

## Ed Crane Pins Fallout With Charles Koch on Russia-Trip Speaking Snub

*Matt Welch* | June 1, 2012

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News has been mostly quiet along the Kochs vs. Cato front (the background for which, including details on multiple *Reason* conflicts of interest, can be found in my [five previous blog posts](#) on the [subject](#)), until earlier this week, when *Washingtonian* magazine posted a [very long article](#) about this bitter conflict within institutional libertarianism.

Much of interest, and of possible dispute, within the piece, but this section featuring Cato President Ed Crane's ideas about his original fallout with Cato co-founder Charles Koch was 100 percent new to me:

In September 1990, Cato organized the first-ever conference on freedom in the Soviet Union. Held in Moscow, the conference required months of preparation, including meticulous negotiations with the US State Department and Soviet officials. Crane, Koch, and several Cato staffers made the trip.

The economic situation in Moscow was so desperate that a security detail had to guard a tray of cold cuts Cato ordered for lunch. The marquee event was an open forum in an auditorium that held 700. More than 1,000 Soviets showed up—"hanging literally from the rafters," Crane says. For Cato staffers, who devoted their lives to promoting freedom, it was a moving turnout.

Minutes before the program began, Koch pulled Crane aside and said, "I need to speak to these people."

The request frustrated Crane. After spending so much time working out the details of the event, he felt it was too late to change the lineup of speakers. "Charles, we have negotiated every 30 seconds here," Crane replied. "I can't do that." Koch never got to speak.

Although Koch had planned to stay in Moscow for two more days, he left early the next morning without saying goodbye.

Crane regrets his decision not to let Koch speak. "If I had been smarter, more mature, I would have said, 'Okay, Charles, we'll work something out—you can take my spot,'" Crane says.

Months later, Crane read in a libertarian newsletter that he was no longer Koch's top political adviser. The newsletter reported that Crane had been supplanted by Richard Fink, a former economics professor whom Crane had selected to run Citizens for a Sound Economy—a Koch-funded, grassroots organization—when it was formed in 1984, Crane says.

Crane was surprised and called Koch to find out what had happened. Koch refused to take the call, Crane says.