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COMMUNICATION TO THE EDITORS

Scientific Exchanges

Dear Sirs:

I endorse Mr. James McGrath's reply¹ to Mr. Amos Wylie's complaint concerning the "Unfair Exchange" of U.S. and Soviet scientific visits² and should like to make some additional comments from the point of view of those of us in the State Department who are concerned with these exchanges. As Mr. Wylie phrases his challenge to defend "the proposition that exchanges of visits by U.S. and Soviet scientists in fields related to the development of new weapons are in the U.S. national interest," one can scarcely take it up without labeling oneself a traitor or a fool. It is like the old question, "When did you stop beating your wife?" One can, however, quarrel with much of what Mr. Wylie says on two kinds of grounds—first, his often erroneous or incomplete set of facts, and second, his ignoring of the broader policy issues involved.

On the first point, Soviet scientists and other exchange visitors are admitted to the United States for specific itineraries only after clearance with the competent intelligence and security agencies, and changes or extensions of itinerary are subjected to a similar procedure. In the case of Oleg Roman which Mr. Wylie cites, for example, no objection was posed to his visit by the competent agencies, including CIA, Defense, and Commerce, all of which were consulted. Mr. Wylie notes that Roman attended the annual meeting of the Metallurgical Society of the American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical and Petroleum Engineers in New York City, a conference in Philadelphia, etc.: these trips had been checked out with the intelligence community, and no objections were posed. Yury Popov's visit in the field of lasers was similarly checked and cleared with the appropriate agencies. Mr. Wylie observes with surprise that the participants in "so-called student exchanges" are not undergraduate students; but undergraduate students have never been included in this exchange on

¹ "The Scientific and Cultural Exchange," in *Studies* VII 1, p. 25 ff.

² *Studies* VI 4, p. 9 ff.

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either side under any of the three U.S.-USSR exchange agreements, nor was an undergraduate exchange ever intended.

Mr. Wylie is anachronistic in pointing to the doctrine of analogy in Soviet law and in describing the crime of disclosure of state secrets. The doctrine of analogy was formally repudiated and the secrets law revised in 1958, and for some time previous to that the former had been inoperative in practice and the latter had not been applied in the manner described. This is not to say there are no sanctions or controls on Soviet scientists, but it shows the inadequate factual background and superficial approach of the article.

The whole question of the advantages and disadvantages of exchanges is a complex one. There is much to be said in support of the position that the disadvantages outweigh the advantages, and there is much to be said in support of the opposite view. It would indeed be a pity if the question were approached on the level of a polemical debate with distorted facts and simplified, superficial views of both one's own position and the other, as when Mr. Wylie attributes to advocates of exchanges the naive contention that Soviet scientists will be converted by visits to the United States.

In discussing this question one should also keep in mind certain political realities that limit one's freedom of choice in any case. With the gradual although limited emergence of the Soviet Union from the iron curtain of the Stalin era, our task is made more difficult in many ways. As Soviet scientists and other specialists are allowed or even encouraged to visit abroad, a U.S. refusal of visas on a massive scale would create such a negative world public image of the United States as to be virtually unthinkable. Furthermore, without an official (and controlled and limited) exchanges program such as we have at present we would be faced with many more ill-conceived invitations and even massive programs by often naive private groups that could be countered only by outright refusal of visas. On the positive side, the primary motivation of the official program, initiated at the highest levels of the government and approved by the National Security Council, was not intelligence but a political-psychological strategy designed to encourage, over a long period of time, liberalization of the Soviet system.

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This strategy looks to more than making a direct impact on the relatively few (and carefully selected) Soviet citizens who are allowed to come to this country (although in private many of these are not the rigid unswerving advocates of the Soviet system that they may appear in their public demeanor or in front of other Soviet citizens or most foreigners of short acquaintance). Probably of much more importance from the standpoint of "impact" is the presence in the Soviet Union of large numbers of foreigners, including Americans, and there is special advantage in having Russian-speakers who are specialists on Soviet society there long enough to establish a circle of acquaintances. Still more important are the indirect benefits of the exchanges program, the mere existence of which gives Soviet citizens a rationale and the courage to talk to foreigners or even to accept foreign ways. The regime itself, by taking one step in this direction, is encouraged to take more, because much of the iron curtain psychology is based on fear and feelings of inferiority toward the West.

Mr. Wylie proposes that exchange be limited to such fields as the arts, literature, and athletics, that is to those where U.S. interest is great and Soviet interest is meager or even negative. But the exchanges are all of one fabric. You can't abolish scientific exchanges without abolishing the *Amerika-USSR* magazine exchange, exchanges of exhibits, and other such informational activities. The Soviet Union is in the exchange business primarily for the sake of industrial and scientific benefits and would see no reason to agree to a program restricted to fields advantageous to the United States and disadvantageous to the Soviet Union.

Moreover, now that we have exchanges—for better or for worse—one would have to consider the political effects of eliminating the program. In addition to the disadvantages vis-a-vis a sizable part of the world public, an abolition of exchanges would tend to throw the Soviet Union back onto itself again—to strengthen the "Slavophil" element over the "Westernizer" element in Soviet psychology and thus to reinforce the cohesion of the Bloc, including Communist China. Although presumably not of decisive effect in present circumstances, it would remain a force in this direction.

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Do we get anything out of the exchanges from an intelligence standpoint? In the graduate student exchange it is true we have few scientific graduate students in the USSR and get little "hard" intelligence out of the program. (We probably wouldn't get much more if we had more scientific participants, in view of the levels of Soviet and U.S. competence in most fields and the Soviet restrictions.) There are some advantages of a political and largely current intelligence nature, however, in having a number of knowledgeable, mature Americans living in Soviet society and close, or relatively close, to the Soviet pulse. This is a resource that the American Embassy in Moscow can draw on from time to time, and its value is reflected in telegrams and airgrams, not in debriefings. Sometimes one sees direct reference to factual information obtained in this way (the Temir Tau riots, for example); in other cases it is simply a matter of analysis being given a somewhat broader base than it would otherwise have.

These remarks, written in reaction to Mr. Wylie's article, put more emphasis on the positive aspects of the program than is probably warranted. (I agree with his refutation, for example, of the claim by some superficial exchange advocates that since scientific information is available in published sources anyway the Soviets gain little or nothing from scientific visits.) I hope that sometime some of us who are familiar with the program at first hand may have time to weigh all aspects of the exchanges in a really serious study in depth.

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