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General Impressions Gained in a Short Visit to Russia

We left Helsinki by night plane, Russian plane for Moscow. As it was dark we saw very little. We were met at the Moscow airport by the Intourist and taken to a comfortable but shabby room with rug, drapes and overstuffed furniture. The Russians were processed first causing a wait of about an hour. Our actual processing was brief. They looked at our passports, stamped and returned them. No bags were opened going through customs and no declaration concerning money was required.

Three long black limousines were furnished by Intourist, three of us to a car for the ride into Moscow. We were impressed by the fine wide straight highway from airport to city.

At the Moscow Hotel the two girls in the office said we were not expected. They took our passports and we sat and waited in the lobby. Nothing happened. We just waited. After an hour or so we called Intourist. In a short time a very sleepy man arrived. He spoke little English but we were conducted to our rooms, each was given a single room with bath. It was quite cold but there was no heat. The heat is not turned on until October. Next morning we were met by the Intourist agent and given our meal tickets. We slept at the Moscow Hotel and ate at another which was just across the street.

Meal tickets were in a small bound folder, four for each day, breakfast, dinner, tea and supper. They can be used

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only at Intourist Hotels. If you wish to dine at a hotel other than the one assigned to you arrangements must be made in advance. It was obvious that there was special food for tourists. The food was adequate but not tasty, 3 or 4 eggs for breakfast, very little fresh fruit, just a few small apples, melon once and we saw watermelons on the street. Caviar was on the table for several meals. The red caviar was excellent.

At the Moscow Hotel we learned that there are five classes of travellers in this classless country. First, the deluxe, second, superior, then first, second and third class. All foreign tourist travel is paid for before entering Russia. The deluxe costs one hundred dollars a day. The superior class which was how we travelled costs about fifty dollars a day. From the original money which was sent we received a spending allowance of five rubles a day. The exchange gave us four rubles for a dollar, making a ruble worth twenty-five cents. However, the Quakers estimated the value of the ruble to be about ten cents. Some Americans have evaluated it at six cents. At the present rate of exchange nylon stockings cost eight dollars a pair and baloney is one dollar and fifty cents a pound. At all stores selling food there were many people buying.

The first time we went to the dining room we wore our coats because it was cold. We learned later that this was against the rules. "No coats should ever be taken to the dining room because of sanitary reasons. Everybody knows that except Americans"

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On the streets we saw many cripples, men without a leg or an arm. These were chiefly younger men perhaps a result of the war. Only a few seemed to have prostheses. On the whole Russians are robust people especially the women.

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While in Russia we had a guide with us most of the time except for short shopping tours. Often we had a second guide to guide the first guide and one day we had three. Everyone greeted the guides warmly. None of our guides has been out of Russia so they thought everything they had was wonderful. We invited our chief guide to attend the opera with us. She accepted gladly, and told us that the opera house in Leningrad was the third most beautiful in the world, stating the most beautiful is in Budapest, the second in Moscow and the third in Leningrad.

All of the guides and most of the people we met seemed sold on their scheme of life after forty years. They are now on their sixth five year plan which promises more fruit and more comforts. Many of their beauty show places date from Czarist days notable exceptions are the permanent Fair Grounds with sixteen lovely buildings, the metropole or subway and the large new university building.

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Tours in Moscow

Information received largely from the Intourist Guides.

Moscow is about the size of Chicago and is a little north of the latitude of Edmonton, Canada. Edmonton has a population of 200,000. In the Western Hemisphere one million people live north of this parallel while in Russia a hundred million live north of this line. They are doing concentrated development of the north for food and manufacture.

The streets of Moscow were widened to 19 to 55 meters by moving buildings back. Surrounding the city are two wide circular roads. A third is planned.

Lenin Library in Moscow contains eighteen million volumes printed in one hundred and sixty languages. Eighty languages are embraced in the USSR. Twenty-six thousand books are used each day.

There are three hundred and ninety thousand libraries in the USSR with two thousand in Moscow. Russia also boasts of twenty-eight planetaria.

