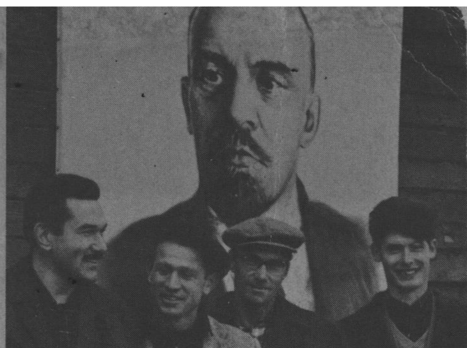
Charles R. Allen, Jr.

JOURNEY TO THE SOVIET TRADE UNIONS

with 65 photographs by the author



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JOURNEY TO THE SOVIET TRADE UNIONS

Charles R. Allen, Jr.

An American Eyewitness Report

Marzani & Munsell

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

as a small token of my regard, affection and esteem . . . for Rockwell Kent and Richard Morford

This booklet has but a modest purpose. With it, I hope to indicate briefly what I found to be the more essential points about the trade union movement inside the Soviet Union today. By no means does this small effort tell the whole story, but I trust that *Journey to the Soviet Trade Unions, An American Eyewitness Report,* will make a valid contribution towards a matter which I firmly believe the American people will find of vital concern. The booklet will no doubt raise more questions than answers; these pages are meant only to convey some notion of the sounds, sights, feel and motion of the ordinary people who work for a living in the USSR.

Ultimately, the points raised in the booklet are an attempt to approach the Soviet people—225 million of them—with an open mind, in an effort to further our understanding of a manifestly different system, a different way of life. If so, then the booklet may serve to advance purposeful and honorable peace between working men and women of the United States and the USSR.

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ON MY WAY

> "We must deal with the world as it is, and not as it might have been . . . Let us re-examine our attitude toward the Soviet Union."
>
> President John F. Kennedy,
> June 10, 1964

While winging 35,000 feet over the European continent, on board a sleek, compact, Soviet TU-104 jet bound for Moscow, I pondered the many ideas—mine and those of others—about Soviet trade unions and the way the Soviet people make their living. I jotted them down, so that I could test them against the realities of the next two months in the USSR.

Back in New York, one of the more popular TV network news "personalities" had gravely assured me: "You know they are not really trade unions at all. Just agents of the state."

An Associated Press correspondent confidently predicted: "They've no unions over there. You'll find that a worker can't negotiate a kopek. He has no remedy available to deal with his hours or working conditions."

A nationally known political columnist told me: "Allen, color the Soviet Union grey, not red! A dull, drab place with people leading a dull, drab life. Unions! Hell, they don't know the meaning of the word!"

A well-known "Kremlinologist," teaching at Columbia University, echoed the notion generally held by most of America's academic circles when he said: "The trade unions, so-called, are in essence merely creatures of the Communist Party which runs everything in the Soviet Union."

A friend of mine who is a national officer of a big AFL-CIO union told me: "Listen, Chuck, you know what most of the pie-cards say. They've no unions there. They're just the speed-up artists in the shops for the government or the muscle boys for the Party. You know yourself that's what most of the guys think."

Yet that is not what *everybody* thinks. Within the past several years, respected American unionists have had a chance—limited in scope for the most part—to see Soviet trade unions. Joseph Curran, the president of the AFL-CIO's National Maritime Union, took a couple of perceptive brothers along with him in August of 1962, when he visited shipping and port centers of the USSR.

I myself had talked with dozens of American trade unionists who, as tourists, had visited steel, auto, textile and electrical plants in several of the larger cities in European Russia. Without exception, their impressions were not nearly as critical as one might expect.

Even the bosses were curious about working conditions there. In 1958, a delegation of the American Iron and Steel Institute visited the principal steel producing centers of Russia and wrote a long

report which included an interesting chapter on labor.

Moreover, the highly respected International Labor Office, an agency of the United Nations, whose work is vigorously supported by the United States Government, had published in 1960 a long, carefully documented report of its own on-the-spot investigations of "freedom of association" in the Soviet trade union movement.

I did not go to the USSR to make gratuitous and invidious comparisons of two trade union systems which were obviously quite different. Nor would I attempt to prove who was the better off: the American or Soviet working people.

I concede at the outset that I harbor a distinct bias in favor of the American labor movement. Despite its many contradictions, despite its frequent backwardness—especially at the national leadership level—nonetheless, the trade union movement of the United States provides the very backbone of the American democratic tradition at its finest.

I resolved to look for the facts of Soviet trade union life: to meet the people on their terms, not mine, and attempt to understand the facts within the context of a Soviet worker's society. While I was well aware of the obvious differences between our systems, I was equally interested to learn of any important similarities in the lives of Soviet and American trade unionists.

My purpose in going to the USSR was to gather data and reportage on Soviet trade unions for magazine and newspaper articles, books, radio and TV documentaries.

I was also going to do a booklet, intended primarily as an introduction to the subject, for American trade unionists. The booklet was commissioned by a private organization in the United States, the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship, whose board of directors includes many distinguished Americans. (The National Council has for many years arranged similar undertakings for American educators, artists, writers, scholars, scientists, ministers, businessmen, and the like.)

In no way affiliated with the National Council, I accepted as an independent, free-lance writer, the invitation to do the booklet under the following conditions: (1) that I have complete reportorial and editorial freedom; (2) that I be permitted to travel at some length and for a reasonably sufficient time in the USSR in order to gain an overall picture of the trade union situation there; (3) that I have free access to a varied cross-section of Soviet trade unions and work-a-day life; (4) that I be permitted to use my cameras and tape recorder as freely as I chose; (5) that I speak to and interview anyone I please; (6) that I not be hemmed in by officials—no matter how well meaning—who would keep me from as close reportage of the rank and file as possible; and (7) that all expenses be my own.

Not only did the National Council readily agree to everything within its power, but, I was to discover, my hosts while in the Soviet

