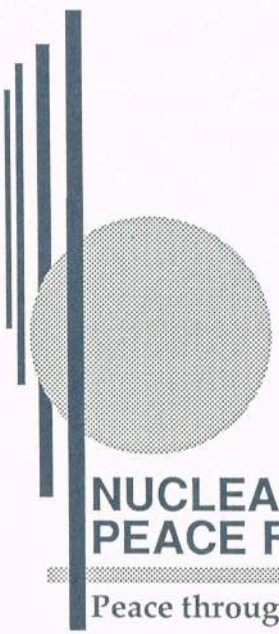
SMALL STATES and BIG ISSUES

by

David Russell Lange

Booklet 17

WAGING PEACE SERIES



NUCLEAR AGE PEACE FOUNDATION

Peace through Informed Action

WAGING PEACE SERIES

As far as is known, the term "Waging Peace" originated with Warren Wells, late husband of Ethel Wells of Santa Barbara, in a letter to President Eisenhower. It was a long-standing practice of Mr. Wells to keep in close touch with key national figures and give them his views on peace issues as well as other vital matters. This series is dedicated both as a memorial to him and in gratitude to Mrs. Wells for her continued efforts in this cause.

Just as peace is more than the absence of war, waging peace is more than supporting arms reductions. In addition, it embraces positive steps toward genuine harmony. In this series the Foundation will distribute short booklets stressing ideas for attaining peace. Some publications will be scholarly, others more popular in style—most will combine elements of both. Concepts expressed will include views of many authorities, and will not necessarily be those of the Foundation.

Suggestions for topics and your reactions to this issue are welcome. Quantity lots are available at minimal charge from the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation.

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Nuclear Age Peace Foundation

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17. **Small States and Big Issues** by David Russell Lange

Introduction*

In the early nineteenth century, John Keats, the poet, wrote, "Beauty is truth, truth beauty, that is all ye know on Earth and all ye need to know." Today, in the nuclear age, we need to know more. We need to know that truth and beauty—and humanity itself—are imperiled by the quiet store of nuclear weapons we have methodically created; and we need leaders and citizens who act creatively and courageously to end the insidious race of death, and preserve humanity's store of truth and beauty. We honor such a leader this evening.

Leaders are men and women who inspire and move others to action by their personal commitment to achieving a goal—in part by their words, in larger part by their lives and their examples. When asked by a journalist for a message for his readers, Gandhi replied simply, "I am my message."

One of the goals of this Foundation is to encourage and honor peace leadership. It is for this reason that the Foundation makes an annual Distinguished Peace Leadership Award, and selects among the many people who have given of themselves for peace —and there are many in this room tonight —an individual who has demonstrated dedicated and courageous leadership for peace.

In the past, the award has gone to Senator Claiborne Pell, Admiral Gene LaRocque, President Rodrigo Carazo and entrepreneur Ted Turner.

Tonight we are very pleased to present this award to the Prime Minister of a friendly nation which has concluded that "the destruction of the planet" cannot serve as a defense for its country.

David Russell Lange has had a very distinguished career. He is an attorney with a Masters of Law from Auckland University with first class honors in criminal law, criminal behavior, and medicolegal ethics. Before winning his first seat to Parliament in 1977 he lost two elections. So he knows something about defeat as well as perseverance. In

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**These remarks were made by Dr. David Krieger, President of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, upon presentation of the 1988 Distinguished Peace Leadership Award.*

1979, he was elected Deputy leader of the Opposition under the Right Honorable Sir Wallace Rowling whom he succeeded as leader in February 1983.

In 1984, at the age of 41, he became New Zealand's youngest Prime Minister this century and second youngest ever. When the new government took office in July 1984, it took a very sensible and yet remarkable action—it immediately banned all nuclear weapons from New Zealand. Although New Zealand is a staunch ally of the United States, they would not allow our ships to enter their ports unless we assured them that those ships carried no nuclear weapons.

The Administration in Washington was not happy about New Zealand's position of repudiating nuclear weapons for its defense, but there should be no doubt in our minds that New Zealand has been and is our friend. They fought beside us in WWI, WWII, Korea, and even Vietnam. New Zealand is a Western democracy that has decided in its own interest—and in the interests of the planet—that nuclear weapons provide neither security nor defense. Rather, in their view, a system of nuclear defense guarantees only insecurity. We believe, along with Prime Minister Lange, that "if countries like New Zealand can safely stand aside from nuclear weapons, there is hope that one day every country in the world can."

