# 1979

# A Dialogue With The Soviets: Nuclear Weapons, Disarmament and Nuclear Energy

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## Summary:

Report from American Friends Service Committee describing the organization's late September/early October 1979 visit to the Soviet Union. Details topics of discussion, which included the current status of Cuba, the SALT treaty, the role of NATO in disarmament, and the numerous issues surrounding nuclear energy. Aimed at promoting positive discourse and the importance of a candid exchange between the United States and the Soviet Union, in opposition to further militarization.

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## Contents:

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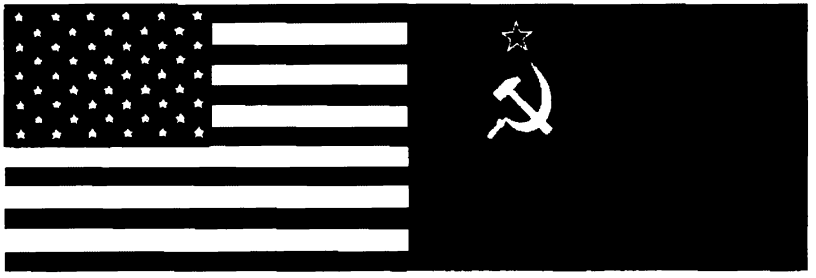

American Friends Service Committee
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# A DIALOGUE WITH THE SOVIETS: NUCLEAR WEAPONS, DISARMAMENT AND NUCLEAR ENERGY

September 22 - October 1, 1979

by Everett Mendelsohn

For two weeks in late September and early October, 1979 a delegation called together by the American Friends Service Committee visited the Soviet Union. The intent of the group was to discuss the nuclear arms race and the relations between military and civilian uses of nuclear energy. Members of the group included a number of activists directly involved in nuclear disarmament projects and others with long interest in nuclear warfare, disarmament and nuclear energy issues:

Dr. Helen Caldicott
Dr. William Sloan Coffin
Dr. Arthur Macy Cox
Marta Daniels
Dr. William Harris
Dr. Everett Mendelsohn
Wendy Mogey
Terry Provance
Pam Solo

Our discussion centered around six issues: (1) Cuba, the Soviet interpretation of what Cuba means for the current SALT discussions, and ratification procedures in the Senate and what the Soviets think it means for the development of U.S. policy; (2) the SALT treaty itself, the ratification process in the Senate, and Soviet views regarding the implications of potential failure to ratify the treaty; (3) what comes after SALT, especially initiatives for capping the arms race; (4) Euro-strategic weapons and the decisions that NATO will be making in the next two and one-half months concerning their deployment; (5) talking to the Soviets about what it means to talk to Americans; and (6) nuclear energy, particularly focusing on weapons proliferation, waste

disposal, health matters, and alternative perspectives for energy.

Overall Evaluation:

Having made a number of visits in the last decade and a half to the Soviet Union to discuss political and disarmanent issues, I found on this visit a greater flexibility in mind, a greater willingness to explore approaches that were not theirs, than I had found at any previous time. The involvement of increasing numbers of people in discussions of this sort with Americans and other Europeai shows. Their ability to hear our ideas, reflect on them, as well as to expound their own ideas, was impressive. This confirms a view which a number of others, particularly those in and around Pugwash, have had, that there is the beginning of a substantial, knowledgeable, disarmament-oriented community within the Soviet intellectual and policy world, and particularly among senior advisors to the Soviet government. The frankness we had in our discussions, however, means that we really cannot attribute statements directly to many people by name. Instead, we are able to list the people with whom we talked and to describe the different issues we talked about and the kinds of responses we found in general terms.

Cuba and SALT

Let me turn first to the Cuba issue. We discussed this issue at two places--one, the Institute of the U.S.A. and Canada, which is one of the Institutes of the Academy of Sciences, which are not only scholarly, but from which several members (including its Director) are very senior advisors to the Soviet government. We talked with them in groups, and on one or two occasions, on an individual basis. Further, we talked directly with two high-ranking members of the Soviet

  

Foreign Ministry, both of whom had been deeply involved in the SALT negotiations at the very highest levels.