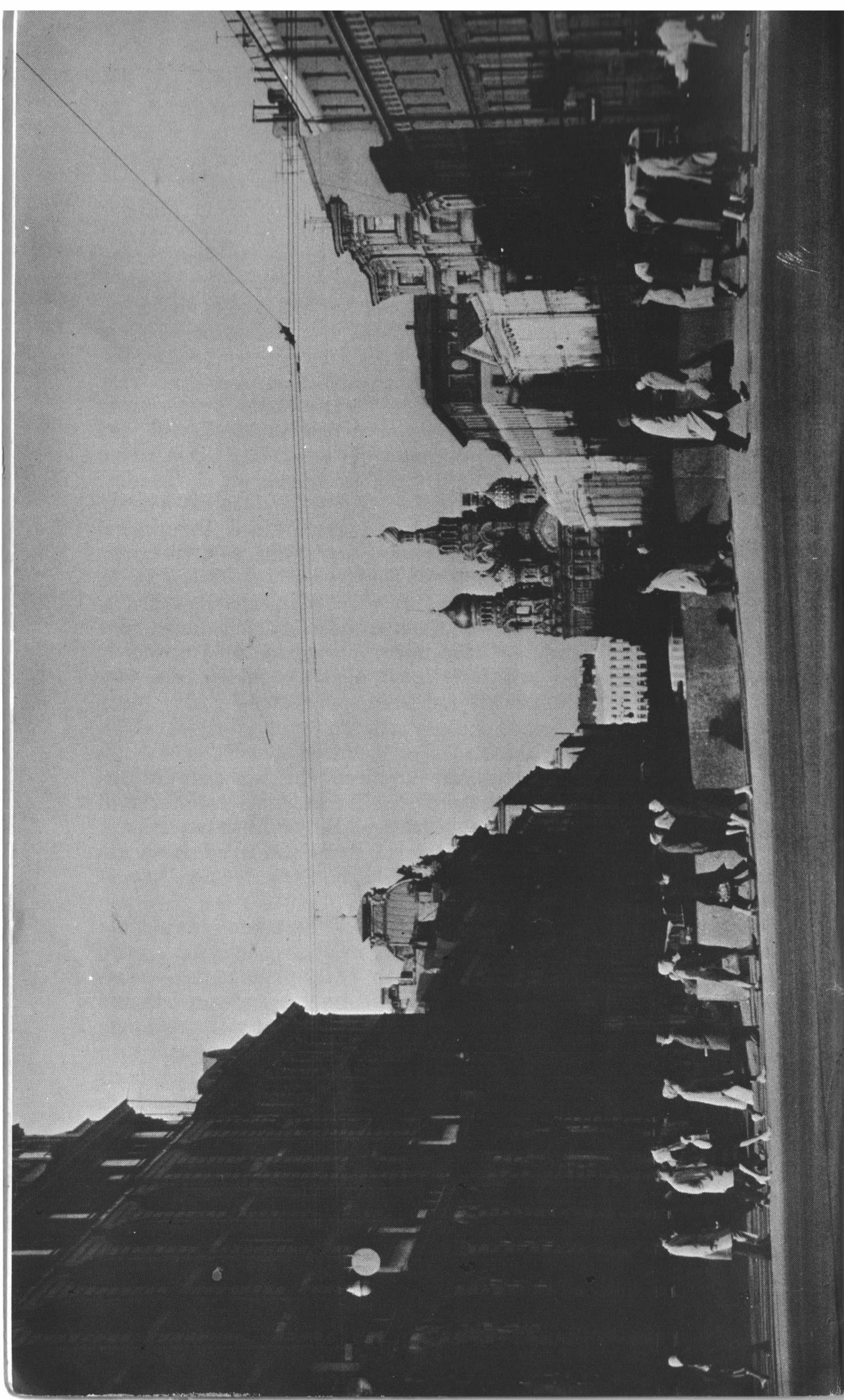
Union—the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions of the USSR and its many republican, regional, district and local affiliates —complied without a single exception to these preconditions. Indeed, they went out of their way to assure as complete and unfettered a coverage as a journalist could wish.

I did not realize while flying over Europe what a big trip was in the offing. Before I finished, I had completed an odyssey which took more than seven weeks and covered more than 12,000 miles throughout the length and breadth of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, including 5 National Republics (the USSR is made up of 15 Constituent Republics), 17 cities, 29 different factories—or enterprises, as the Soviets call their plants—institutions of all sorts, and research centers. I observed, literally, scores of thousands of people from every walk of life, under virtually every conceivable climatic and cultural condition of the USSR. In point of fact, I interviewed some 860 working people, representing a vivid, living slice of Soviet life: trade union, scientific, cultural, social welfare, and sports figures; workers, from sweepers to top-graded, highly skilled technicians; from Heroes of Socialist Labor to ordinary working folk; the very young, the middle-aged, and the very old; people with white, black, brown, and yellow skins; people working in old plants, new plants, or under automation and the very latest production and design conditions, to those making a living under backward and manifestly inferior surroundings. I saw Old Russia smack alongside the very new, and came to see, understand and appreciate—if not totally approve—the frequently startling contrasts and contradictions which characterized life in the Soviet Union wherever I went.

I was to cover virtually all of European Russia, much of the subtropics of the Crimea and the fabled Soviet Asian regions, with their Arabian Nights atmosphere. And I would be fortunate enough to range to the Far East and the taiga (wild, unsettled mountain forests) of legendary Siberia, coming down along the borders of Outer Mongolia and great China itself.

If I had then known that, literally, I would be taking down more than 1,000 pages of detailed notes, descriptions, interviews, and observations, together with the more than 1,000 photographs—color, black-and-white—that were to be recorded on the spot as I moved along, I would have asked for a couple of helpers. Before returning to Europe and thence back to the United States, I recorded more than 30 hours of taped interviews, discussions, meetings, cultural and sports activities of trade union life, both in the factories and in the fields of the Soviet Union. And if I had known that I was to cram in about 784 working hours (and let me emphasize "working")—often involving several, consecutive 24-hour periods at a clip—in the next seven weeks, I might not have been so eager.

Throughout most of the time, I was right with my subject: the working men and women of the Soviet Union. On numerous occasions,



I was lucky enough to accompany them through a whole working day and, afterwards, be with them during off-hours. I got up with them; went to their factories with them—using the same conveyance, whether car, bus, truck, subway (called the Metro), bike, boat, or, in one case, by a giant helicopter, or simply walked to work; spent the entire day inside the plant, talking with them freely and watching them at their work and how they related to their work and their trade unions; lunched with them at the plant cafeteria, went home with them, took evening meals with them at their homes, apartments, farms, or in the neighborhood restaurants; and attended their cultural activities at the Palaces or Houses of Culture (orchestra and band concerts, ballets, dramatic performances, readings, solo concerts, variety shows much like our 'amateur nights,' operas and choirs, and discussion groups and clubs on every subject under the sun).

As a former collegiate and professional athlete, I was especially fortunate to be both spectator and participant at many of the trade unions' enormous sports programs throughout the Soviet Union. I became addicted to Soviet football—we call it soccer—and took in a lot of basketball, weight lifting, track and field, swimming and diving along with gymnastics, wrestling and boxing. In fact, I was able to work out with many of their basketball, weight lifting and swimming teams. On several occasions I found myself stopping off at what they call the "Red Corner"—lounges for reading and playing games at the factories—and taking on workers relaxing at chess (I always lost!).

Additionally, I visited the various social welfare institutions connected with the plants and state farms, paying special attention to the first-aid and medical centers, the prophylactoria (quite unlike anything in the United States), the polyclinics, factory schools, nurseries (or creches), kindergartens, libraries, theaters and the huge housing developments which dominated the Soviet landscape wherever one went.

At all of the plants, I freely engaged in full and frank—often brutally frank—exchanges, discussions and arguments with the trade union committees, and the directors of the plants and their deputies who represent management. I was fortunate to see with my own eyes various factory meetings, an opportunity which few Americans have had. In Soviet Georgia, I sat in on a fascinating Production Conference Meeting between union and management. In Soviet Asia, I saw a big cultural commission of a trade union committee put the boss of the world's largest textile mills through the wringer for alleged deficiencies. I went to meetings of locals in Siberia, Moscow, and Leningrad, and was able to attend a meeting of a factory's Comradely Court (which is also without a counterpart in the United States).

Despite their guest's not altogether infrequent truculence, and a

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L., Leningraders going to work.

species of humor which might be characterized as somewhat irreverent (upon deplaning for the first time in Siberia, for example, I walked down the gangway with my hands up, saying, "All right, I'll go peacefully! Which way to the salt mines?"), my Soviet hosts were not only gracious and generous, but they scrupulously abided by the preconditions laid down prior to my arrival.