Soviet Square was established to commemorate the eight hundredth anniversary of the founding of Moscow, from 1147 to 1947. In the center is a statue of the founder, Prince the Longarm. Standing at the square we could see a hospital for eye diseases, a puppet theatre and an apartment building 156 meters high with 333 dwelling floors containing 452 flats. In this building a three room apartment costs 60 rubles a month while four rooms cost 100 rubles.

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Uprising Square or December Square commemorates the Nobles' Revolt of 1925. The Peasants' Rebellions occurred in 1905 and was the dress rehearsal of the real revolution in 1917.

In the afternoon we visited the Kremlin which has 90 towers, five with stars marking the open gates. The following notes concern articles seen the museum and conversation with the guide.

When the daughter of Peter the Great died she had six thousand dresses but only one ruble. In the museum are many elaborate thrones and crowns. The most elaborate was the ivory throne studded with jewels of Ivan the Terrible, the Fourth Ivan. Peter and Ivan reigned at the same time. In the hall of coaches are many ornate gold vehicles, the most interesting are the small coaches for children which were pulled by ponies.

Ivan the Terrible vowed to build a church for every victory of Russia over Turkey. Our guide added, "He cheated God for there were more victories than churches but he did build a most beautiful cathedral known as St. Basil's

In the 18th Century there were two wars with Turkey. Russia won both of them. The Sultans sent very expensive gifts to the Great Catherine.

Elizabeth the First of England sent a god coach to the Czar. The seat for the coachman was in the rear for no one should have his back to the Czar. Some wag replied, "What about the horses?"

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There was a tremendous ivory eagle from Japan sent in the 18th Century. Each feather can be removed and has its separate location. There are more than one thousand feathers.

Peter the Great was a master of fourteen trades. He made his own boots. He also had a large collection of surgical instruments, some of them quite ingenious. Extracting teeth was one of his hobbies. He had a unique way of punishing those who committed errors. There was a large wooden bowl. It must have held several gallons. The erring fellow was supposed to drink this bowl dry. If he couldn't drink it, it was forced down and of course he died.

One afternoon we visited the Agricultural Fair. This was held in the permanent Fair Grounds outside of Moscow. The USSR is comprised of 16 republics, each republic has a permanent building on the fair grounds. Each building is architecturally representative of the republic for which it stands.

The agricultural produce was beautifully exhibited. The one that interested me the most was the building representing Siberia. Here they had all types of agricultural produce including fruits such as apples and pears. I expressed my surprise at this because I thought Siberia was a cold waste land. The guide replied, "Our agronomists have studied the soil. They can grow many crops by making proper beds for growing." Also in the Siberian building were large exhibits of furs and minerals.

The extensive fair grounds have formal gardens with flower beds, fountains and statues.

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We saw groups of tiny tots out for walks, kindergarten kids whose mothers worked. There was an older woman at the head and rear of each of these small parades. The children were well disciplined, warmly dressed and sturdy.

Women were doing everything, working on the streets, spreading tar, acting as policemen, switchmen on the railroads and at crossings, guides in museums and one older woman sits in each museum room. Most of the guides and professors said they would like to visit the United States.

Many persons along the streets were wearing Peace Medals. These had red or blue backgrounds and a gold world over which is surmounted by the hammer and sickle. The whole hangs from a bar containing the inscription "World Peace."

The guides are certainly dedicated to the cause. Our chief guide, Marguerita, is a sweet little blond with blue eyes and is the mother of a ten month old son whose picture she shows with pride. She said he weighed over nine pounds at birth. She wore an aqua sweater with a tan raincoat and a red scarf. She is honest, as are all of her group. They believe what they say for they have been raised in it. When I asked about the last Czar only Valerie, one of our guides in Leningrad knew of Nicolas II and his end. Valerie pointed out the palace where Rasputin was murdered and his body hid under the ice of the Neva. We wished to visit this palace but were informed it was quite impossible. Later I learned that two American correspondents had tried to see this palace. They put forth great effort but permission was never granted.

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I detected no spark of sympathy for the former Czars and their grandeur. A great deal of evidence of the former life of luxury is preserved, much more is stored away and an unknown amount looted. They have done a good job of cataloging and displaying.

