

THE DOLPHIN TRADERS

An Investigation into the World-wide Trade and Export of Black Sea bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) from the Ukraine and Russia, 1990 - 1997.

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Contents	Page
Executive Summary	3
Introduction	3
1. Argentina - Summary	6
1.1 First Import of Black Sea Dolphins	6
1.2 Second Import of Black Sea Dolphins to Sarmiento Park	8
1.3 Third Import of Black Sea Dolphins	10
1.4 Further Deaths	11
2. Cyprus - Summary	13
2.1 Import to Ayia Napa Marine Park (ANMP)	14
3. Hungary - Summary	18
3.1 Import to Budapest	19
3.2 Companies, Institutions, Individuals and Organisations	19
3.3 Holding Conditions	19
3.4 Closure of the Show	20
4. Israel - Summary	22
4.1 Dolphin Reef Eilat	23
4.2 Tel Aviv Dolphinarium and Luna Park	24
5. Malta - Summary	26
5.1 History of the dolphins	27
5.2 Companies, Institutions, Individuals and Organisations	27
5.3 Export to Malta	28
5.4 Conditions in Malta	29
5.5 Health and behaviour of the dolphins	30
5.6 Performance and Entertainment	31
5.7 Further developments / plans to establish new dolphinarium	31
6. Turkey	33
6.1 Import to Marmaris	33
6.2 Negotiations prior to import	33
6.3 Holding Conditions and Future Development	34
6.4 Closure of the facility and transfer of the animals back to the Ukraine	35
7. Rehabilitation and Release of Captive Cetaceans to the Black Sea	37
7.1 Release of two captive bottlenose dolphins (<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>)	37
7.2 Escape of Captive Belugas	37
8. International Agreements, Conservation Projects & Release Programmes	39
9. Discussion	43
9.1 Captive-bred or wild-caught	43
9.2 Export of Dolphins	43
9.3 Conservation Value	44
9.4 Recommendations	45

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Executive Summary

This report lists a total of 43 bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) exported from the Black Sea countries of Georgia, Russia and the Ukraine to foreign dolphinariums (Appendix 1 & 2). Current information suggests that only 11 (26%) of the 43 dolphins exported are still alive in the dolphinariums to which they were taken. A further nine dolphins (21%) were returned to the Ukraine or Russia. The authors have been unable to obtain sufficient information on the fate of these animals to state if they are alive or dead, although it has been confirmed at least one dolphin (“Dicky”) was successfully released back into the Black Sea.

Documentary evidence is available on the death of 20 of the 43 dolphins (47%), but further information indicates that at least another three dolphins are also dead, bringing the potential total to 23 (53%). Therefore, we can surmise that 47%, but potentially 53% of the Black Sea bottlenose dolphins have died following export since 1990.

The report details several dolphin exports (mainly from the former Soviets, Ukraine, Russia and Georgia) to travelling or temporary shows around the world. After investigating these operations, it seems a well-planned strategy has been initiated to eventually establish long-term captive facilities. Such a plan would result in a more profitable commercial business, as a steady supply of wild-captured dolphins from the Black Sea would be needed.

Whilst some dolphinariums or travelling shows in Argentina, Hungary, Israel and Turkey have been closed down in the last six years, Black Sea bottlenose dolphins are still kept in Argentina, Cyprus, Israel and Malta. A common justification put forward for the continued trade of dolphins is for the conservation of the species through captive breeding: however, no successful reproduction programmes have been established in any of the facilities, with the exception of ‘Dolphin Reef’ in Eilat, Israel, and no conservation management plan exists which include a viable captive breeding element.

This report argues that the export of bottlenose dolphins from the Black Sea is not an efficient Ex-Situ conservation measure, but is simply a disaster for the majority of animals involved. Trade in Black Sea dolphins is a commercial venture, with current practices contributing nothing to the conservation of the species.

If the protection and conservation of the bottlenose dolphin population in the Black Sea is to be taken seriously, the trade in dolphins for captive display or breeding should cease immediately.

Introduction

“Based on many year’s work, the institution has developed a scientific method for work with dolphins from the Black Sea under various circumstances, both in salted and fresh water. The method has been proved through a four year lasting period during which dolphin shows were held in pools in Moscow, Kiev, Vladivostok, Jalta, Belgrade, Budva and many other towns. The experience based on these years is that these various circumstances are not dangerous for the health of these animals”
(Kulagin, V. 1991).

The above is a promotional statement distributed by a Ukrainian company involved in the commercial trade and export of bottlenose dolphins from the Black Sea. It was addressed to “all European Centres for the protection and care of animals” (European dolphinariums) and was a clear attempt to develop the company’s export market. This particular trade in dolphins from the Ukraine has existed since at least the mid-1980s.

This report highlights the export of dolphins from the Black Sea into Argentina, Cyprus, Hungary, Israel, Malta and Turkey during the 1990s. It also discusses the strategy which appears to have been adopted by the dolphin capture and export industry, namely: to establish captive facilities in various countries as a commercial venture, and not, as suggested, to assist the former Soviet Union through development projects or to promote conservation.

This report excludes a number of specific incidents detailing the trade and export of bottlenose dolphins from the Black Sea due the lack of clear proof and data (e.g. the reported circumstances of dolphins kept in former Yugoslavia, several transfers of dolphins within the Ukraine and Russia itself, plus a reported export of dolphins to Vietnam. It also excludes the export of two Black Sea bottlenose dolphins and one northern sea lion to the Lebanon in early 1997, again because of a lack of supporting data, however, the export has been confirmed verbally (Birkun pers comm)

It should be noted that sea lions are often included with an export of dolphins to facilities in Argentina, Cyprus, Hungary, Israel and Turkey and so are an integral part of this business. However, the trade in sea lions and other marine mammals is not addressed in this report.

It is the authors’ intention to provide a comprehensive overview of the fate of the dolphins transferred to various captive facilities, to explain how these projects were, and still are, established and to demonstrate why they cannot be classified or accepted as ex-situ measures for conservation purposes, as defined in the Convention on Biological Diversity (CoBD).

Most of the dolphins that have been exported are said to be ‘ex-military’; however, it is almost impossible to state categorically that the dolphins involved in the documented exports were all former military animals. The dire lack of funding for cetacean facilities in the former Soviet Union has forced these facilities to utilize ex-

military dolphins as performing animals, but, documentary evidence exists that certain military facilities have restocked their captive population with freshly-captured dolphins and exported them for profit, rather than for conservation purposes.

These ongoing captures for captive display purposes are of deep concern to the conservation community at large. Black Sea dolphins are facing increasing threats to their population, from fisheries bycatch, high pollution burdens and habitat change amongst other factors. This vulnerable status is officially recognised by 'The Global Environmental Outlook' (GEO) prepared by the United Nations Environment Programme which lists the Caspian, the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov as seas most at risk from human activity (UNEP, 1997:68). Also applicable is the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS) which states the following: "Parties shall take co-ordinated measures to achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for cetaceans. To this end, Parties shall prohibit and take all necessary measures to eliminate, where this has not already been done, any deliberate taking of cetaceans and shall co-operate to create and maintain a network of protected areas to conserve cetaceans". (Article 2, 1 of the Agreement). Also relevant is the 'First International Symposium on Marine Mammals of the Black Sea', held between the 27th - 30th June 1994, in Istanbul. At this symposium, representatives from the Ukraine and Russia adopted a declaration including a resolution "to desist from wild capture of marine mammals for commercial purposes" (Ozturk, 1996).

The present policies of the Russian and Ukrainian institutions totally contradict ACCOBAMS and jeopardise any serious attempt to protect Black Sea cetaceans, especially the bottlenose dolphin. These institutions clearly intend to continue capturing and exporting dolphins, further depleting wild stocks. This has to be seen as a major concern, especially as a Ukrainian institution is presently attempting to establish a new display facility in Turkey and further captures have been reported from the Ukraine. All conservation recommendations are clearly being ignored. If these activities continue, they will further threaten wild populations of Black Sea dolphins and clearly undermine the conservation principles and measures established for the protection of the Black Sea environment.

Sources:

ACCOBAMS (1996): Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and (Contiguous Atlantic Area).

Birkun, A. (1997): Email to Doug Cartlidge. 12th September 1997

Kulagin, V. (1991): To All European Centers for Protection and Care of Animals. Ukraine. 20th July 1991.

Öztürk, B. (1996): First International Symposium on the Marine Mammals of the Black Sea; June 27th to 30th 1994 in Istanbul, Turkey.

UNEP (1997): Global Environment Outlook. New York, Oxford. Oxford University Press.

1. Argentina

Argentina is a signatory to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), ratified in 1981, and came into force the same year. It is also a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity, ratified on the 22nd of November, 1994.

Chapter Summary - Imported Black Sea Bottlenose Dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*): Total 14

1.1 First imported group.

Total: 4 bottlenose dolphins

Date of import: 23rd November 1991

2 dolphins: "Antonio" & "Antonia" died shortly after arrival at Ezeiza airport

2 dolphins (identity unknown) were sent to Mar del Plata (Punta Iglesias swimming pool) and from there transferred to Sarmiento Park

1.2 Second imported group.

Total: 3 bottlenose dolphins

Date of import: 1992 (specific date unknown)

All 3 dolphins (identity unknown) were sent to Sarmiento Park

1.3. Third imported group.

Total: 4 bottlenose dolphins

Date of import: 1993 (specific date unknown)

1 dolphin (identity unknown) went to the Mashwitz swimming pool

3 dolphins (identity unknown) went to the Mashwitz swimming pool, were transferred to Sarmiento Park, and were finally sent to Mar del Plata

Status of the dolphins

It is impossible to determine the fate of some individual dolphins since, as once they arrived in Argentina, they were mixed during the various transfers. However, the following information is believed to be correct.

- "Antonio" & "Antonia" died at the airport at Ezeiza, 23rd November, 1991
- One dolphin died at Sarmiento Park (exact date unknown)
- One dolphin held at Sarmiento Park died in October 1992 at the Expo-America
- "Masha" died at Sarmiento, 8th August, 1993
- "Aida" (f) died (approx. 20 years old) at Sarmiento, in August 1993
- One dolphin died soon after arrival at the Mashwitz swimming pool in 1993. (The dolphin swallowed a diving glove which had accidentally fallen into the pool)
- One dolphin died in 1993 (exact date unknown)
- One dolphin died end of March/early April 1994 at Mar del Plata
- "Sheryl" died in October 1997. She was owned by a Colombian travelling show

1.4 **Movements of the imported Black Sea dolphins within South America:**

Three dolphins were exported, although it is unknown which original import the dolphins were from.

- One dolphin, kept in a mobile swimming pool in Argentina, was transferred to Vina del Mar, Chile, where it subsequently died
- One dolphin (identity unknown) died in Mendoza City, Argentina, in transit to Santiago de Chile
- The status of the remaining dolphin, transferred from Mr Marin/Rosario City to Mar del Plata is unknown

Arrival in Argentina

1.1. First Import of Black Sea Dolphins:

Imported: 4 bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) and 1 sea lion

“Antonio” (male, estimated age 20) & “Antonia” (female, estimated age 25)
2 dolphins (identity unknown)

Date of arrival: 23rd November, 1991 at Ezeiza airport.

On 23rd November, 1991, four dolphins and a sealion arrived at Ezeiza airport, Argentina, aboard an Aeroflot plane, with their Russian trainers. The dolphins had originally come from Moscow dolphinarium, but had then become part of a travelling show through Southeast European and Asian countries (including Turkey, the former Yugoslavia and Vietnam). On their arrival in Argentina, the dolphins were due to be transferred to the Mar del Plata dolphinarium, owned by Mr. Simon Tutundjan. However, there were problems at the airport as the custom officers refused to release the dolphins due to incomplete permits. As a result, an alternative holding place for the dolphins had to be found, whilst the permits were clarified.

