

3-1990

Trip Report: Admiral Crowe's Visit to the Soviet Union, March 17-25, 1990

Jeffrey W. Legro

University of Richmond, jlegro@richmond.eduFollow this and additional works at: <https://scholarship.richmond.edu/polisci-faculty-publications>Part of the [International Relations Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Legro, Jeffrey W. *Trip Report: Admiral Crowe's Visit to the Soviet Union, March 17-25, 1990*. Occasional Papers (Soviet) 016. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1990.

This Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Political Science at UR Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Political Science Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of UR Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact scholarshiprepository@richmond.edu.

**RAND/UCLA
Center for Soviet Studies**

1700 Main Street, P.O. Box 2138, Santa Monica, California 90406-2138

**TRIP REPORT: ADMIRAL CROWE'S
VISIT TO THE SOVIET UNION**

Jeffrey Legro

March 1990

RAND



Occasional Paper OPS-016

THE RAND/UCLA CENTER FOR SOVIET STUDIES

The RAND/UCLA Center for Soviet Studies (CSS; previously the RAND/UCLA Center for the Study of Soviet International Behavior) was established in October 1983 as a joint undertaking of The RAND Corporation and the University of California at Los Angeles. With major grant assistance from the Rockefeller, MacArthur, Bradley, and other foundations, the RAND/UCLA Center supports a broad program of analytic and policy-relevant research in Soviet domestic and international behavior, provides training leading to a doctoral degree at UCLA or The RAND Graduate School (RGS), and disseminates its research findings to the public.

The Center's interdisciplinary program represents an innovation in the area of Soviet studies, combining RAND's strong research capabilities in Soviet domestic and foreign (including security) policy with the research activities and the broad and well-established program in Russian/Soviet and East European graduate training at UCLA. Together, RAND and UCLA have more than thirty faculty and research staff members who are Soviet specialists, a concentration unmatched at any other comparable center in the U.S. In addition, leading scholars from other UCLA departments as well as from RAND's technical staff, are involved in various aspects of the Center's teaching and research.

Director

Abraham S. Becker
Economics and Statistics Department,
The RAND Corporation and
Economics Department,
University of California, Los Angeles

Co-Director

Hans Rogger
History Department,
University of California, Los Angeles

A11409 091069

CSS Occasional Paper Series

Joint Reports are issued by the RAND/UCLA CSS to facilitate the exchange of ideas among those who share the research interests of the Center and of scholars participating in its research and seminar programs. The views expressed in these reports are those of the individual authors, and are not necessarily shared by the RAND/UCLA CSS, UCLA, The RAND Corporation, or their research sponsors.

TRIP REPORT:

Admiral Crowe's Visit to the Soviet Union
March 17-25, 1990

by

Jeffrey W. Legro

I recently accompanied Admiral William Crowe, retired Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, during his 9-day stay in the USSR. The trip was an extension of the U.S.-USSR military-to-military exchanges that were initiated under Crowe's leadership at the JCS. The purposes of the trip were to reciprocate Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev's visit to the United States and to testify to the Supreme Soviet's Committee on Defense and State Security. In addition to the Admiral, the delegation included his wife, his longtime aide, Captain Jay Coupe, Steve Sestanovich of CSIS, Kurt Campbell of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Harvard's JFK School, and myself.

The schedule was a full one including visits to Moscow, Kiev, Odessa, and Novosibersk. Primarily this was a "motorcade" tour, with the little time that was available in each city taken up by official visits. Accommodations were provided in official guest houses usually situated outside of the metropolitan areas. For example, in Moscow we were housed at Barvicha, a village on the outskirts of the city where many of the dachas of top government officials are located. Places visited during the trip included two defense plants undergoing conversion, the Space Control Center, The Nuclear Physics Research Institute in Akademgorodok, a Sovkhoz, the Air Defense Academy, Izvestiia, and the Danilov monastery.

