

F 38434

CONFIDENTIAL/CS OFFICIALS ONLY/SECURITY INFORMATION

Country - USSR/Poland
Subject - Travel Formalities for US Editors' Visit to Moscow, April 1953
Place Acquired - [REDACTED]
Date Acquired - [REDACTED]
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Source Description - [REDACTED]

25X1A2g

25X1A6a

25X1X6

1. The visa to enter the USSR was stamped in our passports at the Soviet Consulate in London, before the deletion in the passports of the State Department ban on travel to the USSR. 25X1X6
2. The Soviet authorities made entries in our passports when we landed at Moscow airport and on the train at the border when we left the USSR at Brest. The Polish visa was obtained at the Polish Consulate in Moscow. The Polish authorities made entries in our passports at Litovsk and again at Frankfurt/Oder.
3. We first applied for a visa to enter the USSR at the Soviet Consulate in Washington in January 1953. During our trip we applied again at the Soviet Consulates in Athens, Damascus, Rome, Paris and London. The permission came unexpectedly in London on March 28th or 29th. The Soviet Consulate informed us that 10 passports belonging to our party would be stamped with visas to visit the USSR for seven days; in other words, we could choose 10 persons to make the trip.
4. We entered the USSR via an Aeroflot flight direct from Helsinki to Moscow airport - no stop at Leningrad. We left Helsinki about 4 p.m., reaching Moscow about 10 p.m. The plane was a DC-3 type. It must have been chartered especially for us (though we paid for our tickets) because we were told in Helsinki that all flight reservations had been cancelled. We were the only party aboard.

We left the USSR by train from Moscow to Brest. We left Moscow about 12:30 noon, reaching Brest the following day (April 8th) about 1:25 p.m. We had bought our tickets from Intourist in Moscow.

We left Brest about 7 p.m. that same day and reached West Berlin the next day at 10:55 a.m. This part of the trip was made on the crack Blue Express. The headwaiter in the dining car on the Blue Express told me he is a German and has had the job four years. He is frozen in it and could not quit if he tried. He told me the Blue Express is completely controlled by the Soviets, though it crosses Polish territory. No civilians use it - only the military. He told me that a separate locomotive always precedes the Express by about 15 minutes to clear the track. This is because the Soviets fear sabotage.

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Although I picked up no Soviet-printed schedules for rail or air travel, I did see some in Russian at the Intourist office in the National Hotel in Moscow where we made our reservations to leave the USSR. The international schedules we consulted are easily available to anyone in the large Time Table book put out by Cook's World Travel Service.

5. The only documents we had to produce upon entering and leaving the USSR were our passports. They were inspected when we arrived at Moscow airport -not enroute- by whom I presume were the airport immigration authorities. They were inspected again by the Soviet authorities on the train at Brest.
6. No limitation was placed on the luggage we could take into the USSR beyond the usual weight limitation for air travel. The question didn't arise as we were travelling light anyway - two suitcases apiece.
7. No restrictions were placed on the articles we brought into the USSR.
8. The Soviet customs authorities inspected our baggage at Moscow airport and on the train at Brest. At Moscow they just raised the lids of four or five bags. They asked if we had cameras. "Yes". Films? "Yes". Were the cameras loaded? "Yes". But no difficulties arose. On the train at Brest the Soviets opened one or two suitcases, but again no trouble. However, several of our party are convinced that the Soviets did search the train compartments and toilets thoroughly.

The Polish customs inspectors at Litovsk were quite different. They opened each suitcase and spotted the cameras. Despite our protests that the Soviet authorities had made it clear that we could take pictures, the Poles confiscated three loaded cameras and destroyed the films. They said we "weren't on Soviet territory any more."

9. No Soviets travelled with us from Helsinki to Moscow. The Soviets on the trains from Moscow to Brest and from Brest to Berlin were all high military officers travelling to Warsaw and Berlin. I didn't notice their customs inspection, but a Soviet officer in my compartment did produce what seemed to be an identity card. There seemed to be no civilians on the train.
10. I have no knowledge of the personal documents carried by Soviet civilians.
11. When we arrived in Moscow we presented our passport to the Intourist authorities at their office in the National Hotel where we stayed. We registered with Intourist only.
12. Intourist retained our passports for about four days, returning them before we went to the Polish Consulate to obtain Polish visas.
13. No documents were issued us in lieu of our passports.

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