Whilst being held in the airport customs area, two of the dolphins, Antonio (20 years old) and Antonia (25 years old), died. Both died only a few hours after their arrival yet no autopsy was performed.

Transfer to a swimming pool in Ezeiza

With the help of a local veterinarian (with no marine mammal qualifications or experience), the two remaining dolphins were moved to a local swimming pool, as a temporary holding measure. At this stage, the vet reported that the dolphins were not in a good condition.

Transfer to Mar del Plata

Eventually, the two dolphins (and the sealion) were transferred at night, to Mar del Plata, where they were kept in a dilapidated and unused swimming pool on a crowded beach in Punta Iglesias. However, the holding conditions of the pool were already the subject of considerable public criticism, and legal steps to prevent the transfer of the dolphins to the pool had been initiated by Fundacion Fauna Argentina, an Argentinian NGO. As a result, neither the press nor representatives from national NGOs were allowed to visit the site and no information on the animals' health was made available upon their arrival.

After a short period in the Punta Iglesias pool, the animals started performing shows for the public. However, within a few weeks, the show was stopped by the Argentinian authorities and a decree¹ was enforced to prohibit any further use of that location. The company promoting the shows, “Ya Publicidad”, had failed to obtain an

¹ -

official permit from the local authorities before starting performances. Meanwhile, criticism also came from the scientific community, specifically, from the Laboratory on Marine Mammals (M.A.C.N), represented by Dr. Marcela Junin.

Dr. Junin (from the Museo Argentino de Ciencias Naturales “Bernardino Rivadavia” e Instituto Nacional de Investigacion de las Ciencias Naturales) stated that the female dolphin showed apathetic behaviour and was not included in the show. She was not eating and a gastric illness was suspected; consequently, she had to be captured several times a day for treatment, further exacerbating stress levels. Facing such opposition and an official ban, the owners transferred both dolphins to Sarmiento Park, Buenos Aires in February 1992, again, during the night.

Sarmiento Park

In March 1992, the Sarmiento amusement park in Buenos Aires opened dolphin and sealion shows. Two dolphins and a sealion were being held. It is presumed that these were the animals from Punta Iglesia. Mr. Acerbo, owner or lessee of the dolphins at Sarmiento stated that the company had signed a contract with the Russian Academy of Science in Moscow in order to obtain dolphins.

Dr. Junin later reported that Mr. Acerbo and Mr. Tutundjian, (owner of the Mar del Plata Aquarium), had been associates, but a legal dispute over the dolphins had begun after the opening of the Sarmiento amusement park. When the dolphins started to die, Sarmiento Park employees publicly accused Mr. Tutundjian of poisoning the animals (Castello and Junin, 1994).

1.2. Second Import of Black Sea Dolphins to Sarmiento Park:

Imported: 3 bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*). Identity unknown
Date of Import: 1992 (specific date unknown)

There were now a total of five dolphins at Sarmiento Park. However, one of the dolphins died very quickly, although the exact date of death is unknown. It is also not clear whether it was one of the two dolphins already kept at the Sarmiento Park or one of the three newly-imported animals: however, it is more likely that the dead dolphin was the female who was already in a poor condition at Punta Iglesia.

Sarmiento Park leases dolphins to the Expo-America 1992

In October 1992, two of the dolphins at Sarmiento Park were leased to “Expo-America” which had organised an improvised “dolphin-spectacle”. However, this ended in disaster, as one of the dolphins died after becoming trapped in a fold of the coating of the pool.

Sarmiento Park 1993

In a veterinary report dated 6th August, 1993, concern was expressed at the inactivity of the dolphins, particularly the dolphin named Masha. In a statement to the press, vet Fernando Passano claimed that the park had received threats to poison the dolphins

(Castello and Junin, 1994). However, there was considerable scepticism surrounding this claim and many felt that it was being used to deflect attention away from the inadequate holding conditions.

Barely two days later, on the 8th of August, 1993, Masha died, followed a few days later by the death of a female named Aida (approx. 20 years old). On the 17th August, 1993, Aida's body was transferred with a police escort to the Museum of Natural Sciences in Buenos Aires. Present at the autopsy were Dr. Marcella Junin (Laboratory for Marine Mammals), Diego Albareda (Laboratory for Marine Mammals), Dr. Mariano Hornostay (veterinarian co-operating with the Laboratory), plus the veterinarian from Sarmiento. Dr. Passano, with his assistant and staff from the 'Direction de Fauna', were also there to observe the autopsy.

The necropsy report showed 'severe necrotic gastritis'. Aida's stomach was full of fish and some of the fish bones had pierced the gastric wall. The entire stomach and oesophagus was full of fish, some of it even reaching the oropharynx. The stomach contents were in an advanced state of decomposition, which would have started whilst the animal was still alive. The rotting fish released toxins into the ulcerated gastric wall and the resulting 'Pasteurella infection' caused a very severe toxic-metabolic state, culminating in cardiac and renal failure (Castello and Junin). It seems likely that Aida had been force-fed.

End of the performances at Sarmiento Park

The show at Sarmiento was eventually closed in August 1993, with just one dolphin, "Sherryl", still alive. The Secretariat of Natural Resources asked Mr. Acerbo to export the dolphin to another facility outside the country. However, Acerbo was able to delay the closure until the end of winter on the grounds that he had insufficient funds to enact the transfer. The delay may have been simply a tactic to enable the show to stay open until the end of the busy period. After the show was closed, NGOs and the Laboratory of Marine Mammals intended to rescue the dolphin and requested assistance from the Secretary for Natural Resources. Unfortunately, Sherryl ended up in a travelling show in Colombia.

The tragedy of Sherryl

Sherryl's whereabouts were discovered when a Colombian travelling circus, 'Waterland Mundo Marino' (M&M Amusement, owned by Ricardo Rocca) applied to the US National Marine Fisheries Service for a permit to perform in Puerto Rico².

According to the application documents³, Sherryl was transferred from Sarmiento Park on June 30th 1994, to Waterland Mundo Marino in Colombia. The documents

² Puerto Rico's constitutional status is a so called "Estado Libre Asociado" which was adopted by US congress in July 1952. It guarantees autonomy related to internal questions and issues, but is binding to US-jurisdiction in all external (foreign affairs), military affairs etc.

³ Application for a display permit was sent by M&M amusement park of Puerto Rico to Ms. Ann Hochman, Permit Analyst, Permits and Documentation Division, Office of Protected Resources, US Department of Commerce, NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service, Silver Springs, MD 20810,

further state that Sherryl was confiscated by the Argentinian Government for being housed in poor health by Parque Sarmiento in Argentina (Castro, N.R. 1997).

Her identity was also confirmed by Hugo Castello, from the 'Museo Argentino de Ciencias Naturales "Bernardino Rivadavia" e Instituto Nacional de Investigacion de las Ciencias Naturales', who was informed by the Argentinian Secretary of the Environment that:

"no *Tursiops* was ever given to any foreign firm in the last decade, with the exception of a Russian bottlenose dolphin which was abandoned at a Buenos Aires swimming pool after another two were killed by Pasteurellosis. This specimen was sent to Seiner's Isla del Rosario oceanarium at the Colombian Caribbean. I was later told that the animal was "given" to a narco-dealer at Cartagena, Colombia for this swimming pool, and from then I lost any track of that dolphin". (Secretary of the Environment, Argentina, 1994).

Sherryl's history had to be established in order for NMFS to grant M&M Amusement a permit to enter Puerto Rico. However, NMFS denied the permit in September 1997 on the grounds that: "APHIS has also expressed serious reservations about (NMFS) granting a permit to M&M Amusement Park and has recommended that we carefully consider the inherently stressful nature and risk of harm to the animals, particularly the dolphins, of the multiple planned transports" (Diaz-Soltero, H. 1997).

It is ironic that, after NMFS had officially stated fears as to the suitability of travelling dolphin shows, Sherryl died of heart failure at the end of October 1997 (Berman, M. 1997).

1.3 Third Import of Black Sea Dolphins

Imported: 4 bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*). Identity unknown
Date of import: Unknown

In 1993, Mr. Simon Tutundjian, a businessman and owner of the "Mar del Plata Aquarium" imported another four dolphins, supposedly from Russia. The four dolphins were temporarily placed in a swimming pool, privately-owned by Ingenieur Mashwitz. One of the dolphins died within a few days of arrival after swallowing a diving glove which had accidentally fallen into the pool (Castello and Junin, 1994).

However, again there were problems surrounding this import, as Mr. Acerbo (of Sarmiento Park) went to court against Mr. Tutundjian, because he claimed he had an agreement with the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS) to be "the only person (in Argentina) authorised to import dolphins". The court found in favour of Mr. Acerbo and the three remaining dolphins were temporarily transferred to Sarmiento Park. However, this decision was later overturned and the court ordered the return of the dolphins back to Mr. Tutundjian's facility at Mar del Plata (Castello and Junin, 1994).

At this point, before the transfer back to Mar del Plata, a veterinarian stated that one of the dolphins had an infection and started medical treatment, informing Mr. Tutundjian of the critical situation. Mr. Tutundjian ignored the advice and took the three dolphins to a small pool located close to a new oceanarium, which opened in

June 1993. It is clear that the import was authorised and occurred before construction work of holding facilities had even been finished.

Death of a dolphin at the Mar del Plata Dolphinarium

On the 1st April 1994, Fundacion Fauna reported a dolphin death at the Mar del Plata dolphinarium. It is assumed that the dead dolphin was the one reported as sick by the veterinarian at Sarmiento Park.

With only two dolphins remaining, Mr. Tutundjian bought another dolphin from another businessman, Mr. Marin of Rosario. Mr. Marin bought the dolphin, plus a sealion, from the same company which imported the other dolphins to Argentina, expecting to make an easy profit with dolphin shows in Rosario. But Mr. Marin never finished the installation of the facility and the planned show never started. After considerable local opposition, the dolphin was sold to Mar Del Plata and the sealion was finally confiscated and transferred to a zoo in Rosario.

1.4. Further Deaths:

Argentina was also used as a route to import dolphins into other South American countries. There is evidence that one dolphin imported via Argentina died in Vina del Mar, Chile. Again this dolphin was subjected to the entirely unsuitable conditions of a mobile swimming pool. Another unnamed dolphin died in transit from Mendoza City, Argentina, bound for Santiago, Chile.

Conclusions

Of the 14 documented dolphins originating from the Black Sea, the deaths of 12 can be proven. (The status of the other two missing dolphins is currently unknown to the authors.) It is of considerable concern that no medical examinations were undertaken prior to the import of the animals to Argentina or Chile. A 'Pasteurella' infection is proven in at least some of the animals yet, in every case, medical treatment was far from adequate. A further concern is the fact that some animals were imported prior to the completion - or even establishment - of a receiving facility. The primary motive for import in all the stated cases was the use of the dolphins for economic purpose as a lucrative attraction for tourists.

Argentina's role as a conduit for captive dolphins and other marine mammals can only be viewed extremely negatively. Such blatant disregard for the welfare of marine mammals must not be permitted in the future. It is the recommendation of this report that the Argentinian authorities prevent any further imports of dolphins, regardless of their country of origin, whether from the Black Sea or other oceans.