Meetings or dinners were held with Gorbachev, Yazov, Moiseyev (only Crowe met with these three), Bessmyrtnikh, members of the Supreme Soviet, the commanders of the Kiev, Odessa, and Siberian Military districts (Gromov, Morozov, and Pyankov), Republic and local officials in Kiev and Novosibersk, Afghan veterans, and Laptev, the editor of Izvestiia. The main issues discussed in these meetings were German reunification, European security, arms control and political reform in the Soviet Union. The visit was hosted by Marshal Akhromeyev, and he and his wife accompanied us virtually everywhere.

The point of the following report is to pass on as many of the useful specifics of the trip as possible. I think it will be more useful to explain who said what in which setting rather than give an amalgamated, "This is the Soviet view on" The main categories relate to individuals, institutions, and issues.

I. Marshal Akhromeyev

The official we had the most exposure to during the visit was the Marshal. Now retired as Chief of the General Staff, he is in the Congress of Deputies, the Supreme Soviet and is a member of the Committee on Defense and State Security. In the future it appears that he will have additional official responsibilities. During Crowe's meeting with Gorbachev, Gorbachev turned to Akhromeyev and said, "I want you to be my advisor on national security issues," apparently offering him a formal position comparable to Scowcroft's. Bessmyrtnikh called Akhromeyev one of the few military men who sees military problems in the larger political context.

Throughout the trip, Akhromeyev wore his uniform. Virtually all other officials the Admiral met with deferred to and/or were dominated by Akhromeyev. This included commanders of the military districts, local officials, and Bessmyrtnikh. Yazov was the only possible exception (I was not in that meeting). Apparently Akhromeyev has a bad relationship with Moiseyev and he did not attend that meeting (nor did Mrs. Akhromeyev accompany Mrs. Crowe to Mrs. Moiseyev's apartment).

Akhromeyev is quick-minded, direct, argumentative, energetic, and habitually punctual. His outlook is that of a devoted, albeit progressive, communist of the WWII generation. He is not entirely comfortable with the ongoing changes in the Soviet Union and this was clear from a number of his comments:

- In a meeting with local party authorities: "We Communists are of one mind."
- At the sovkhos where the head administrator argued in favor of private property: "There should be no private property because that leads to capitalism."
- With regard to open elections: "Those that promised more got elected. Democracy and demagoguery have resulted."
- He is against the current bill on the press because it does not specify the obligations of publishers. Thus a publisher with a certain "tendency" does not have to print the "objective truth." Nonetheless, Akhromeyev is very supportive of Gorbachev and apparently views changes as necessary, even if distasteful. An ideological fix on Akhromeyev might be had in his comment at Izvestiia that the paper "is at the very center of perestroika, but in my opinion is too far to the left."

Overall, the Marshal took a fairly hard-line view on issues. This undoubtedly reflected the general hardening taking place in official policy, yet at times the Marshal seemed even more conservative.

- Germany - Akhromeyev was adamant that there could be no future for a reunified Germany in NATO. This of course was a change from his statements at Brussels that left the door open to NATO membership, but it was not quite so strong a position as he maintained with John Hines. The Marshal noted that the "positive conditions" that permitted the troop reductions in Eastern Europe were now having "negative consequences." He prefers a neutral disarmed Germany.
- Arms control - He was pessimistic about arms control and was not at all sure that three outstanding issues could be resolved anytime soon: (1) the relationship of ABM to a START treaty, (2) ALCM and bomber counting rules, and (3) SLCMs. He and Crowe spent a long time discussing these issues with little agreement. Nonetheless, during the meeting with Gorbachev, Crowe mentioned that it looked like there were some major problems to be resolved on arms control before an agreement could be reached. Gorbachev turned to Akhromeyev and asked what the major problems were. Akhromeyev responded that there were no major problems. Thus, it could be that Akhromeyev was trying to bolster the Soviet negotiating position by playing the bad cop and sending a tough message home with Crowe.
- Lithuania - We were out of touch with ongoing events and Lithuania was not a central focus. Nonetheless, an exchange between Laptev and Akhromeyev was indicative of the latter's views. Laptev emphasized that any questions of separatist movements must be resolved peacefully. The Marshal then chimed in, "Yes, but the entity of our Union must be maintained."

