

# Uncensored Pictures Of People Behind The Iron Curtain



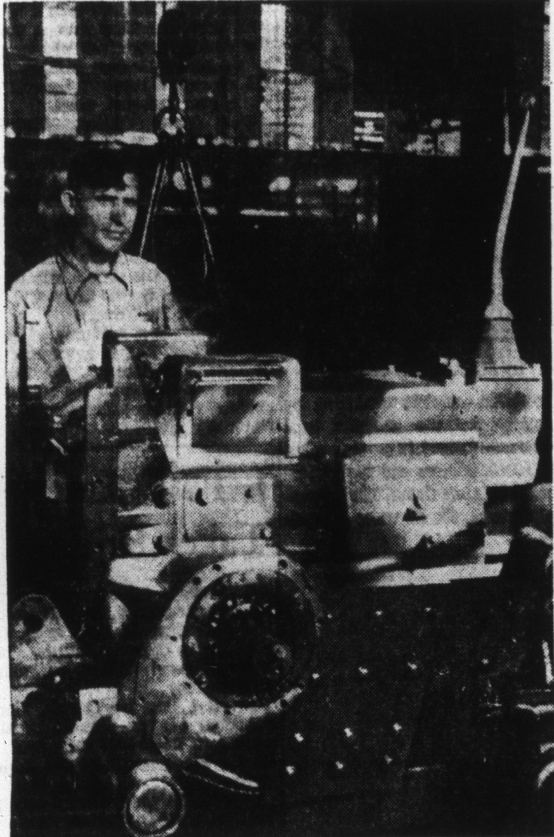
**IN FRONT OF THE CHURCH, BEGGARS:** To get into Moscow Cathedral, you must walk between two lines of beggars—perhaps 80 in all—the halt, the lame, and the blind. The only place John Strohm saw beggars in his 4000-mile journey through the U. S. S. R. was in front of the churches. This woman, who carried a sack of coins, distributes some to each beggar.



**BANQUET FOR VISITOR:** The chairman of a collective farm proposes a toast to Strohm: "In the near future we'll be able to heal the wounds of war. Tell the American people we're not afraid of work; that we'll overcome these handicaps and hardships. And we will return once more to the happy life we had before the war." The farmers drink samogon, a "moonshine" vodka; the well-stocked table is not every-day meal, but a banquet for a special occasion.



**PHYSICAL CULTURE PARADE:** Husky, well-built girls stride across parade grounds in a physical culture demonstration in Minsk. In each republic, groups like this vie for a chance to march in Moscow's All-Union parade.



**ASSEMBLY LINE:** One line in this Stalingrad tractor factory is in operation. The manager dodged a question on production hopes; the sign on the wall listed the goal at 6000.



**UNRRA SHOES:** U. S. Army style shoes are carried by a Red Army soldier who got them when he was demobilized. The shoes bring \$100 per pair in Moscow; this soldier turned down a barefoot woman's offer to barter a supply of canned goods for them.



**BRINGING IN THE SHEAVES:** Women like these cut grain in bunches with little sickles. They do 80 per cent of the work on Russia's farms. For each quarter of an acre they cut, bind and shock, the women get credit for 1.75 trudo-dyns or "work-days."

## BEHIND RUSSIA'S IRON CURTAIN— Soviet People Want Peace, Better Living and a Chance to Build Homes

(Continued From Page One)

newspaperman has been given as great freedom to go where he pleased, talk with whom he pleased—and rarest of all, to take hundreds of pictures of life and conditions behind the so-called Iron Curtain.

This privilege was granted to me only after I had cabled Prime Minister Stalin after six months of efforts to obtain a visa for Russia through regular channels had gained no yardage.

I appealed to Stalin to permit me, as a writer for American farm publications, to talk to the common people of Russia in hope of improving the understanding between our two peoples.

Ten days later, I had the visa. And I have finished my tour with no sterner injunction from official sources than the admonition of the minister of agriculture to "tell the truth."

### Farmers Spade in Bare Feet

No official asked to censor my copy. These dispatches are transcribed from my Moscow notes, in New York.

No one sought to conduct my travels to where I might see "favorable" views on Communistic life.

No one even examined the hundreds of photographs which I took in the cities and farms of Russia.

Much of the territory I covered was in the former "bread basket" of Russia. They're still spading the fields barefooted in Byelorussia; they're still hungry; they're still living in the debris of the disastrous war they've just gone through.