Sources:

Berman, M. (1997): Email to Niki Entrup. 10th November 1997

Castello, H. & Junin, M. (1994). Mamiferos Marinos. La Masacre de los Delfines Rusos en la Argentina. April. 1994

Castello, H. (1997): Letter to Ann Terbush, National Marine Fisheries Service. 28th July 1997.

Castro, N.R. (1997): Letter to Ann Hochman, National Marine Fisheries Service. 3rd July 1997

Diaz-Soltero, H. (1997): Letter to the M&M Amusement Park Production Director N.Castro. NMFS. 25th September 1997

Zambrano, H. (1997): Letter to Niki Entrup. Dated on the 19th September 1997

2. Cyprus

Cyprus is a signatory to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), ratified by Cyprus in 1974 and entered into force in 1975. It is also a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CoBD) which was ratified on the 10th of July, 1996.

Chapter Summary - Imported Black Sea Bottlenose Dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*). Total: 4 (2 sealions were also imported).

Date of import: 26th October, 1994

- Freddie, male
- Grant, male
- Michelle, female
- Anna, female

Destination: Ayia Napa Marine Park (ANMP) is located on the south-east coast of the island in the heart of one of Cyprus` busiest tourist resorts.

The Dolphins: It is unknown whether the dolphins are captive-bred or wild-captured. The Russian Academy of Science (RAS) has been unable to produce any documentation pertaining to births to support its claims the animals are captive-bred. Originally, RAS told the Cyprus Department of Veterinary Service (DoVS) that the dolphins were born in captivity. However, they have since admitted to DoVS that the dolphins were, in fact, caught from the Black Sea in early 1994 (Troisi, G). No veterinary tests were carried out before import to Cyprus either upon dolphins, or the sealions (Andreou, K. 1995).

Country of origin: Russia

Status of dolphins

- One dolphin died in August 1995 (possibly Michelle).
- Another dolphin died in September 1996. The cause of death was not identified.

The precise identity of those dolphins which have died is not known to the author.

2.1. Import to Ayia Napa Marine Park (ANMP)

The 4 bottlenose dolphins and 2 sea lions arrived in Cyprus on the 26th October, 1994.

Parties involved in the import:

- The ANMP is jointly owned by three people, one of which is Mr. C.K.Constantinou; K.O.K. Dolphin Leisure Parks Ltd.
- The dolphins were owned by the Russian Academy of Science (RAS)⁴ whose staff include; Dr. Prishepo, V Derevchtchikov, V. Semenov and Dr. Alekseev. The Academy has five permanent marine biologists in Cyprus (the fifth is unknown) who monitor the welfare of the dolphins and other marine mammals at the park (Constantinou, 1995).

Holding conditions at the ANMP (Troisi, G. 1995):

Dolphin pools

- Volume of chlorinated water in the two pools: 2000m³
- Total surface area of the pools is approximately: 325 m²
- Depth of the smaller pool: 3.6 m
- Depth of the larger pool: 6.3 m
- The method of water treatment at ANMP is chlorination.

ANMP justifications for the import

The ANMP application to display dolphins avoids stating that the dolphins will be used for public entertainment and focuses instead upon the supposed non-commercial aspects. The DoVS stated that ANMP wanted to use the dolphins for display, scientific studies, a swim-with programme and therapy (Andreou, K. 1995). The swim-with programmes and scientific studies were highlighted by ANMP in the press to maximise public awareness of the forthcoming shows and attractions. An article within a Cyprus Airways magazine detailed the three intended scientific studies to be carried out at the ANMP: one study concentrated on the communication and interaction between dolphins and man. Participants would be briefed on the dolphins and then work alongside scientists studying the dolphins in the tank. The second was a study into the relationship between dolphins and physically-handicapped people, focusing upon the role that the dolphins' sonar plays in this interaction. The third projected area of study centred upon communication between the dolphins and autistic children/children with special needs (Sunjet, 1994).

Health and behaviour of the dolphins

During her investigation into the dolphins and sealions at the ANMP, Gera Troisi, a marine mammal scientist from the UK, observed that all of the dolphins - with the exception of the six year old female, Michelle - were lethargic and behaved as if boredom had set in. The dolphins also appeared to be hungry for food.

⁴ reference: Constantinou, letter to Niki Entrup, 1995 & Andreou, K. 1995 – Andreou lists “Institute of

Her main concerns focused on the female dolphin, Anna, who seemed particularly unhealthy and stressed in her surroundings. Anna did not co-operate in performances, except on rare occasions and, between shows, the other three dolphins were actively excluding Anna from their social group. At these times, she would display very unusual behaviours. She would approach the right-hand corner of the main pool near the wall and remain stationary on her side, eyes closed and with her tail bent forwards, towards her abdomen. Troisi was also able to identify "an unhealed wound on this fin (right pectoral fin) at the point where it meets the body". This wound was consistent with an unhealed wound incurred during transit, which, if correct, would be a matter of serious concern. Anna's eyes also appeared to be affected by the high levels of chlorine in the pool, as they appeared irritated and were frequently closed.

Content of the Performance

The trainers at ANMP use food rewards as a training method. Worse, Troisi witnessed an animal being beaten by a trainer. The show itself appeared to have no educational value, consisting largely of trainers using cut-down brooms painted as tooth brushes to "brush the teeth" of two dolphins (Freddie & Michelle). The dolphins were also trained to jump through hoops, retrieve toys, "beach" themselves and vocalise on demand.

The DoVS did request that ANMP trainers should not incorporate "voluntary strandings" into the dolphin show. The DoVS also vetoed offering a "swim-with" programme to the public for an additional charge; however, the DoVS was unaware that ANMP trainers were already arranging such programmes (Troisi, 1995).

Temporary transferral of the dolphins

In December 1994, two of the four dolphins were transferred to a swimming pool within a tourist apartment complex in the Liopetri beach area (Gorgona Beach complex). Protests were held against the move and the Cypriot press took up the issue. The Cyprus Weekly magazine states that "when we (the magazine) contacted one of the three owners of the Marine Park, Kikis Constantinou, yesterday, and asked him why the two dolphins were being kept away from the dolphinarium, he said that they were there 'for biological and scientific studies' " (Cyprus Weekly, 1994). After a period of time, the dolphins were moved back to the ANMP (precise date unknown).

Attempted import of a further four dolphins

The Cyprus Department of the Environment informed Troisi that they had received an application from Russian dolphin trainers, in early August 1995, to import another 4 Black Sea bottlenose dolphins and 2 sea lions, this time into a sea enclosure at Limassol. However, the DoVS and Department of the Environment (part of the same Ministry) rejected the application (Troisi, 1995). The author believes that it was a Ukrainian company applying for the importation of the animals into Cyprus. The date of the application, plus the number of the animals, leads the author to believe that these were the dolphins held in a temporary dolphinarium in Marmaris, Turkey which were being expelled from the country (see below). If so, this was an attempt to use Cyprus as a 'laundering route' for these dolphins.

Conclusions

Throughout this case, there was an obvious conflict between the various Cypriot authorities regarding the import of these animals. Whilst the Department of Environment (DoE) is responsible for granting CITES permits, the Department of Veterinary Service (DoVS) is responsible for monitoring the health and welfare of any animals kept in captivity in Cyprus. Without the approval of both, no establishment can officially hold captive marine mammals.

Troisi reported that the DoVS informed her that customs officials had requested permission from the Attorney General to allow entry of the dolphins, sealions and trainers. It was apparent that the CITES import permit had been obtained without the knowledge of the DoVS. No veterinary tests were carried out on the animals upon entry into Cyprus, (Troisi, 1995). To add to the contentious circumstances surrounding the import of the dolphins ".the premises of the ANMP were constructed without permission from the Department of Town Planning. By all accounts, the ANMP is an illegal venture" (Katsourides, 1995).

The inherently commercial nature of the import became apparent when, late in 1994, representatives from NGOs protested against the conditions the dolphins were held in. Mr. Constantinou (one of the three owners of the ANMP) is quoted as commenting, in response to the charge that the dolphins were used purely for commercial purposes: "We are not a charity institution" (Cyprus Weekly, 1994).

Additionally, over a year after the import of the dolphins and sealions, the DoVS stated that no scientific papers regarding the proposed "scientific experiments" (outlined above) had been published (Andreou, 1995). Troisi also carried out a literature search in an attempt to discover any scientific studies which the Russian scientists involved had previously undertaken. "Veterinary science, bio-science, zoology, medical and ecology databases were searched at the British Science Library (one of the largest international collections of international scientific literature) using CD ROM computer catalogue data-bases of all scientific journals, including Russian, spanning 20 years. There are **no** publications detailing research into autism or dolphins generally, submitted by any of the ANMP research staff available in the British Science Library" (Troisi, 1995). Therefore, it is this reports conclusion that the ANMP has completely failed to complete one of the conditions of import.

To date, the authorities have still taken no action regarding the dolphins. However, on the 21st September, 1995, during a meeting between representatives from the DoVS and N. Katsourides, (local marine mammal NGO) the DoVS categorically stated that under **no** circumstances would any more dolphins be imported onto the island (Katsourides, N. 1995). This comment is also documented by G.Troisi, (1995).

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3. Hungary

Hungary is a signatory to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) which it ratified in 1985 and entered into force the same year. It is also a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CoBD) which was ratified on the 24th February, 1994.

Chapter Summary - Imported Bottlenose Dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*). Total: 5

Date of import: 26th July 1992

“Turn”, male, **died** within the first week

“Bouble”, female

“Nana”, female

“Igma”, female

A further dolphin (identity unknown) was sent back after arrival, now believed to be dead.

1 sealion was also imported.

Location: public swimming pool on the Margit Island, Budapest

3.1. Import to Budapest, Hungary:

Date of arrival: estimated to be 26th July, 1992

The animals were flown by helicopter from Yugoslavia to the Hungarian border (it is unclear whether the helicopters crossed the border), according to Mr. Slobodan Perovic, a lawyer working for “First Global Express”. The dolphins were then loaded onto lorries and transported to the swimming pool in Budapest. One dolphin was sent back after arrival, officially due to ‘illness’ (but suspected to be dead, as seriously-ill dolphins are rarely subjected to such transport). From discussions with Slobodan Perovic, it appears the dolphins were owned by the Ukraine and were originally part of a show in Belgrad, Yugoslavia Belgrad, which owned 14 dolphins (refer to report on Malta).

3.2. Companies, Institutions, Individuals and Organisations involved:

1. First Global Express (Slobodan Perovic): export from Yugoslavia to Hungary
2. Mr. Jankowitsch, a Hungarian businessman was involved in the import
3. Mr. Bliznyuk, the chief scientist charged with caring for the dolphins
4. Owner of the dolphins “Ziznj Mora”, Ukrainian Education and Scientific Centre (V.Kulagin, 1992)

3.3. Holding Conditions:

Main Pool size: estimated 25 x 15 x 5m

Two small isolation pools

As one dolphin was thought to have died during the transfer and another did not survive more than a week in Budapest, only 3 dolphins remained. However, two dolphins, “Bouble” and “Nana”, were seriously ill. They displayed apathetic behaviour, did not participate in the show and showed no interest in feeding. Therefore, only one dolphin was able to perform, twice daily. The show consisted simply of the dolphin jumping through hoops, playing basketball and other pure entertainment features. There appeared to be no educational element to the shows (Entrup, N. 1992).