Cuba worries them, and the American response to Cuba worries them. It worries them because they see the issue of Cuba and the question of troops there as unrelated to the SALT negotiations except in the most general way. They felt that the American reaction to what was purportedly discovered is a contrived reaction; they felt that the issue was being used by hawks as a way of undermining the credibility of SALT within the Senate. They were particularly disturbed by the fact that it was the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Frank Church, who broke the issue and broke it in as negative a manner as possible. They were worried by the sharp positions people took--"SALT ratification is not possible unless the Soviets change their current position," said Frank Church. "The status quo will mean the defeat of SALT," said the Carter administration in one of its early briefings.

Within the course of our discussion in the Foreign Ministry they gave their explanation of the Cuban situation in the following terms. At the time of the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, there had been between 25,000 and 30,000 Soviet troops and the beginnings of missile emplacements. During the negotiations that took place at that time the Soviet Union agreed to cut down their troops and to withdraw missiles on a reciprocal basis. At the same time, the U.S. cut back troop emplacements and withdrew its forward base missile system from Turkey. The reciprocity was in the agreement and in the signed documents at the time. Their feeling is that at the moment this reciprocity is being undercut.

I would stress here the extent to which reciprocity is an important concept for the Soviets; they came back to it over and over again in the discussion. It was on this basis that they felt something else was happening in the current situation beyond the actual problem of troops. They pointed out that there are approximately 2500 Soviet troops involved, they say, in training missions, and 1300 Soviet civilian personnel involved in back-up, training, and support systems. They point out that these 2500 troops are comparable to the number of U.S. troops stationed at the Guantanamo Naval Base on Cuban soil. Further, they note that these 2500 troops and civilian advisors, while they rotate in and out, have been in Cuba constantly since 1962, and they point out that American intelligence has known this constantly since 1962. They have had neither opportunity to hide this nor reason to do so, and they list a number of documents and statements made by U.S. intelligence over the years showing that the presence of Soviet troops in Cuba has been known and monitored all along. With this in mind, then, they wonder what will come next from the U.S. political arena and they expressed real fears that this may undermine the SALT ratification procedures. I confess that we couldn't help but be in general agreement with their sense of total disillusionment of the introduction of the Cuba issue into the middle of the SALT ratification process.

SALT Ratification - Soviet Perspectives

Let me turn to SALT and indicate who it was that we talked to on this issue. In addition to the Foreign Ministry and the Institute of the U.S.A. and Canada, we talked to members of the Institute of World Economics and International Relations, the senior

editor of Izvestia, who is well known as a personal advisor to Brezhnev as well as being one of the senior columnists and commentators in the Soviet political system, a former admiral, with connections to the Ministry of Defense. We also had conversations on the issue with several political officers at the U.S. Embassy.

There is little doubt that SALT looms large in the Soviet perspective and that they place great importance on its ratification without substantial amendment. They feel that if the treaty must go back to renegotiation, the process may be thoroughly undercut. They see a lack of leadership in directing SALT through the Senate, and this concerns them. They wonder about whether the U.S. is indeed serious about arms control or whether SALT is being used as a pretext for further advancement of arms, and they point out that the Senate is insisting on a 5% increase in arms spending for next year.

Equality

A couple of issues involved in SALT are important to underline. First, the concept of equality. SALT II, as no prior U.S.-Soviet agreement does, includes an agreement that the weapons capabilities on both sides now have reached equality. To the Soviets this was a terribly important step, for in their view, as long as they were seen as the second-rate power, they were in position to be manipulated. Having announced equality and written it into the treaty, they now claim that there is a new position from which to move toward more general arms reduction rather than just arms control.

