

Trip report to Rick Anthes, Director, NCAR

TRIP (Nov. 28 - Dec. 12, 1987) ①
To: USSR, ETHIOPIA, KENYA
By: Mickey Glang (NCAR)

For all those who think travel is a lot of fun, let them take a trip like this one. This trip was a multipurpose one: To the USSR and to the Soviet Committee for Science and Technology and for GosCom Gidromet. This was done with the support of UNEP's World Climate Impacts Program in order to develop a project in the USSR on regional scenarios related to a CO₂/trace gases warming of the global atmosphere. It is based on the framework for the regional scenarios project that I am now doing with the support of the US Environmental Protection Agency for North America. The hope is that the USSR will develop its own climate impacts research community to undertake assessments of the interaction of society and atmospheric processes and to develop policy responses to those impacts. The idea is to assess recent climate anomalies (outlying climate extremes) to see how well societies have dealt with them. These will identify the strengths and weaknesses in contemporary responses to climate extremes and to climate variability and should help society in the long run to cope with climate changes whatever form those changes might take at the local, regional, or national levels.

I left Colorado at 7 am on Saturday and arrived in Moscow at 5:30 pm. It was eight pm by the time I got to the Hotel Rossia, adjacent to Red Square and GUM (the global department store). I found out that I would be traveling to the Main Geophysical Observatory in Leningrad the next morning, leaving the hotel at 8:30 am. I was told I'd be back in Moscow on a 4 pm flight the next day (Tuesday 1 December).

This was an interesting trip with fortuitous timing because I met a delegation of political scientists mainly from UCLA traveling to the USSR on an IREX grant to develop a joint conference on US-Soviet cooperative interests in sub-Saharan Africa. They were on their way to visit the Soviet Academy of Sciences, Institute for Africa, headed by Anatolie G Gromyko. Unfortunately, Gromyko had hurt his shoulder and could not attend. I was asked by the to participate in their discussions about appropriate topics that might be addressed and I suggested climate and the environment. They are going to seriously consider a climate/environment element to their joint workshop to be held next fall in the Washington, DC area. I have spoken to Gromyko about NCAR and our work in Africa on Drought and climate and he has been very interested in it. I did meet Dr. Goncharov, Gromyko's Deputy, who said that the Drought and Hunger book (the result of the NCAR Symposium in August 1985) had been reviewed for one of their African Studies journals and that I would get to meet the reviewer and get a copy of the review when I returned to Moscow later in the week.

I was picked up at the hotel in Moscow at 8:30 am and we went to Sheremet'yevo I airport for an 11:15 flight. I stayed at the Moscka Hotel at the end of Nevsky Prospect. As soon as I got to the room I received a call from Kondratyev to arrange for a meeting with him and the Leningrad VAAP representative on Tuesday morning. I was then taken to the MGO and to a meeting to discuss climate impacts studies in the USSR. I met with Borisov, Zaitsev and others from the MGO. I explained UNEP's WCIP's interest in regional scenarios in the USSR. I explained the ESIG regional scenario activity for EPA. Borisenkov gave me an overview of activities and interest in the MGO. I let him know that UNEP was predisposed to give the MGO about 200,000 roubles for the 1988-89 biennium budget for such activities. B said that there was only one economist at the MGO so I suggested that he might use some of the UNEP money to bring in researchers from the Institute for Geography or some other institute. He mentioned that his government was more interested in these societal and economic concerns with the emphasis on "perestroika". He did constant refer to economics while I constantly reminded him of the need for input of other disciplines. I told him about the ESIG/Hungarian project on extreme meteorological events. B said that was what was important for regional level decisions---extremes not means.

He said that he would put together a proposal which had to be cleared by GosCom Gidromet in Moscow and that he would send it to Usher and a copy to me. I offered to help in any way that I could, having done such studies for several years. B also said the MGO was concerned about the value of meteorological information in general and of forecasts in particular.

He is concerned about the CO2 issue but considers himself an owl. He feels that the models are not very good at generating credible or reliable scenarios. I explained that the regional scenarios for EPA provide important insights in climate-society interactions and not just information about societal response to a global warming. He felt that it was much too early to begin to make decision using CO2 projections. He mentioned that some had already advised the government not to build more ice breakers because the warming will reduce the extent on ice in the Arctic. He also pointed to the Caspian Sea and the Aral Sea. With a warming he said there would be an increase in snowpack in the Pamirs and the Aral Sea would go up in sea level. For the Caspian Sea with its origins in the European territory, its sea level would be reduced in a warming. I suggested that these cases wul be interesting ones from the standpoint of climate impacts. They also mentioned the extreme droughts in the USSR grain producing regions in 1972 and 1975. Also good candidates for study.