Hastings and Knight (1992) later reported that Bouble and Nana were very thin. The lateral sides of their bodies were hollow at the base of the dorsal fin, their eyes were permanently closed and they had white spots on their skin. It is likely that this may have been a fungal infection such as *Candida*. Dr.Hastings advised immediate medical treatment. He stated that “if this plan is not possible, in the absence of a clear diagnosis, treatment will consist of broad spectrum antibiotics, choice guided by previous antibiotics used, which have failed to resolve the problem”. (Hastings & Knight, 1992).

For at least three weeks, the animals were kept in virtually chlorine-free freshwater which may not have helped their condition. The filtration system was inadequate and reportedly only removed large particles; therefore, dissolved organic matter - including bacteria - was possibly able to accumulate. Eventually, the water was turbid

with an algae bloom and faeces were reportedly caked around the anal slit of several animals.

Knight and Hastings (1992) summarised the dolphins' conditions as follows:

All three animals were in extreme danger:

1. From infection due to dirty water
2. From stress caused by bad handling and rapid changes in salinity
3. Lack of care, as the company running the show was forced to close (after the 13th September, 1992).

3.4. Closure of the show

On September 13th the dolphin show was stopped by the Hungarian Ministry of the Environment and the dolphins put under temporary state control as they lacked CITES permits. On the 5th October, NGOs, the Ministry of Environment and the Ukrainians agreed to empty the pool, primarily to obtain samples from the dolphins for analysis and to refill the pool with water of the correct salinity and chlorine concentrations.

An NGO organised the necessary 40 tonnes of salt but, surprisingly, the Ukrainians did not allow anyone to enter the area and so the NGOs were unable to clean the pool. An unidentified individual (never seen before on-site) led the move to block the NGO's efforts. During that time, Mr. Perovic and Mr. Bliznyuk had been to the Ukrainian Embassy in Budapest to get a written decree that no-one was allowed to take any action regarding the dolphins. As discussions started, NGO representatives were informed that any improvements would only be allowed if they signed a document stating that the dolphins would not be confiscated and that they were to be transferred back to the Ukraine. As a result of these delaying tactics, no improvements were made and the dolphins' health continued to deteriorate.

However, the involvement of NGOs and the pressure caused by them, did significantly help the situation, as the dire conditions suffered by the dolphins forced the authorities to act quickly. The dolphins were finally transferred back to the Ukraine in October 1992. The Hungarian National Authority for Nature Conservation within the Ministry for Environment also stated that they would not give permission for future dolphin shows (Rodics, 1997).

As a point of interest, an interesting comment was made in the Knight and Hastings report which stated that Bliznyuk had originally kept the dolphins in sea water and he had been involved in extensive research into marine mammals. He once claimed to have dropped 30 dolphins by parachute into a fresh water lake and they all survived (Hastings, & Knight, 1992).

Source:

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4. Israel

Israel is a signatory to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), ratified in 1979 and entered into force in 1980. It is also a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity which was ratified on the 7th of August, 1995.

Chapter Summary - Imported Black Sea Bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*): **Total: 12**

4.1 Dolphin Reef Eilat - imported 6 dolphins

Date of import: 1990

Sindy, male, approx. 20 yrs old.

Shyi, female, approx. 20 years old.

Domino, female, approx. 11 years old.

Dana, female, approx. 13 years old.

Dicky, male, aged between 11 and 14 years old.

Additional male (identity unknown)

4.2 Tel Aviv Dolphinarium and Luna Park - imported 6 dolphins

Date of import: 1994 or earlier

3 dolphins (identity unknown) - Tel Aviv

1 dolphin (identity unknown) - Tel Aviv - Luna Park

Boby, male - Tel Aviv - Luna Park

Fiadora, female - Tel Aviv - Luna Park

Status of dolphins

- Sindy - alive at Dolphin Reef
- Shyi - alive at Dolphin Reef
- Domino - alive at Dolphin Reef
- Dana - alive at Dolphin Reef
- Dicky - transferred back to the Black Sea and released into the wild
- Dolphin (identity unknown), died at Tel Aviv dolphinarium
- Boby - Died, July 1995 of lead poisoning at Luna Amusement Park
- 1 dolphin (identity unknown) died of lead poisoning (?July 95) at Luna Amusement Park
- 2 further dolphins (identity unknown) **presumed** dead
- Fiadora - transferred back to the Russian Academy of Sciences

4.1. Dolphin Reef Eilat

Imported Bottlenose Dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*): 6

Sindy, male, approx. 20 years

Shyi, female, approx. 20 years

Domino, female, approx. 11 years

Dana, female, approx. 13 years

Dicky – transferred back to the Black Sea and released back into the wild

Date of Import: 1990

The dolphins were imported from the Russian Academy of Science (RAS), Ukraine, on loan, as part of a scientific agreement with the Dolphin Reef in Eilat (Zilber, M. 1997).

In 1996, one male dolphin called ‘Dicky’ was returned to the Black Sea and released back to the wild (see chapter “Release of captive cetacean in the Black Sea”). The reason given by staff at Dolphin Reef for his removal was social problems between the two males. Dicky was transferred from Eilat to the Utrish dolphinarium on the Black Sea on August 20th 1996. This dolphinarium belongs to the Russian Academy of Science (RAS)⁵. As of 29th July 1997 there were 10 dolphins at Dolphin Reef⁶.

⁵ Staff from the Dolphin Reef in Eilat cooperated with Professor Supin and Dr. Mukhametov from the RAS

⁶ - - - - -

4.2. Tel Aviv Dolphinarium & Luna Park

Imported Bottlenose Dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*): 6 dolphins were imported to the Tel Aviv dolphinarium (Damelin, R. 1995)

Date of import: 1994 (or before)

1 dolphin (identity unknown) died at the Tel Aviv dolphinarium
Boby, male - died at Luna Park in July 1995 of lead poisoning
1 dolphin (identity unknown) died at Luna Park (?July 95) of lead poisoning
2 dolphins (identity and current location unknown) are **presumed** dead
Fiadora, female - transferred back to the Black Sea
At least one sealion was also imported.

At least three of these dolphins were owned and exported by the Russian Academy of Science. The Tel Aviv dolphinarium was built as part of a beach resort in order to attract tourists (Ganor, 1996). NGO representatives reported that, from early days, conditions in the dolphinarium were poor and dirty. At least one dolphin is known to have died in the dolphinarium, but it is believed that possibly two more have also died.

Due to the inadequate conditions, the three remaining dolphins were transferred to another facility “Luna Park”, an amusement park in Tel-Aviv. NGO representatives described the dolphin holding pool as a small metal tank near a noisy construction site and close to a highway. In March 1994, the Mayor signed an administrative order to close the dolphin display. One of the reasons cited was concern for the welfare of the dolphins. However, the case went to court and the administrative order was rejected much to the Mayor’s concern (Galli, 1995). Referring to the question of possible confiscation through the Israeli authorities, the Ministry of the Environment replied that Israel did not have the authority to make decisions concerning legal matters, as the dolphins were the property of the Russians (Horowitz, 1995).

Later, two of the dolphins (Boby and one other) died, reportedly after being fed with lead bullets by a visitor. Fiadora, the remaining dolphin, was also affected by lead poisoning, but survived. The veterinarian treating Fiadora was David Taylor from the International Zoo Veterinary Group, IZVG (Damelin, 1995). Fiadora was transferred back to the Black Sea (Ganor, 1996) and is rumoured to be kept in a private dolphinarium, Brezhnev Lodge, in a hotel swimming pool near Yalta, Ukraine (Cartlidge, 1997).

The tragedy of the dolphins imported to the dolphinarium in Tel Aviv also had political ramifications. The Mayor of Tel Aviv declared that he strongly opposed keeping dolphins in captivity. He declared that the dolphins were brought to Israel by a private group and their stay in Tel Aviv was against Municipal policy (Galli, 1995). The Ministry of Environment also stated that the dolphins being held in Tel Aviv Luna Park were there against the wishes of Mr. Sarid, Minister of the Environment. The author was informed by the Ministry that Mr. Sarid has since decided to ban the import of dolphins to Israel for the purpose of trade and amusement (Horowitz, 1995).

This has been confirmed in a statement from the Ministry of the Environment, September 1997: “in the past years, following a decision by the previous Minister of Environment, there has been no import of dolphins to Israel for the purpose of trade and amusement (Cohen-Ginat, 1997). Today, the site is closed following additional efforts of the Mayor in issuing an administrative order to close the place (Galli, 1995)”.

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5. Malta

Malta is a signatory to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) ratified in 1989 and entered into force the same year. Until February 1997, Malta has not ratified and enforced the Convention on Biological Diversity (CoBD).

Chapter Summary

Imported Bottlenose Dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*). Total: 4

'Bhudvan', male
'Chigra', male
'Kvicha', male
'Pega', male

Country of Origin: Georgia⁷

Imported to:

"Splash & Fun Park", White Rocks, Bahar ic-Caghaq, Malta
"Mediterraneo" is situated at Bahar ic-aghaz, adjacent to the Splash and Fun Park (Leisure and Theme Park)

Status of the Animals:

'Bhudvan', 'Kvicha', 'Pega' - all alive as of 11th August, 1997
'Chigra' died in January 1993, possibly due to heart problems⁸.

It is unknown whether the dolphins were captive-bred or captured from the wild.

⁷ at the time of exportation Georgia was still part of the USSR

⁸ The post mortem report by Dr.A.Gruppeta from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries certified

5.1 History of the dolphins

Originally, the four dolphins came from Budva and were taken to the Batumi Dolphinarium in Georgia. From there, the dolphins were exported to Belgrade⁹. A document provided by the Director of the Batumi Dolphinarium, dated 10th May 1992 (after the export to Malta), states that the four dolphins were all captive-bred at Batumi Dolphinarium¹⁰. The document also states that the dolphins were born between 1984 and 1987, but no information is provided on the parentage of the dolphins. However, a report prepared by British Divers Marine Life Rescue (a British NGO) in 1993, states that the animals are aged between 7 or 8 years¹¹. Whether the dolphins are captive-bred or captured from the wild is not known for certain.

In total, 14 bottlenose dolphins were transferred to the former Yugoslavia. The exact date of transfer is unknown. Also unknown is whether all 14 dolphins originally came from the Batumi Dolphinarium, or from other dolphinariums around the Black Sea. A document provided by a Greek company states the Batumi Dolphinarium has not been open since 1991 (LDK, 1996): therefore, the dolphins must have been transferred in 1991 to Yugoslavia, if not before. J. Caldwell, a research officer from the Wildlife Monitoring Unit, lists two different exports of dolphins to Yugoslavia: three dolphins in 1989 and eight dolphins in 1991, all originating from Russia¹².

Statements provided by V. Kulagin 20th July, 1991, representing the institution “Ziznj Mora” in the Ukraine, declare that “dolphin shows were held in pools at Moscow, Kiev, Vladivostok, Jalta, Belgrade, Budva and many others”. Therefore, the exchange of dolphins from the Ukraine, with foreign facilities, already appeared extensive and suggested that a facility in Belgrade had been involved for several years.

Slobodan Perovic, a representative from ‘First Global Express’, the company, responsible for the export of the dolphins from Yugoslavia to Malta and Hungary, stated 14 dolphins were being held in Yugoslavia at the time they transferred the dolphins to Hungary and Malta. The other five dolphins (other than the five that were flown to Budapest and four that were transferred to Malta), were left in Yugoslavia¹³.

