

# USSR

Recently two of our comrades visited the Soviet Union on a two week tour of Moscow, Tallinn (in Estonia) and Leningrad. What follows is a description of what they saw, which indicates that the revisionist clique has not turned back the Soviet socialist revolution.

## General Impressions

As we were driving from the Moscow airport to our hotel, the first thing that impressed us was the cleanliness—no litter or garbage in the streets anywhere. There was nothing that even approached what we know as a ghetto or slum. Coming from San Francisco with an unemployment rate of 40% in the construction industry, we were impressed by the massive building program and by the movement of equipment that we could see from the bus. Later we were to learn that 450 flats were constructed in Moscow daily. (In contrast with our massive unemployment, they actually have a universal shortage of workers.) Housing nowhere costs a person more than 5% of his income.

In travelling through Moscow, Leningrad and Tallinn we were able to see tremendous progress in the reconstruction of the cities and towns that had been all but levelled during the fascist invasion. For a country that had lost over 20 million people only 30 years before, these workers rebuilt from the rubble, a modern socialist country.

In Leningrad we saw the Pavlovsky Museum. Here the fascists had occupied the building for 3 years, right on the outskirts of the city. When they were driven out by the Soviet army they burned the building, leaving only charred walls. What we saw was unbelievable. The Soviet peoples with their love for their history, had rebuilt the museum so well that it looks as it did hundreds of years ago.

In Moscow, we walked down a boulevard which had been razed to the ground by the fascists. In less than two years a boulevard of six story buildings had risen out of the ashes.

As for clothing, the average citizen in the USSR is dressed well even by our standards. They don't have the large amount of clothing, but they do have well-made and attractive clothing.

We had a discussion with an Estonian woman who had been a factory worker but who had gone to school and accepted a lower paying job in order to serve her people better. She said that 10 years ago clothes had cost more and that the citizens had demanded better made and less expensive clothing. Through the collective effort of the workers' trade unions, the quality had improved and the cost had gone down.

Here a word about wages and working conditions. The lowest wage in the USSR is 130 rubles a month—5% to rent, 50% to food, 10% to transportation and 35% to entertainment and clothing. An example is the Leningrad dockworkers. The average wage is 237 rubles, the highest is 400 and the minimum is 170. Their union dues are calculated at 1% of their wages. The head of the union earns 190 rubles a month and collects only half his pension along with his full wages upon retirement, whereas a regular worker collects his full wages and full pension upon retirement.

Workers on the docks and most industrial enterprises get a 10 minute break every hour. Also, male workers generally retire at 60 and females at 55. Retirement is at a younger age for workers in the more hazardous occupations.

Our wages in the USNA are continually being eaten away by inflation and our standard of living is falling. In contrast, wages in the USSR are rising while prices stay the same or fall—in short, their standard of living is going up.

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## Children

One of the highlights of our trip was a visit to the Pioneer Palace in Moscow where youngsters can go after school. All children can go free and they have a wide range of activities to choose from where their interests are allowed to develop and their horizons broadened. They have discussion groups where they talk about such things as nations fighting for their independence. The kids have pen pals in these countries and collect money and send them gifts. There are also groups of children learning to cook, paint, sew, embroider, sculpture, dance and even cross-breed plants. The children have their own planetarium, zoo, track and field, swimming pool, astronaut training center, dramatics club, and other things. Besides the Pioneer Palaces in all the major cities, each trade union has facilities for children. It was clear that the children have a special place in society as they are considered the future of society. (The second part will continue in Vol. 3 No.1)