

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 an everyday 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.

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 auto truck.

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 Germans 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 clubs? What sports did I play?

"What bureau do you work for?" I asked the disabled soldier who was shining my shoes as I stood on the sidewalk outside the Hotel Ukraine. He has its atrocity stories by

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.

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The Russians have incentives for jobs that American industrial experts never heard of. The industrial piecework system has been completely passed 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 60 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 combining and tractors, but a lot of it. 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, wrapped

in rags.

And they wanted to please me:

Did we have collective farms in America? Did American women take 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.

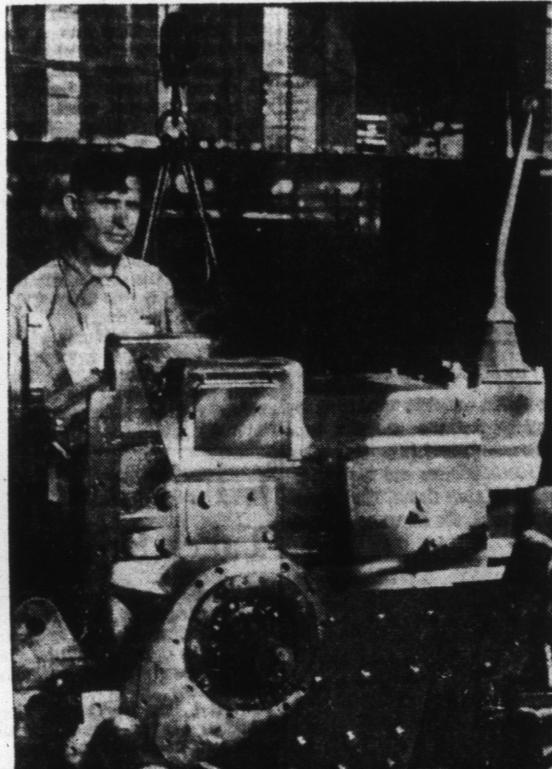
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ASSEMBLY LINE: One line in this Stalingrad tractor factory is in operation. The manager dodged a question on production hopes; the sign on the wall listed the goal at 6000.



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, men, women and children.

In one county, every building was burned by the retreating Germans.

One small section of one town of the Soviet Union, sacrificed 300,000 lives for the common victory.

Their 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

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And they wanted to know:

Why not grow potatoes?

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 at a low price. Thus, everyone has a chance to eat, regardless of the money he earns.

Women Do Heavy Work

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



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-dys or "work-days."

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