II. The Supreme Soviet Committee on Defense and State Security

Crowe appeared in front of the committee for about two hours, first giving testimony on the United State's strategy, arms control stand, and defense decisionmaking structure and then answering questions. The "culture" of the hearing was more like an academic seminar than the cross-examination of our own Congressional hearings. Questions were politely forwarded and were not particularly focused. The chairman, Lapygin, decided who would get to ask questions and because no follow-up inquiries were allowed, the session had little bite to it. The main interests of the committee members appeared to be gaining control over defense policy (particularly regarding access to info from the MOD) and furthering arms control.

The committee currently has three sub-committees: (1) Military Policy (chaired by Velikhov), (2) Military Industry (chaired by Simonov), and 3) State Security (i.e., KGB oversight). According to one of the committee members I sat next to at lunch (Sergei Tsyplyajev, Secretary of the Committee), they have spent most of their time so far on the budget and war power laws. It will be awhile (due to lack of expertise) before they take on military policy directly. I was particularly interested in their access to MOD information. He told me they get it by directly petitioning Yazov and Moiseyev. They verify the answers by "looking for inconsistencies." Another means the committee has for gaining leverage over policy is that they confirm the top level appointments such as Minister of Defense.

III. Defense Conversion

The two plants we visited were the Chrunicheva Factory in Moscow and the Sibtextilemash in Novosibersk.

- Chrunicheva - The buildings of the Chrunicheva Factory were typically dirty and disintegrating on the outside, but on the inside they were clean and modern. This factory produced Tupolev aircraft up to 1963 and then switched over to missile and rocket hardware. Their products have included the Proton missile, the Salute space station, and currently the Mir space station. Conversion at this plant means cutting in half their production of "space" hardware. They switched over to car parts, ski poles, children's tricycles, and "exotics" such as remote emergency vehicles and water purification plants. Pre-Gorbachev, 25 percent of their output was civilian-oriented, it is now 40 percent, and by 1991, 60 percent will be the civilian figure. These figures are based on man hours devoted to particular products, rather than funds invested or actual output (this is apparently true of all conversion statistics on civilian vs. military output). The problems they are having in the conversion process include raw material supplies for new consumer goods, keeping wages and morale high as they shift from high to low technology, and maintaining profits. This year, profits are down, but the government has minimized that loss by lowering "taxes."
- Sibtextilemash - This plant makes artillery casings and, in the past, Katusha rockets. Conversion here means shifting some of their defense capacity to the production of weaving machine tools and car parts. The plant has been given a larger investment allotment than usual in order to retrain its workers for the new tasks.

IV. Political Reforms

We talked about the impact of political reforms at the republic and local level in both Kiev and Novosibersk.

- Kiev - Madam Shevchenko, head of the Ukraine Supreme Soviet, and member of the national Supreme Soviet, provided a synopsis of the elections. This year's elections had 4.4 contestants for each seat in regional bodies. For the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet, there were eight candidates for each seat. There was a 70 percent turnout in the March 18 vote, down from 95 percent in last year's poll. The difference is allegedly attributable to the fact that the latest poll was a second round. Thus many whose candidate did not make it that far did not bother to vote.

Madam Shevchenko is satisfied that the KPSS is doing well as it saw its percentage of the vote increase in recent elections. "People realize that the Communist Party is at the cutting edge of perestroika. However, attacks on the apparat continue." She herself is going to give up her local responsibilities as the national Supreme Soviet will become a full-time job with eight-month sessions.