Soviet Data:

A second item which is terribly important from the U.S. point of view is that the treaty gives real numbers. For the first

time in a signed treaty with the Soviets there are accounting systems. We know how many missiles they have in place and of what sort. That both the Soviets and the U.S. have agreed on the actual numbers of weapons in existence gives a base line from which any future negotiations can take place. In the past this has been a difficult issue, but in this case the Soviets have given the numbers that we have always said are necessary. Further, the treaty includes the full expectation of verification. Both sides believed that they had confidence in their own inspection and verification systems.

If SALT Fails

What if SALT fails? Certainly this was the major question on the minds of the Soviets with whom we talked, and in our minds as well. None of us in our delegation is a vigorous supporter of SALT itself, but all are vigorous opponents of its defeat, and this was communicated to our hosts. SALT, we felt, does not go nearly far enough in stopping the arms race; on the contrary, it allows continued escalation. On the other hand, the defeat of SALT in the current political situation could well mean not only a turn-back in political terms, a turn-back to Cold War attitudes (which, after all, is exactly what the opponents of SALT in the Senate and outside are calling for), but could also trigger a substantial addition to the arms race. This addition could be very dangerous in that it would involve the deployment of counterforce weapons and the concommitant adoption of a "first-strike" strategy. Both sides seem able to move to these weapons in the very near future (in the U.S. the MX system and in the Soviet Union the continuing MIRVing of missiles, for example). These weapons, if deployed, become more difficult to verify or inspect and may increase the illusion that

fighting a nuclear war is possible, and under certain circumstances necessary. A failure to ratify SALT at this time would almost certainly provide strong incentives for each side to achieve weapons superiority rather than the current equality. These factors would substantially increase the difficulties in negotiating any future treaty and would mean that the overall level of weapons deployed would be increased. The instabilities created by potential weapons inequalities, probable first-strike capacity, and decreased verifiability could add a significant new element of insecurity to a world already insecure and unstable enough.

A Nuclear Moratorium

In our discussions with the Soviets, we tried out several of our own ideas, exploring their responses to several elements of the political program we are developing for the U.S. The first of these was the idea of a moratorium on the deployment, testing, and production of nuclear weapons. We see these as linked, but separable in terms of negotiation.

Freeze and Deployment

The proposal addressed most directly was that of a freeze of deployment of strategic nuclear weapons. We felt that we wanted to urge a freeze at the earliest possible moment, perhaps even a commitment to it before SALT was ratified, and certainly immediately after. This is particularly important given the nature of counterforce weapons and the time frame of SALT. SALT puts a limit on certain weapons until 1981, after which the long-range cruise missiles, ground and sea-launched and mobile ballistic missiles could be deployed if controls had not been extended through negotiation. The move to new weapons allowed by the treaty has negative consequences in terms of the nature of the weapons (counterforce capacity of some), in terms of the nature of the verifiability of the mobile systems.

  

and in terms of escalating of the arms race. We, therefore, see the next two years as critically important. With equality in place, with the numbers of weapons now recorded, with verifiability agreed to by both the Soviet Union and the United States, we are at a perfect place to put a cap on the arms race in strategic weapons, at least at the point of their deployment. This represents the last opportunity for ending the arms race.

Such a freeze speaks to some of the fears that people have. A major fear expressed in the Senate has been that the SALT agreement, as it now stands, allows the Soviets to increase substantially the number of missiles. This is because they will deploy more MIRV'd ICBM's. The Senate SALT opponents say that this means the Soviets can not only go past us, but achieve a kind of counter force ability within the treaty's terms itself which would put the U.S. at a disadvantage in a war. A freeze would prevent this from happening. It would also prevent the deployment of the MX and Trident II by the U.S. These are counterforce weapons. We were pleased by the interest shown in this proposal. At no point did we get a really negative response; at some places we got good, hard, intelligent, knowledgeable questions about what the implications would be both for SALT and after. We received strong affirmative response in the Foreign Ministry.

Total Ban on Testing

We explored the other elements of a moratorium, including a total ban on the testing of weapons. Such a ban is now possible with both nations having in principle said they are for it. However, the United States' desire to continue testing of very small weapons may be a problem. A total test ban at this point would be another significant way of cutting off the development of new weapons systems before they can be deployed. A ban on testing can be handled easily through

existing verification systems, requiring some black box monitoring, but not the complex monitoring systems which we thought necessary twenty years ago when we first began discussions with the Soviets on this issue. I believe a ban on testing represents a significant political item for the American disarmament agenda in the near future.