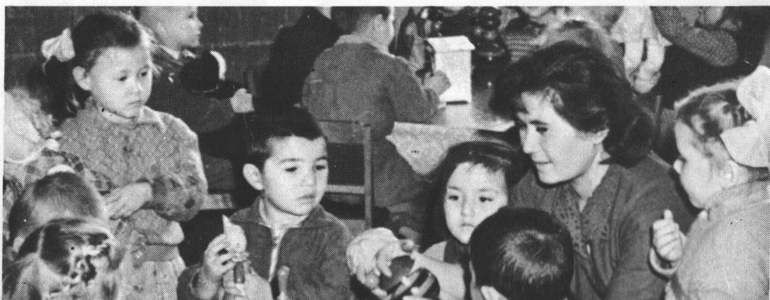
At no time and in no place would anyone say: "You can't go there" or "You can't say that, or interview this or that person." I was, quite candidly, surprised by the openess, frankness, and complete willingness of everyone to let me report and comment and question just as I pleased. And—this is most unusual, indeed the first time it has happened to me in a 16-year career as a writer-journalist—there was not a single case of anyone or any organization invoking the right of non-attribution, that is of "going off the record."

I not only had cooperative agreement as to the program which was to be carried out during my journey through the USSR, but often went out either by myself or with my interpreter, ranging far and wide among the people. In several places and for days at a time, I was unaccompanied by any official representative of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions.

I also must touch on another attitude which I adopted from the outset of my journey to the Soviet trade unions. It is best expressed by a speech that the United States Senator from Arkansas, J. W. Fulbright, gave on March 25, 1964, in the United States Congress. Stressing the rapidly changing relations between the United States and the USSR, Senator Fulbright said that too often people are blinded to the reality of the Soviet Union by the "devil theories" and "myths" that have been spawned since their 1917 revolution. His remarks applied with equal validity, I felt, to the commonly held beliefs that many of us have about the Soviet trade unions and the labor movement there.

"The master myth of the cold war," said Senator Fulbright, "is that the Communist bloc is a monolith composed of governments which are not really governments at all but organized conspiracies, divided among themselves perhaps in certain matters of tactics, but all equally resolute and implacable in their determination to destroy the free world."

Insert the word "trade union" in the appropriate places, and one has a fair summary of the views held by many Americans about Soviet trade unions. I felt that my trip would test a crucial "master myth" against the glare of reality.



'WELCOME TO THE SOVIET UNION!'

> "'The forests are the Lord's gardens,' said grandfather . . . There are forests on the Volga too, stretching as far as the Urals . . . it is all so boundless and wonderful . . . The place called up a feeling of peace and solace in my heart . . . During that time also my senses acquired a peculiar keenness, my hearing and sight became more acute, my memory more rentention, my storehouse of impressions widened."
>
> *In the World* by Maxim Gorky

My explorations began even before setting foot on Soviet soil. While in flight, I discussed trade unions with the pert Soviet hostesses—who, it is a pleasure to report, are as attractive as their American counterparts—the chief pilot and his engineer, a professor of philology at Leningrad University returning from an exchange visit to an English university; and, lastly, at an impromptu gathering of the Moiseyev Dancers—on their way home after a smash visit to London.

Curious about their attitudes towards trade unions, the first Soviet people I talked to expressed amazement that I would even ask if they belonged to a trade union. "Of course!" exclaimed a lovely young blonde hostess, "*Everyone* belongs to a trade union. What else?"

I was to discover that this was the case throughout the Soviet Union. Everyone, so it seemed, indeed was a trade unionist, no matter what his line of work (except for the military and collective farmers).

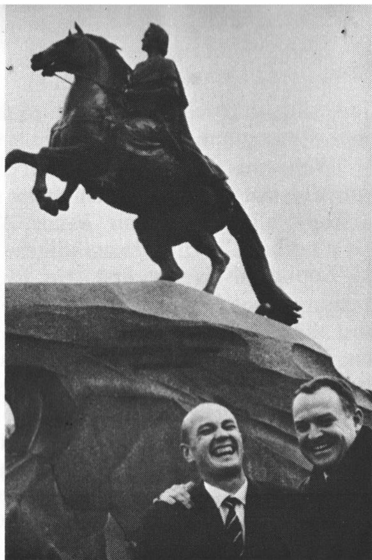
I had read about the principle of "one plant, one union," which apparently applied to all factories and establishments in the USSR. How did this approach to trade union organization apply to him, I asked the captain of the TU-104 as we jetted smoothly on automatic pilot high over Scandinavia.

"Everyone working on the plane is a member of the Aviation Workers' Union," he said. Furthermore, I was told by the flight engineer, everyone permanently employed at an airport: the girls at the ticket counter, the porters, maintenance men, loaders, dispatchers, sweepers—all are in the same union.

"It's really quite simple," said the pilot.

The philology professor from Leningrad told me that "Everyone in the university is a member of the Education, Higher Schools and Scientific Institutions Workers' Union. Ours is not merely a teachers' union but represents everyone working at an educational institution." Asked if that included maintenance workers and students, the professor replied, "Yes, all who work at the school. From the university president to the janitors. Students are workers too, you know."

At an impromptu meeting with the Moiseyev troupe, while winging 30,000 feet over northwestern Europe, I was told that all of them —dancers, choreographers, set designers, wardrobe mistresses, car-



Harold . . . Victor . . . Slava and friend . . .

called. Victor and I soon learned that we could communicate quite well in French and German. He and his younger colleague, Harold Shchetinin, 36, with dark hair, impeccable manners and a youthful zest about him—could have easily passed for a young instructor on an American campus. These three AUCCTU representatives would accompany me, with Slava serving in the capacity of interpreter. Boris Averyanov was quite young (in his late thirties) to be occupying so important a post in the Soviet trade union movement and, as I was to learn later, is one of the movement's up-and-coming figures.

The interpreter, I noted, was going to be the key to my coverage. Yes, they agreed. I wanted to expand on this, if I might. "Pozhaluista, pozhaluista!" they chorused. ("Please, go right ahead!"—a wonderful expression of courtesy which I was to hear many, many times in the Soviet Union.)

I went on: I should like the translation to be word-for-word, on-the-spot renderings of the English and the Russian.

Of course, they responded, Slava does precisely that. He teaches and interprets for the national Labor College and has interpreted for many foreign delegations from Great Britain and other English-speaking peoples. Moreover, he has had wide experience at international conferences, serving as a simultaneous translator.

I had brought along my tape recorder which would be running wide open most of the time.

Yes, they knew that, they could see my recorder.

What make is it? inquired Averyanov.

Dutch: Norelco, a transistor.

Very good. How heavy is it?

Not even 10 pounds and absolutely reliable.

Wonderful!

If at all possible then, Slava, I said, turning to the shy, brilliant interpreter, I should like you to use the mike as much as I do. I've had experience before doing this (notably in German and Korean), and it will require a great deal of concentration and plain, unvarnished hard work. "We will have to move fast at all times," I said.

Certainly, came the confident reply.

My Russian was sufficient to follow a discussion. No punches were to be pulled, all questions and answers were to be given with no euphemisms. Furthermore, I intended to indicate the banners, signs, and slogans to be translated. And should anyone in the plant or on the assembly line call out or make some gratuitous remark, I wished it translated immediately. "For instance, if some guy mutters, 'It's none of your damn business,' or 'What's that Amerikansky doing here?' I want to have it. In other words, I want to pick up everything just as soon as it happens. O.K.?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," Slava said. His eyes—blue and warm—danced eagerly.

"Well, we shall go to the Hotel Moscow where you will be staying," said Boris Averyanov. "We shall go over the program, discuss it, have dinner, and next morning get to work."