At the end of our 4 hour continuous discussion, they expressed strong interest in the regional scenario idea, although I believe that there will be a natural tendency to make them meteorological descriptions than impact studies but I think that with the proper guidance they will do impact studies. I told them that my next step would be to inform Peter Usher at UNEP/Nairobi of their interest and my support for their effort as long as we can move them in the direction of impact studies.

One of the most interesting points in the whole discussion was the view opposite to Bydyko's that policymakers are eating up their every word about global warming and were taking it into account in their decisions. The fact of the matter is that there are factions over the issue of taking action on the CO2 issue based on currently existing climate information.

I was taken to the GKGM (Goskomgidromet) for a meeting that began at 11 and went till one pm. I was welcomed by a small group and an interpreter who works with Gringof at Obninsk. They made some general pleasantries and based on my discussions in Leningrad I decided to open the session with a comment on the distinction between impacts and applications. I knew that they were unfamiliar with the idea of impacts and that they would be reluctant to get involved. They lived up to my expectations. They said they do not have an interest in the societal aspects and proposed several topics for investigation or for publication to the WCIP. I explained that UNEP has funds for impacts. They were pretty hard line on being noncommittal about possible involvement in impacts. They mentioned that they were not sure about WCIP and the SAC. They kept referring to the great successes in the WMO of the Joint Scientific Committee and said that was what UNEP needs. I reminded them that the USSR had had a vacant seat in SAC since 1981 and that I hoped they would send someone to the meeting in India in March 1988 to express their views.

Many of the suggestions they made were more appropriate for other parts of the WCP but not for the WCIP. We were clearly at a standoff. My gut feeling was that they were not interested in scenarios based on societal impacts of recent climate anomalies and would only entertain consideration of GCM and paleoclimatic scenarios. They mentioned only Bydyko and Vinnikov and Karol. They wanted to know what the MGO had said about these scenarios of mine and whether they came up with ideas for a project. By comparison the discussions in Leningrad were considerably more useful than those in Moscow, but it appears that Moscow calls the shots and therefore there will be little in impacts that Borisenkov can do without their support. During the Moscow discussions I did mention perestroika and the growing needs in the future for the type of information that can come from impacts assessment. Tomorrow I will meet with the members of CIP and it was mentioned that they will have a proposal to make to UNEP.

It seems the GKGM has total control over anything related to the atmosphere but it does not want to get involved in the mean time it is not telling other institutes about the possible interest in support for these activities by UNEP.

TRIP Report to NCAR...Day 5 (Thursday)

I visited GKNT's Center for International Projects. This is an administrative unit that is under UNEPCOM. CIP's director is Perienko and his deputy is Voronin. At first I discussed the prospects of UNEP WCIP support for a climate impacts project, in response to a question about my views. I reminded them that WCIP funded impacts not applications and that the MGO's proposed projects on monitoring drought and including economists and geographers was not exactly an impacts study but I said I would have to see what the proposal looked like. They would send it to me at the same time that they send it to Usher.

Once again I explained in detail our EPA regional scenarios project trying to draw parallels to similar problems or situations in the USSR: the falling (in the early 80's and the present rising of the Caspian Sea; the declining Aral Sea and desertification around it, and the loss of fishing); droughts in the European territory of the USSR and grain production; severe 1986/87 winter and energy supplies; mild winter of 1982/3 and the saving of energy supplies; the virgin lands scheme that failed in the 1950s in Kazakhstan.

They expressed concern whether UNEP would support a project within the USSR that did not involve international cooperation with third world countries. I said that I thought they would because it was the goal of the SAC of the WCIP to foster climate impacts studies and because they were not yet being done in the USSR, support for them was possible. We added to the project a small international meeting of 5 foreigners (US, Brazil, Canada, England, Thailand) to discuss impact studies and especially regional scenarios related to the trace gases issue. Also I suggested an international small workshop to discuss the findings of their impact studies with potential impacts researchers from the third world on climate change and social impacts. They felt more comfortable with these additions because it was more in line with the international aspects of UNEPCOM.

I met with Voronin for an hour. He explained to me how the perestroika was about to change the bureaucracy. The USSR was to create in January a new Commission for the Environment. This would be like our EPA and would be very powerful. GKGM would continue to monitor the environment but its charge and power and influence would be greatly reduced. It is to become basically a met service. It was also said that there was a recent lengthy attack in a Moscow newspaper on Yuri Israel and the sluggishness and errors in projections for planning of GKGM. It does not look like he will be calling the shots in this area for much longer. From this and my talks at GKGM I had the feeling that there was resistance in this organization to perestroika.

