

Related notes of Soviet Visit - December 28-31, 1967 - F. A. Long

Jerry Wiesner and I called on Deputy Minister for Science and Technology Gvishiani. We had hoped also to see his superior, Kirillin, who turned out to be unavailable. Wiesner had toured the Soviet Union with Gvishiani in one of his earlier visits and knew him well.

Much of the discussion was on Soviet-US relations. Apparently there had been some preliminary talk about bilateral exchanges involving MIT and Soviet engineers. According to Gvishiani, the general idea of such a bilateral student exchange is interesting to them. Under it Soviet students would go to the United States for a period of 3 to 6 months and larger numbers of US students might come to the USSR for shorter periods, e.g. 3 weeks or so. He went on to say that the official exchange procedures are awkward. It is not that they fail, but that they are inflexible and overladen with bureaucracy on both sides. He also noted that the pure "academic" exchange is, from their standpoint, rather sterile. What they particularly like is for their engineers to have a mixed sort of visit, in which they do some studying, perhaps do some research in a commercial concern, and have some general responsibility to look at equipment with a view to purchasing, i.e. they like to see a linkage between study and commercial activity. Apparently the Soviet had this kind of arrangement with a number of European concerns but none with the US.

Gvishiani spoke in somewhat gloomy terms about US-USSR trade. He noted that the Fiat machine tool decision was, in his view, unfortunate.

He went on to say that, in fact, a moderate amount of information on US processes and equipment is coming in to the Soviet Union via Europe, i. e. via subsidiary concerns which America has in Europe.

Before we left Gvishiani returned to the question of arrangements with universities, with a general belief that they should attempt to do more. He repeated that he was quite prepared to enter into bilateral arrangements between universities and similar groups in his country and MIT and Cornell. He also noted that he will be in the US in April for the meeting of the UN Committee on which he serves.

Gvishiani is an impressive man. He is young and vigorous. He seems very well organized and incisive.

On the night of the 29th, Doty, Wiesner and I went to Millionshchikov's house. Kapitza, Emelyanov and Voslensky were also there. It was a bachelor dinner party. The entire evening was spent in a friendly and easy way. Much of the talk was general and concerned science developments in the USSR, interesting programs and similar topics. Some time was devoted to general discussion of the Vietnam war, which is a matter of great concern to all of the Russian intellectuals. It was during this period that Kapitza pleaded for a little more time the next day to finish the discussion of Vietnam. We also talked some about scientific exchanges, with the US group repeating again the difficulties of exchange programs which had to go through a form of bureaucracy.

On Saturday, the 30th, Keldesh gave a reception for the group and also for Talcott Parsons. It was a brief luncheon with a minimum of toasts. I presented Keldesh with some material on the US space program, including a book of the Gemini photographs. During the discussion I asked Keldesh if he had reacted to the data from the US Kurile Island experiments which had been forwarded to him. He professed ignorance of the forwarding. In spite of that I repeated our general belief that we should have more cooperation in this sort of thing and told him we would look forward to receiving the data from their current Kurile experiments. He had no response to this.

The Soviet gave the group a New Year's Eve party the night of the 31st. It was in a private room in the House of Science, which also had that same evening a very large New Year's party for Soviet scientists. This, too, was exceedingly friendly and gay (in a somewhat decorous manner). One of the more interesting flareups there came when Peter Kapitza had been commenting on things and said something to the effect that Vietnam interfered with better exchanges. His wife flared up on this in an indignant way and said, "Vietnam is like a dark shadow over all of our lives; it is always with us; when will it ever cease?" It is clear that her state of emotional involvement is high.

There were numerous private exchanges between Soviet and individuals of the US group. It was characteristic in these exchanges that

the Soviet were quite outgoing and free with information. As one example, Artsimovich was quite prepared to analyze the FOBS system and conclude that it had first strike potential. As another, Millionshchikov was willing to discuss specific meetings and to make the point that, formally, the Soviet should be host to the next meeting, perhaps in the spring in the south of Russia, but that perhaps it would be equally easy and worth considering to have the meeting in the United States in a place similar to the previous discussion at Endicott House.

It was in private discussions that the Soviet noted that they had closer contacts with Kosygin than they had had with Khrushchev and that specifically they had seen Kosygin before these current meetings and expected to see him again in the next week or so.

I had brought along some facts about Soviet oceanography from Glenn Schweitzer and hoped to ask questions but found no reasonable place to do so.