5.2 Companies, Institutions, Individuals and Organisations involved:

As the ownership is not totally clear, this report assumes the Ukrainian centre “Ziznj Mora” owned the dolphins at the time of their exportation to Yugoslavia. A document provided by this company states the dolphins were for ‘temporary exportation’. We assume that there is still at least some business relationship between this company and the Maltese company, ‘Aquaculture Development Limited’, from which Marineland Limited leased the animals. After the split between the Ukraine and Georgia, it is also unclear to the author as to which country would be the former or actual owner of these

⁹off-record conversation by John Maidens, BBC researcher, with Zivanovic, involved in the export of the dolphins from former Yugoslavia to Malta

¹⁰Tserodze, T. 1992

¹¹ between 12 and 13 today/1998

¹² it may be that Caldwell lists Russia as country of origin, because in 1991 the Soviet Union still existed.

¹³

three dolphins. “Ziznj Mora” appears to belong to the Ukraine ‘military’, while the dolphins originally came from Batumi, Georgia. The exportation of the dolphins from Yugoslavia to Malta was undertaken by a company called ‘First Global Express’ (Knight, pers comm Slobodan Perovic, 1993) which was also involved in the Hungarian operation. There, the dolphins were eventually transferred back to the Ukraine.

It seems clear that, in 1993, Marineland Ltd took over at least the management and use of the dolphins. Marineland Limited of Leisure and Theme Park, White Rock, Bahar ic-Caghaq, Malta, was registered under the Laws of Malta on the 15th June 1993 and is still so registered (Department of Trade, 1995). Marineland Limited has sub-leased the land from Leisure & Theme Park Limited, a shareholder, for the remaining 45 years of the original lease. It has also leased the dolphins from Acquaculture Development Limited, a related company. Marineland Limited involved the Italian company, ‘Narvalo’, to take over the management and training of the dolphins (Marineland Limited, 1996).

It is unclear precisely when the International Zoo Veterinary Group (IZVG) first became involved in the Malta project. It is documented that IZVG was in contact with a Maltese environmental organisation on the 31st March, 1994. During which time a female was in contact with IZVG and had a meeting in Malta with Maurice Mizzi, who is one of the Directors and promoters of Marineland Ltd., in Malta. Andrew Greenwood of IZVG arrived in Malta on the 11th April, 1994. Shortly after his arrival, Jon Kershaw, from Marineland Antibes, France, flew to Malta. It can be assumed that the arrival of both persons is related to the meeting they had with Alexei Birkun from the BREMA Laboratory in the Ukraine. The meeting was held between the 18th and 20th January, 1994.

Shortly after the transfer of the three dolphins to the new complex, in late June 1995, staff from the Riccione Dolphinarium took over the on-site handling of the dolphins. It is stated that, following the change over, the Georgians were ‘ignored’.

5.3 Export to Malta

The dolphins were imported with CITES documents from the former Yugoslavia to Malta on the 7th August, 1992¹⁴. The transfer of the dolphins from Yugoslavia to Malta took about 11 hours by air and land (BDMLR, 1993). Commenting on the legal aspect, a spokesman for the Department of Environment in Malta said: "Everything has been done legally." On condition that the animals were not to be used for commercial purposes, his Department gave Mr. J. Fenech the go-ahead needed to bring the dolphins into Malta, according to the CITES convention¹⁵.

On September 11th 1993, a meeting was held between the Ministry of Environment, Dr. Zammit, representatives from BDMLR and the Maltese NGO ‘Marine Life Care Group’ (MLCG). During this meeting, Dr. Zammit stated the following: “They (the Ministry) were not keen on dolphinariums to start with, but had been faced with a difficult choice. The choice was either to admit these dolphins from former Yugoslavia, or they would die, as such it was difficult for them to deny a permit once

¹⁴ Malta Independent, dated 18th.8.1992

¹⁵ —

they had the necessary CITES permits”. Dr. Zammit also stated that the Government did not wish to see a breeding programme develop, therefore, only male dolphins were allowed to be imported. This assurance has only been given verbally and not in writing¹⁶.

5.4 Conditions in Malta

a) Holding Conditions at the First & Second Locations

On their arrival in August 1992, the dolphins were kept in a small pool at the ‘Splash & Fun Leisure Park’ in Bahar ic-Chaghaq, 12km from the capital city, Valletta, in the northern part of the island, a popular tourist area. The ground is sub-leased from the Leisure and Theme Park, which is shareholder of ‘Marineland Ltd’. (also the owner of “Mediterraneo” (the third location see below)¹⁷. The owner of the complex is ‘Marineland Ltd.’, a company which registered in June 1993¹⁸. According to official documents, the company which imported the dolphins is ‘Aquaculture Development Ltd.’ Marineland Ltd. took over from the original company - however, most of the Directors are the same (BDMLR, 1993).

The Splash and Fun pool where the dolphins were first kept was previously a boating pool and had a water surface area of some 12 x 7 metres and was between 1 and 2 metres deep. The dolphins were provided with no protection from the sun, and sea water was pumped in and out with a single portable pump. At that time, no filtration system was provided. These conditions are totally inadequate for dolphins, yet they were kept in this pool between August and November, 1992.

The dolphins were then transferred into another pool in the same complex. This second pool was only slightly larger and deeper. However, this pool also lacked a filtration or water purification system. Neither of these pools were designed for dolphins - in fact, they were originally designed for human swimming activities. In January 1993, one dolphin, Chigra, died. In May, the dolphins were transferred back to the smaller pool to allow tourists visiting the Fun and Leisure Park to use the swimming pool (BDMLR, 1993). BDMLR provided advice and supplying vitamins and Lanolin cream from June 1993 until September 1993 to help protect the dolphins from sunburn.

The first application for the dolphinarium dates back to 1992 [Maltede planning application reference 4632/92]. This was processed by the authority, but no permit was ever issued. In fact, several stop notices (because of the illegal works) were issued against the company during 1993, as the developers illegally started to construct the dolphinarium on the property of the Splash and Fun Park. The Planning Authority Board actually stopped the construction work for the first time in June 1993. In July, the Park owners made another attempt to continue construction work illegally (BDMLR, 1993). Again, the work was stopped by the Authorities.

¹⁶ the local newspapers reported that the Prime Minister Alfred Sant inaugurated the dolphinarium and he

commented in favour of the setting up of dolphinariums

¹⁷ Marineland Ltd. Forecast results for the year 1996-2000

¹⁸

An article published in a British newspaper¹⁹ resulted in more pressure to resolve and improve conditions for the dolphins. Pressure came from national and international NGOs and several more press articles followed. A report by BDMLR stated, that soon after publication of the article, the Government veterinarian, who had not visited the dolphinarium since the previous January when one of the dolphins died, phoned the directors of Splash & Fun and advised them to remove the dolphins to a larger pool (BDMLR, 1993). The 'Orrizont' and the 'Times' reported on the 26th and 27th August that the Maltese Department of Environment urged the Directors of the dolphinarium to find an alternative place for the dolphins within a week, because of the poor conditions. On September the 4th 1993, the dolphins were transferred into holding pens. BDMLR and MLCG both assisted with the transfer. Within days, a permit was granted to continue the work on the new pool. The dolphins were then kept in these holding pens for two years, whilst the new pool was built.

The holding pens are approximately 10metres in diameter and 5 metres deep. The present complex is referred to in this report as the 'third location'.

b) The new dolphin pool (third location)

On June the 29th 1995, the three dolphins were finally transferred to the new dolphinarium. At the time of writing (August 1997), the dolphins are still being kept there. The complex consists of a kidney-shaped pool and two small holding pens. The size of the main pool is 30 m in length and 12 m wide. The depth varies from 7.5 to 12 metres. The two isolation pools are 10 metres in diameter and about 5 metres deep (sketch available). Sea water is pumped in and out.

5.5 Health and behaviour of the dolphins

Almost all the information provided in this section is based on the period the dolphins were kept in their first location and shortly after the transfer to the second. Little information is available regarding the situation in the new complex, as, until the official opening, for the local informants it was impossible to observe or monitor the dolphins.

In September 1993, BDMLR reported that one dolphin had marks on the left pectoral fin. Georgian staff (who had accompanied the dolphins from Yugoslavia) explained that this was a compression mark due transport (BDMLR, 1993). In the same report, Kvicha's behaviour is described as 'very unsociable' and that he always floated on the water surface, whilst Pega and Bhudvan were interacting most of the time. In August 1993, Bhudvan was documented to have deep scars on his nose (BDMLR, 1993). As of August 1997, Kvicha's behaviour is still unusual and, in fact, he is the only one who is not performing to date (pers comm, August 1997).

Aggressive behaviour between the dolphins was also documented; this is possibly due to disco held at the "Splash & Fun Park" late on Friday evenings (until 23.00). Although no-one was allowed to approach the dolphins, the loud music may have had an affect on the dolphins, which were observed to chase each other around during periods of high acoustic aggravation (BDMLR, 1993).

¹⁹ - - - - -

5.6 Performance and Entertainment

Following their arrival, the dolphins did not officially perform until June 1997. The present dolphinarium was officially inaugurated by the Prime Minister of Malta on June 12th 1997 (Orrizont, 1997). When the Georgians maintained the dolphins, they used to invite friends to swim with them (although on an informal rather than a commercial basis). The Riccione dolphinarium staff started the training schedule in July 1995 and, subsequently, took over the daily work with the dolphins. New trainers are now being trained at the dolphinarium and no one, except the trainers, are allowed to swim with the dolphins (August 1997).

5.7 Further developments / plans to establish a new dolphinarium

On January 24th 1996, Joseph Fenech from Marineland Ltd., sent an application to the Planning Authority for the establishment of an oceanarium and heritage park (Mediterranean theme) in the same area which houses the dolphinarium (The Malta Independent, 1996). This was just a formality, because parts of the complex was already constructed. Therefore, a lot of construction work was again carried out without the necessary permits or permission.

The project included building a dolphinarium; an aquarium to display Mediterranean fish; a bird sanctuary; cafeteria, and a restaurant (Marineland Ltd., 1996). However, it is unclear from where the dolphins are to be supplied. The intention to import further dolphins is not a new one. The Maltese authorities must also have been aware of it since the beginning of the project. First rumours that further dolphins (females) were to be imported into Malta in the near future comes from the newspaper article in Orrizont, 1992. The Orrizont again reports a proposed importation in August 1993 by stating that, in the very near future, the male dolphins will be accompanied by females (Orrizont, 1993). Other newspapers stated that the Park will increase its attractions when a sealion and two other dolphins will join in (Nazzjon Taghna, 1993; Il-Mument, 1993). Il-Mument writes that the two dolphins are 'being kept somewhere in Serbia' (Il-Mument, 1993). It has to be assumed that the companies involved still intend to bring more dolphins to Malta, perhaps the ones left in Yugoslavia. Nothing is known about the fate of the dolphins left in Yugoslavia.

The big dolphinarium complex was due to open in the first week of July 1996. In spring 1996, the directors of the Theme Park applied for a loan from one of the top Maltese Banks. Alongside the banks, the main financial supporter of the project appears to be Chev Maurice Mizzi, a Maltese businessman. It is clear that the Directors and supporters of Marineland Limited are also affiliated with the 'Leisure & Theme Park Limited.'²⁰

Source

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Orrizont (1993): Article published on the 27th August 1993

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6. Turkey

Turkey is a signatory to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) which it ratified in 1996 and entered into force the same year. It is also a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity which was ratified on the 14th of February, 1997.

The dolphin import summarised in this section happened **before** Turkey became a signatory party to CITES and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Imported Black Sea Bottlenose Dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*). Total: 4
2 sea lions (*Eumetopias jubatus*) were also imported.