- Novosibersk - Here we met with city officials, who like Madam Shevchenko, gave a quick run down on election figures. There were an average of eight contestants for each seat in the RFSR Supreme Soviet. In the past 12/18 of the local representatives to the RFSR SS were communists, a figure now increased to 16/18. Fewer of them, however, are workers and women, and more are intellectuals. In the past, there were 50 percent communist in the local legislature, now there are 70 percent. However, in the past 60 percent of the deputies to the RFSR were usually replaced, but this time 90 percent were. What seems to be happening is that the old communists are being thrown out, but the Communist party is maintaining and improving its performance for the time being by incorporating a wider range of "new thinking" viewpoints. This will undoubtedly change when other political parties or movements become organized.

V. Miscellaneous

Several of the personalities and issues deserve a few words.

- Colonel-General Gromov - The man who oversaw the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, now the head of the Kiev military district, was our host in the Ukraine. At 5'8" and 43(?) years of age, Gromov is described as a legend in his own time. He is subdued, shows little emotion, often appears lost in thought. The General is short-sighted, but apparently does not wear glasses. Gromov was accompanied at the dinner by his second wife, who is said to be a widow of another Afghan war vet and is ten years younger than her husband.

The General paid appropriate, although not boot-licking respect to Marshal Akhromeyev. He gave away little about his opinions on current events, with one notable exception. At the Sovkhoz there was an exchange between its administrator and Marshal Akhromeyev with the former arguing that the present system does not work and that the farms needed to be privatized. Akhromeyev was against such privatization. At that point the meeting began to break up, but Gromov muttered in disapproval, "That's right, the farmer produces everything and the state takes its all."

- Military Reform - Akhromeyev once again restated his opposition to a professional army. In Crowe's meeting with Moiseyev, however, the Chief of the General Staff left the door open on this issue by commenting that it is currently under study. Akhromeyev did note that the political parties in the Army will remain until the USSR becomes a multi-party state. On the issue of the criticism of the military in the press, Laptev commented that it had peaked and that there would be "more profound reporting" in the future (after all "the Army defends the country too").

Near a military building at the Novosibersk airport, a sign read, "The Ultimate Goal of Perestroika is the Improvement of Military Preparedness."

- Deputy Foreign Minister Bessmyrtnikh - This official deserves a few lines as the only foreign ministry contact. His views were largely in line with those of Akhromeyev. He saw problems in arms control that he was not sure could be resolved before the summit. He stressed that the German issue would have a tremendous impact on U.S.-Soviet relations. He thought that the United States and the USSR should work together to slow reunification (memories of Brezhnev on U.S.-USSR collaboration in Europe?). While recognizing that Germany today is different than in the 1930s, Bessmyrtnikh also stressed that the USSR must keep in mind the long term future and the dangers that might accompany it. He also rejected a united Germany in NATO.
- Food supplies and Popular Political Sentiment - In my usual food supply spot check, meat availability seemed to be about the same as a year ago, with red meat being a bit more difficult to find. Chicken was in good supply. Sugar was still being rationed at two kilos per month per person in Moscow, and 1.5 kilos to each person in Moscow.

In the Moscow "taxicab" poll, there was continuing dissatisfaction (no more than last year) with Gorbachev's domestic policies, but there was no clear cut popular alternative. Many were impressed by Sobchak, the prosecutor from Leningrad.

VI. Domestic Constraints

In closing, I should note that several of the officials we met with stressed how Gorbachev is constrained by domestic forces. Either the "narod" or conservative forces are supposedly preventing him from doing what the United States would prefer. For example, in terms of a reunified Germany joining NATO, this would be unacceptable because "the Soviet people vividly remember WWII and they could not tolerate this." In terms of Lithuania, "conservative forces are demanding action." The point made is that Gorbachev is under fire and if the United States wants him around, it must modify its position.

It seemed to me that given Gorbachev's consolidation of power and political prowess, this line was being exaggerated to gain diplomatic leverage. The Soviets are tuned in to the "should we help Gorbachev" debate in the United States that has largely been settled in favor of doing so. Now the Russians seem to run up the "Gorbachev's in trouble" flag every time they want a concession. Given the course of recent events, they are bound to be right in the end.