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Between The Lines

by Edith Kermit Roosevelt

WASHINGTON--When an American tourist visited an office of the Soviet travel organization Intourist recently, he marvelled at the hospitality and friendship with which he was received. The branch manager himself came out to shake the startled American's hand and invited him for a glass of Russian tea in his office.

But the pretty secretary who took the tourist's hat and coat to the anteroom had a special assignment. She removed the sweatband of his hat, treated it with a chemical substance and replaced it with two rolls of microfilm embedded in the folds. The chemical solution was a protective measure. Should the unsuspecting tourist tear it off by mistake or should his hat be lost, the chemical would destroy the films and the secret message they contained.

A reception committee awaited the American when he landed at Moscow's Sheremetyev Airport. The moment he checked into his hotel, the chambermaid ran him a hot bath. The microfilms were deftly removed from his hat before he had time to wash his back. Another American tourist had been fingered as an unsuspecting espionage courier by Intourist, which operates branch offices in seven Western cities, including New York.

The above anecdote is one of several related by Arkady V. Gorin, a former Regional Inspector for Intourist, who defected to the West last year. Writing in the spring 1966 issue of the Ukrainian Quarterly, Gorin warns that tourism continues to be used as a vehicle for Red espionage and an important arm of the Communist conspiracy. He urged Americans to think twice before buying a ticket to the U.S.S.R.

The Soviet defector's warning is timely in view of the fact that Washington is promoting tourism as a means of bettering relations between the United States and the Soviet bloc. The rationale for this policy appeared in Study Phoenix Paper 1, the policy-setting paper prepared by Vincent P. Rock for the State Department in July of 1963. Rock wrote:

"The United States should seek to expand interaction with the Soviet people in areas such as art, games, and tourism...The ability to play together may be prerequisite to effective collaboration in many other fields."

To help further this policy, the Citizen Exchange Corps (CEC), a supposedly "private" group with links to the State Department, has been quietly working to bring about large scale exchange of visits between Soviet and American citizens. Last August CEC sent a group of 140 Americans, including a university president, business men and students, to Soviet Russia for three weeks. The corporation council for this New York City based organization is James B. Donovan, who was involved in such "gray" government operations as the release of Bay of Pigs prisoners by Castro and the exchange of Francis Gary Powers, the American U-2 pilot, for a Soviet master spy.

Such attempts to send "ambassadors of goodwill" to the Soviet bloc ignore the dangers of tourism which is well known to our Central Intelligence Agency. Laszlo Szabo, a former major in the Hungarian Secret Service (AVH), warned of Communist use of tourists as a pool of potential Red agents. In testimony released March 17, 1966 by the CIA Subcommittee of the House Armed Service Committee, he said:

"The internal AVH works against the foreign diplomats, the students who come to study in Hungary and the tourists... Always the internal people are looking for good recruits among the diplomats, the students, the tourists. They monitor telephones, try to plant the microphones and maintain the surveillance on foreigners. This is the main principle: if you can recruit a foreigner inside Hungary, you may have a good agent in his home or another foreign capital one day."

In addition to the recruiting of agents and the use of witting or unwitting couriers for Soviet espionage, U.S. tourists play a special role in aiding the Red conspiracy in these areas:

1. As an important source of American dollars. While tourist travel to the Soviet Union only amounts to some \$35 million a year, this is an important figure in terms of the Soviets declining gold reserves and their debts to Western European nations. These U.S. dollars and other hard Western currencies can later be redeemed for gold at the official world price. This gold in turn can be sold through black market channels at a substantial markup, used to buy strategic materials or to finance "wars of liberation".

2. Tourists provide an important source of military, industrial, personal and political information. In this connection, obtaining facts and figures about new weaponry is still important but not as important as getting information about the hobbies and passions of say a visiting U.S. trade union leader or foundation official. The main thrust of Soviet subversion is the paralysis and diversion of policy and the molding of public opinion.

3. "Potemkin village" tours. Gullible tourists are shepherded through carefully selected beauty spots in order to impress them with the Soviet Union's supposed "peaceful development" image. One of the most notorious examples was when W. Averell Harriman, now undersecretary of state, returned from a tour of the USSR, to praise the luxurious prison of Kryukovo as typical of Soviet slave labor camps.

In a Senate Internal Security Subcommittee publication entitled "Beware! Tourists Report on Russia", Eugene Lyons, the well-known author who spent several years in the Soviet Union, summed it up as follows:

"For every tourist who catches a glimpse of the grim realities, there are dozens who simply act as innocent transmission belts for Moscow's propaganda wares."