

RED STARS AND REGIMENTATION

Towering ornate skyscrapers, like giant candelabra topped by glowing red stars, rising above a skyline of contrasting rather low buildings and golden bulbous domes — that is one of the visitor's first impressions of Moscow, political and cultural center of the U.S.S.R.

This fantastic city, built on seven low hills, has a population of over six million. Much construction is in progress. Miles of almost identical, gray, rectangular buildings line the streets. In the outskirts new residential areas are being developed near industrial centers. Here apartment buildings of huge prefabricated cement blocks provide housing of two or three rooms for workers and their families.

The Moscow River, winding through the city, provides transportation for the residents of this far-flung city and affords the visitor with superb views of the modern buildings, turreted Kremlin

walls, and sixteenth century monuments. One of the most unusual sights in Moscow is the Metro, or subway. Each station has its own architectural style combining marble, mosaics, sculpture, and crystal chandeliers. Every day three million persons ride the swift, clean trains, which are reached by a series of steep escalators.

All avenues lead to the Kremlin, a walled city within a city. Despite architectural contrasts, it is a place of unforgettable beauty. Within its crenelated red brick walls are various palaces, medieval cathedrals, and office buildings. One of the most impressive buildings is the Palace of Congresses, where meetings of the Supreme Soviet are held.

This ultra-modern building of white Ural marble seats six thousand persons and has a communication system that provides for simultaneous translation in fourteen languages. The Mausoleum of

Lenin is the center of attraction for thousands of visitors who arrive daily from every part of the Republics. They stand for hours as the long line inches its way toward the granite monument.

Just outside the Kremlin in Red Square is the magnificent St. Basil's Cathedral, built by Ivan the Terrible in the sixteenth century. With its brilliant colors and ornate domes of varied shapes and design, it appears like something from a fairy tale. The church is now a museum, as are all the churches in the Kremlin. There are few active churches in Moscow today. Although religious freedom is said to exist, it is not expedient to practice religion openly because of social, economic, and political sanctions.

Representatives from In-tourist Organization served as our guides and interpreters. Our feelings of apprehension were soon allayed as we were given complete freedom of movement within the city and permission to take pictures.

A well-planned program included conferences with Soviet educators and visits to the University of Moscow,

Friendship University, a Pioneer Camp, a nursery school, and a secondary school sponsored by a trade union in an industrial area. Among our cultural activities were visits to art galleries, a trip to the Tolstoy museum, attendance at an opera and a ballet presented in the Kremlin.

One evening we were guests in the homes of teachers living in Moscow. This was an especially pleasant event because we had an opportunity to visit informally with a Russian family, to enjoy their gracious hospitality, and to build a bridge of friendship for better understanding.

We drove through the beautiful birch and pine forests and rural areas surrounding Moscow to observe work being done with young people at a Pioneer Camp. Trade unions sponsor camps which take care of six million children. In some ways vacation at camp is a continuation of school work. The program is planned for all-around development of the child, and the leaders are young teachers from the Institute. The camp we visited had 550 children of workers in the Academy of Scientists.

The many talented youngsters in the group, varying in ages from seven to fifteen, presented a program of dancing and music. It was a surprise when one small girl sang in English, "I come from Alabama. . . ."

Our first seminar was with representatives of the Central Committee of the Trade Unions. Mme. Tamara Yanushkovskay, president of the Educational and Scientific Workers Union welcomed us and explained the purposes of the union. Of the teachers, 98 per cent are members. She said that educators are held in high esteem. Children write poems about teaching and teachers. There are five Hero Teachers in the country.

Educators we met were friendly and interested in discussing common problems in improving education. At Secondary School #729 in an industrial area, Mme. Demina, physicist and a deputy to the Supreme Soviet, greeted us, "My dear colleagues, allow me to express my appreciation of your visit to our school. Educators are the most desirable guests." She explained the role of women in her country by say-

ing, "It was the great wish of Lenin that women play a great part in the governing of the state. A society can be judged by the number of women participating in the governing body."

Russian women work hard and want to be thought of on the same terms as men. There is no discrimination in pay for women. Retirement age is fifty-five. They are granted 120 days for maternity leave with pay, and mothers of large families are held in great respect and awarded medals of honor.

At the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences, Prof. Marchushevich described some experiments in education and curriculum changes taking place. Schools are trying to improve content in mathematics and make the program more modern by getting away from theory and paying more attention to functions and calculus in the upper grades. Algebraic symbols and equations are being introduced in the elementary grades. Attention is also being given to improvement in the teaching of foreign languages. In the past too much emphasis was placed on grammar and not

enough on practice. The result was that pupils knew rules but could not converse with foreigners. Study of one foreign language is compulsory beginning with the fifth grade.

Education of youth is one of the chief concerns of the government. About forty-three million children are studying. Many adults attend evening classes. Russians are avid readers, and books are inexpensive. Education on all levels is free, and many students at the university receive stipends as well as discounts on rooms. Education is also obligatory.

Much attention is being paid to children with unusual ability. Special schools are provided for those who show talent in the arts, in mathematics, in science. Schools have been established, also, for the mentally retarded and the physically handicapped.

Teachers go to the homes, at government expense, to teach children who are not able to attend school. Children whose parents work are cared for in nursery schools. The director told us that most parents prefer sending their children to the nursery

school because they know the children will be brought up the proper way. There are twenty-two hundred of these schools in Moscow alone.

Soviet education is predicated on the Marxist-Leninist philosophy. One educator stated, "The principle of the school is to teach the child how to work and to love to work. . . . A man is friend and brother to another. One is for all, and all is for one." Schools are to arrange the behavior of every child correctly, and at each period of the child's growth certain skills and attitudes should be developed. Students are expected to do two years of practical work before admission to establishments of higher education.

Everything in Moscow seemed to be on a massive scale. Answers to questions were usually lengthy and followed the Party program. The people seemed to enjoy statistics and were intent on conformity. They were eager to display their achievements. Although we might not agree on basic philosophy, we were impressed by the friendliness of the educators who made our seminar enjoyable and

informative. Our hope is that this spirit will prevail and that teachers, who hold the destiny of the future in their hands, may continue to extend a hand of friendship in a world of peace. — *By Edith Bauerlein in D. K. Gamma Bulletin, Winter, 1965.*

RECREATION

When Maxim Gorky visited America he was taken to Coney Island by friends who wanted him to behold this huge playground swarming with holiday throngs. They took him through the crowded concessions, where he saw one dizzy contraption after another, swinging people through the air, swirling them in eccentric curves, shooting them down breath-taking inclines. They took him underground and overground, into bewildering mazes, museums of freaks, palaces of jugglers, theatres of dancing ladies and living statuary. They were giving Maxim Gorky the time of his life! Finally, at the end of what may have seemed to them a perfect day, they asked him how he had liked it. He was silent for a moment. Then he said, very simply, "What a sad people you must be!"