Date of Import: believed to be 25th May, 1995

6.1 Import to Marmaris, Turkey

Four dolphins from the Ukraine were imported into Turkey via Antalya, to Marmaris, and transported by lorry to a small fenced-off site within the local harbour (Hetman, Ö, 1995 & Öztürk, B. 1995). The company exporting the dolphins was 'Biostar', (actually called "Sea Life"). The company is part of the commercial arm of the military in the Ukraine, and responsible for the transport of many other marine mammals. The importer was a Turkish businessman, Ahmet Mazgal.

Doug Cartlidge, (a former curator at Seaworld, Australia) was informed that two of the four dolphins were captive-born and the oldest male was in captivity for 16 years. But, as in the other cases, no proof has been provided to confirm whether the dolphins are captive-bred or captured from the wild.

Cartlidge was also informed that **no** reliable medical health checks had been undertaken before flying the animals from the Ukraine to Turkey and placing them in the open sea pen. This was also confirmed by a report prepared by Dr. B. Öztürk in early June 1995, who examined the health of dolphins and their holding conditions. There was also no veterinarian included in the Ukrainian group: therefore, the animals were without any medical care during their entire stay in Turkey.

6.2. Negotiations prior to import

The operation to transfer marine mammals from Ukraine to Turkey was described as intending to be a 'long-term breeding and conservation plan' involving representatives from European dolphinariums. The International Zoo Veterinary Group (IZVG) also commented on the trade with a representative from the Ukraine in January 1994. In September 1994, Dr. Andrew Greenwood advised the Ukraine BREMA laboratory on the application by BIOSTAR to move dolphins to Turkey. The IZVG recommended the following conditions for the export:

1. 'Turban' or 'Biostar' to pay the cost of a visit for Greenwood or Jon Kershaw (from Marineland Antibes) to the sites in Turkey.
2. No movement of the animals from the specified places during the term of contract, without express permission from Dr. Birkun.

3. Immediate return of the animals to the Ukraine at the end of the specified period, **unless** a further permit application is submitted at least one month before that date.
4. No extension should be given to the permit period unless plans are submitted for a permanent dolphinarium in Turkey (i.e. a sea pen will be unacceptable) (Greenwood, 1994).

It would seem that the IZVG argued against sea pens, supposedly to prevent a travelling show. However, it is believed that opposition to sea pens must necessitate the development of permanent constructions to house dolphins.

6.3. Holding Conditions & Future Development

Despite the IZVG recommendations the animals were exported to a sea-pen inside the harbour in Marmaris by Biostar as there was no proper facility ready for them. The initial holding area was heavily polluted and had little water circulation. Eventually, pressure from local NGO's and residents forced the company to move the animals into the new sea-pen before it was fully completed. As with the other transport of Black sea dolphins there appeared to be little planning or consideration for the health and welfare of the dolphins once they arrived.

The dolphins were kept in four small holding pens, each approximately 3 x 4 meters and there was a larger pool for the show area. The whole complex was located at the mouth of the local harbour. All shipping entering or leaving Marmaris passed the holding pens and the number of boats in the harbour per day was estimated to be in excess of 500. Therefore, the dolphins were subjected to oily water, waste discharge, permanent noise pollution from shipping and harassment from tourists who were allowed to swim with the dolphins and jump into their pens.

The conditions of the holding pens caused more protests from local people and tourists supported by some major European tour operators. In a letter to the Ministry of Environment for Turkey and the Ukraine, the Touristik Union International (TUI) stated: "As you certainly know, these dolphins are not being kept in their natural environment and their physical condition is getting worse every day. Due to these circumstances, there have been several calls from concerned holidaymakers returning from Turkey, which we take very seriously" (TUI, 1995).

After the dolphins' arrival, a Turkish NGO, 'TURMEPA' initiated an investigation into the animals health by Dr. B. Öztürk on the 3rd and 4th of June. The subsequent report found the dolphins to be in a very poor condition, showing signs of stress and aggressive behaviour, (Turmepa, 1995). Dr.Öztürk also listed other issues of concern; no samples were taken to ascertain if the seawater was sufficiently free of pollution, Marmaris Harbour is exposed to a great amount of noise, coming from the ships as well as from the shore. He concluded that the holding conditions were entirely unsuitable for the health of the dolphins.

Doug Cartlidge was also sent to Marmaris in July to investigate further by international NGO's and he confirmed all the concerns of Dr.Öztürk. He also reported that two of the dolphins were already looking extremely thin. In a press-release he urged the Turkish authorities and the Ukraine staff to return the dolphins to the Ukraine immediately because of the poor conditions and lack of medical treatment

available. Cartlidge stated: "If they stay they will deteriorate in their present conditions and the large male has an injury to its oesophagus which can not be treated in Marmaris" (Cartlidge & Rowley, 1995).

Even in the face of growing concern the Turkish authorities were reluctant to confiscate the dolphins as they were reported to still be Ukrainian Government property.

6.4 Closure of the facility and transfer of the animals back to the Ukraine

Finally, public opinion forced the Ukrainian staff and the Turkish businessman to cancel the operation and the dolphins were returned to the Ukraine. On August 3rd 1995, the dolphins were moved to Dalaman airport. They arrived at around 11.00 hrs but had to wait until 10 hours before they finally boarded a plane back to the Ukraine. The animals arrived in Simferopol, 4th August at 3am. At 9am they arrived at the military base in Sevastopol.

Dr. Chepkov from the Department of Biological and Land Resources confirmed that 4 dolphins and 2 sea lions had been returned from Turkey to Ukraine, 4th August 1995 and: "...that the owners have provided the normal conditions for their maintenance" (Chepkov, B. 1995).

In a letter to the author, Kulagin, Director of the State Oceanarium of the Ukraine (SOU) stated that: "...the attempt of Ukraine and Turkey to begin the business about dolphins in Turkey was not a success. The dolphins got in dangerous conditions, although we had a guarantee of Turkey Ecology Minister, we had to remove animals back in Sevastopol. This was a reason we consider that Turkey is not the best place for working along the big program with sea mammals" (Kulagin, V.1995).

However, in autumn 1997 it was again rumoured that the same Ukrainian institution is negotiating sending Turkey dolphins and encouraging the construction of a dolphinarium.

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7.0 Rehabilitation and Release of Captive Cetaceans to the Black Sea

7.1. Release of two captive bottlenose dolphins (*Tursisops truncatus*)

- Dicky, male, held at the Dolphin Reef Eilat, Israel from 1990 until 20th August 1996. Estimated to be approximately between 11 and 14 years of age.
- Bella, female, captured 1996 to accompany Dicky in the reintroduction, estimated to be between 5 and 7 years old.

Date of Release: 23rd August 1996

Location: Taman Bay (Russian coast, Black Sea)

On August 20th 1996 Dicky was transferred from Israel to the Utrish Dolphinarium which belongs to the Russian Academy of Science. “At the scientific station, Dicky was put in an open sea pen together with a local female recently caught to keep him company in the release. Dicky and Bella stayed in the sea pen for three days. Then they were taken by a vehicle and boat to Taman Bay – the place where Dicky was caught six years earlier in 1990. Dicky was marked on his dorsal fin with the symbol ‘+’ and Bella ‘v’ (Zilber, 1997).

The conditions at the Dolphin Reef had allowed Dicky to hunt fish on a regular basis: “for this and other reasons, we found Dicky prepared for release with no need for a rehabilitation program” (Zilber, 1997). It is said that Dicky was allowed to move outside of the fenced off area in Eilat almost every day for about two years (Mukhametov, 1997).

Dr. Lev Mukhametov, Director of the Utrish Dolphinarium, also decided not to install radio transmitters on both animals for satellite tracking, but to freeze brand them because the radio transmitter may harm the dolphins and because a foreign object on the flipper could frighten the wild dolphins. “We decided that in this case the benefit of the dolphins should be more preferential than the benefit of the science” (Mukhametov, 1997).

Dr Mukhametov lists the following sightings of Dicky and Bella:

“On September 5-7, 1996 the marked dolphins were noticed by the fishermen near the city of Yalta. During 3 days both dolphins were seen catching close to fishing nets together with the group of wild dolphins.” Also in June (16th-20th) 1997, Dicky was seen near the Gelendzik (Mukhametov, 1997).

The release was considered successful.

7.2. Escape of Captive Belugas

Information is inconsistent about the escape of at least 3 Belugas (*Delphinapterus leucas*) into the Black Sea. In an e-mail to the author, Mr Kulagin from a Ukrainian institution stated that the 3 belugas who escaped after heavy storm in summer 1991

are dead. However, one animal, a male, did appear in Turkish waters begging for food (Kulagin, 1995).

The contrasting information to that version is an article²¹ presented by Bayram Öztürk at the First International Symposium on the Marine Mammals of the Black Sea, (June 27th to 30th 1994 in Istanbul, Turkey).

Bel'kovich and Kiriiova state:

“One beluga named ‘Igor’ was caught in the Amur River six months before our observations and the other named ‘Aydin’ had already spent eight years in captivity. It is known that for a majority of animals the process of rehabilitation in a new environment is very complicated and that after a sufficiently long time in captivity is practically impossible. Nevertheless, after it was moved into the open sea following a storm, Aydin could adopt to solitary life in the Black Sea, and successfully recovered his hunting behaviour. For an animal used to living as a member of a herd, solitary hunting for quick fishes was undoubtedly an extreme behaviour that would rarely be displayed.

But ‘Aydin’ continued to use the experience he had gained through contact with people while in captivity and approached ships and boats for fish. Meanwhile it appeared many times near the coast of Turkey. This unusual case of rehabilitation of a lone animal migrating through the Black Sea shows the high plasticity of behaviour, strength of memory and adaptive capability of belugas”.

Nevertheless, this case presents an escape and not a scientific project to rehabilitate captive marine mammals to be released back to their natural habitat.

²¹ The Hunting behaviour of Dolphins as an Index of Adaptation to Environment, Bel'kovich, V.M. and

8.0 International Agreements, Conservation Projects and Release Programmes

Convention on Biological Diversity (CoBD)

The countries discussed within this Report and adjoining the Black Sea are all signatory parties to the CoBD²².

Article 9 of the Convention defines measures for Ex-Situ conservation (conservation of species outside their natural habitat). 'Each Contracting Party shall, as far as possible and as appropriate, and predominantly for the purpose of complementing in-situ measures:

- (a) Adopt measures for the ex-situ conservation of components of biological diversity, preferably in the country of origin of such components;
- (b) Establish and maintain facilities for ex-situ conservation of and research on plants, animals and micro-organisms, preferably in the country of origin of genetic resources;
- (c) Adopt measures for the recovery and rehabilitation of threatened species and for their re-introduction into their natural habitats under appropriate conditions; etc.'

Most of the cases in this report ignore recommendations a) and b) and point c) of Article 9 which clearly requires the reintroduction of threatened species into their natural habitat.

'The Ukrainian Programme for Black Sea Dolphin Populations Conservation'

Birkun, A.Jr (BREMA, Laboratory, Simferopol, Crimea, Ukraine), and Stetsenko, N., Ministry of Environmental protection of Ukraine, Kiev, Ukraine (First International Symposium on the Marine Mammals of the Black Sea; June 27th to 30th 1994 in Istanbul, Turkey., Editor: Bayram Öztürk, Istanbul 1996).

Introduction: In recent years all the three Black Sea cetacean subspecies have been listed in the Ukrainian National Red Data Book: Bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus ponticus*, Barabasch-Nikiforov, 1940) in 1989, Harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena relicta*, Abel, 1905) and common dolphin (*Delphinus delphis ponticus*, Barabasch-Nikiforov, 1935) in 1993. Under the 'Law of Animal World of Ukraine' (1993) and according to the Statute of Ukrainian Red Data Book (1992) endangered species must be protected by appropriate governmental programmes. In 1993 the Ministry of Environmental Protection of Ukraine asked the BREMA Laboratory to prepare a draft of the National Programme for Black Sea Dolphin Population Conservation.

