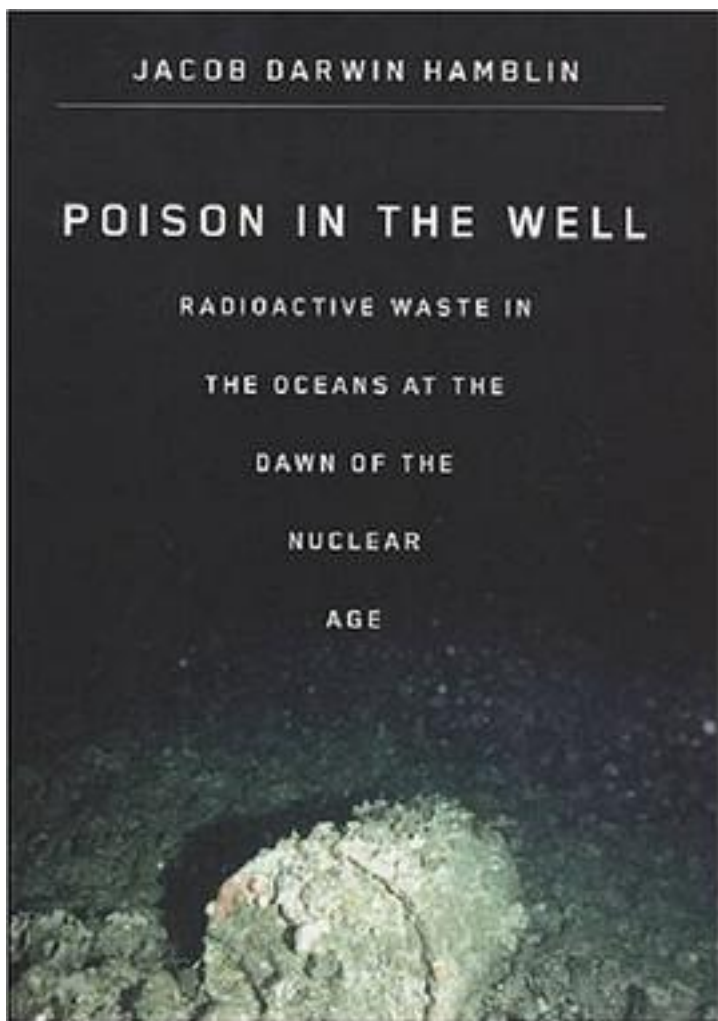


Poison in the Well



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In the early 1990s, Russian President Boris Yeltsin revealed that for the previous thirty

years the Soviet Union had dumped vast amounts of dangerous radioactive waste into rivers and seas in blatant violation of international agreements. The disclosure caused outrage throughout the Western world, particularly since officials from the Soviet Union had denounced environmental pollution by the United States and Britain throughout the cold war while undertaking their own radioactive dumping in secret. It may be instructive to link environmental pollution to the Soviet Union's corruption and failed political ideology, but as Jacob Hamblin writes in *Poison in the Well*, there is much to learn from the processes that shaped these same issues in the West. The United States and Britain were the first countries to begin sealing radioactive waste into large metal drums and disposing of them in oceans. These countries' policy decisions, scientific conflicts, public relations strategies, not to mention mishaps and subsequent cover-ups, defy convenient generalizations about secrecy and openness in the East and West during the cold war era. Why did scientists and politicians choose the sea for waste disposal? How did negotiations about the uses of the sea change the way scientists, government officials, and ultimately the lay public envisioned the oceans? This book traces the development of the issue from the end of World War II to the blossoming of the environmental movement in the early 1970s. The salient difficulty was that the by-products of the nuclear age were deadly and would remain so for indefinite periods of time. Many controversial solutions were proposed over the years, and indeed the problem has yet to be solved: even today's scientists and politicians clash over plans to house the nation's most dangerous materials in Nevada's Yucca Mountain.

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