They hate war as only those who have known its terrors most intimately can hate it. Numb, hungry and bleeding from the last conflict, they can only feel horror at the thought of going through it all again against a nation which many of them assured me earnestly they love.

"America gave us food which kept us from starving," said a woman on the street in Moscow.

"America gave us the Studebaker trucks which helped win the war," said a soldier in Stalingrad.

Other impressions which crowd to the fore in the kaleidoscopic pattern of my travel by airplane, jeep, train, automobile, and afoot include:

**ONE.** The Russian citizen knows much more about the United States than we have been led to expect, despite the limited reports on the outside world published in the controlled Russia press.

**TWO.** There is a genuine gratitude and appreciation not only for the assistance which the U. S. gave the Soviet to defeat the German but also for the UNRRA food shipments.

**THREE.** The people are amazed and baffled to read in their newspapers that the United States is plotting aggression against Russia and brandishing the atomic bomb offensively.

**FOUR.** Communism, as practiced in Russia, is far from Utopia. In its present phase of development

Savoy in Moscow. (It was hard to get used to the idea of every dry-goods store, lemonade stand and movie being run by the government.)

"I work for myself," was his surprising answer.

He said he pays 1500 rubles to the government license inspector when he comes around every month. (That's \$125 at the diplomatic rate of exchange for a license to operate a shoe-shine business on Moscow's sidewalks.)

Even though he gets three to five rubles a shine (24 to 40 cents), he said, it keeps him hustling to pay the tax and earn enough additional to take care of his family.

He is one of many discharged veterans who have been given an opportunity to engage in private enterprise on a limited scale.

Then there was the little girl I talked with as we crossed the Volga river on a ferry headed for Stalingrad. She had a basket of cucumbers slung on one end of her shoulder yoke, a container of milk on the other. She was carrying her shoes, until she got to town.

### Allowed to Own a Cow

The milk was from the family cow—yes, they owned the cow. All collective farmers can own a cow and also a calf, a sow, 10 sheep, 10 beehives, and as many chickens as they can keep.

The cucumbers had been grown on the acre of ground each collective farm family has for its own use. The milk and cucumbers were surplus so she was headed for market. The milk would bring about 55 cents a quart; the cucumbers, about 30 cents apiece.

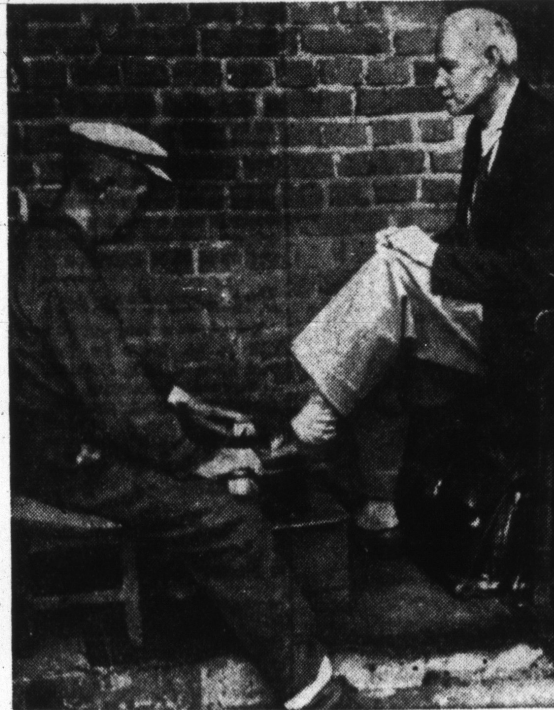
I almost wanted to buy a farm and start planting cucumbers myself. But land is one of the things a man can't own in the Soviet Union. It all belongs to the state.

The Russians have incentives for jobs that American industrial experts never heard of. The industrial piecework system has been transposed completely to the farm.

**Royalties on Enterprise**  
For example, here's how a state farm I visited pays the girl who takes care of the race horses: She gets 40 rubles a month for taking care of each mare and cleaning the stable. She gets 160 rubles each time a mare gets pregnant; 50 rubles if the mare has a live and healthy colt; 50 rubles if the colt lives one month; 50 rubles if it lives two months—and so on until each colt is five months old.

And it's not only for jobs like taking care of race horses. They have such an incentive system for every job from hauling manure to experimenting with perennial wheat. The scientist who develops a new variety of grain, for instance, gets a flat royalty for every acre planted to it. He does very well financially.