Program's Direction:

- Creation of a rescue-rehabilitation-reintroduction system;
- elaboration of a set of reliable criteria for rescue and rehabilitation activities;

²² Georgia signed on the 2nd 6. 1994, Romania signed on the 17th 8.1994, Ukraine signed on the 7th

- elaboration of rescue techniques and methods of veterinary assistant for stranded, by caught, sick and traumatised dolphins;
- elaboration for tagging, tracking, re-acclimatising and releasing techniques for rescued and rehabilitated animals,
- organisation of a cetacean rescue service such as the establishment of dolphin ambulance and marine mammal rehabilitation centres on the basis of reconstruction of existing facilities.

These program measures do not exclude the rehabilitation and release of captive marine mammals. Using the release of Dicky and Blanca as an example it is obvious that captive marine mammals should be considered as candidates for release, and to develop further techniques for successful reintroduction's. However, the capture of wild dolphins should not be considered to provide 'companions' for animals in future rehabilitation programmes.

Franco-Ukrainian Project for Research, Rescue, Rehabilitation and Reintroduction of Black Sea Dolphins

Birkun, A.Jr. (BREMA. Laboratory, Simferopol, Crimea, Ukraine), Stanenis, A. (Laspi Dolphinarium, Sevastopol, Crimea, Ukraine) and Kershaw, J. (Marineland, Antibes, France), (First International Symposium on the Marine Mammals of the Black Sea; June 27th to 30th 1994 in Istanbul, Turkey., Editor: Bayram Öztürk, Istanbul 1996).

The project presented at the meeting in Istanbul as the "Franco-Ukrainian Project" causes much confusion. Two different versions have been presented. One version of the agreement was drafted in January 1994, but six months later the same project was presented at an International conference in Turkey with a different content. It is interesting to compare both scripts to get some insight into the intentions of this project.

Script published in: 'First International Symposium on the Marine Mammals of the Black Sea'. June 27th to 30th 1994 in Istanbul, Turkey. Editor: Bayram Öztürk, Istanbul 1996:

In October 1993 the Ukrainian Ministry of the Environment ratified the action plan for rescue, rehabilitation and reintroduction of wild cetaceans as a constituent part of the Ukrainian National Program for Black Sea Dolphin Populations Conservation. In January 1994 according to the agreement between BREMA Laboratory, Laspi Dolphinarium (Ukraine) and Marineland-Antibes (France), this plan was a collaborative project for research, rescue, rehabilitation and release of wild Black Sea dolphins (RRRR-project).

The aims of RRRR-project are:

- The collection of all possible information on animals in difficulty with active search programs for stranded, by catch, injured and sick animals.
- Multi-disciplinary research on the causes of cetacean death, diseases and human related injuries. The organisation of mobile rescue unit in the development of rescue and rehabilitation techniques.
- The establishment of a marine mammal rehabilitation centre.

- The development of dolphin releasing techniques and a methodology for the observation of released animals in the open sea.

The First Draft of Report on the Findings of the Working Committee on Captive Marine Mammals in the Ukraine, Antibes, France. 18th to 20th January 1994.

Participants at the meeting:

The International Zoo Veterinary Group (IZVG) represented by Dr. Andrew Greenwood

BREMA Laboratory represented by Dr Alexei Birkun

Marineland Antibes represented by Mr. Jon Kershaw

Aims of the Working Group: ‘With the primary consideration being the well being of the animals concerned and the conservation of the species, to establish a plan of action for the captive population of marine mammals (particularly the bottlenose dolphin) held in existing facilities in the Ukraine.’

3 possible solutions are listed:

- a. Release into the sea of all the animals
- b. Reconstruction and re-organisation of existing facilities
- c. Relocation of some or all of the animals to existing, or new, better equipped facilities elsewhere

The question of release was dismissed with statements such as: “none of several release programmes undertaken has ever been taken to a successful conclusion”. Therefore with no references to cases or discussion, release projects were rejected. So it appears that the primary intention of this co-operative venture was the long term maintenance of cetaceans in captivity within the framework of a captive breeding program.

The script attempts to promote dolphinariums and captive breeding by stating: “captive breeding of the bottlenose dolphin is well established world-wide”. The draft also claims that: “Oceanariums are an important educational tool which at present is not being fully exploited. Their commercial viability as public facilities, especially in areas of tourism, makes it possible to maintain captive dolphins long term with a view to establishing self-sustaining populations, a situation which probably already exists for the Atlantic bottlenose dolphin, but not for the endangered Black Sea race”.

The working group finally come to the conclusion that “logical assessment of the three possible solutions has led us to favour a very carefully controlled version of option c – relocation of the majority of the 60 plus bottlenose dolphins by sale, rental or loan, while retaining at least one group in the Ukraine. No release programme of new or existing stock should be attempted until the situation threatening existing wild populations in the Black Sea has been corrected”.

The script does not outline any procedure to establish a captive breeding programme. Neither does it discuss the genetic viability of attempting to establish a breeding programme, nor recommend the age and sex structure for a “breeding stock”. The recommend provided by the working group is in total contradiction to the Ex-Situ Conservation measures defined within the CoBD. No references are provided for the

assumptions and therefore the documents validity is extremely questionable as a conservation tool for bottlenose dolphins in the Black Sea.

As we have seen from this report the recommendation has resulted in disaster for many of the dolphins (and people) involved. The authors remain concerned that the plan for the rehabilitation of Black Sea dolphins is really predicated on the intentions of the draft report.

The authors urge all national authorities that ratified the agreement to reconsider the application of this agreement in light of this report.

Sources:

Bel'kovich, V.M. & Kiriiova, O.I. (1994): The Hunting behaviour of Dolphins as an Index of Adaptation to Environment. The Shirshov Institute of Oceanology, Moscow, Russia. Editor: Bayram Öztürk, Istanbul 1996.

Birkun, A., Greenwood, A., Kershaw, J. (1994): First Draft of Report on the Findings of the Working Committee on Captive Marine Mammals in the Ukraine, Antibes, France 18th to 20th January 1994.

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9. Discussion

9.1 Captive-bred or wild-caught

When discussing the country of origin and if the exported dolphins are captive-born or wild-captured, the author relied on oral information and documents provided by the institutions involved. It must be stressed that all the companies and institutions failed to provide conclusive evidence to state if the animals were captive-bred or taken from the wild. Therefore, information provided about this important question is understandably vague.

9.2 Export of Dolphins

Throughout the country reports there are some aspects which recur in the majority of cases.

a) Commercial Purpose:

All the facilities that the dolphins were transferred to are in tourist areas, most of them close to bars and night-clubs or within an amusement park. The companies involved in setting up these dolphinariums always state they are keeping them for conservation, scientific or educational purposes. However, it became apparent that they were purely interested in commercial exploitation. No scientific papers have been published on these animals (except Eilat). It is also clear that few, if any, of the importing enterprises involved at the final destination have had any previous experience in keeping cetaceans.

b) Facilities

In exporting the dolphins to inadequate facilities their lives were jeopardised, some facilities were not even built when the dolphins arrived (Argentina, Malta). Some dolphins were simply transferred into public swimming pools (Cyprus, Hungary, Malta). In Turkey the dolphins were initially located in a fenced off area located in a polluted, noisy harbour.

Authorities in many countries were often misled or the dolphins were imported illegally (Hungary). This often resulted in a political and public struggle where confiscation of the animals was never seriously taken into consideration mainly because the animals were still regarded as Ukrainian or Russian property. Also, the companies involved were/are aware that normal civil authorities do not have the expertise required to move the animals or be able to find an alternative location to safely move the dolphins into.

Another vital area of discussion must be health examinations prior to importation of the dolphins. In Turkey it was obvious no viral or bacterial examinations were carried out to safeguard the natural ecosystem into which the dolphins were placed.

9.3 Conservation Value

None of the companies or institutions involved in the dolphin trade stated they were purely commercial. They constantly claimed "conservation" or "breeding programmes" as the main reason for importing dolphins and establishing new dolphinariums. Behind these statements is an obvious strategy seen in the draft report on the findings of the working committee on captive marine mammals in the Ukraine. Using those same terms it was relatively easy to obtain the required CITES permits to export or import the cetaceans.

Exporting Black Sea dolphins to various captive facilities has completely failed as a conservation tool and these projects violate Article 9 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CoBD). Article 9 provides basic criteria for the conservation of species outside of their natural habitat²³. Marine mammal captivity will never be able to provide a viable genetic stock to preserve the Black Sea dolphin. Captivity inflicts damage to the in-Situ population and therefore violates Article 9 (d) of the CoBD, as none of the listed projects have taken place in the country of origin, no offspring have been produced by the exported animals except in Eilat and none of the projects are involved in any reintroduction programmes for ex-situ Black Sea dolphins into their natural habitats. Therefore, the trade in these animals does not fulfil any criteria of Article 9 of the CoBD.

This commercial exploitation and subsequent attempts to establish more "breeding programmes" is opposed by several institutions and politicians, for example; in a letter Mr Christiani from the National Forest and Nature Agency on behalf of the Danish Minister for Environment and Energy, Mr.Svend, states: "From the present conservation status of the bottlenose dolphin in the Black and Mediterranean Seas it does not seem justified to use captive breeding operations as a measure to conserve this species" (Christiani, O. 1996).

Almost 50 % of the exported dolphins are already dead. Only 12 out of 43 dolphins originally exported remain alive in the captive facility of the destination countries, reinforcing the complete and total failure of these programmes.

²³ Ex-Situ: Criteria for the conservation of species outside their natural habitat

Article 9: Ex-Situ Conservation

Each Contracting Party shall, as far as possible and as appropriate, and predominantly for the purpose of complementing in-situ measures:

- (a) Adopt measures for the ex-situ conservation of components of biological diversity, preferably in the country of origin of such components;
- (b) Establish and maintain facilities for ex-situ conservation of and research on plants, animals and micro-organisms, preferably in the country of origin of genetic resources;
- (c) Adopt measures for the recovery and rehabilitation of threatened species and for their reintroduction into their natural habitats under appropriate conditions;
- (d) Regulate and manage collection of biological resources from natural habitats for ex-situ conservation purposes so as not to threaten ecosystems and in-situ populations of species, except where special temporary ex-situ measures are required under subparagraph (c) above; and
- (e) Co-operate in providing financial and other support for ex-situ conservation outlined in subparagraphs (a) to (d) above and in the establishment and maintenance of Ex-Situ conservation facilities in developing countries

In conclusion, this report believes that further captures and exportation are clearly not valid conservation measures for Black Sea cetaceans populations. Using the terms of the CoBD it recommended that those animals which have already been exported should be transferred back to their place of origin in the Black Sea and that the EU, all other agencies and management bodies begins to take measures to protect the wild populations of black sea dolphins from all threats including capture.

9.4 Recommendations

- That CITES authorities recognise that the export and import of Black Sea dolphins is unsuccessful and in future refuse any applications for permits.
- That the EU and Black Sea States recognise that the export of Black Sea dolphins abroad has been unsuccessful.
- That the EU recommends the in-situ conservation of Black Sea dolphins and other marine mammal species.
- The EU and Black Sea States ban further wild captures and the export of Black Sea bottlenose dolphins.
- The surviving Black Sea bottlenose dolphins that were exported are returned the country of export, or the most appropriate institution in the Black Sea, to begin rehabilitation programmes for return to the wild.
- The EU endeavours to support any rehabilitation programme financially.
- That individual member states of the EU recognise the above recommendations.