Ban on Production

The third element of moratorium was a ban on production of nuclear weapons. Stopping producing weapons not only releases resources for human and social needs, but it also means that the whole momentum of arms research and development activities would be phased down. When the production component of R. and D. is dropped out, the research component also tends to slow.

Verification

Problems of verification are real, however, and we directly addressed this issue with the Soviets. To verify a production ban reassures on-site inspection of a kind that we have not been able to negotiate with the Soviets to date. We raised the question of whether on-site inspection is possible and their response was "why not?" When we referred to the difficulties encountered in the past, they responded, "To the extent that you are really serious about a full ban on production, to that extent the amount of inspection that can be carried out on Soviet territory will also become more serious, right to the total limit." This response came from three different sources, indicating that part of our fear of not being able to reach agreement on inspection issues needs to be thoroughly re-examined. This included human on-site inspectors, as well as black boxes.

They linked any freeze and any moratorium to what to them looks like a major new threat coming through NATO.

Euro-Strategic Weapons

The speeches of Henry Kissinger and General Alexander Haig in September 1979 backed President Carter's proposal that NATO must decide in December to put in place a series of new weapons, medium range missile systems, the Pershing II and the cruise ground - launch systems, which would be based in Europe and have the capability of reaching the Soviet Union from Europe. Kissinger argued that these weapons are needed to give NATO the capability of waging "liminted nuclear wars." To the Soviets this represents a major escalation of the arms race in that it makes their cities and their weapons targets. The argument made by Kissinger and Haig is that we need more bargaining chips in our discussions with the Soviets. If we wish to avoid this escalation through NATO, we have only two and one-half months during which intense effort must be made to make sure that NATO does not go this route. The Soviets make the point that we should negotiate a cut in the Euro-strategic systems that now exist--the SS-20, the Backfire Bomber, and the missiles on the U.S. side emplanted in Germany--instead of going on to new weapons.

Background on the SS-20

The history of the European weapons controversy begins with Kissinger's deal with the Russians, that if they would leave the U.S. Forward Base missiles (carried by planes from aircraft carriers and Britain based bombers) out of the SALT II negotiations, in turn he would give them favored nation trade status. This deal was undercut by the Jackson-Vanik amendment to the trade bill, and the Russians responded by beginning deployment of the SS-20 and the Backfire Bomber

system targeted at Europe. These Soviet weapons, however, replaced older Soviet missiles (SS-4 and SS-5). Should we not push for reduction in both the SS-20 and backfire on their side and in our forward base missile system on our side rather than move into a new round of missile and counter missile, particularly of this medium range strategic form that is being proposed?

Two high Soviets, with whom we talked, saw a Soviet willingness to enter into discussion on reduction of these European systems rather than seeing NATO move ahead in putting them in place (Leonid Brezhnev's October 6 speech in Berlin confirmed our own gleamings). Many of those we talked to saw a reason to reduce their SS-20 Backfire system and our forward base system, if we were willing to do so. However, they note the additional difficulty represented by China and France. An independent Chinese and French nuclear capacity represents a direct threat to the Soviets. They urged a joint U.S.- Soviet approach to persuade China and France to join negotiations.

Military Cuts - Budget Data

Returning directly to one concept which they and we both discussed and which they have previously advanced is the idea of the reduction of defense budgets through a mutual 10% cut. We discussed the realities of such a notion with them and indicated that to ensure that a 10% cut occurs, there is need to have the proper data to measure it. Just as the SALT agreement can ensure what's going on because of the data given, so too to ensure a 10% reduction, you need the data, which means better budget data. We explored with them the ways of gaining this information--data which they traditionally do not give out. They said, however, that these kinds of statistics can be made available progressively as the seriousness of the reduction discussions grows. And they pointed directly to SALT as a precedent for more

  

forthcoming attitudes. They said that the difficulty they have had was with what they called established patterns in the past, but indicated their belief that these could be altered.