It was close to midnight when we finished a Gargantuan meal, accompanied by an equally expansive fellowship. Harold Shchetinin suggested we go over to Red Square for the changing of the guard at Lenin's mausoleum. Everyone concurred.

While getting our coats, I talked with the gnarled old man in the hotel's coatroom. He was in his seventies, came from a peasant family and, after the Revolution, worked in steel mills. "This gives me something to do," he said. "Some spare money besides." Does he receive full pension while working part-time? Oh, yes. How much did he get a month in the cloak room? 70 rubles. That didn't sound like much. "Well," he began to explain, "with my pension, my free apartment and . . ."

at site of the Battle of Stalingrad . . .
"We'll be moving fast . . ."

"Later, Chuck," someone shouted. "Later! Hurry or we'll be late!"

There was a tug at my sleeve. "Let's go!" shouted Harold, Victor and Slava together (Boris had long since left us for other business), and our party—which had become a whirlwind of laughter, jokes, and tales—spilled out of the hotel.

As we strode up the cobblestoned, sweeping avenue leading to Red Square, however, the jollity died down. In the ice-blue light of the Square at midnight, hidden spotlights caught the high spires of the Kremlin, its towers, and medieval parapets. The great walls of the ancient fortress, with large, blood-red flags streaming high along the farthest reaches into the black of the night, loomed ahead of us like a powerful shade. The soaring, thrusting gold and striped cupolas of St. Basil's Cathedral seemed to hang in the air. The colors and shapes, the sheer presence of the great buildings on the Square —the Kremlin, the cathedral, the GUM department store—all bathed in soft lights, the full moon scurrying off in space, the muffled snapping of the flags and the cold wind against our faces silenced our levity. There was not a soul to be seen or heard on the vast square.

Suddenly, the Kremlin chimes began to peal a strange, halting and haunting melody quite unlike anything I have heard. I looked up to the farthermost tower, crowned by a twinkling red star. A white light flooded the face of its large, gold-faced clock, which showed less than two minutes before midnight. Then there was a scurry along the outer edges of the Square as dozens of people materialized out of the darkness and came on the run to the grey, red and black marble structure with its massive steel doors over which was the legend: L E N I N

Two young soldiers stood motionless at their posts. Their bayonets caught the lights in sharp reflections.

Then the quick, regular steps of the relief guard broke and resounded across Red Square. Two soldiers, bayoneted rifles portered on their shoulders, and an officer, his dress sword snapping smartly, came swinging out from the Kremlin tower. They were attired in deep, rich grey greatcoats with red piping, pearl grey Astrakhan caps set smartly on their heads, marching, in quick, high and vigorous steps in boots which blinked with black brilliance. They came bearing down on us, their free arms and white gloved hands swinging high off their chests, past the snow-white reviewing stands and then across the crimson cobblestones, which rang with their steps as the chimes continued their haunting refrain.

As they swung by the silent, almost reverent, knot of people, I saw that the guards and officer were youngsters, barely in their twenties. All were tall (better than 6′2″), slender, erect and handsome blue-eyed Slavs, whose faces betrayed not the slightest movement, their eyes riveted straight ahead.

They halted abruptly before Lenin's tomb. Almost inaudibly the

young officer gave his orders, as the great bell from the Kremlin Tower began its deep, booming strokes of the day's final hour. Rifle stocks smashed on concrete and boots cracked as the guards neatly executed their exchange.

In a trice the relief had been posted.

The guard was crisply snapping off its steps back to the Kremlin Tower, as the chimes pealed high in the cold Moscow air.

ON THE JOB

> "From its visits to factories and other institutions, [The Mission] was able to observe that large numbers of union bodies existed and that the officials of these bodies were generally persons of ability and influence . . . fully conscious and responsive to the problems affecting union members."
>
> "The Trade Union Situation in the U.S.S.R.", Report of the International Labor Office, an agency of the United Nations, 1960.

A ray of the early morning sun caught the side mirror of the Volga and momentarily blinded us as we swung past Gorky Street, slowed down for the early morning rush hour that swept in front of us, roared round the lower end of Red Square, and then the golden disc seemed to dance after us, as the cab driver slammed into third, racing by the 19th century Liberal Arts building, a part of Moscow University.

We were on our way to the Sverdlov textile combine and I kept up a running conversation with the cab driver.

"Ah, I see you're reading on the job!" I said in mock outrage. "The boss will hear about this! Any driver found reading Turgenev's *Smoke* at this early hour will be docked a morning's pay."

"Nyet," he laughed good-naturedly. "I read all the time."

Seriously, how many hours did he work a day?

"Seriously," he replied. "I work 7 hours a day, five and one-half days a week."

Have much overtime?

No, hardly ever. Overtime requires special permission.

Whose?

The Trade Union Committee of the Communications, Automobile Transport and Highway Workers' Union, of which he was a member.

Chances are that if he were an organized cabbie in the United States he would belong to the Teamsters, biggest union in America, close to two million members.

"Da," he answered, his eyes alertly on the rear-view mirror and traffic. "I have read about the Teamsters and Jeemy Goffa. The

bosses do not like Goffa, da?"

(In Russian, H is pronounced G.)

Yeah, that was accurate to say. The Teamsters are militant and so is their president.

How did he get paid: tips, salary, bonus system, incentive?

"I get a base salary of 120 rubles a month, plus bonus."

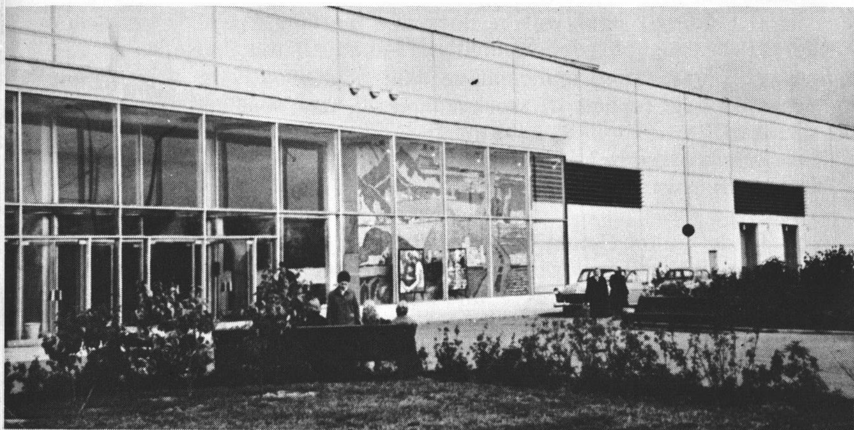
How's the bonus determined?

"By a lot of things. Not only the number of passengers I carry but also safety record, how much gas and oil I save at the end of a month, the working condition of the car and any 'rationalizations' [improvements] I might make," he said as we sped along the broad Leninsky Prospekt which, like the other main thoroughfares of Moscow and all the large cities I saw in the Soviet Union, is kept spotlessly clean by teams of sweepers often elderly men and women —with their long brooms of stiff twigs.

Were the cabbies organized in locals or by their garages, or how? I was told that any given metropolitan area was divided into geographical areas. His Local was the Central Moscow district where his cab, garage, and polyclinic hospital are located.

There was no time to go into the details of his Local's set-up, but I did notice several traits which were to prove common to Soviet cab-drivers, from Kiev to Siberia. They drive fast, too fast for my taste. They are very economy-minded: turning out headlights a good bit of the time while night driving; using the windshield wipers sparingly during the heaviest downpours; riding the car in neutral whenever possible (down hills, on long, sloping grades and the like). The top money-makers were invariably ace mechanics who constantly fretted over their engines. In order to qualify for a cab driver's job, I was told that it is necessary to take rigorous practical and theoretical tests in automotive mechanics.

