefits for the citizenry. About one-third of them anticipated no benefits. Among the benefits expected, employment was by far the most prevalent hope among the citizens of Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk. Other anticipated benefits included cheaper and more abundant gas for home and industrial use, regional economic development, improved living standards, improved infrastructure, and increased tax revenues and budget for the regional government.

Second, an overwhelming majority expected some negative effects on the citizens of Sakhalin. Utmost among their concerns was the potential environmental impact of the Sakhalin projects. Causes of their concern included lack of information about the offshore projects, apparent ignorance about them, and concern regarding the adequacy and effectiveness of pollution control or environmental monitoring mechanisms employed in the projects.

Third, a fracture appeared in the public opinion regarding the benefits and costs of the development projects. Oblast дума members and administrators eagerly anticipated positive benefits for Sakhalin. City officials and elementary and secondary schoolteachers were similarly expecting benefits for the citizenry, but they were also concerned about negative effects. Younger people, including students, were the most skeptical. Women also seemed more cautious than men about the expected benefits of the Sakhalin projects. NGO members, university professors, and scientists shared this skepticism. As far as expectations of negative consequences for the citizens were concerned,

**TABLE 2. RESPONDENTS BY EDUCATION LEVEL**

Education	# of respondents	%
Higher education	84	76.4
Incomplete higher education	12	10.9
Technical secondary education	9	8.2
Secondary education	4	3.6
High school	1	0.9
Total	110	100.0

**TABLE 3. RESPONDENTS BY AGE**

Age	# of respondents	%
up to 19	2	1.9
20-29	36	33.3
30-39	19	17.6
40-49	30	27.8
50-59	16	14.8
60-69	5	4.6
Total	108*	100.0

\*Two respondents did not indicate their age.

the Oblast дума and administration personnel were the exception, with all other categories of people anticipating negative effects.

Fourth, Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk citizens had mixed expectations about the impact of the Sakhalin projects on their own personal welfare. People who expected no benefits for themselves outnumbered those who did expect them by about 10%, and by a somewhat larger margin (12%), expectations of negative consequences prevailed over expectations of no negative impact on personal welfare. Interestingly, a fairly large number of people anticipated positive benefits for other Sakhalin citizens but not for themselves. This is reminiscent of a characteristic often ascribed to the Russian people, that of self-doubt.<sup>5</sup> "Life...has been difficult for the Russians, and there is an inclination to see the world in sweeping, fatalistic terms."<sup>6</sup> It was no coincidence that women were more skeptical than men about the personal benefits of the Sakhalin projects.

Among the desirable effects of the oil and gas projects that our respondents expected for themselves were improved living standards, expanded supply of natural gas to their homes, and employment opportunities. Among the undesirable consequences cited were environmental pollution, health problems due to air and water pollution and contaminated food, and the loss of access to traditional food supplies, particularly fish.

Fifth, a solid majority of the respondents believed that the oil and gas development projects would bring Sakhalin closer to the rest of the world, and they welcomed the projects. However, a good number of respondents based their expectations on wishes and hopes rather than on firm facts. They hoped that closer international ties would contribute to the region's economic development by attracting investment, introducing new technologies, improving infrastructure, expanding trade opportunities, and improving the scientific information available to the citizens of Sakhalin. Many of our respondents were concerned that expanded international ties would also mean that their natural resources might be depleted, their economy might be exploited by foreigners, their environment might worsen, and corruption and other political problems might result. A significant number of people were also concerned that international ties might bring moral decay to their society and increasing disparity in economic opportunities for the island's residents. Here again, students and other young people, as well as women, were the most cautious.

Sixth, women were generally more skeptical than men about the impact of the Sakhalin projects, be it on citizens in general, on their personal welfare, or on the international status of Sakhalin. It is often observed that women are among the most vulnerable groups in Russia

today. Humiliation, submission, and servility have long been the lot of Russian women, even during the Soviet period, when the Communist propaganda touted the supposed equality between the sexes. Many women in our 1998 sample felt vulnerable and helpless, some even desperate.

Finally, the apparent indifference and skepticism among the younger respondents require some discussion. There appeared to be widespread ignorance among the students regarding political, economic, and environmental issues in general and, specifically, about the oil and gas developments of interest to us in this study. Young people seemed to feel as though the world was moving beyond them or past them without offering them any benefits, tangible or otherwise. We also detected among the younger people in our sample a feeling of alienation and lack of trust vis-a-vis the local government, the regional government, the central government, and the international community. We suspect that the indifference they conveyed to us reflected their feeling that they were not connected to the values and institutions that had been brought into Russian society following the collapse of the Soviet system.