We believe that Prime Minister Lange and the people of New Zealand have acted for humanity. Theirs is a message which we believe should be heard and understood by every American, every Soviet and the citizens of every other nation. The question it should raise in our minds is, "If they can do it, why can't we?" I submit to you that New Zealand is leading the way. Recently the Danish Parliament took a similar action. And someday every nation, including the United States and the Soviet Union, will refuse to base their defense upon a policy which threatens global annihilation.

It is for their courage in saying an absolute 'NO' to nuclear arms as a means of defense, and for the leadership of David Lange and the people of New Zealand that we tonight proudly present to him, and through him to the people of New Zealand, the 1988 Nuclear Age Peace Foundation Distinguished Peace Leadership Award.

David Krieger
President
Nuclear Age Peace Foundation

SMALL STATES and BIG ISSUES

by David Russell Lange

May I say at the outset that, with all respect, I cannot accept your award in a strictly personal capacity. The cause that your Foundation is recognizing is one that has taken on the dimensions of a popular movement in New Zealand and other small countries of our region in the South Pacific. It is those individuals and communities who have earned the recognition. It is on their behalf that I would be pleased to accept your award.

I have chosen to talk tonight about "Small States and Big Issues." I have New Zealand's own experience very much in mind. You are aware of the differences over nuclear issues that developed between my government and the United States government during our first term of office. Both governments have held to their positions. New Zealand will not permit nuclear weapons to enter its ports or territory. The U.S. will not maintain an active alliance with New Zealand while we maintain our anti-nuclear policy. The impact of that disagreement was significant in a bilateral sense. The substance of the issue was also extremely significant. We still, however, share many common interests. At no time have differences over this one issue superseded the fundamental feeling of goodwill that New Zealanders have towards the United States.

New Zealand's Anti-Nuclear Stance

As I have said on many occasions, both at home and abroad, New Zealanders are anti-nuclear, but they are in no way anti-American. Like so many New Zealanders who visit your country, and especially sunny California, I feel very much at home here. I am sure Americans do also when they visit New Zealand as, I am pleased to say, they are doing in increased numbers. The whole nuclear weapons issue is enlightening as an example of how the perceptions and the interests of small states and their larger friends can diverge quite widely even while the common interest remains predominant. I shall return to that point. In particular, I shall want to put the New Zealand position in the wider framework of our conceptual approach to security issues.

I should explain to you to begin with that anti-nuclearism in New Zealand has a long history. It was not some new departure which arrived with the new government in 1984. Our long-held concern about nuclear weapons can be traced back to the fact that for three decades our part of the world had been used for nuclear weapons testing. France continues to test against the objections of the countries in the region. Years of opposition to this testing has meant that anti-nuclear sentiment is part of mainstream rather than fringe politics. It is a feeling that no New Zealand government can ignore.

In the early 1970's, a previous labour government dispatched a warship to the vicinity of the French testing zone as a protest, and took action against France in the International Court of Justice. There is nothing novel about New Zealand taking an active line on nuclear issues. We have never felt the issues are simply too big for us.

I make a point of showing visitors a map I have on the wall of my office. It takes what you might call a satellite's view of the globe — with the satellite hovering far above Wellington. What is novel about the map is that it puts New Zealand right in the middle. The chart has a circle which shows the boundary of the hemisphere centered on New Zealand. In other words, anything on that circle is half a world away from us. In modern terms, the boundary of that hemisphere is about 12 hours away by air. Most of the area inside that circle is water. The only two large landmasses are Antarctica, which is mostly covered in ice, and Australia, much of which is desert. Further off, the eastern coasts of Asia just come within our hemisphere, while California and most of Continental America lies beyond.

In short, we are a long way from just about anywhere. Our nearest neighbors are Australia and some of the Pacific Islands, twelve or thirteen hundred miles away. Europe is on the opposite side of the globe. If we tunnelled right through the centre of the Earth we would come out in Spain. That makes us the antipodes as far as the Europeans are concerned. That gives you an idea of where we stand in relation to the rest of the globe.