There are very few dogs and cats in either Moscow or Leningrad, in fact I saw only two dogs and two cats. During the siege of Leningrad the dogs were eaten and even now there is not enough food for pets. There is a line of people at every food store for hours to get milk and bread.

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There were few children playing with toys. They walked, see-sawed, played in sand boxes but few had toys.

During the war Hitler's forces advanced to within 16 kilometers of Moscow. He was so certain of victory that he had massive amounts of granite sent from Finland to build a large victory memorial in Moscow. Later the granite was used to build an apartment building for the people.

The population of Russia has increased about 22,000,000 in the last five years. However so far as we could tell no census has been taken. In Leningrad we were told the last census was in 1939.

Swamp Market is where Pugachov was quartered and executed during the Peasant's Revolt.

Red Square does not refer to color. Anything beautiful was called Red.

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The subway is known as the Metropole. This is really a work of art. Each station has its own artistic motif and is dedicated to a famous person or industry. Here I rode on my longest, fastest and steepest escalators. At one station there were huge heroic figures in bronze depicting the life of the Russian people. In the subway everyone was in a hurry. The trains were controlled by a huge clock and the doors opened and closed automatically. You were either in or out. Some people were polite and some were not. One station contained beautiful crystal chandeliers. I suppose it was dedicated to the glass industry but I'M not sure. The ceilings were covered with Italian glass mosaics. They imported Italian workers to install it. We asked our guide why a utilitarian thing like the subway should be made a work of art. The reply was, "We wish to bring beauty and culture to the people." As the people rushed in and out of the trains they seemed to take little notice of the beauty.

On the streets the pedestrians paid no attention to traffic lights. The streets are more difficult to cross than those of New York. They are crowded and everyone seems to be in a hurry.

Most women have long hair, many with plaits which are wound around their heads.

The streets are very clean and are continually swept by women with brooms made of faggots. Around the trees there are plates of wroughtiron scroll work. We saw women with forceps picking up bits of paper from between the iron scrolls.

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Most calculations of sales people and others are done by using the abacus. We bought tickets for the opera and the girl used an abacus to calculate the cost. She gave us an incorrect figure. When we told her it should be such an amount she looked up in amazement and said, "Did you also specialize in mathematics?" Then she explained that she had studied office work and had had no special training in arithmetic.

On the streets of Moscow are crowds of warmly dressed people. The busses are overloaded and the people que to get on them.

Every day a long line, about five blocks long of people three abreast form to see the tombs of Lenin and Stalin. They stand patiently for hours to take their turn. Many come from the villages, a few wearing native costumes and high rubber boots. I asked the guide if the government sponsored pilgrimages to the tombs and he replied, "Definitely not, every person in that line paid his way to Moscow."

In the hotels and on the streets were many Chinese, some Indonesian and some Tibetans. A beautiful Tibetan family sat near us at the ballet.

We left Moscow on September 13th by night train for Leningrad, two in a compartment. Our guide Marguerita accompanied us. The trains were similar to European trains, with a corridor on one side and the compartments opening from it. The walls of the car are of greenish plastic with blue velvet curtains at the windows. There are couch like berths, all very clean with heavy warm blankets, white linen face towels. Bot tea was served with cookies before

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STAT we retired. Everytime we left our compartment we saw one man standing at the end of the corridor [redacted]

"Big brother is watching." When it got light next morning we put up the curtains and looked at the country side. We passed through several villages of small cottages, some were badly in need of repair. Extensive building was in progress in almost every village. There were several large factories and groups of oil tanks. All houses seemed to be furnished with electricity, even the small tumbled down ones. There were several collective farms with large three and four story buildings in groups. There were many large hay stacks but our guide said, "Our crops were poor this year, as we had a cold summer and too much rain."

In Leningrad we were met by three cars and taken to our hotel, three persons in each car. This hotel is old but comfortable. Here again each of us was assigned a single room.

STAT [redacted] I had a sitting room with sofa, two upholstered chairs, two straight chairs, desk, table, wardrobe with long mirror, Persian rug on the floor. The bed was in an alcove, separated from the sitting room by blue velvet curtains.