Economic Conversion

We raised the issue of economic conversion or, as they called it, reconversion from arms production to civilian production in our conversations. We suggested that were they, and we, to become involved in serious reconversion studies, taking sectors of the arms economy and indicating the ways in which they could be reconverted into civilian productive sectors, that this would provide "confidence building" steps. Each side could see the other thinking seriously about reconverting their economy in real segments to civilian uses in terms of time, numbers, people, etc.

Overall Assessment on Disarmament

How serious are the Soviets about disarmament? This is hard to assess in that both the U.S. and the Soviet Union have substantially increased their armaments every year since 1945 and we have seen little in the way of a pull-back. SALT I led to seven years of an arms race which quadrupled the number of nuclear weapons in possession on each side. During both the SALT I and SALT II negotiating processes, the Soviets very significantly increased their nuclear capacity, substantially catching up with the U.S. and gaining a functional equality. On the other hand, we did in 1962 negotiate a ban on nuclear weapons testing in the atmosphere, we did negotiate a SALT I treaty successfully, and we did negotiate a SALT II treaty successfully. As we look at the Soviet record in these, it's, if anything, somewhat more forthcoming than ours. Our technicians have taken the lead at almost every turn in the development of new weapons,

while the Soviets generally have been responders. I would conclude that the Soviets are serious about disarmament if they feel immediate threats are removed, particularly in terms of U.S. superiority which had been maintained up until the SALT II treaty, and if what they see as the threat in the east from China can be removed by bringing China into a broader negotiating system.

Soviet - U.S. Communications

Let me turn to the issue of the Soviets' talk to the U.S. In our discussions we were able to hear a whole series of very thoughtful, direct, specific comments on problems like a freeze and moratorium, problems like Euro-weapons, problems of getting data on budget cuts, and on reconversion models. Our question was, how can this kind of discussion which we were able to have be made available to the American public? Traditionally, Soviet press conferences are canned. A sloganeering statement is put out as the words of President Brezhnev, or one of the other senior officials, and there is little room for interaction and for the kind of probing which we found in our meetings. We talked to over 100 Soviet scientists, government people, advisors, and scholars, and many of these are extremely interesting in exchanges because they are flexible, knowledgeable about their system and ours. We urged them to be more forthcoming in their exchanges. We felt that the U.S. press ought to be sought out more by the Soviets and we felt that the Soviet Union had a lot to gain by allowing thoughtful and analytical people to talk to the U.S. press and to come to the United States for talks.

The U.S.S.R. and Nuclear Energy

Now to the final issue: nuclear energy. We visited the Soviet atomic energy installation at Novovoronezh, the largest in the

  

Soviet Union. We also met with the Deputy Director, and several of his associates, of the State Committee on Atomic Energy, which represents the equivalent to the Atomic Energy Commission in the U.S. We visited with a group at the Institute for Chemical Physics of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. We visited with several members of the very well known radium laboratory at the University of Leningrad. We visited with others in the University of Leningrad. We talked with a number of staff members of the Ministry of Health particularly concerned with radiation issues.

Commitment and Proliferation

We found an almost complete commitment to a strong nuclear energy policy. The Soviets are optimistic about being able to achieve the nuclear energy capacity that they want and they are optimistic about being able to solve any problems attendant on it. We raised what seems to us the most critical problem of nuclear energy--namely, proliferation of nuclear weapons through materials diverted from civilian uses. We cited the nations which have not directly been given bombs or bomb-making capacity by the super powers, but which have diverted technology or materials to gain actual nuclear weapons capacities--India, Pakistan, probably Brazil, probably South Africa, probably Israel. The Soviets were also concerned about this. However, they were quite sure that their own management of their systems was sufficiently tight, that there could be no diversion from it. They were fairly confident that in the reprocessing that they were engaged in for materials which came to them from other countries (they are one of the major enrichment and reprocessors of fuels for nuclear plants) and in the plants that they export they had control. We asked were they confident, however, in the ability of the International

