

JUL 28 1961

# Inside Russia American Tourists Get "Cold War" Briefings Before Trips to USSR

## Aim Is for Greater Contacts With Red Citizens to Dispel Soviet Propaganda Fog

### How to Avoid Soviet Guides

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NEW YORK—The United States has discovered a new, non-nuclear, non-ballistic inter-continental weapon: The American tourist.

Americans traveling behind the Iron Curtain are being enlisted in the Cold War—with encouragement from the State Department. It begins with a "briefing" in a building across the street from United Nations headquarters in New York.

One recent hot and humid morning, 15 U.S. citizens, bound for the Soviet Union on a tour, listened intently to this vignette:

"One of my favorite tourists is an 88-year-old lady, a real Boston Brahmin. During her stay in Moscow last summer she went into Gorky Park every day, sat on a bench and spread out copies of Life, Look and National Geographic. On the average it took only 42 seconds before a Russian struck up a conversation with her."

The anecdote, intended to illustrate how it's possible to breach the Iron Curtain even with unstratagetic techniques, is related by a gregarious young, Russian-speaking Yale Law School graduate named Peter Gillingham. He has briefed thousands of American travelers to the Soviet Union in behalf of the Governmental Affairs Institute. This is a private organization—but its financial support includes "modest sums" from the Government. And the State Department makes no secret of the fact that it refers travelers headed for Red-bloc countries to the Institute for "advance preparation."

#### "Ambassadors Abroad"

Mr. Gillingham seeks to promote contacts between American tourists and Russian citizens. He refers to American visitors behind the Iron Curtain as "ambassadors abroad" with a much more important role to play than they have anywhere else overseas.

In a few hours of advice he offers the travelers he tells them candidly: "The United States is interested in promoting a flow of information and ideas between private citizens of the two nations. He also warns them that in Moscow the Soviet travel agency which arranges and supervises tours of the U.S.S.R., has quite different desires:

"Intourist will show you the things they are proud of and which they think will impress you favorably. They will discourage you from seeking what they don't want you to see—and especially they'll discourage private contacts between you and Soviet citizens," he says.

Mr. Gillingham urges American travelers to escape from "the stately quadrille" which Intourist has planned for them: "Take up your courage and your phrase book and break away from your Intourist guide. Go out on your own; eat in a workers' restaurant; you'll have the richest experiences of your trip." In the Intourist hotels and restaurants, the traveler will encounter only fellow-foreigners and Intourist employes, he says.

Won't the American get into trouble if he bucks Intourist? "There is a very wide range of things a tourist may do which lie between what is actually forbidden and what Intourist wants to show you," according to Mr. Gillingham.

#### Tourist Tide Grows

The number of American visitors to the Soviet Union is still small compared with the hordes who tramp over the rest of Europe. However, there has been a sharp increase over the handful who traveled to Russia a decade ago. Something like 9,000 to 10,000 Americans will penetrate the Iron Curtain this summer to visit cities such as Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev. In 1957, the first year of any "large-scale" tourism to the U.S.S.R., there were only about 2,500 American visitors to the U.S.S.R., according to a State Department estimate.

Many of the tourists would return to the U.S. with a highly artificial—and possibly a quite favorable opinion of the way the Soviet system is run if it weren't for Mr. Gillingham's efforts in promoting face-to-face contacts with ordinary Russian citizens, a State Department official comments. "With Intourist at the controls, the traveler sees only the best side of the Soviet scene and his opinions may be distorted as a result," the Government man explains.

And Mr. Gillingham agrees another reason the U.S. Government welcomes personal contacts between Soviet and American citizens: The Russian gets the best of the United States—a highly distorted one—entirely through a screen of Soviet government propaganda. And yet, according to Mr. Gillingham, who has traveled extensively in the Soviet Union, the Soviet citizen shows a receptivity to ideas contrary to those his government gives him.

To promote these contacts, Mr. Gillingham and Edward McGowan, an American who also speaks Russian and has traveled in countries of Eastern Europe, have taken over 800 American travelers so far this summer, including the American track team which competed against the Russian team in Moscow earlier this month. A few of the sessions were held for voyagers to other Red bloc lands such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Hungary.

Mr. Gillingham conducts his briefings in a large carpeted lounge, decorated in contemporary style. From a desk in front of a wall painted a brilliant orange, he addresses an audience seated in lemon-colored plastic chairs and dispenses a variety of facts and advice.

He admits, early in the session, that the language barrier is the most serious obstacle to greater contacts.

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