Now take a closer look. Our two main islands are nearly the size of Japan, and just as mountainous. But we have not many more than three million people in that area. The majority of them are of European origin, but perhaps a tenth of the population are Maori, descended from the legendary Polynesian explorers who originally discovered the land and made it their home. We also have a good number of more recent arrivals from the Polynesian islands of the South Pacific, particularly Samoa,

Cook Islands, Niue and Tonga. Family links with those islands remain strong. We are now very much a Pacific People.

So much for where we are and who we are. You also need to know what we as a nation do. The answer used to be simple. We were Britain's farm. We grew lamb and wool and made cheese and butter for export. Since Britain joined Europe, we have had to diversify. But agriculture, fish and forestry still account for two-thirds of our exports, and exports account for 28% of our economic activity. The comparable figure for the U.S. is about 7%. In return, we import a large proportion of the goods and services we need — everything from light crude to "L.A. Law."

I don't propose to turn this into a geography lesson. The simple point I want to make is this: even though we are physically isolated — just about as far away from Europe and North America as you can be — we are tightly locked into the rest of the world by our heavy reliance on trade. That is why commentators who saw New Zealand's anti-nuclear stance as isolationist are so wrong. Opting out can never be an option for New Zealand.

I go back now to the situation four years ago. We inherited a set of policies that dated back to the 1950s. At that time our main market was Britain. And our security seemed a matter of finding someone to protect our green hills by keeping the unnamed enemy as far away as possible. Our main military commitment became during the 1950's and 1960's the defence of continental Asia. The fortress New Zealand approach had been reserved for our economy. We had a mix of import barriers, internal controls and state involvement in commerce that many Eastern Bloc governments would have been proud of.

We have changed all this. As a result, the New Zealand government has since 1984 acquired a reputation in some quarters for economic reform as radical as its approach to foreign policy. The goal of our economic reform has been to integrate economic activity in New Zealand more fully into the world economy by making the domestic economy more open and dynamic. You would hardly expect us to adopt an outward looking economic policy and an inward looking, or isolationist, foreign policy. In fact, the two are complementary.

The changes we made were radical not in terms of their content—in fact, we kept to standard economic and commercial principles—but for the rigour and consistency with which we applied them. And they were remarkable for the support they received. It has been one of those periods in a country's history when the need for reform takes hold and

generates its own momentum. Underlying the reforms we brought in was a conviction that it was time for the New Zealand economy to rejoin the real world.

Analyzing New Zealand's Security

We have applied the same logic to defence and security as we have to other issues. In the end the test for us was this: what policy is best for our specific situation and needs? We applied that test across the board. We started with the simple questions. What external interests does New Zealand have? What are the threats to those interests? Which of them are most serious? And how should we respond?

There have been some starry-eyed interpretations of the actions we took. Let me make it clear what our policy did not represent. It was not pacifist. As I have already stressed, it was certainly not in any sense isolationist. It did not have any particular ideological basis. And it was not alarmist in fact, as I shall explain shortly, we had rather less reason than most to be alarmed. But we concluded that we needed a policy that took better account of our location and interests.

Let me illustrate with one home-grown observation. The police in New Zealand do not routinely carry guns. We have always believed that the safety of our citizens and the police themselves is better served by not carrying weapons on a regular basis. It is a case where experience has shown that giving every member of the police force a firearm for self-defence is not actually the right answer in our country. And that is a reflection not on the policy, but on the criminals. However, I would not go to Los Angeles or any other city in the United States and say that the police there should do as the police in New Zealand do.

I make the point that public authorities in New Zealand are not less concerned for the safety of their citizens than public authorities in the United States. But we do not find it necessary to arm our police routinely. You will see the analogy with our approach to nuclear weapons. The issues associated with nuclear weapons are enormously complex. Those who have them are inclined to see questions of development, use and control as their own business. It is not always easy for smaller states to register the point that they have a direct interest. It has certainly always been difficult for us to have any real influence on such matters.

The traditional view is that the only realistic response to the threat of nuclear attack is to build a bomb of your own and thus deter a

potential adversary. It you are too small to build your own, you stick close to someone who does have one. Somewhat ironically, the same argument is made about having a say in the nuclear arms control and disarmament process. The entry ticket is said to be either the possession of nuclear weapons, or holding onto the coat-tails of a nuclear power.

