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 KEYS:/PROVOCATIONS NO. 210/
 Memo to: The Climate Club --- C759 22 May 1988
 From: Walt Roberts

Provocation No. 210
 Russia Revisited
 I'm just back from 11 days in the USSR, my first visit since about two months before the December 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Prior to that I'd gone to Russia for scientific exchanges about every year or two since the summer of 1958. Much is the same; much is changed!

My purposes this time were two. First, I participated in a global warming seminar, and the formal opening of the "Greenhouse Glasnost" computer-mediated teleconference on the effects of a hypothetical global greenhouse climate warming on the two countries and their ties with the rest of the world. It was all a great success, and I'll say more about it in the next "Provocation". The formal opening was on May 11th at 4:30 PM Moscow time. We initiated a direct computer-to-computer link from the Institute of Space Research in Moscow, while my co-chairmen Rusty Schweickart and Soviet scientist Roald Sagdeev participated simultaneously from Washington at 8:30 AM EDT. The link will operate for a year and support a 20 person asynchronous teleconference that had its genesis here in the WBSI/SMSS.

Second, I revisited the Kislovodsk solar coronal research station of the Pulkovo Observatory, perched high on a mountain pass in the Caucasus. The wildflower sprinkled site commands a panoramic view of 18,500 ft Mt. Elbrus, which lies East of the Black Sea and some 150 miles north of the border of the USSR with Turkey. The station, run till his recent retirement by Dr. M. N. Gnevyshev, resulted in part from my consultations that began with Gnevyshev in 1948. There, as on my previous visit, I gave a lecture on solar research to the staff.

The same as before in the USSR were the perennial bold block lettered red billboard slogans in every town and city "GLORY TO THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE SSR!" The same were the clean-cut young soldiers repairing roads, working in fields, building structures, patrolling airports and the like. The same were the hotels with their matronly floor managers in charge of room keys, soap, and the rough, dark but functional toilet paper. The same was the long, orderly, respectful line of Soviet citizens waiting for a glimpse of Lenin in his mausoleum in the Red Square. The same, the friendly, curious, helpful people everywhere. The same, the spectacular, efficient, clean, inexpensive subways in Moscow and bus systems elsewhere. Still 5 kopecks (about 8 cents official) to go anywhere.

Markedly different was the easier access to laboratories and hotels. You didn't need a pass to enter any of the hotels I visited and go directly to a room. No identity card was required to go into Moscow State University or the Space Institute. Passage in and out through customs was fast and simple, though I suspect I may have had preferential treatment. There was free, open and sometimes sharply critical discussion

everywhere. Perestroika and Glasnost were prominent in billboards, papers and TV. Gorbachev seems popular with the people and the top few Party people he has named, but not with the massive ranks of the Party bureaucrats below, who have lost perks and face performance standards.

Striking is the difference in the availability of alcohol. Most (maybe all) restaurants serve no alcohol before 2:00 PM. At official receptions and small meetings alike, Coca Cola, Pepsi, Fanta, replaced wine, vodka, cognac and supplemented mineral water, tea and coffee. I couldn't even get a beer at my hotel anytime. Ordinary citizens have a hard time to buy vodka or spirits at all. Sugar is all but gone from the markets as people hoard it to make their own alcoholic beverages.

My domestic plane flight south on a Tupelov 154, which strongly resembles a Boeing 727, was on a spotlessly clean plane in excellent maintenance, and new was the fact that all signs for lavatory, seat belts, etc included English. Even though I suspect that I was the only foreigner aboard the absolutely full airplane, the flight announcements were given in English as well as Russian. The plane left ten minutes early (why not, everybody was on board) and arrived ten minutes early, after a perfect two hour flight and an excellent snack. No smoking allowed at all on the plane. The return to Moscow was on a wide-body Ilyushin 84, a 300 passenger plane which does not resemble any US plane, and we were also off early and on time in Moscow.

To me it seems that winds of real change are blowing in the USSR. It will be fascinating to see if Gorbachev can maintain his power in the face of the reactions of privileged Party people who have apparently lost many of their special advantages under his rule.

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