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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

1. The only part of the USSR with which I am familiar is Gorodomlya Island and the town of Ostashkov. My speaking knowledge of the Russian language is very poor; my ability to understand the language comparatively good.

PRICE AND AVAILABILITY OF CONSUMER GOODS

Decrease in Prices

2. Differences in prices existed between the state stores and the free market. This was partly due to the fact that certain items, for example eggs, were sometimes not available in the state stores (magaziny). Other food items, for example potatoes, were of much lower quality in the state stores than on the free market, where prices, depending upon the seasons, were much higher. However, during the latter part of our stay in the USSR, prices in the state stores became relatively stable. In addition to the official free market, a black market existed for some items, for example flour and yeast, the sale of which is forbidden in the USSR.

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3. The prices of consumer goods which were offered for sale in the state stores decreased considerably after 1946. Prices were lowered on several occasions after 15 December 1947, especially for bread, the main food of the Soviets. One kilogram of bread at the end of 1952 cost only 1.80 rubles. Vodka also became cheaper (very important for the Soviets).

TEXTILES

4. These price reductions were of great importance to the Soviets. For example, they could afford to buy textiles in 1952, which had been too expensive in 1947. Old and young, men and women, wore only quilted cotton-wool (Wattkleidung) clothing during the summer and winter of 1947 whereas in the summer of 1952 such clothing was seen very rarely.
5. When I had arrived in 1946, practically nothing was available in the state stores despite rationing. In 1952 the supply was large, especially in cloth fabrics. Wool material was of good quality, but badly threaded, and it wore out quickly by friction. A man's good suit of Soviet material cost at least 800 rubles and lasted about a year. Colored printed materials faded, and the Soviets refused at first to believe that our material was of fast color. Discovering that this was true, they tried to buy all our colored clothing.
6. Imported merchandise, Czechoslovakian shoes (Bata), German watches (Thiel), several Czechoslovakian and Polish textiles, German photographic products (Agfa), and to a lesser extent Hungarian cosmetics, was available after 1948.

FOOD

7. A constant shortage of flour existed and was available only on the anniversary of the October Revolution, the first of January and the first of May. Each Soviet worker and employee was then entitled to two to three kilograms. According to a special arrangement with the Soviet management at Ostashkov, every German specialist received one kilogram, and every non-working family member half a kilogram of flour on the above mentioned holidays (three times a year). Every year, shortly before the new harvest in June, bread was scarce for several weeks; only one kilogram was sold per person. Men, women and children waited on the street in front of the state stores from early in the afternoon until the next morning, just to buy one kilogram of bread.
8. Sugar was scarce most of the time. In the beginning sugar was also available only on these three holidays. Later the situation improved and sugar became available more frequently. Arguments and trouble with the Soviets always arose, because we Germans bought larger quantities at one time, whereas the Soviets could only afford to buy a small amount.
9. After the outbreak of the Korean war, butter became scarce. When butter was available in the stores at all, no more than 300 grams were sold per person; but it was possible to stand in line at the store several times for the same item. On the free market in Ostashkov the demand for butter was also greater than the supply, and prices were correspondingly higher. Fruits and vegetables were

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almost completely missing during the winter. When the supply of carrots was exhausted, one had to rely exclusively on pickled cabbage, if available, and preserves.

#### SOVIET ATTITUDE TOWARD STANDARD OF LIVING

10. I am of the opinion, that the great masses of the Soviet workers are satisfied with their standard of living. It is emphasized again and again in the newspapers, that the living standard is constantly improving, and the Soviets believe it. The press also states constantly that the worker in the capitalistic countries is exploited, goes hungry and is unemployed.
11. Every year since 1948 the population has believed that next year bread (white, gray and black) will be given away free in unlimited quantities in the state stores. Several times the press and large colored posters mentioned this plan. Simple people were inclined to believe it, but the intellectuals were not convinced.