Some of our critics argue that we have now lost this seat at the table and can no longer have any real influence. I reject this analysis. Indeed, perhaps never before have New Zealand's views on the nuclear issues been of such interest abroad. My presence here is evidence of this. Certainly there is no evidence that being an unquestioning junior member of a nuclear alliance somehow provides a means to influence decisions on nuclear strategy.

Our analysis was that, for New Zealand, being defended by nuclear weapons was little different from being threatened by them. We concluded that nuclear weapons were not relevant to the security needs of our region. We made a conscious decision to act on that assessment. That is why we legislated to exclude nuclear weapons from our ports and our territory.

In taking this action, we were careful not to directly confront the long established U.S. policy of neither confirming nor denying the presence of nuclear weapons on their ships and aircraft. Our answer to this problem was simple, although it has been widely, and perhaps deliberately, misrepresented. We decided not to request any information from the visiting captain or government concerned, but to make our own judgment. That is what our law requires. If in our assessment the vessel is non-nuclear, it is welcome to visit. If we conclude that the vessel is nuclear, its request to visit will be declined. But the basis of our own assessment, and the request itself, will not be made public.

It is important to understand that in the end it was not so much the threat of nuclear attack on New Zealand cities or risk of an accident in one of our ports, or even the fear of fallout from a northern hemisphere conflict that persuaded us to take this action. You see, New Zealand faces rather less danger from these sources than most countries. So forget the idea that nuclear winter in Wellington or mushroom clouds over New Zealand were our main concern.

I go back to my earlier point: New Zealanders have never imagined that they can insulate themselves from the rest of the world. Our real worry was, and remains, the wider problem: the global threat of nuclear weapons and their proliferation. The way in which we chose to act on that assessment was specific to New Zealand. We took

that action we did because it was the most effective disarmament measure we could take that was fully within our control.

A South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone

Our concerns were in many aspects shared by the region as a whole. Members of the South Pacific community had for some years been working towards regional action on the nuclear issue. That initiative eventually took the form of a treaty, the Treaty of Rarotonga adopted in 1985, which established a South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone. The zone extends from the equator—or just to the north in a couple of places—to the Antarctic circle, and from Australia in the west to the boundary line of a similar Latin American zone in the east. In the south the zone is contiguous with the Antarctic Treaty area. Under the terms of that treaty the Antarctic continent is itself declared nuclear-free.

These three areas combined represent about forty percent of the earth's surface. The practical effect of these treaties in those areas where they are in force is quite significant. One common feature is that they prohibit the use or manufacture or stationing of nuclear weapons. But they did not go so far as the New Zealand legislation and ban visits by nuclear ships.

For those of us involved in the formation of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone, the important achievement of the Treaty was the message it conveyed. The message was that countries in the region wanted to make their voices heard on nuclear issues as they affected them. More than that, they were prepared to take practical steps reflecting their judgment of their security interests.

I made the point earlier that we did not see our security solely, or even principally, in terms of a nuclear threat. We undertook a full review of our defence policy at the same time as we were working through the nuclear weapons issue. We are now implementing the conclusions of that review. I regard them as no less important to the security and stability of our region than our policy on nuclear weapons. They are part of the same package.

The basis of the defence policy is that same map I described to you earlier. It was clear to us that New Zealand's location and the nature of the surrounding region had to be the starting points. I must tell you that that notion was rather novel. We have a history of military involvement in other parts of the world. New Zealand troops have served in various major and lesser campaigns in Europe, Africa and Middle East, parts of

Asia and the Western Pacific. But we have never really felt we needed to worry about the area closest to home.

That frame of mind dated back to the days of the British Empire. It lingered on partly from a belief that any independent defence effort by New Zealand was meaningless. Because the forces arrayed against us were so great, the argument ran, our only option was to maintain solidarity with our allies and rely on them to protect us. This effectively ruled out a useful independent military role for New Zealand. It also abdicated to others the main determinants of our foreign policy.