Atomic Energy Agency, of which they were one of the major establishers, to handle the problem of proliferation. The answer from the State Committee on Atomic Energy was a very simple "no." They were not confident. When we talked about what this meant, the furthest they would go was to say that we need some more direct Soviet-U.S. cooperation on tightening up the whole area of civilian uses and diversions of civilian nuclear materials which could be used for weapons construction. In spite of the problems, however, they were committed to continuation of nuclear energy reactors. They point out, however, that their interest and worry about proliferation led them to alert the U.S. intelligence system of South Africa's growing capacity to make bombs. They pointed to this as indication of their good faith in opposing proliferation.

The Problem of Waste Disposal

We talked at length with people at all these places about the problem of waste disposal and handling of waste. They admitted at once that it was a critical question. Their general response, however, was one of technological optimism. They felt they could handle it and that technology would, if not today, certainly in the future, solve all the many unsolved problems that we raised with them. They pointed with satisfaction to their system of storing radioactive waste materials in multi-barrier systems within geological formations. They noted a large amount of experimentation with vitrification (that is, enclosing the waste in solid vitreous blocks), but they are not using that system yet. France is the only country that has begun doing it, but still on a very small level. They also noted that their civilian nuclear energy program is small by comparison to that of the U.S. or Western Europe. They have only 12 to 15 plants in

operation, and although they have more in planning, the amount of waste coming from their civilian system is small.

When asked about how waste from military production and production capacity facilities were handled, they said they didn't know. And it was quite clear that if they did know, they wouldn't tell us, and a complete curtain was drawn between discussion of civilian systems and military systems. This differs from the greater openness with which both civilian and military problems can be explored in the United States. This was not possible, at least by people like us, within the context of the Soviet Union.

Health and Safety

We then explored issues of health and medical genetic problems. They are aware of the issues; they participate in the International Commission for Radiation Protection and have their representatives on the Commission. However, it is fair to say that there was no crack in their agreement that they do safety well and that really there is no problem of radiation safety in the Soviet Union. They felt they could meet all the issues that we raised with them. On the other hand, I think it is fair to say that the data they gave us at the nuclear energy establishment we visited of the whole body radiation received by workers in the plant was much too optimistic to be true. It just doesn't meet with any of the technological realities which we know of from the operation of plants anywhere else in the world. And having seen their plant, while it was nice, it certainly was not that much more tightly constructed than the others we know of, and therefore I think we have to say that their optimism may be shielding a series of other issues or problems.

They shared with us their studies on environmental effects of radiation in the concentric circles around their plants and they said their studies show no environmental contamination whatsoever. Again, looking at data like that suggests that we are not getting the whole story. Radiation just does not behave in that way, however careful they may be. They pointed out over and over again that not being a system depending on economic competition, but one depending on planned and staged development, they weren't forced to race ahead the way a private corporation in the U.S. might. Perhaps, but nonetheless their total optimism really seemed problematic to us. Again, data from workers involved in manufacturing of weapons, or from areas around weapons manufacturing facilities, were totally unavailable.

Alternative Energy

We had one fascinating discussion on alternative energy futures with the group at the Institute of Chemical Physics. These were people who had been engaged in a number of Pugwash discussions. They knew what the issues under discussion were, both in the West and in the Soviet Union and had some very inventive approaches. They were particularly thoughtful and innovative in energy conservation. One of the points that one of their senior figures made is that they believed they should be developing new energy sources, particularly solar energy. There is experimentation and developmental work going on in this field, and it was his feeling that by the end of the century a fairly significant solar capacity will be developed. I was impressed by the extent to which this man really knew the numbers, the amounts of energy which could be gained from these different systems when used

in different ways. He was also very aware of the amounts of energy used in the various productive systems, the production of the goods, services, transport, etc., that a society uses. He was not talking in vague generalities, but he was pointing to very well researched ideas. His major thrust was that what had to occur now was a substantial move to conserve on energy in the production of goods, services, and transport. And he analyzed sectors of the economy and indicated ways in which there could be very substantial savings in the interim as new non-nuclear energy sources are developed. He said when he looks at the energy needs versus availability, the problem of an energy shortage is a problem of only one generation. Unfortunately, he said, it's our generation. He believed that a generation hence we will have new sources in place and, in addition, will have transformed the nature of our productive techniques to ensure substantially less energy use.