In Leningrad there is more laughter and more smiles than in Moscow. The children waved at our bus, tittered, laughed.

Formerly Leningrad was named St. Petersburg founded by Peter the Great in 1703. It is situated on the Neva River, has forty-eight canals and is known as the Venice of the North. There are one hundred and one islands. In 1939 the population was between two and three million. There has been no census since 1939. Leningrad is an industrial and cultural center with forty-

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eight museums, four hundred and sixty-one schools, seven hundred kindergartens, nine hundred nurseries, fifty hospitals, one hundred thousand college students. Seventy percent of the medical students are women.

The fortress of St. Petersburg is built on an island. This fortress was built for protection against the Swedes. Only one shot was ever fired from this fort. It was fired in 1917 as a warning shot at the time of the Revolution. Peter the Great is buried here along with the other Russian Czars. This fortress was used also as a political prison.

The guide stated that Nicholas II and his family were massacred in Siberia. Their bodies were cremated and the ashes shot from a cannon so Nicholas II can never take his place in the burial grounds of the Czars.

December Square commemorates the Nobles' Rebellion in 1825. In this square is Peter the Great on horseback carved from a single granite block. He is arising from the ocean waves. Nicholas I reigned 1825 - 1855. The Nobles rebelled against him. The name of the square was changed in 1924.

There is a single granite monolith to the victory over Napoleon. It is the largest in the world. It is fixed only by its own weight.

During the last war the Germans besieged Leningrad for nine hundred days. They advanced within three kilometers of the city. They issued tickets for the Victory Banquet to be held in the Winter Palace. The tickets were never used.

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During this siege one half of the population of Leningrad died. There were as many as forty air raids daily. Starvation was rampant. There was no food or water. People were dying on the streets. Our guide could still see their staring eyes and bloated bodies. Just as he paused a truck passed with cabbages and watermelons piled high. There are many signs of shelling and cannon balls can still be seen in some walls.

Then there is Military Square, a reminder of the October Revolution and Victory Square. Nevsky Boulevard is the main street. There is not so much traffic in Leningrad as in Moscow but more historic buildings and many palaces.

As we talked three women passed pulling a cart filled with concrete. There were other women working on the railroad and spreading tar on the street and women operating a pile driver and a stone crusher.

The children seemed very gay, dressed in bright colors, anxious to have their pictures taken. Each mother wanted her children's picture to be taken and had no objection to being photographed herself. The people were much more friendly and many more laughing than in Moscow. They seemed happy to have visitors and welcomed the tourists. Here too where food was sold there were long lines. Numerous buildings were under repair.

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scaffolding enveloped many churches. This was the repair from the nine hundred day siege.

I was surprised to learn that the Birch tree was the national tree of Russia.

Pushkin school and park were founded in 1910 but named after Pushkin in 1924.

Hermitage is the name of this palace which is now a museum. Our guide told us this contains part of the history of crime culture.

Winter Palace shows great French influence and contains much of the historical past of the Russian Royalty and people, many paintings, uniforms, flags, coats of arm, etc. All the pictures depict Russian victory.

There are extensive art galleries, all originals including Veronica's handkerchief. A room of Ruben's with thirty-eight originals, a room of Van Dykes with twenty-six including his self portrait in youth.

Then there was the Flemish Room whose paintings were all food and fight containing forty eight originals, ten of heroic size in a gallery supported by ten massive pillars of granite.

In the Italian Room there are thirty-nine originals painted between the 16th and 17th Centuries. Many Gobelin tapestries, one used simply to screen off some workers. Numerous

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madonnas, one imitation of the Vatican gallery and several salons of Italian art. There were two originals of Leonardo Di Vinci, Madonna Benois, Madonna Litta.

In the bedroom of the Czarina the walls are of malachite and marble with a lapis lazuli table top two inches thick and five by eight feet in size. There are massive urns of lapis.