[ends]

UPDATE, March 1999 on THE DOLPHIN TRADERS

An Investigation into the World-wide Trade and Export of Black Sea bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) from the Ukraine and Russia 1990 - 1997

This updates the original report on the trade in bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) originating from the Black Sea, "The Dolphin Traders", produced in 1998. The update details three separate incidents involving a total of 9 *Tursiops* from the Black Sea (export from Russia to Romania; export from Bulgaria to India; export from Russia to Bahrain).

Bulgaria appears as a new country exporting Black Sea dolphins. All three dolphins exported from Bulgaria to India died less than half a year after export. No information was available on the current status of the dolphins in Romania. In January 1999 two of the three dolphins imported to Bahrain in December 1998 died. Therefore 5 out of 9 exported bottlenose dolphins have died within a few months after export (56%).

In addition to this, the deaths of the two remaining *Tursiops* in Cyprus have been confirmed by the Cypriot Authorities. Within just four years, the four *Tursiops* that were imported to Cyprus in 1994, have all died. The companies involved in the initial import have already applied for a permit to import four more Black Sea *Tursiops*. Following the deaths of two of three dolphins imported to Bahrain, two more dolphins have arrived there. This data is also included in the following update.

The Report now lists a total of 54 bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*), exported from the Black Sea states of Bulgaria, Georgia, Russia and Ukraine to foreign facilities. All the exports

At least 27 (50%) dolphins, but possibly 30 (56%), have died following exportation since 1990. The deaths of 27 dolphins are documented and further information indicates that at least three others are also dead.

9 of the 54 dolphins originally exported were returned to the Ukraine or Russia. The authors have been unable to obtain sufficient information on the fate of these animals to state if they are alive or dead. At least one dolphin (Dicky) was released back into the Black Sea.

Only 15 (28%) of the dolphins exported are still alive in the facilities to which they were taken.

The import of three bottlenose dolphins to the United Arab Emirates is not included in this update as no positive evidence has yet been provided to confirm if these animals originated in the Black Sea.

It must be noted that the mortality rate of the animals involved is extremely high. The trade in *Tursiops truncatus* from the Black Sea should cease immediately.

ROMANIA

Romania is a signatory to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), acceded to Romania on 18th August 1994 and entered into force on the 16th November 1994. It is also signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CoBD) which was ratified on the 17th August 1994.

Imported Black Sea Dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*). Total: 3
Date of import: July 1998 (still to be confirmed)
Country of Origin: Russian Federation
Destination: Constanta dolphinarium, Romania

At the time of writing, four dolphins are reported to be held at Constanta. We have been unable to confirm if the dolphins are wild captured or captive bred, although comments by a Romanian journalist quoting staff strongly suggests all were wild captured: "We've got them eating from our hands already. That's pretty good," said Iancu. "It will take six to seven months to get them acclimatised here and they should be ready to perform next year" (Romania-Dolphins, by Ron Popeski, Reuters, see Source).

Import of Dolphins

"Blanket media coverage greeted the arrival of the newcomers from the Russian Black Sea port of Anapa. The two males and a female, identifiable by a wide spot on her dorsal fin, each cost \$12,000" (Reuters, August 1998).

Quotes by dolphinarium staff:

Regarding the status of Black Sea *Tursiops*:

"Gabriela Plotoaca, the dolphinarium's director since 1983, says dolphins are not threatened in the Black Sea. There are 150,000 alone in the waters off Ukraine, Romania and Bulgaria and an estimated half million in the entire area, she said. Russia was the natural place to find suitable candidates to expand the Constanta collection, Plotoaca said" (Reuters, August 1998).

Regarding the reason for import:

City authorities helped to cover the cost of the three dolphins and 40 percent of the facility's costs. Unlike facilities in many Western countries, or even in neighbouring Ukraine, which use dolphins increasingly in dolphin-assisted-therapy for children, the smaller breed in the Constanta collection are trained PRIMARILY as performers (Reuters, August 1998).

Regarding the male dolphin "Marc" who is already held in Constanta and said to have been captured in Romanian waters:

The new Russian trio will have no contact with 13-year-old Marc. Marc killed two dolphins several years ago in what the trainers saw as a tragic but normal reaction. "He was just protecting his territory. They get more aggressive as they get older," Iancu said. "It means the three of them can never be put together with Marc." (Reuters, August 1998).

In correspondence dated 19th August 1997, Simion Nicolaev of the Romanian Marine Research Institute stated: "The dolphins at the dolphinarium in Constanta originated from the Black Sea Romanian coastal waters; the dolphins were caught by own forces" (Nicolaev, 1997). This quotation confirms that Marc, and other dolphins previously held at Constanta dolphinarium (now thought to be dead) were captured from the Black Sea.

Conclusion:

The reason for importing further dolphins was primarily for entertainment and certainly for commercial gain. It is also clear that new dolphins were acquired in order for performances to continue as only one male dolphin remained at the dolphinarium. Staff statements also suggest that the three new dolphins are wild captured.

Source:

Simion Nicolaev, Romanian Marine Research Institute, fax to Niki Entrup, dated on the 19th August 1997 Reuters:News-0809.00293; 08/09/98; Reuters:News-0809.00314; 08/10/98

INDIA

India is a signatory to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), ratified by India on 20th July 1976 and entered into force on the 18th October 1976. It is also signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CoBD) which was ratified on the 18th February 1994.

Bulgaria is a signatory to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), accessed by Bulgaria on 16th January 1991 and entered into force on the 16th April 1991. It is also signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CoBD) which was ratified on the 17th April 1994.

Imported Black Sea Dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*). Total: 3 (sex unknown)
Date of import: spring (May?) 1998
Country of Origin: Bulgaria
Destination: Dolphin City, near Chennai (Madras)

The first dolphinarium in India, Dolphin City, opened in May 1998 near Chennai. The exact date of import is still unknown, but it is assumed to have taken place in spring 1998. The exporting country is said to be Bulgaria, although the national CITES authority in Bulgaria has so far not replied to the authors numerous inquiries.

All three dolphins are now dead:

Only a few months after their arrival, all three dolphins had died. "While two dolphins died in September, the third collapsed on October 2". Mr A. Jose, spokesman for the Amusements and Picnic Resort Pty. Ltd., which owns the dolphinarium, initially maintained that the dolphins "are indeed alive and healthy," but after some grilling, he admitted that all three had died. His boss, Dr Pinheiro, was unavailable for comment. It appears the first female dolphin died in mid-September and was closely followed by its mate. The third dolphin died on October 2. "All three had not been eating for some time" (The Asian Age, 10.Oct.1998).

Immediately following the death of the third dolphin, the dolphinarium applied for another permit to import 5 more Tursiops to replace the dead animals. The permit was refused.

"The Ministry of Commerce has decided not to permit the import of mammals such as dolphins and sea-lions" stated the Union Party Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment, Maneka Gandhi. In an informal chat with reporters, Gandhi said she had requested the Ministry of Commerce not to permit further imports of animals after hearing about the recent death of three dolphins in Chennai, reports PTI. She had been assured that such an import would not be permitted, she added. "The dolphins, performing in a dolphinarium near here, died one after another in the last few weeks". (<http://www.expressindia.com/news/30300087.htm>).

Conclusion:

Bulgaria's involvement in this case is as a new addition to the list of Black Sea countries that have become involved in the captive dolphin trade. All three dolphins imported to India died within a few months of their arrival. This suggests the animals were transferred to highly inadequate conditions. This transfer also highlights, yet again, the existence of commercial trade in this species. Only the welcome reaction of the Indian Authorities prevented a further import of 5 Tursiops from the Black Sea population. It is also clear that commercial companies are becoming increasingly involved in the trade of Tursiops truncatus originating from the Black Sea and that these companies are seeking new markets in countries previously not involved in the commercial dolphin trade.

Source:

The Asian Age (1998): "All 3 dolphins at Chennai Park dead. 2 Died last month, the third died on 'continuous performance'" by R. Bhagwan Singh. New Delhi. 10. Oct.1998.

The Indian Express (1998): "No more import of dolphins": Maneka. 31.Oct,1998.

<http://www.expressindia.com/news/30300087.htm>

Personal communication with local NGOs

BAHRAIN

Bahrain is not a signatory to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Bahrain is a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CoBD) which was ratified 30th August 1996.

Imported Black Sea Dolphins (Tursiops truncatus). Total: 5

Date of first import: December 1998

Date of second import: 24th February 1999

Country of Origin: Russia

Destination: Dolphin Park, Bahrain

Bahrain's first dolphinarium opened in December 1998. Less than a month after the arrival of three dolphins (2.1), one of the imported dolphins, a male, died. "A dolphin flown into Bahrain to entertain seaside crowds has died after swallowing a piece of wire"... "Although we take particular care of our dolphins and make sure that they are well looked after, one of our dolphins died after swallowing a piece of wire" said Ahmed Mahmoud Abd Al Aal, assistant general manager of the Dolphin Park in Manama, Bahrain. (Gulf Daily News, 13.1.1999).

The Gulf Daily News revealed on 22.1.1999 that another dolphin had died, within days of its companion. Although to date the Dolphin Park has denied the second dolphin's death, this contradicts a statement from a Government veterinarian stating that he had performed a post-mortem on the body. "The cause of death was determined to be chronic inflammation of the internal organs" (Gulf Daily News, 22.1.1999). To replace the dead animals, two more dolphins (1.1) were imported into Bahrain from Russia on February 24th 1999.

The Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS) is not just concerned over the ongoing trade in these animals, but also over the fact that it is not the first time such "accidents" have occurred, involving bottlenose dolphins originating from the Black Sea. Two Black Sea dolphins exported to Israel died in 1994 after being fed lead bullets. One dolphin imported into Argentina died after becoming trapped in the fold of the plastic coating of the pool, another swallowed a glove (Entrup & Cartlidge, 1998).

Source:

Gulf Daily News (13.1.1999): Dolphin Dies in Park accident.

Gulf Daily News (22.1.1999): Second Dolphin Death is Denied

Gulf Daily News (28.2.1999): British Group in Dolphin Appeal - Society Protests to Bahrain Officials Over Shows.

Entrup & Cartlidge (1998): The Dolphin Traders. A report for the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society. May

Sunday Express (7.3.1999): Dolphins sold on the Internet and Dying in Misery. London.

CYPRUS

The situation in Cyprus is explained in detail in the report "The Dolphin Traders". Four bottlenose dolphins (2.2) were imported on October 26th 1994 to the Ayia Napa Marine Park. The first dolphin, a female, died in August 1995 less than a year after import. Another dolphin died in September 1996. In early August 1995 the Russian company involved in the previous import applied to import four more dolphins to Cyprus. The import permit was denied and no more dolphins were imported. It has now been confirmed all the dolphins from the first import have died. "The last died in October 1998" (Veterinary Service, Cyprus 1999). Further to this, the Cypriot Authorities have confirmed that "the Proprietor (of the Marine Park) and the Russian Academy of Sciences officially asked for permission to import 4 new tursiops truncatus. The issue is now with the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment and the Attorney General's Office" (Veterinary Service, Cyprus).

Source:

Cartlidge, D & Entrup, N. (1998): The Dolphin Traders. Bath, UK

Hadjisavvas, Th. (1999): Email to Doug Cartlidge. Veterinary Service, Cyprus. 4.3.1999

[End]