Another element in judging a driver's eligibility for a bonus is



his behavior on the road. This is not to be confused with courtesy to pedestrians—because there is continuous warfare between the two on the streets of all large cities: pedestrians walk against lights, cross in the middle of the street, go against the flow of traffic and, in general, blithely defy all vehicles; cab drivers, for their part, bear down on civilians with equal disregard, so that one must steel himself to near collisions as part of a normal drive.

I also learned that drivers—and this applies for all transport employees—have rates starting from Grade One to Grade Six. The base pay is naturally uniform by law, as in all jobs, I was to learn—ranging from 90 rubles per month, with higher bonuses for those working in distant areas, like Siberia, or under hazardous conditions.

I also discovered, as we approached the Sverdlov textile combine, that most drivers behave in a most anti-authoritarian way toward officialdom. As we swung up along Leninsky Prospekt, a policeman —called "militsia" in Russian—waved his red and white baton at our cab, signaling that we should continue down another lane, thereby forcing us to miss our exit. "Like hell!" shouted the driver at the frustrated cop, "I'm going in here!" And nobody stopped us.

Aren't you afraid of getting nailed? I asked.

"Nyet!" the driver snapped still annoyed, as we pulled up in front of the plant. "I wasn't doing wrong. If I had been drunk or speeding or driving recklessly, or went through his stop sign, why he could arrest me or, for a minor infraction, fine me on the spot. But to hell with him. He knew I wanted to turn and he just wanted to give me a hard time."

We call the police the "fuzz" in the United States, he was told. That is, the hip do.

"The fuzz, you say! That's good: the fuzz." He grinned with delight.

In getting a bonus are fines considered?

"Yes," he said. "Too many fines, no bonus."

Did he get many?

"My share. Sometimes too many, then my wife really gives it to me!"

"OK. Just watch the fuzz." His grin lit up the street. . . .

In The Shop

As can be seen from the photographs I took, Sverdlov Combine is a handsome modernistic complex of steel and glass, whose colorful murals incorporate, interestingly enough, free-form and abstract designs executed in stainless steel, along with panels depicting the every-day life of the people who work here. The plant is—along with several other light industry establishments—the center of this community development. Integrated about the plant, as can be seen from the photographs, are supermarkets, movie houses, a huge housing development, and broad, tree-lined roads.

The Sverdlov Combine incorporates two dyeing and weaving plants which manufacture silk, rayon, cotton, and nylon largely for women's wear: such things as coats, suits, dresses, lingerie, negligee, and bathing suits are made at nearby Moscow mills.

Thirty-six hundred people work here 5½ days a week, 7 hours a day on 2 shifts. As is often the case in Soviet light industry, most of the workers are women; in the case of the Sverdlov Combine, 80% are women. According to the darkly handsome 28-year-old chairman of the weaving plant's Trade Union Committee, the complex is scheduled to go to a 6-hour day by the end of 1965.

As was the case in the 29 plants I visited, I was permitted to tour freely through the handsome, airy, and immaculately clean establishment which houses some 600 looms, 30% of which are automated. "The more automation here, the better," the trade union chairman told me. "We have an acute labor shortage here and automation will help us with that and increase our production."

What happens to a worker displaced by a machine or automation? "Nothing," answered the trade union official. "She simply gets another job with the same pay, same rate, and keeps her seniority."

Joining The Union

We were passing down the long lane of looms and spinning machines, when I stopped to chat with one of the women just arriving on the first shift.

What's your name, I asked. "Valya," she said into the tape recorder, as the machines whirled in a din that was not nearly as noisy as most textile mills I've observed, because of the extensive sound-proofing throughout the building. When did she come to work here? 1962. The year the plant was commissioned? Yes.

How did she get her job? "When I got out of technical [high] school I read a notice on the wall bulletin at our apartment that they were hiring here."

Did she have any previous experience? No. What did she do? "I work on these doffing machines," she said. Is there a union here? She looked at me as though I might be kidding her.

"Why, of course," she replied with puzzlement in her voice. "My union is the Textile and Light Industry Workers' Union. What else?"

Were there any other unions in this plant? "No, of course not," she answered. "We all are in the Textile Workers Union." How did she join the union? "After I had been here for a few days, I went to the Committee and asked for an application, filled it out and, in a few days, received my card. Well, that's all. Very simple."

I then asked: To hold her job, did she have to join the union? Did she pay an application fee? What about dues? Did the Communist Party quiz her upon taking her job, or did she have to take a loyalty test? What questions were in the application?

"No," she laughed—and her laughter was joined by several other

workers and foremen who, out of curiosity, had gathered around us —"the application just asks your name, address, previous work history, if you belonged to a union, which one, your union card number. Things like that. No politics. I paid 1% of my monthly wage when I was admitted. My dues are a little less than 1% of my base rate each month. Dues are picked up each month by our collectors."

Who are they?

"The collectors are our comrades. We elect them when we elect our organizers and delegates from the general meeting," she said.

What's her base rate? Can a collector be elected to other offices? How is he elected?

At this point, another worker—an elderly woman—politely broke in: "In this section we all have Grade 2 rates. One hundred a month. If we get a higher rate, we can not pay over 1% dues. That's a law."

From the workers, I learned that dues are collected on a voluntary basis. If one misses three months in a row, he can be in trouble with the Committee; in fact, he jeopardizes his union membership. The dues are receipted by stamps issued by the National Bank of the USSR. The stamps are pasted in the union member's book. The dues money goes into the union local's account from which, in addition to other money raised, the union can draw for expenses, operating costs and the social welfare program of the particular union.

Who keeps an eye on your dues, I asked.

"We have an Auditing Commission and a treasurer whom we elect each year," a woman said. "Don't worry about that!"

I remarked that the rank-and-file attitude toward the chairman of the trade union committee (he corresponds to a Local president in the United States) was casual, informal; very similar to rank-and-file attitudes in the United States.

"Why shouldn't it be," a man who was passing through commented on overhearing me. "We know him. His faults as well as his good points. But why not? Just because he's elected to the Committee, does that make him, or the rest of the Committee, above criticism. I should say not!"

Everywhere I went this attitude was so prevalent that it fairly well characterized the atmosphere of most of the plants I visited. One Moscow textile worker cracked: "He'll behave himself. Otherwise, next year: out!" Local elections are held annually. District and Republic hold office for 2 years, and national offices for 4 years.

How often do you hold union meetings, I asked.

"Often here," said Valya. How often is often? "We hold team meetings everyday and our shop department weekly. General Meetings [of the whole Local] are each month."

I attended every kind of meeting held by the unions during my trip. Their frequency, attendance, and the high degree of involvement by the mass of people were significant.

Along with the rights which the rank-and-file exercised so expansively, there were clearly certain fundamental obligations that devolved on union membership. Foremost among these was, what appeared to me at any rate, a virtual duty to meet and exceed production quotas or norms. Everyone—from the lowliest apprentice sweeper to the highest rated miners (the aristocrats of the Soviet pay scale, whose earnings average five to six times unskilled labor)—was norm conscious. "If I exceed the norm, I get my bonus," and "If our labor team goes past the norm we all get bonuses" were typical remarks by individuals. Of course, banners, streamers, signs, posters and murals dot every factory in the Soviet Union. "Workers of Communist Labor! All Glory to the Working Class!" thundered an enormous blood-red banner across long rows of spinning machines at the Sverdlov Combine. "A Rise in Labor Productivity of One Percent Annually Means We Produce 2,900 More Pairs of Shoes!" exclaimed a great sign over a shop in a big Leningrad shoe plant.