#### **Follow-Up Survey, April-May 2000**

In April-May 2000, we conducted a follow-up survey in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk. The purpose was to survey the views of Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk residents regarding the Sakhalin shelf projects about a half-year after Sakhalin-2 started commercial production of oil. We asked many of the same questions we had asked in the earlier survey. We also asked several questions to see if in the respondents' views the shelf projects had become a campaign issue in the Federation Duma elections in December 1999 or in the Presidential election in March 2000, and whether the projects influenced the way they voted in either of those elections. We engaged the same NGO in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk to distribute the survey instrument to 90 individuals, including the 70 individuals who had responded to the 1998 survey. Many of these people had moved from Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk or were otherwise not reachable by our NGO colleagues. We received completed surveys from 70 respondents, and the following observations are based on those surveys.

#### **Profile of Respondents**

The age breakdown is as shown in Table 4.

Similar to the 1998 sample, our 2000 sample is made up of well-educated individuals. 50 respondents graduated from university, one has an advanced degree, the equivalent of a Ph.D., and another is currently in a graduate program. 5 more are university students. 9 others graduated from special-technical schools.

<sup>5</sup> For an extensive psychoanalytical discussion of the historical and cultural sources of "moral masochism" in Russia, see Daniel Rancour-Laferriere, *The Slave Soul of Russia: Moral Masochism and the Cult of Suffering*, New York: New York University Press, 1995.

<sup>6</sup> Yale Richmond, *From Nyet to Da: Understanding the Russians*, Revised and Updated Edition, Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press, 1966, p. 41.

**TABLE 4. RESPONDENTS BY AGE**

Age	
20-29	26
30-39	13
40-49	15
50-59	12
60-69	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>

**TABLE 5. RESPONDENTS BY PROFESSION**

<b>NGO</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>Oblast Duma/Admn.</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Mass Media</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>City Administration</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Teacher</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>University student</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>University professor</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Scientist/engineer</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Businessmen</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>13<sup>a</sup></b>

<sup>a</sup> 3 lawyers, 2 interpreter/translators, 1 Regional Duma consultant, 1 university administrator, 1 land surveyor, 1 museum researcher, 1 typographer, 1 librarian, 1 proofreader, 1 lifeguard. One respondent did not indicate his occupation.

The respondents' current occupations/professions are shown in Table 5.

### Benefits for Sakhalin Citizens

Asked if they had observed any benefits from the Sakhalin projects, 38 out of the 70 respondents, answered in the affirmative, 28 in the negative and 4 did not answer this question. Employment opportunities led the list of benefits, cited by 22 respondents, followed by benefits to the regional budget (8 people). 7 people mentioned foreign investment as a benefit. 4 people said the projects had provided funding support for educational programs and another 4 indicated support for various social programs.

When they were asked if the benefits they had observed would likely continue in the future, 42 of the respondents answered "Yes". However, as many as 26 respondents foresaw little or no future benefits, all of them among those who had not observed any benefits so far.

### Negative Effects on Sakhalin Citizens

Only 9 respondents thought there had been no negative effects from the offshore energy development projects. 4 persons said they did not know. The rest of the respondents, 57 people (81%) cited negative consequences. As many as 36 people (51%) said the Sakhalin projects had caused environmental problems, 24 of them specifically mentioning oil spills. In fact, there had been an oil spill at Sakhalin-2 in September 1998, which was widely reported by the media. 14 respondents said they had observed damage to fishery resources. 5 people suspected that other cases of environmental damage and violation of federal laws were not made public.

Asked if they expected the negative effects they had observed to continue in the future, an overwhelming 62

respondents said they thought so. Only 5 people said they anticipated no negative consequences in the future. It is evident that individuals among our sample lacked confidence in the integrity and quality of either the technology, law, or management in the development of the offshore resources. The most widely shared concern for the future, cited by 22 respondents, is the environmental consequences of the projects, including accidental oil spills, oil dumping, the dumping of drilling mud, and damage to the fisheries in the Sea of Okhotsk. The second most frequently cited ill effect was the depletion of natural resources, most notably fish. Third, the excessive influence of foreign companies and foreigners was feared. For example, there was fear that foreign companies would outbid domestic ones on future works, income from the shelf projects would escape the local economy, and foreign specialists would be hired rather than local ones. Fourth, there were several respondents who were concerned about corruption in the local and regional administrations and enterprises.