6

During my discussions with the deputy director of CIP, Voronin, I mentioned that SAC had not received a Soviet member since its inception and I urged that a Soviet scientist be appointed to the committee for the next meeting in March 1988 in India. I told him that in the past it seemed that GKGM who had appointed Sazanov of the MGO to be the SAC member, for some reason never let him attend. Voronin said they were very interested in SAC and if a letter requesting Soviet participation were received at UNEP/COM (X Perienko) that there was a good chance someone would attend. This would be a real coup as we have tried in the past to get them to get interested in impacts but GKGM apparently opposed it. Perestroika strikes again.

→ INSERT A (p.7)
TRIP DAY 6

I was met in the morning by Igor Zonn of the Academy of Sciences Institute for Geography. We discussed several projects. He was very interested in the one I had been discussing on regional scenarios. I told him to talk to Voronin with whom he said he had good relations. Zonn understands what the purpose of these scenarios would be and had in fact found cases similar to those we have for North America on sea level changes, desertification, frosts, etc. He went into some detail on the Caspian Sea falling and the fate of the Kara Bogaaz. A dam was built and then the Caspian sea began to rise making the dam useless. Also the rise in sea level of the Caspian has had a negative impact on some industries around the sea. During the falling phase, human settlements encroached on the shoreline only to be in trouble with subsequent sea level rises. As for the Aral Sea, Zonn said that the Aral Sea is falling with adverse effects on fishing and it is creating desertified land around its edges as the water recedes. As a result the salt soil is being blown by winds as far as 1000 kms away into agricultural areas in Kazakhstan, adversely affecting productivity there.

I asked Zonn to talk to Voronin to see how the Institute for Geography could be included in the project on climate impacts along with the MGO and perhaps other government agencies but without GKGM.

I offered my assistance in any way to get a viable proposal together on climate impacts and they said they would draw on my help. We must first see the proposal that they produce.

I asked my interpreter/guide Maya if she heard anything about my discussions on the previous day. She said she had heard favorable comments that the MGO and CIP could field a viable proposal in climate impacts. This too would be a real coup because the Soviets (especially GKGM) have been reluctant to get involved in such assessment. Perestroika strikes yet again!

INSERT A on preceding page

7

TRIP REPORT---Day 5 Thursday December 3

I had an appointment to visit Anatole Gromkyo Director of the Academy of Sciences Institute for Africa. I have met him on several occasions, the last being January 1987, during the coldest winter in Moscow since the early 1940s (temperatures during that week of my visit stayed between -31 and -40 degrees Celsius!! I found out the Gromkyo had a shoulder problem and was in the hospital. He did not even attend his meeting with the group of American political scientists. I met with his Deputy, Leonid Gonchorov and the head of the International Crises in Africa Section, Fituni. This was an interesting meeting. Fituni is a young researcher whose father is an economist. His work had been in the Portuguese parts of Africa, as mine had been. We conversed in Portuguese although his English is excellent. We discussed the Institute's growing interest in applied problems and of its interest in agricultural development and drought. My new book (Drought and Hunger in Africa: Denying Famine a Future) had been favorably reviewed by an institute scientist, Timoshenko. His review agreed with the premise that drought had been an overlooked constraint on development. Gonchorov told me how perestroika was having an impact on this institute. The word was that there should be less hierarchy and therefore more participation of and interaction between senior and junior scholars. That's why they recently created the crisis management section of young research under Fituni. He said that when I first visited the institute he had no idea what the atmosphere had to do with African development. He said he could now clearly see the connection and that the younger researchers like Timoshenko were working with drought considerations. Gonchorov said that the need to mix theory with application and practice was now seen to be very important. Theory alone would apparently no longer be the order of the day for the institute. Perhaps there will be less rhetoric and diatribes against imperialism and a greater one on realism and problemsolving.

Gonchorov was very interested in the early warning system project in Ethiopia. He thought that perhaps we could work together on such a topic. It would mean Americans and Russians working together with the Ethiopian Met Service to develop a viable and credible early warning system, one in which I believe we could get them to incorporate for the first time anywhere some political elements that are involved in EWS but are never mentioned. I may pursue this with UNEP. This could be an interesting spin off of "the Reagan-Gorbachev summit"!!!! I may see if Timoshenko might be interested in pursuing this topic.