I remarked to one trade union official: "Man, doesn't all this talk about production get to be a drag? There's got to be resistance to this kind of thing."

I often made this point. Always, I was disputed. "The Rules of the Trade Unions of the USSR," a printed manual issued to every trade unionist in the Soviet Union and the Bible of that nation's socialist labor movement, states that every working man and woman should, in its words, "work unremittingly for a further advance of the national economy, science and culture of the Soviet State, for the fulfiillment by every enterprise, shop and team of their production plans and targets, and for a steady rise in labor productivity; [and] to expose shortcomings in production, and work for their elimination. . . ."

Line workers, rank-and-file, Local officials, top Republic and national labor leaders uniformly denied that this suggested speed-up or gave foremen license to get on anybody's back. "It is our shop. We own the means of production," was a typical, obviously sincere response. "Therefore, the more production, the greater benefits we get."

Like it or not, this was the general attitude.

Collective Agreements

I took the same midnight express between Moscow and Leningrad that Joe Curran, president of the National Maritime Union (AFL-CIO), and his fellow unionists had taken in 1962. Both of us agreed that the train itself—a handsome, immaculately kept string of superior crafted cars—is a joy to ride; but we differed about the sleeping accommodations. The NMU guys, veterans of all kinds of beat-up, cramped holds, complained about the "back-breaking night" they went through. On the other hand I slept like a log, lulled to a deep sleep by the clickety-clack of the cars flying across the steel rails.

AUTOMATION

Among the most pressing problems I observed in Soviet working life is the shortage of labor throughout the country, especially in the newly developed areas just opening up. It helps to account for the attitude toward automation which I found was generally common everywhere I went; from line workers to ranking, national trade union leaders—automation was—oddly enough for myself who is so used to hearing expressions of deep-seated fear and discontent from working people about the "threat" of automation—welcome. Not merely welcomed but officially encouraged and, obviously from my many observations, being put in throughout heavy and light industry in all parts of the Soviet Union.

There is no unemployment to speak of in the Soviet Union. Other than a fractional percentage of people in the midst of changing jobs or occupations, there are no systematic, chronic and seasonal layoffs or firings of sizeable numbers of working men and women. With the continuous expansion of plants and enterprises, there is an acute need for manpower. The trick is to find it.

Despite the elaborate factory and polytechnical schools turning out hundreds of thousands of graduates annually, despite the entry of newly minted high school and college trained personnel each year, these sources do not begin to meet the demand for labor in the U.S.S.R. Especially missing are advanced, skilled people who are desperately needed to control highly mechanized and automated lines. Despite the dramatic numbers of graduate engineers entering the rank of industry each year—and remember, they all are trade unionists—they have not been able to meet the continuing need for trained personnel.

Couple this pressure along with the lowering of the working day (today it is 7 hours and, in certain industries, 6 and 5½ already) and the *lowered* retirement age (today it is 55 for men, 45 for women), and the squeeze on labor is obvious.

The big solution for them is automation.

I saw several automated sections of big plants in textile, steel, leather and ball bearing manufacture. I brought home with me an extensive collection of photographs of the automation at State Ball Bearing Plant Number One in Moscow. I let a bunch of guys from AFL-CIO organized ball bearing plants in the Chicago and Milwaukee areas examine them; they tell me that the Soviet automation is very advanced.

At the huge Red October steel mills in Volgograd, I saw automatic skips at work which eliminated the need of having men stand on top of the furnace where—ask any steel worker—the air is usually fouled by the hot, nauseous (and dangerous) gases coming up from the blast furnace feeding and mixing the charge.

I stopped off with the Sverdlov Combine workers in Moscow to discuss automation and its effects at this new textile plant. Despite the introduction of more and more automated lines, they told me that the number of personnel had increased because of "help wanted" ads placed outside of the plant's main entrance.

The chairman of the Sverdlov Combine trade union committee told me: "We have the following principles. Wherever automation or advanced mechanization is introduced at the plant, nobody loses his job and nobody is transferred out of grade, no downgrading."

He also showed me that section of the collective agreement (contract) which provides that management is responsible for allocating a certain percentage of its funds for training new workers, giving advanced training to older workers and to provide up-to-date literature in the plant's already burgeoning technical library.

Community supermarket close to Moscow textile plant. Both work and shopping are within a few minutes walk of working people's homes . . .

I had not been in Leningrad two hours before I was tearing out to Shoe Factory Number One, a series of bulky red-brick buildings constructed in 1930. I learned about its truly heroic history of production right on the front line during the terrible 3-year siege of Leningrad by the Nazis. Today some 5,000 people work there; 76% of whom are women.

The director of the factory, the president of the union, and I were going through a stamping room when I came across a mimeographed booklet hung up on a large bulletin board. I thought it said in Russian: Collective Agreement.

"Yes, that's what it is. Our collective agreement," said the director of the factory, a large, serious and obviously efficient executive who underneath her no-nonsense exterior was a warm, really feminine, woman.

When had it been negotiated? "Last year," said the gal union chief, "we re-negotiate this November." The factory director said jokingly: "They always push that under my nose!"

The collective agreement is the Soviet trade union's contract. It does not cover an entire industry like our chain-wide agreements; instead, the collective agreements are purely local, dealing with matters of mutual and general agreement between the management and the factory committee, which is the legally constituted representative of the workers.

All collective agreements contain a production preamble of general statements detailing production norms, "Socialist emulation" and the use of advanced engineering and production techniques. The collective agreement has been established in national law since 1918 and, like other major institutions in the Soviet labor movement, has a history of ups and downs, ins and outs, what they consider trial and error.

The agreements also specify the conditions and methods of getting paid, overtime, bonuses; the fixing of norms, apprenticeship, on-the-job training, plant-sponsored education programs, labor discipline, labor protection, labor inspection, safety, housing and social welfare,

Valya.—She operates doffing machine at ultra-modern Sverdlov textile combine at Moscow. Like all women in Soviet industry, she gets equal pay for equal work, and, in certain industries, like textile, women not only predominate the factory rolls but also dominate its union leadership. A working mother is given two month's prenatal and two month's postnatal leave with full pay and guarantee of the same job at the same rate if she chooses to return. She also has the option to take her annual vacation at the end of the postnatal period and to extend all of this with an additional three month leave (without pay but with her job guaranteed). In the event of any untoward difficulties at child-birth, a working mother's paid leave can be extended indefinitely upon the advise of her physician. Pregnant mothers can not be assigned to arduous work, night shifts, overtime or to business trips by management. Health centers for the child are provided by the unions from the child's birth through his early teen years. No discrimination is made among married women, divorced, abandoned or unwed mothers. It has been often said that the children and their mothers are the "privileged class" of the U.S.S.R. Even the casual observer sees the truth of this remark everywhere he goes in the Soviet Union.