We went back to the map. We noted that Cam Ranh Bay is closer to Athens that it is to Auckland. We looked at New Zealand's location in relation to the strategic points of the Pacific Basin. We considered the military resources of other countries in the region. We took account of some simple facts of logistics. The conclusion seemed a matter of common sense. They were novel only in the sense that they overturned much of the conventional wisdom. We had to conclude that New Zealand did not face a risk of invasion or major attack. But we also had to accept that there was potential for real problems at a lower level.

The less conventional military threats are almost the norm today. The lowest and ugliest end of the scale is terrorism, which has become endemic in the modern world. These days not even the South Pacific is spared. The current violent unrest in New Caledonia, our nearest neighbor, is a matter of real concern to us. So, too, is the fact that a year ago our region experienced its first military coup—in Fiji. These developments highlight the relevance of our commitment to a regional and conventional defence role. **Nuclear weapons are of no relevance to the instability created by colonial struggles, ethnic differences, or economic deprivation.**

Security Commitments To The South Pacific

New Zealand's commitment to the security of the South Pacific is beyond question. We have constitutional obligations which we intend to uphold to a number of islands in the South Pacific region, including the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau. Those islands are up to 2000 miles from Auckland. We have a variety of defence links with other island states in the region. And we have reaffirmed our long-standing treaty commitments and active military alliance with Australia. The logic of this regional framework is very plain. As part of a collective effort it has a wider value.

We are now moving to reshape our forces and equip them for the situations they are most likely to face. Until now we have had half the effective strength of our army in Singapore. Those personnel are coming back to New Zealand. And because we are a maritime nation, with defence responsibilities throughout a vast region that is mostly water, we are having to build up our naval capabilities— particularly for supply and support. We have just taken delivery of a new tanker and we are working on plans for other new ships.

So we are developing realistic capabilities to operate in a small way throughout a large region. Given the scale of things in the South Pacific, we consider that a useful goal. We are taking a modern approach tailored to modern defence needs. But let me come back to my earlier point about considering security in its broadest sense. We did not confine ourselves to military questions, nuclear or otherwise. For the fact is that the real threat faced by many of our smaller island neighbours in the South Pacific is natural disaster or market collapse.

Cyclones every year wreak havoc somewhere in our region. For countries whose economies are already fragile, a series of storms can threaten the whole basis of their national well-being. Each year New Zealand helps to restore the damage—and our armed forces will have a key role in this recovery programme. It is not just the weather we have to worry about. We and many of our neighbours are part of the Pacific rim of fire. We have our own local equivalents of Mount St. Helens and the San Andreas Fault. Wellington sits on a major fault line and Auckland, our largest city, straddles a volcanic zone.

We have adopted an approach which explicitly recognizes that security has economic as well as military aspects, particularly for the islands of the South Pacific. Our policies and the resources we put into maintaining our security have to be measured on that basis. For us it is a matter of common sense that an ability to assist in the event of a major disaster in the region should be one of the roles of our military forces.

I have dwelt at some length on the question of security because I would like our approach to be understood for what it is. It is, above all, a practical response to New Zealand's circumstances and needs, and to those of our neighbours. If it differs from the approach others might favor, that is because our situation calls for different solutions. It will be apparent from what I have said that our wider regional and international commitments were very much a factor in the decisions we took.

The Changing Framework of International Relations

I said I proposed to talk about "Small States and Big Issues." You have heard something of what we have been doing over the last few years in terms of specific New Zealand policy on major issues. But what of the wider picture? What are the trends we have to take account of when we look ahead? One fundamental shift is now visible. That is the weakening of the bipolar framework for international relations. Many of the assumptions around which postwar alignments have been built are today being challenged. The reasons have a lot to do with the changing pattern of economic development.

American commentators have recently been dwelling on the fact that the relative strength of the U.S. economy has declined. Stronger growth in other parts of the world has been shifting the center of economic gravity away from the Atlantic. These shifts have important consequences. We seem to be moving beyond a phase during which international alignments were dominated entirely by American and Soviet strategic resources.

Richard Nixon, I think, had an early glimpse of the trend when in 1969 in Guam he spelled out his expectation that American allies would start to take on primary responsibility for their own security. Much of what New Zealand has been doing meets this objective. By asserting greater self-reliance and promoting increased regional self-help, we enhance the peaceful development of our region and also further the interests of the U.S.