Every village in Byelorussia or the Ukraine has its atrocity stories by



**SHOE-SHINE LICENSE:** This shoe-shine man pays a license fee of \$125 a month for the privilege of plying his trade on the Moscow sidewalk. The government permits a certain amount of private enterprise by disabled war veterans for a stiff license fee.

the dozen. On one farm I visited, 38 families had been killed, the men, women and children.

In one county, every building was burned by the retreating Germans. One small section of one small republic of the Soviet Union sacrificed 300,000 lives for the common victory.

The Russian concern today is not beefsteak and automobiles; it is bread and shoes. A pair of army shoes sells for \$100 in the Moscow market. Farm workers go barefoot.

In the Ukraine, which claimed to be the most highly mechanized agricultural area in the world before the war, the most striking sight this summer was of women cutting the grain with sickles and cradles, bending over to bind the bundles by hand.

**Women Do Heavy Work**

Not all that is due to war loss of combines and tractors, but a lot of it is. If they don't have combines, they swing cradles and flails. In Byelorussia, when it came time for spring planting and they had neither tractors nor horses, they spaded half a million acres. Some of those feet pushing the spade into the earth were bare, too, or wrapped in rags.

Women are doing 80 per cent of

the work on farms. In Stalingrad, the gigantic job of clearing the rubble of this blasted city is being done largely by teen-agers and women.

There are no steam shovels or bulldozers; these girls patiently carry the stones away on wheelbarrows without wheels, a girl lifting each end of the load. Women are laying brick, driving tractors, working on roads, swinging scythes, doing everything a man can do and doing it well.

"Without the women, we never would have won the war," said one Soviet official.

I asked Minister of Agriculture Benedictov: "When the Soviet Union gets back to normal—oh, say 15 to 20 years from now—how much of the work on farms will then be done by women?"

"Only about 55 per cent," was his answer.

**Biggest Grain Crop**

The Soviet has just harvested the biggest grain crop since the war started, but rationing will be continued at least until next year. Basic rations are provided for all at a low price. Thus, everyone has a chance to eat, regardless of the money he earns.

Bread is less than four cents a



**U. S. LABELS:** All the food on the shelves of this store, above, is UNRRA food, without which people of Minsk would have starved. A Russian woman here buys powdered milk. The only non-UNRRA goods on these shelves are vodka, champagne and other wines, with vodka selling at 120 rubles a liter (\$10 at diplomatic rate of exchange, \$24 at official rate).

pound. (Ration prices have recently been tripled.)

If the worker wants to buy things not on his ration card, he can go to the commercial store or free market. There all he needs is cash.

An egg costs 80 cents, a pound of butter \$10, and the price tag on a skinny two-pound chicken is \$20.

The average industrial worker who makes less than \$35 a month doesn't splurge on chicken.

Farmers eat relatively well. But even they are planting grain in the tiny plots back of their houses which ordinarily would be given over to vegetables or more intensive gardening.

"Why not grow potatoes?" I asked a collective farmer.

"Because I want to be sure of having some bread for my family," he answered.

The pastor of the Moscow Baptist church may be writing to find out why I, a soft-shelled Baptist in good standing at West Union, Ill., didn't come to church in Moscow.

Well, I went to church—but it was the Russian Orthodox church. I almost didn't get in. The Cathedral was jammed inside and out. People were even huddled under the windows to hear snatches of the mass and the beautiful music.

I'll never forget the hunger for that undefinable something on the faces of those people.

**Love Beauty, Pageantry**  
"They love the beauty, the pageantry," and the music of the church—you can't keep the Russians from their church," the Patriarch told me.

It was the same in the country. In a corner of every farm home is a religious ikon.

The Anti-Religious Museum in Moscow has been closed to the public since 1943, although I did still see a sign, "Religion Is the Opiate of the People," on the outside of a museum facing Red Square.

In Minsk I was invited to a cup of tea—that's Russian for a banquet—by the foreign minister of Byelorussia, Kuznetsov, at an enigma.

whom I had met while reporting the United Nations conference at San Francisco. I told him I wanted to introduce the people of these countries to the people of America—as the best approach to a lasting peace.

He agreed. "When I was in San Francisco," he said, "I have just taken a trip through Byelorussia. I talked with your scientists, with your farm people. They say the same thing. America and the Soviet Union must be friends."

Kiselev nodded. "Yes, I am sure that is the way they feel," he said slowly. "So looks like our job is to educate the diplomats. Our diplomats are our main problem—they must be shown the road to peace."

**TOMORROW:** Moscow: first look

at an enigma.