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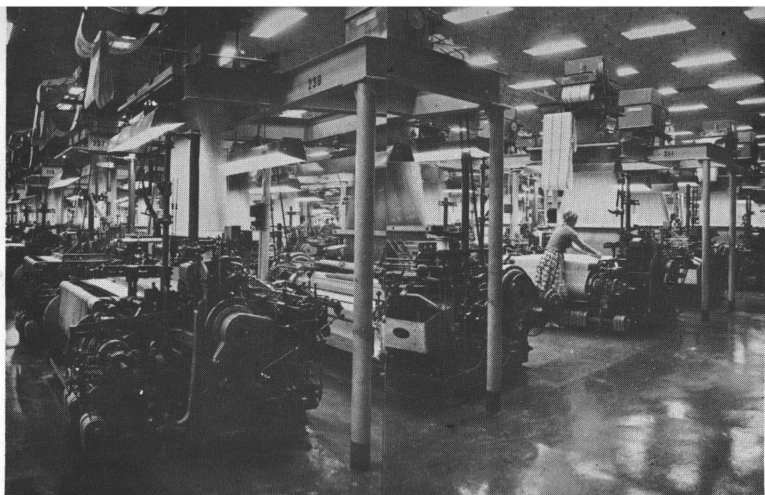
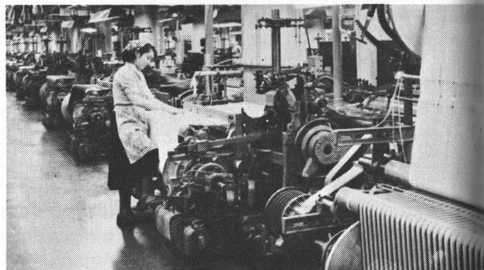
catering and cultural facilities.

Wages are determined at the national level *after, and only after,* it was explained in detail to me, exhaustive participation and criticism from the local level through all-Union organs by all of the trade unions in conjunction with the Soviet federal legislative bodies. I have read a lot of nonsense in literature published here about the Soviet trade unions' collective agreements having nothing to say about wages. "They can't negotiate a kopek," was how one authority put it.

I found in examining on-the-spot several dozen collective agreements in more than ten industries that this opinion does not hold up under reality. In addition to the unions participating intimately and primarily in the legislative and administrative processes which determine *basic* wage categories within a sliding scale of six grades,



Interior shots of Sverdlov plant . . . automatic control room whose technician was an American basketball buff . . .



the unions, in their individual agreements, work out in an elaborate detail that would satisfy any "shop lawyer" in the States (for Soviet plants have the same kind of guys), the rates of pay, categories of skill, overtime, bonus arrangements and advancement.

The Collective Agreement of the Bratsk Power & Electrical Workers Union (the front cover of which is reproduced here) has detailed wage scales in the contract.

As in other countries, not socialist—such as Great Britain, France, and Sweden, for example—the collective agreements do not set out provisions regarding hours of work, paid holidays, pensions, vacations, health insurance, accident compensation and the like; all of these issues are, and have been for some years, established in national law.

The collective agreement may be displayed prominently in bulletin boards in each unit of a plant, as was the case in the Shoe Factory Number One in Leningrad or, as was the case in Bratsk, Siberia and numerous other places, the entire text of the agreement is printed in booklet form for each worker, who gets his copy upon employment. The language is Russian, although I saw them translated into Georgian, Uzbek and Mongolian. Every worker, regardless of his

union status, is covered by the agreement.

There is also a provision in every collective agreement which states that the union can take judicial and administrative action against management, which I'll treat with shortly.

I brought back the full texts of several collective agreements, which will be published in full in my forthcoming book on the Soviet working people. That the collective agreement is an established weapon of the USSR's trade unions is an established and vital fact of Soviet life.

The Trade Union Committee

The heart of power in the Soviet labor movement is the trade union committee, variously referred to (both in the past and now) as *fabkom, FZK, zavkom,* and *mestkom,* but generally called the factory or trade union committee by most of the working people in the 29 enterprises which I visited. I also learned from Moscow to Siberia that there is a common composition, procedure, function and purpose to this core of Soviet unionism.

It is the executive, administrative and juridical arm of the union; it is also, at the local level, the court of last resort; it is, in short, the basis of a local's self-government. The trade union committee varies in size, depending on the number of workers employed at a given plant. I encountered several committees with upwards of 20 to 30 members at the larger plants.

The manner of election also varies with the size of the plant. At smaller places (less than 200 or so), a direct secret ballot is employed; at the larger plants, whose buildings and workers are often separated over great distance, the committee is elected, much as in the larger plants in the United States, by a delegative assembly (which is always chosen directly by popular, secret vote), which in turn votes by secret ballot. The assembly is composed of directly elected delegates from each unit of the shop. Again the process is a direct, secret ballot. As in the United States, the large plants are divided into units and subunits, according to the dictates of production. In many respects, I found the electoral processes of Soviet shops quite similar to the traditional democracy of the large, CIO industrial plants in the United States.

I was told that all elections, regardless of level, must be announced 10 days in advance, usually through bulletin board notices, advertisements in the shop newspaper and at unit meetings. For example, at the Leningrad Optics Plant where I spent an entire day with the Trade Union Committee, I saw many election notices posted conspicuously throughout a complex employing 25,000 people.

Nominating meetings are usually lively and often frank, brutally frank, affairs where the merits and demerits of the candidates for chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, members of the committee and delegates are discussed openly and fully. Such meetings *by law* must have a two-thirds quorum. Communist Party membership is by no

means the determining consideration I thought it would be in trade union elections. Since the trade unions are the largest mass, public body in the USSR, I would not have been in the least surprised to see the Party dominate its elections. In fact, I met many non-Party people who were chairmen or vice chairmen or members of the Trade Union Committee.

The elected head of the 300 workers at the Lake Baikal Research Institute in Siberia is not a Party member; in fact, he told me, he himself was a victim of the Stalin repression. He served 10 years in a labor camp in the Arctic on trumped up charges. He is a quiet, brilliant geologist, who is also a mountaineer. He is in his fifties but could easily be taken for forty.

SLOGANS AT WORK
"Yes, we work for peace and friendship with the peoples of the whole world! Glory to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union!"—Volgograd Power Project
"Lenin! More alive than anyone living!" — Moskvich Automobile Plant, Moscow.

During a long, disturbing talk he and I had together while hiking in the breathtaking beauty of the Lake Baikal mountains, I asked him: aren't you embittered by that experience?

"Yes, and no," he said reflectively. "To be torn away from my dear family was the worst thing; but it also interfered with my work."

Wasn't he the least disillusioned with the Soviet socialist system then?

"I never lost faith in socialism during the whole time I dug peet in the Arctic. Never," he said with feeling. "I was never a member of the Party, although I am a student of Marxism-Leninism. But without political freedom, no system can work. I returned to my family and to my work. My fellow workers have shown their confidence in me on many occasions. Many of my fellow prisoners were not so lucky," he said darkly.

Who was responsible for visiting such crimes on the Soviet people, I asked. "Stalin," he said flatly. "He has stained our honor."

I said bluntly: "Everywhere I go in the Soviet Union, people are quick to heap all the blame on one man, Stalin. Yet, Stalin by himself could not have committed these excesses any more than he alone achieved the incredible accomplishments of the Soviet Union during his regime, as was always claimed. He had to have help on both counts,it seems to me.

"You're certain that such things are not endemic to the system, to the risks historically inherent in a dictatorship, no matter how benevolently intended? Are you so certain it can not happen again?"

He replied: "No, never. We shall never allow it to happen again.

Stalin Purge Victim.—Now head of his trade union . . . not a Communist . . . scientist, mountain climber . . . in Baikal region of Siberia . . .

„Коммунизм- это есть советская власть плюс электрификация всей страны".
В. И. Ленин.