### Personal Benefits

As many as 44 respondents said they had not benefited personally from the shelf development projects, far outnumbering the 18 individuals who said they had personally benefited. 7 individuals gave no answer. Among the benefits cited were the availability of electricity, cheaper oil, social, cultural, and ecological projects, research opportunities, information for self-development, timely salary payment, and increased international contacts.

Regarding the future, 35 individuals anticipated no benefit for themselves. On the other hand, 28 respondents said they either expected or hoped to see some personal benefits from the shelf projects. The "pessimists" gave few reasons and there was not one reason that was given by more than one individual. The "optimists" expected improved living standards,

availability of cheaper oil, gas, and electricity, gasification of the southern part of Sakhalin, cleaner energy, higher salaries, opportunities for employment and skills development, international cooperation for environmental protection, and more social and cultural activities.

### Personal Negative Effects

33 of the 70 respondents said they had not experienced any personally harmful impact of the shelf projects. On the other hand, 35 individuals said they had personally felt negative effects, 12 of them being alarmed by damage to the environment and resources, including fisheries, 11 people citing psychological or moral concerns, and 2 respondents mentioning health problems. 4 people were troubled by the dominant or intrusive presence of foreign enterprises. One of them quipped, "One mustn't venture into others' homes with a charter of one's own."

Our question about their future expectations prompted 45 respondents (64%) to say that they expected to suffer some negative consequences personally. Again, environmental deterioration was the number one concern among them, followed by damage to fish. On the other hand, 17 individuals expected no harmful effects personally. In short, the future (the unknown) appeared more troubling than the experience so far.

### Benefits of International Ties

Asked whether the development of international ties through the Sakhalin projects brought any benefits to Sakhalin, as many as 49 respondents (70%) answered affirmatively. The benefits cited by more than 3 individuals included foreign investment (mentioned by 18 people), Sakhalin's enhanced international image and status (10), expanded international partnerships and contacts (7), better salaries, introduction of new and different technologies (7), employment opportunities (6), infrastructure improvements (5), and contact with people from foreign cultures (3). On the other hand, 14 respondents saw no benefit accruing to Sakhalin from the offshore project-related international contacts. Only 1 of them gave a reason for his negative assessment, stating that morally there has been no benefit.

As many as 46 respondents said the newly established international contacts would continue to provide benefits to Sakhalin. International investments, employment opportunities, infrastructure development, the region's economic development, and improvement in their material wellbeing were the most frequently cited benefits they expected. On the other hand, 19 individuals were skeptical about future prospects.

### Negative Effects of International Ties

Slightly more than one half (38) of the respondents pointed to negative effects of the Sakhalin project-related international ties. 18 individuals in this group raised concerns about environmental hazards or about resource exploitation and export. There is a strong sense that the shelf development projects are dominated

by and carried out for the benefit of foreign enterprises. One respondent typified this concern when he wrote, "We are not masters in our own house." On the other hand, 19 individuals saw no negative influence from the international contacts the Sakhalin projects were developing.

Future prospects appeared uncertain in the eyes of our respondents. 35 of them (50%) were afraid that the negative effects they had seen so far would continue in the future, but 26 of them anticipated no negative consequences. 9 people did not indicate their future expectations. Environmental problems, resource depletion, foreign exploitation, and domestic legal shortcomings and administrative inadequacies were cited by at least 5 respondents each. A sense of vulnerability, neglect, and exploitation pervades those who feared unfavorable consequences. One respondent wrote, "Until they [foreign companies] pump out all the oil, they will not leave us alone." Another echoed the same sentiment and stated, "The international community is not interested in Sakhalin's economic development. Their goal is to get cheap raw materials."

In these responses one clearly notices a perception of unequal sharing of the benefits of the projects between Sakhalin, Russia, and the international community. Xenophobic sentiments are also detectable in the responses of many, if not the majority of the people in our sample.

### Changes in Environmental Views

Have the offshore projects altered the Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk residents' views of their environment in any way? 33 respondents answered affirmatively and 34 negatively. 3 individuals did not answer this question. Virtually all the respondents who said their environmental views had changed as a result of the Sakhalin offshore development projects said they paid much closer attention to their natural environment and had a deeper appreciation of the importance of protecting it. 27 persons gave their reasons for changing their views. Three common themes appeared in their responses: (1) the environmental consequences of the shelf development were worse than they had anticipated, (2) if the shelf development continued, environmental pollution would be inevitable, and (3) not enough was being done, technologically, legally, or administratively, to control the environmental impact.

On the other hand, only 8 of those who said their views had not changed gave their reasons. Common among them was the view that that the environmental impact so far had been less than alarming and quite manageable. A typical response was, "The devil is not so terrible as he is painted." Another response, reflecting a rather sanguine view of the environmental impact of the shelf projects, was, "We should pay more attention to the environment, but within reasonable limits."

