News and Comment

East-West Exchanges: Viet Strife Has Had No Immediate Effects, But Soviets Unresponsive to Expansion

Since its inception in 1958, the Soviet-American exchange program has been shielded from the Cold War by a sort of political iron lung. The program has never shown great vigor, but both sides obviously see utility in some East-West traffic, and even during the various Berlin and Cuban crises the exchanges have, by and large, gone on as planned.

That pattern is now continuing, despite the tensions that have arisen from American bombing of the Soviets' ideological associates in North Vietnam. But among many persons connected with exchange activities there is also the feeling that the long and enduring Vietnamese war has created a chill that seriously limits the possibility of employing science and culture as a device for expanding relations between the two countries. As one person put it, "We are just coasting."

Since bickering and charges of bad faith have marred the exchange program even during periods of relative placidity in Soviet-American relations, it is difficult to establish that any current frictions are peculiarly related to the Vietnam situation. Bouncing out each others' students for allegedly improper conduct is a well-established part of the pattern, and the volume of recent ousters is just about at par. Furthermore, there are parts of the formal agreements—such as film exchanges and visits by prominent cultural figures—that have never been fully carried out. But beyond these standard difficulties, there is some evidence that the Soviets and some of the Eastern-bloc nations are reacting with an unusual amount of chill to American initiatives for closer scientific and cultural ties. This behavior is, presumably, in harmony with recent Soviet indications that matters of disarmament and trade cannot be fruitfully discussed while the U.S. is heavily involved in the Vietnam war.

Just what is going on in respect to scientific exchange activities is difficult to ascertain. This is in large part because American scientific leaders feel that science has proved to be a uniquely effective channel for communicating with the Russians throughout the Cold War, and that it is therefore prudent to play down the difficulties and to go to great lengths to encourage friendly relations with Soviet researchers and administrators. (One U.S. scientist recently commented that an associate of his thinks rather poorly of a particular Soviet research effort; nevertheless, he said, the associate spoke well of it in a public statement "because he was worried about how his Soviet colleagues might react" if he were frank.)

In any case, there have been some recent incidents which support the thesis that conditions are not now favorable for further expansion of scientific relations between the U.S. and the Soviet bloc. According to some Washington sources, the Soviets suddenly, and without explanation, withdrew their acceptance of an invitation to attend a privately arranged, publicly unannounced meeting of high-level scientists that was scheduled to be held during the spring in Europe. Those who were to attend included scientists who are considered to be close to their government's political councils.

Another case of shying away from Western initiatives involves Rumania, which had recently been showing an unusual degree of interest in closer relations with the West. Last May an American scientific delegation was scheduled to visit Rumania—a visit that had been arranged well in advance with what seemed to be considerable enthusiasm on the part of the hosts. Not long before the delegation's arrival date the Rumanians canceled the visit on the grounds that the meeting conflicted with a particularly busy time in the academic year. On the American side, it is acknowledged that the end of the school year is in fact a busy time for academicians, but this was evident when the date was agreed upon. Efforts are being made to reschedule the meeting for this fall, but the outcome is not certain.

Against a background of continuing exchange traffic east and west, it is well to remember that too much might be read into these two incidents. In the latter half of last year, some 575 Americans took part in formally arranged scientific, technical, cultural, and academic exchanges with the Soviet Union, while 486 Soviet citizens in these exchange categories came this way. This year a similar pace is being maintained, and there is also a good deal of visiting and professional contact that takes place outside of the carefully prescribed agreements. But in the view of some of the people who are close to the situation, the Soviets are unresponsive and even recalcitrant when overtures are made for new undertakings. With the current 2-year exchange agreement due to expire at the end of this year, there seems to be no expectation in Washington that the Soviets will favor anything but the *status quo*. Some indication of their feelings may be had during the next few days when the continuing committee of the Pugwash conference will hold a meeting. This has no direct connection with the exchange program, but it has in the past served as a forum where American and Russian scientists can speak candidly.

In general, however, the attitude among Washington officials seems to be that, in the present international situation, the exchange program will be doing well if it can manage to retain its present level. The American proposals have not yet been formulated, but it can be expected that the U.S. will, as in the past, seek agreements for lengthier visits involving more people, fewer restrictions on travel, and increased opportunities for attendance at Soviet scientific meetings.