#### HOUSING CONDITIONS

12. The housing conditions of the Soviet employed at Branch No. 1, Institute 88, were, according to our standards, terrible. A Soviet family normally occupied only one room of a several room apartment, and shared the kitchen with the other families. Only the director of Branch No. 1 had a three-room apartment by himself, and the chief of Department No. 1, KHUTORYANSKY, had a two-room apartment. A teacher, Antonina IVANOVA, who was a pulmonic patient, had to live with a family with two children in one room. According to school children, who visited her, she had a bed in a back corner of the room with a small table in front of it (40 x 60 cm), where she did her school-work (corrections).
13. Our maids often asked, how many rooms we had in Germany, but they never really believed us when we answered. In the beginning we had Soviet maids officially, later secretly, because the Soviets were not allowed to enter German houses. My last maid, Mascha, once asked me, how many rooms Professor SCHUETZ had in Germany. I told her that he had been the director of the Institute of Physics at Koenigsberg, and had occupied an eight-room apartment there. In response, she just laughed and replied: "Se, they told you the same fairy tale.."
14. During a Russian language lesson for Germans the Soviet interpreter, Lida SHEIFER, told us that she lived in two rooms with her parents in a seven-room apartment at the Mayakovsky square in Moscow. Five more families lived in the five remaining rooms. She said, that a time-table by the hour was set up for the kitchen and if the cooking could not be finished in time, it simply was continued on a hot plate in the room. Endless quarrels also resulted in regard to cleaning up, etc.
15. There was also a certain difference in the location of housing allotted to leading Soviet employees (engineers) and to simple workers. The engineers were billeted at the island, whereas the workers had to commute daily over the lake from Ohtashkov or Pesky. I believe that this was done for social reasons. The Soviet workers regarded these poor housing conditions with indifference. Since they do not own furniture and only rent the most necessary pieces, one room is usually large enough. The plant, Branch No. 1,

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had furniture (which included everything from beds to pots,) and for a monthly fee was leased to the workers and employees. When damaged or worn out, the plant exchanged the items again for new or used ones. The wives of the Soviet engineers complained often about the housing conditions and were promised that new houses would be built. Finally only three new houses for employees were built.

#### WOMEN AND FAMILY LIFE

16. I believe that the Soviet women, knowing no other type of life, are content to work like the men. The Soviet woman realizes that work is a necessity. There is no question of work interfering with marriage. According to Soviet interpreters and workers, all Soviet wives have to work, except those who have a child less than two years old. I knew only four Soviet women who did not work, and all of them had children under two years old. The Soviet women could not understand why we German wives did not work. It is true of course that they had much less work at home than we. Their cooking is very simple, one room is quickly straightened out, and the Soviet women practically never learned any needlework.
17. According to my observations Soviet family life is just as orderly as it was in Germany under normal conditions. Soviet women are content with their family life. Only a few envied us occasionally, because we used to take walks with our husbands and children, which is not customary in the USSR. The Soviets are seldom at home, which is quite understandable in view of the crowded housing conditions. They attend many movies (school children are encouraged by their teachers in this respect), go to clubs, to political meetings, to political indoctrination courses, alone or with their families. Mothers take their babies with them.
18. I never heard about trial marriages in the USSR. I know of only one divorce at the institute, where the Soviet director influenced the man to marry the second woman because she was pregnant. Both women in question worked in the same department and the majority of Soviet girls sympathized with the first wife.
19. During the last year a nursery was established. Soviet mothers or fathers took their children there in the morning and undressed them. Nurses dressed them with special clothes. In the evening the children were picked up again by their parents. I do not know about their diet, except that the children received some milk.
20. The procedure in the kindergarten was similar, only the children wore their own clothes. In my opinion the nurses were not really trained and the children were unsupervised most of the time. The children had lice and scarlet fever was prevalent through the kindergarten. The Soviets were not satisfied with the nursery or the kindergarten because of the constant danger of infection, but they had no choice since very few could afford a babuschka (grandmother) for the children.

#### CLASS STRUCTURE

21. The most privileged Soviets are high ranking officers, and the directors of large plants. In addition to high salaries and frequent bonus payments, these individuals receive many other advantages. For example they may buy many goods at cheaper prices. The intellectuals, doctors and engineers, look with great contempt on unskilled laborers. The difference between poor and rich is much greater in the USSR than in Germany. These upper classes are

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also privileged in the assignment of apartments. Engineers are very different in their appearance, manners and clothes from the ordinary worker. Our maid told me once that several parents on a Kolkhoz wanted to send their gifted children to a high school for ten years. This was not permitted because the children must continue to work at the Kolkhoz.