It appears, in short, that the Sakhalin projects have had some—by no means a major—impact on the environmental consciousness of the citizens of Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk. Not surprisingly, environmentally concerned residents were more expressive of their

views than those who were less concerned.

### Russian Duma Elections

We were interested in knowing if the Sakhalin offshore oil and gas development projects had become an issue in the election campaigns for the Russian Duma elections in December 1999. We found out that indeed they had. 47 respondents confirmed our expectation. They said that all candidates talked about the projects, most of them in favorable terms. Only 5 respondents noted critical remarks made by some Duma candidates. Many respondents mentioned that the candidates who spoke approvingly wanted to take credit for the projects and emphasized the benefits of the shelf projects for the material wellbeing of the Sakhalin residents. 5 respondents noted that there were environmental components to the candidates' campaign platforms. What is disappointing, however, is that as many as 17 people either did not answer this question or said they did not know if the Sakhalin projects were a campaign issue. 5 of them admitted they were not interested in politics or in the Russian Duma elections and therefore did not vote.

60 of our 70 respondents voted in the elections. Asked if that shelf development issues influenced the way they voted in any way, only 11 said they had. Environmental concerns were prominent among those who said that their votes were related to the oil and gas development. In comparison, 50 respondents said their votes were not influenced in any way. Among this group there was a good amount of skepticism about the election campaigns as far as the Sakhalin projects were concerned. Skepticism was expressed in the following statements: "The candidates all said the same thing about the projects." "The candidates did not give enough information about the projects' benefits." "The campaign platforms were one thing and the development of gas and oil projects was something else." "There were many lies in the speeches some candidates made." "The candidates' discussion of the issues was inadequate." Others said they were more interested in other issues or used other criteria in their participation in the Russian Duma elections. Among the "other issues" or "other criteria" mentioned were the country's economic reforms and the candidates' honesty and integrity.

Asked if they chose their candidate on the basis of his/her position on issues or their affiliation with a political party or bloc that they supported, 42 of our respondents said they voted for their candidates' stand on issues. Only 11 respondents considered the party/bloc affiliation of their candidates. 17 people gave no answer to this question.

### Presidential Election

There was no apparent linkage between the presidential election and the Sakhalin offshore projects as far as our respondents were concerned. They were

asked if they thought the shelf projects had become a campaign issue in the presidential election in March 2000. As many as 25 respondents did not answer this question. 28 respondents (40%) said there was no such linkage, 9 of them saying the candidates did not mention the Sakhalin projects, 3 noting the Sakhalin projects were insignificant at the national level, and one saying there was no information to suggest the projects had become a campaign issue. 17 respondents (24%) said the Sakhalin projects were mentioned by candidates. 7 of them noted that Yavlinski mentioned Sakhalin oil and gas development in general, while 3 of them mentioned that the Yabloko candidate took credit for the federation law on production sharing.

When asked if the Sakhalin projects influenced the way they voted for their presidential candidate, 49 of our respondents (70%) answered negatively and only 11 (16%) answered affirmatively, with the remaining 10 giving no answer. 14 respondents who saw no direct link between the Sakhalin shelf projects and the presidential elections believed that there were more important issues at stake in the presidential elections.

### Conclusion

Anticipation and apprehension coexist among the Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk citizens who responded to our surveys. This ambivalence is reminiscent of the oft-cited character of the Russian people, which is variously described as "dualism," "divergence," and "dichotomy." Many literary figures, philosophers, historians, journalists, and former diplomats have described this trait of the Russian national character. It is regarded by some as the "defining characteristic" of Russian culture.<sup>7</sup> George Kennan, for example, wrote that Russian life "at any given moment is not the common expression of harmonious integrated elements, but a precarious and ever-shifting equilibrium between numbers of conflicting forces."<sup>8</sup>

Anxiety and apprehension among our respondents are also due to the sheer lack of information about the Sakhalin energy projects. Clearly the federation government and the regional authorities must better inform their citizens about the benefits and costs of the projects. Only a well-informed citizenry can provide the necessary support for the sustained development of Sakhalin's economy. The need is particularly great when international participation is involved in the energy projects that will have far-reaching impact on the economic future of the island, at a time when there is general anxiety about Sakhalin's environmental and resource situation.

The accidental oil spill on the Molikpak platform shortly after the commencement of commercial exploitation in 1999 did much to vindicate the environmental concern among the residents of Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, even among those who were generally supportive of the shelf projects. Moreover, from the

<sup>7</sup> See Vassilieva and Sokov, chapter 2.