In other discussions they pointed to the potential for expanded use of their proved gas and coal reserves so that the Soviet Union for the foreseeable future will not be a net importer of energy resources. In the course of one discussion, the claim was advanced that in the next five-year plan there will be a substantial increase in budgeting for gas and coal use at the expense of nuclear energy. This was information given to us by a strong proponent of nuclear energy.

U.S.-Soviet Similarities

One of the things I think we can conclude is that the general discussion by those involved in nuclear energy in the Soviet Union is strikingly similar to that in the United States. Technological optimism abounded. There was a blindness to the longer-range problems and to the extent to which when uncertainties multiply--uncertainties

  

of proliferation, of waste, radiation, health--the rate of development ought to decrease.

We explored with them the idea of a moratorium of nuclear energy development, particularly in light of weapons proliferation problems, but met a generally negative response. We pointed also to health and safety elements which might be served by such a moratorium. The idea received a positive hearing only in the group who were seriously looking at alternative energy futures.

Conclusion

The discussions were wide-ranging, remarkably frank, and most important, suggestive of areas for specific political action and education. Particularly on issues of nuclear disarmament, the Soviets were very forthcoming and helped identify places where new initiatives could well lead to positive Soviet responses. On the planned deployment of new Eurostrategic weapons in NATO, we discovered not only their concern, but also proposals which might serve to reduce the nuclear threat in Europe rather than increase it. They were markedly positive to the concept of a freeze on deployment and production of all strategic nuclear weapons immediately after SALT II ratification. They firmly backed the need to move rapidly to SALT III negotiations so that another long hiatus between treaties does not become a period of arms escalation. They shared the concern for nuclear weapons proliferation, but held back from linking it to a slowed pace of development of civilian nuclear energy. The group felt that exchanges of the sort achieved were very valuable and hoped that they might be extended beyond the narrow circle of participants currently involved. The group encouraged the Soviets to move openly to engage the U.S. press in candid exchange.

After World War II, the AFSC was concerned to begin to ease the suspicions and tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. In 1949 Quaker scholars and businessmen travelled from Philadelphia to Washington, New York, and Lake Success (headquarters of the UN) to make contacts with anyone who could offer an opportunity to bring rapprochement with the Soviets. They maintained contact with the State Department and with the chief Russian delegates to the UN. They published a pamphlet, The United States and the Soviet Union, in which the authors were seeking to find the means to achieve a transition from an attitude of suspicion and hatred to one of tolerance and forbearance.

In 1955 the AFSC sent a team to the Soviet Union, to visit for a month. The team met with private individuals and officials, saw a variety of institutions and projects. A pamphlet based on this trip was issued, Meeting the Russians, and the team back in the U.S. lectured widely, wrote articles and attempted to interpret a more sympathetic and understanding account of the Russian scene than was usually found in American publications.

Also in 1955 the Conferences for Diplomats program in Europe, part of the AFSC International Divison's programs, issued invitations to the Soviet Foreign Ministry to have Soviet diplomats participate, and they began to do so in 1956. These opportunities for confidential dialogue brought the Soviets into an international grouping and also gave them increasing openness to AFSC initiatives.

Further direct exchanges over the last 20 years have included reciprocal seminars for academics, journalists, and social scientists, work-camp/seminars for young people, and a Secondary School Teacher exchange (now seconded to American Field Service). Our long concern and involvement with the Soviet Union has enabled us to continue contact with the many past participants in Moscow and Leningrad, and has given the AFSC an entree for dialogue with leading Soviet experts.

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