So we are adjusting to something resembling a multipolar framework for international relations. For countries used to clarity and certainty in their allegiances, that means a new requirement for agility and flexibility. The globe is going to have shades of grey as well as red, white and blue.

There have been other major developments. For the first time in many years major progress has been achieved in the field of arms control. I believe that the INF agreement signed by President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev in Washington in December will prove to have been a turning point. The elimination of an entire class of nuclear weapons is an achievement that I am sure will be applauded by all who are here tonight.

I take further encouragement from the fact that negotiations on a strategic arms reduction treaty are making substantial progress. It is my own view that these achievements have been assisted by a

growing appreciation that even within the traditional framework of deterrence there are limits to the real contribution that nuclear weapons can offer to international security. And certainly we have concluded that the traditional priority given to the threat of nuclear conflict between East and West is of declining relevance as the basis for New Zealand policy.

Where Do We Go From Here?

The movement towards nuclear arms reduction has acquired some momentum. But in areas such as Europe it is clear that that process can be maintained only if the level of conventional arms can be reduced at the same time. If the management of East-West relations is to be put on a sounder footing, that issue will need to be addressed. Meanwhile, we should not let the long-standing focus on East-West confrontation obscure real problems in other areas.

It is true that direct conflict between the superpowers has been avoided for four decades. It is clear that the nuclear powers themselves remain acutely conscious that any use of nuclear weapons would have unimaginable consequences. On that level, an uneasy stability has been maintained. But in terms of keeping the peace, the wider picture is dismal. The United Nations Secretary-General has recently reminded us that 17 million people have perished in conflicts around the world since 1945. That represents an appalling record of loss and human misery. And the loss continues.

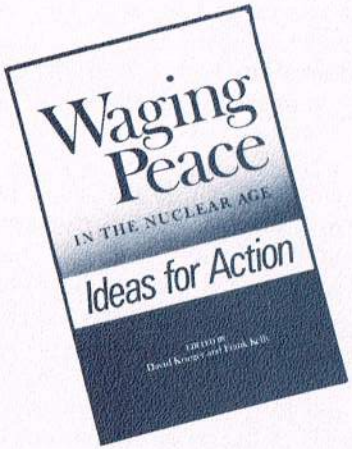
There are no signs that the pattern is about the change. In some regions conflict has become endemic. Against that background, and taking account of the increasing technical resources of many developing countries, nuclear proliferation is the great threat.

The risks of the development and deployment of nuclear weapons by regional powers, who might not feel the same constraints as the present nuclear powers, are immense. And they are real. That gives a special urgency to current moves by the nuclear powers to reverse direction on weapons development and deployment. We cannot hope to control nuclear proliferation until the superpowers themselves are in a position to show that they are making permanent and continuing reductions in their arsenals.

I have ranged widely tonight. My purpose has been to offer you a view of some of today's issues from the rather different perspective of one of the smaller members of the international community. If there is

one thing I have wanted to point out clearly it is this: even though a small country may see some issues differently from its larger cousins, that does not suggest that its grip on reality is any less firm. There has never been any correlation between wisdom and size. As a small nation, we are the ones who can least afford to live on myths. We know our region best. We are happy to share this information with our friends.

Although our views on some wider issues differ, this does not mean that our friendship is less strong and sincere. Indeed, the best friends are those who tell you honestly and directly how they feel. The matters I have been discussing, many of which I know are of close concern to this Foundation and its members, are real issues which have required practical responses. But a certain amount of vision is also required. California of all places, I believe, shows the pragmatism and imagination—together with the vision and purpose this Foundation represents—that are essential ingredients of the more secure international environment we all seek.



Waging Peace

Ideas for Action

Edited by David Krieger and Frank K. Kelly
342 pages, $9.95

The Nuclear Age Peace Foundation has recently published a new book **Waging Peace, Ideas for Action**, which contains many of the innovative proposals put forward in the **Waging Peace** series. The book also contains suggestions for your own involvement in reversing the nuclear arms race. It is a book filled with positive ideas for action by many leading thinkers of our time including, Ted Turner, Rodrigo Carazo, Seymour Melman, and Nobel Laureates Hannes Alfvén, Jan Tinbergen and George Wald.

For information on obtaining this book at an introductory price, please write to:

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