It is generally assumed, of course, that the United States takes the initiative for expanding exchanges and the Soviets resist opening their doors. This seems to be a fair assessment of how things have worked in the past, but a recent development in the Senate suggests that political sentiment in the U.S. may be suffering some side effects

from the Vietnamese war. This development involves the Soviet-American consular treaty, which was signed in Moscow last year as another step in what then seemed to be a growing East-West thaw. The treaty, which had been under negotiation for 4 years, provided the legal framework for each country to expand its diplomatic representation beyond Moscow and Washington, a step which the administration favored as a means of creating good will and also of making it easier to look after the growing volume of American tourist travel in the U.S.S.R. Last month the Senate Foreign Relations Committee reported out the treaty with only one dissent. Subsequently, however, five members of the 18-member committee expressed doubts about the wisdom of permitting the Soviets to open offices outside of Washington. The opponents pointed out that FBI director J. Edgar Hoover has warned that the consular treaty is "a cherished goal of the Soviet intelligence" service. He didn't make it clear why plainly labeled Soviet diplomats would present a difficult problem for the FBI. But Senate leaders seem to feel unsure of getting the necessary two-thirds approval for the treaty, and at this point they do not plan to bring it up for a vote, their rationale presumably being that no treaty is preferable to a defeated treaty.

Russians in Illinois

Though the exchange program is generally insulated against the political winds that seem to be affecting the consular treaty, it never can be completely independent of the surrounding atmosphere, and not a season goes by without a few unpleasant incidents. In many of these cases it is hard to keep track of the provocation and response cycle, since our response can be their provocation, and vice versa. A recent round of ousters illustrates the situation. Last June the State Department ordered the expulsion from the U.S. of two Russians enrolled at the University of Illinois—Avenir Velikanov, an inorganic chemist, and Juri Pirogov, a ceramic engineer. According to the State Department they were expelled for having traveled more than 25 miles from the place of their studies without permission, Velikanov having gone to a meeting of the Electro-Chemical Society in San Francisco, and Pirogov having gone to Salt Lake City, Las Vegas, and Phoenix.

Both were here under the auspices of the Inter-University Committee on Travel Grants, which annually sponsors exchanges of 25 or so Soviet and American doctoral and postdoctoral students. Under the committee's agreement with the Soviets, the course of study is supposed to conclude with a tour of the host country. Permission, according to the State Department, is relatively simple to obtain: the visitor merely has to notify the State Department of his itinerary within 4 working days of departure; once having done this he does not even have to wait for specific approval. If he wishes to attend a professional meeting he must obtain an invitation. Otherwise, with the obvious exception of areas that have military significance, it would appear that Soviet exchangees can move about rather freely, in the spirit of the international brotherhood of men of science.

Now, just a few days prior to the Electro-Chemical Society's meeting, Velikanov requested permission to attend. According to Robert Kolbe, assistant executive secretary of the society, "the bylaws of the society provide that Iron Curtain visitors must have the approval of the board to attend meetings." The board, Kolbe said, was en route to San Francisco for the meeting and could not be contacted. Therefore, permission, if not denied, was certainly not granted, although the meeting was wide open to the public and anyone who paid the registration fee could attend. On this basis, Velikanov walked in, sporting a name badge that listed his nationality. Someone—no one seems to know who—notified the State Department of his presence, and he was ordered to leave the country.

In the case of Pirogov, the State Department reports that he filed his travel itinerary as required, but that it was "turned down at the request of an agency other than the State Department for temporary reasons." Pirogov went anyway; his movements were reported to the State Department—by whom, it is not stated—and he, too, was told to get out. Not long after we kicked out the two University of Illinois Russians, their countrymen ousted one of our students from the University of Leningrad, on the grounds that he was distributing anti-Soviet literature. But before we expelled the Illinois Russians, it appears, they put out one of our people on undefined grounds; at about the same time, we ousted some of their people on an assortment of charges, including a penchant for drink and poor academic standing. At present the score appears to be even. However, the Illinois Russians were expelled at about the time they were going to leave anyway, which may possibly have some effect on the official scoring.

Where is the truth? What does all this mean? It is difficult to say, since reliable information is sparse, and strong passions are easily aroused on the subjects of scientific freedom and how to get along with the Russians. The ouster of the Illinois Russians was the topic of a caustic letter that three scientists sent to an eastern newspaper. When one of them was asked if he could supply some details about the case, he replied, "I know very little about it. I just signed the letter."

Someone who knows a little more about it explained that the Russians have given our students a very difficult time on travel, insisting that they move about in groups accompanied by official guides; and, he said, they also skin our students on the rate of exchange for dollars. Are we retaliating by throwing out a few of their students? "No," was the answer, "but we feel that it is essential to insist upon the reciprocity principle to protect the rights of Americans who wish to study and travel in the Soviet Union."

—D. S. GREENBERG

Drug Abuse: Tighter Controls Placed on Amphetamines and Barbiturates; Law to Cover Other Drugs Later

The Food and Drug Administration is gearing up to administer a new law which places tighter controls on manufacturers and distributors of barbiturates, amphetamines, and other "psychotoxic" drugs. The measure rolled through Congress almost frictionlessly and was signed into law by the President early in July.

Known as the Drug Abuse Control Amendments of 1965, the bill alters the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act. The new provisions do not go into effect until 1 February. The FDA, therefore, has time to prepare to enforce the new law, which, in essence, requires an increase in record-keeping along the chain of manufacture and distribution of stimulant and depressant drugs and also gives the FDA stronger investigatory powers.