<sup>8</sup> George F. Kennan, *Memoirs, 1925-1950*, Boston: Little, Brown, 1967, pp. 528-529.

point of view of civil society-building, it is critically important that Sakhalin's citizens are fully informed about the opportunities and challenges presented by the ongoing projects.

In terms of Sakhalin's place in Russia, we note that virtually no one in our samples suggests that the island become an independent entity, economically, much less politically. In fact, most respondents very strongly identify themselves as Russian. In no way should we interpret their critical comments about the present economic and political situation in Sakhalin as an indication of their wish to seek a separate and independent existence from the rest of the Russian Federation. Many Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk residents do feel, however, that the Russian government does not attach much importance to the Sakhalin offshore projects.

It is equally clear that the international community must pay close attention to the sensitivity with which many Sakhalin people view internationally associated development projects. The progress in the shelf projects between 1999 and 2000 did little to alleviate the concerns that many Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk residents have about the dominance of international interests over local concerns. Their sense of exploitation is accentuated further by their understanding that the projects in question are designed in large measure to develop the island's energy export potential. Many island residents have seen little or no improvement in their material wellbeing, including in energy supply for their homes. They see jobs being created more for foreign experts than for local specialists. The concern about foreign exploitation is certainly not unique to Sakhalin. In fact, studies of local views in other parts of the Russian Far East also reveal the sensitive nature of international projects, particularly when they relate to resource development with potential environmental consequences.<sup>9</sup>

It should be quickly added, however, that there is a reservoir of international goodwill among the Sakhalin citizens, as indicated by our respondents' generally favorable attitudes toward international cooperation. They do see beneficial effects of growing international ties, such as educational opportunities, employment opportunities, and improved physical infrastructure. For example, Exxon's donation of \$100,000 to the Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk State University for the installation of internet facilities was a welcome development. However, further cultivation of positive attitudes would require greater effort on the part of the international community to address the pressing concerns of the island citizens. It appears that citizens who are participating in organized civic activities appreciate and

expect funding and material support from those who benefit from the offshore energy development projects. Should such support cease, we can expect much disappointment.

There are other areas where international assistance would make a very important difference in meeting the vital needs of the people, e.g., orphanages, kindergartens, schools, and other institutions that are in dire need of basic supplies and equipment. International aid in this sphere of life in Sakhalin would generate an immediate, positive response from Sakhalin citizens of all political persuasions.

It should also be noted that the sensitivity that our respondents continue to exhibit toward international interaction represents, in our view, the lasting saga of Russians' search for national identity. Throughout their history, Russians have struggled with the question of national identity relative to Europe and the Western civilization and the East and the Asian civilization. The Europeanists among them held up the Western civilization as superior to their own, while the nationalists and Eurasianists viewed it as inferior to or at least as different from their own. Most Russian intellectuals held the Asian civilization to be inferior to their civilization.<sup>10</sup>

During the current period, there is much pain and anxiety in Russia, and Russian intellectuals are again searching for their national identity. Against the backdrop of political instability, economic crisis, and social turmoil, nationalism is clearly on the rise. In their search for national identity, intellectuals in the Russian Far East are divided between those who look for their future in closer ties with the West (Europe and the United States), those who seek closer association with Asia, and those who seek answers to their problems in their own national space. "Mixed," "ambivalent," and "cautious" are the adjectives that best describe their attitudes toward the international community.

The Sakhalin energy projects are the biggest development projects that this island has undertaken in recent decades. With the influx of international visitors, foreign technology, foreign capital, and elements of foreign culture, the lives of countless citizens of this remote island may be transformed drastically, perhaps irreversibly. The mixture of anticipation and apprehension among the Sakhalin citizens is therefore only natural. To the people of Sakhalin, the offshore projects represent both a disaster waiting to happen and a miraculous beginning to prosperous life in the twenty-first century.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Tsuneo Akaha, Pavel Minakir, and Kunio Okada, "Economic Challenge in the Russian Far East," and Tsuneo Akaha, "Environmental Challenge in the Russian Far East," in Akaha, ed., *Politics and Economics in the Russian Far East*, London: Routledge, 1997, pp. 49-69 and pp. 120-134, respectively.

<sup>10</sup> For a recent succinct discussion of Russian identity vis-a-vis Europe and Asia, see Pierre H. Hart, "The West," and Mark Bassin, "Asia," in Nicholas Rzhevsky, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Russian Culture*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 85-102 and pp. 57-84, respectively.