MINORITY PROBLEMS

22. I never observed any official or social antisemitism in this area.

RELIGION

23. One church was open in Ostashkov on the high holidays (Easter, Christmas, etc.) and on a few Sundays. I heard that the church (when open) was generally full and that young people were present. Collections resulted in relatively large sums compared to the small income of the visitors. All other churches and a monastery served other purposes. For example: the monastery was a jail for juveniles, and the other churches served as a bakery, a repairshop for automobiles and tractors, a Swedish bath, a milk distribution shop, etc.
24. All party members were opposed to the church. A party secretary, SHURIK, once asked a German interpreter, if she believed in God. When he got an affirmative answer, he laughed and told her how stupid she was to believe in things she cannot see. The anti-church attitude of officials is reflected in the following incident. A girl once wore a small golden cross around her neck to school. Her teacher demanded before the whole class the immediate removal of the cross, because religious propaganda was forbidden in the USSR. The child told her that her grandparents had sent her the cross from Germany, and that she would like to wear it for this reason. The child had to leave the class and naturally never wore the cross again.

CRIME AND CORRUPTION

25. No gangs or homeless orphans existed in this area, and crimes in general were no more frequent than in other countries. Bribery and corruption were prevalent. The managers of the trade organization Kalintorg lost their jobs every one to two years because of corruption. The sale girls in the state store on the island were frequently changed, because of dishonesty. A typical example was the case of SAYZEV, the chief for two years of some administrative department (real estate?) and a former school teacher. He was placed in jail for embezzlement, and after serving his sentence, he started in a lower position in his old firm. However, he was soon promoted and when we left Ostashkov he handled our furniture transportation. He demanded vodka from the Germans, and was constantly drunk. Another Soviet, who called himself "Island Commandant," was fired for taking vodka from the Germans. He then received a similar position in Ostashkov. Another Soviet, chief of the militia on the island, mishandled money (premiums for construction workers). He had to give up his job, but got a good position in Moscow. Thus, although a Soviet has served a jail sentence, he can achieve a leading position again. I do not know how much bribery is involved in this procedure.

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26. A salesgirl at the magazine had sold many goods such as thread and soap at extremely high prices. She was sentenced to ten years of forced labor by the court on the island. The interpreter, Lida SHEIFER, voiced the opinion to us that she had been unlucky, because her case had become too well known in public, especially among the Germans. If the court procedure had taken place in Ostaszkov, she would have been able to bribe the judge with enough money to receive a shorter sentence.
27. The population was accustomed to such incidents. Very often they sympathized with the culprit (like the above mentioned salesgirl), despite the fact that they were the victims. A baker, who had stolen large quantities of flour, to the detriment of everyone, was generally pitied. This man committed suicide later for fear of punishment.

PUBLIC OPINION

28. In my opinion the masses were passive towards the Soviet system. The peasants paid little attention to the party holidays in May and October, but celebrated the church holidays. During the first winter of 1946-1947 derogatory remarks by returning soldiers about Stalin and praise of Germany would be heard in the market. Later such comments were never heard. However, the leaders were convinced Communists, and there were many active followers among the workers.
29. All the Soviets were convinced, that it was the USSR alone which defeated Hitler Germany. All of them were also convinced, that in comparison to the capitalistic countries, the USSR had attained great achievements, such as no unemployment, free medical care for all, and equality of sexes.
30. The Soviet population believes, that the United States is the sole cause of world tension. All of them are afraid of a new war. The intellectuals believe that the communistic and the capitalistic system cannot exist side by side, despite the frequent statements to the contrary by Stalin. They are convinced, also that the USSR will not initiate a war, but if war comes, the USSR will naturally win after a hard struggle.
31. The outbreak of the Korean war was taken very quietly in this area. The accusation of bacteriological warfare by the United States was indiscriminately believed. The newspapers published reports and pictures regularly about it. They published pictures of dropped containers with English labels, of insects used as bacterium carriers, of infected persons, and reports of commissions and alleged testimony of American fliers taken prisoners.

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