There is one sculpture by Michael Angelo. There are a number of Della Robias. The ceilings are ornate, the floors parquet. There was room after room of madonnas. German paintings from the 13th Century. Lovely malachite urns, the loveliest you have ever seen. Inlaid tables, twenty-four enormous crystal chandeliers built for Nicholas II

The word Hermitage means Rest. The entrance faces a portico overlooking formal fountains and flower gardens. On one side of the Czarina's room was the fountain of tears, there were eight shells so arranged that a single drop of water dropped from shell to shell. The fountain of tears was certainly appropriate for the last Czarina.

In each room of every museum there was an older woman who acted as guide or perhaps watchman.

We were very anxious to see Russian art as we were in Russia. The catalogue shows a wing of the museum devoted to Russian art from the 7th to the 13th Century. Unfortunately this was closed for repair.

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Russian art from the 17th to the 18th Century was open. There was much there about Peter the Great and his instruments for pulling teeth and performing surgical operations. In Peter's apothecary's box there were many surgical instruments such as scalpels, knives, brace and bits, saws and spreaders.

There was a life sized image in wax of Peter the Great in blue silk suit embroidered in silver, wearing embroidered stockings and shoes of his own making. His own hair is used for the wig. His death mask is also there. His son by his first wife was ordered to be executed by him.

There is a solid silver casket of Alexander Nefsky. It was brought here by Peter the Great.

Malachite Hall is the most ornate room I have ever seen. It has gold doors with real rubies for door knobs. The ruby door knobs were three inches in diameter. There is a six foot basin of malachite and fifteen malachite pillars and a malachite vase six feet high, a mantle of malachite and a charming desk set. The room is circular with a domed ceiling. Everything is massive and heroic.

Pushkin is considered the Shakespeare of Russia. "In his heart is freedom and the spirit of the famous people of Russia in his soul." Even his nurse is famous. He is descended from an African negro. Peter made this African negro a nobleman and Pushkin was the great grandson of this African. Pushkin's

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wife was the first beauty in Russia. The Czar awarded Pushkin a very low rank so his wife could come to court and at the same time this low rank was an insult to Pushkin.

Later Pushkin was exiled. Pushkin at the age of 42 was killed in a duel with the son of a French ambassador. On hearing of his death the Czar said, "A dog's death to a dog."

Valerie, our guide in Leningrad was a tall, slim young man with a black cravat and a light raincoat. He wears glasses and seems quite sensitive. He speaks English well without an accent. He told us his story. His father was killed during the early days of the siege of Leningrad. He as a child was evacuated to Archangel where a ship was to bring him and other children to the United States. The Germans had blockaded the port so the ship never arrived. Instead of coming to the United States they were sent to Siberia. He said food was scarce and now if he has only bread he does not complain. While in Siberia he and some other boys found a cow. They milked her every day. To keep her tail from switching them they tied a heavy box to it. She switched it anyhow and knocked one of the boys unconscious. After this they bound her to a post to milk her. He remained in Siberia four years. He said, "I was fortunate, my mother found me. I did not know her." He further stated that twenty million were killed during the war, chiefly me. The women preserved the country, both the homes and the industries. During the siege of Leningrad one half of the inhabitants died, many starved, Most buildings

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were destroyed. Many have not yet been reconstructed. Reconstruction of the Baptist Church is almost complete and they are now holding services.

Sunday. We went to hear the choir at 10 A.M. at the Greek Orthodox Church. There was a leader and twenty singers. It was very dark inside the church. There was a small group of worshippers constantly coming and going. They knelt and placed their foreheads to the floor in front of each praying station. Two elaborately robed priests conducted the services.

The Romans cross themselves from left to right. The Russian Orthodox or Old Russian crosses himself from right to left. He used to use three fingers, now he uses two.

Three funerals were in progress with flowers and mourners. Caskets were shaped to fit the body closely. Upstairs are many religious treasures and ancient icons used only for festivals. Although most of the congregation were middle aged and older people there was a scattering of the young and a number of children.

We did not visit the anti religious museum, in fact we did not hear of it until it was too late to go.

Some places we wanted to visit were under repair, such as the gallery in the Winter Palace for the development of Russian art.