КОЛЛЕКТИВНЫЙ
ДОГОВОР
Братской ГЭС
на 1964 — 1965 годы

БРАТСК — 1964

The front cover of the Bratsk, Siberia Collective Agreement of the Power Stations and Electrical Industry Workers' Union for 1964 . . . . A copy for every guy on the job . . . negotiated anuually . . .

WAGES

It was constantly stressed to me by Soviet trade unionists that they in co-operation with government bodies dealing with state planning, economic production and finance determine the funds set aside for wages throughout Soviet industry, fixing rates for pay, overtime and bonuses, and for setting output standards.

While the evidence indicated that such was the case, from my own probings, I am satisfied that final decisions regarding wages are, necessarily, ultimately made by the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. (whose membership, incidentally, is preponderantly made up of trade unionists from all walks of industry and agriculture).

As I have already stated most production workers are paid piece rates. Even the most sympathetic observers shortly after the 1917 Revolution did not think that the incentive system would become as institutionalized as it has become. "Piece rates in Russia, however, are regarded only as a temporary necessity," wrote Robert Dunn, author of the still highly regarded work, *Soviet Trade Unions,* in 1927. "The union leaders believe that as industry is mechanized, and the co-operative spirit of the workers strengthened, time rates will gradually replace the present piece rate system."

Today—nearly forty years later—the piece rate system is a highly complex, institutionalized basis for determining the bulk of wages paid out to Soviet industrial workers. From my evidence, there appear to be six wage classes and the spread within a job category was about one to three.

I was told everywhere I went that there is a constant effort made to compress these wage differentials so that by the 1970's, the highest rate should not exceed the lowest by more than twice.

From my experience, it seems that they still have quite a way to go to bring the differentials down. The average wage of the unskilled worker appeared to be about 100 to 110 rubles. Among the top earners in the coal, mining, iron and steel industries, I met some who, with bonuses, topped that by four and five times; yet the bulk of skilled workers, technicians and engineers seemed to make about three times the average of the unskilled. Of course, workers in Siberia and other removed geographic or climatic locations were the top money makers. Bonuses seemed to make about 20% (of the monthly wage), with 40% being tops.

Within the context of local wages, rates, job categories and determination of bonuses, there was no doubt whatsoever from my observations that the unions controlled this issue, not management nor the government. That was abundantly clear.

The top money makers of the U.S.S.R. are not to be found in industry, however. Actors, actresses, ballerinas and well-known artists and writers along with top-ranked academic and scientific figures are paid anywhere from *five* to *ten times* the average wage earner's salary according to what I learned. I also discovered that this was common knowledge among most of the rank and file I discussed it with; and was generally resented.

Even the official rate of exchange—one ruble= $1.11—does not have much meaning in itself in relation to the total Soviet wage picture.

One can not discuss the wage system in the U.S.S.R. intelligently, however, without placing it in full context. I learned again and again that what they called their "socialist wage": that is, the inexpensive apartment with its many gratis concessions, free medical and hospitalization, paid vacations and extended rest home and sanitoria treatment, education and maternity care and the innumerable childrens' ser-

vices—all available without cost or at very little cost, are considered as part of his wage by the average line worker that I encountered.

The socialist (and Biblical) maxim: "He who does not work, neither shall he eat" appears to be firmly fixed in Soviet life, as does: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his production." Yet in applying these principles, in a money economy, the wage system of the U.S.S.R. appears to be a constantly evolving institution which by no means is claimed for its final perfection, above all by those who make a living under it.

You are right about the point concerning the dangers of a despotic dictatorship. It is one of the reasons why the trade unions are becoming even more important, because they must become the real schools for achieving a *communist democracy*."

In addition to the chairman of the Lake Baikal scientists and intellectual workers, I encountered many non-party people in basic production. In the 29 factory committees I met with for lengthy, exceedingly frank discussions, of the approximately 406 committee members involved, more than half (I figured 63%) were *not* members of the Communist Party.

The trade union committee as the standing executive of the workers is charged with responsibility for negotiating and enforcing collective agreements; presiding over production conferences; implementing labor production laws in the plant and on the job; and serving as the over-all director of all trade union activities inside and outside the plant.

There are several "commissions" which constitute the trade union committee's own internal administrative organs. Each member of the Committee is entrusted by an open vote of the Trade Union Committee-as-the-Whole to serve as chairman of such Commissions as: Housing, Labor Protection, Social Insurance, Wages, Disputes, Culture, Sports, Public Accommodations (Transport, Catering, Rest Rooms and the like), Education and Childrens' Activities (creches, nurseries and kindergartens for working mothers).

In turn, the members of the Commissions are drawn from volunteers among the rank-and-file. Often the Commissions—depending on the size of the plant, some of which are large and lavishly financed—employ full-time professionals to run their sports, cultural and social welfare facilities (and, incidentally, all full-time staff employees are also members of the union employing them; staffers have the full rights and duties as members in the shop).

I asked the woman vice chairman of the famous Tashkent Textile Mills' trade union committee what was the most essential aspect of her work. She replied unhesitatingly: "To represent the interests of our members, first, and *to involve as many of them as possible* in the work of running the plant."

Job Security

I sought, wherever possible, to determine how much protection

Some of the gals from Leningrad Shoe Factory's Cutting Room Number One take a break . . . They get two ten minute relaxation periods every 3½ hours . . . "It's in our collective agreement!" . . .

a rank-and-file worker could invoke against management. Within the space limitations of this booklet, a full treatment is not possible, but certain incidents will serve to suggest what goes on in this basic area of Soviet work-a-day life.

I was fortunate enough to attend several production conference meetings at steel plants, a confectionery factory and an optics plant. These meetings are held weekly at the department level. They were always presided over by an official of the trade union, although both management (frequently the director, his deputy and the department head) and a representative of the Communist Party unit in the plant sat on the platform along with the Trade Union Committee representatives.

The meetings appeared to run along the line of Robert's *Rules of Order*. Attendance was 100% of the shop unit as, from my experience, they seemed to take place at the very end of the first shift, so that both shifts could attend.

Full discussion is not only allowed but seemed nearly belabored. After a half dozen rank-and-filers had climbed all over the shop superintendent at a meeting of steelworkers in Rustavy, Georgia, for his alleged failure to get spare parts quickly enough, the chairman of the conference repeatedly asked: "All right, does anyone wish to add further. Please speak up. That's what we are here for."

On and on went the criticism for a full hour. Finally, a big, rugged rolling mill worker got up and yelled: "Look, tell him to get those parts or we'll get him out of here!"

Leningrad Optics Plant.—Union president is at far right, factory director is third from right, young woman to director's right is also an elected member of the City Soviet . . . author (left) scribbling notes . . .

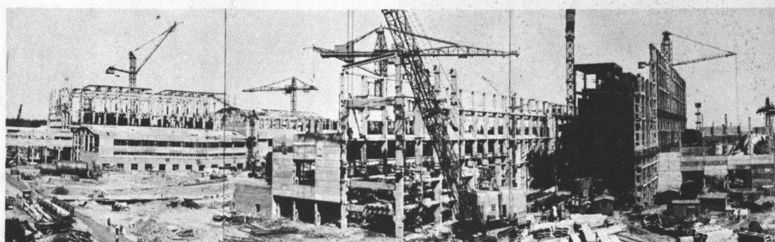
Lake Baikal region of Siberia . . .

I looked over at the unfortunate recipient of this abuse, the boss of the shop. He was clearly unhappy. After the meeting I said to him: "Must be pretty rough, a meeting like that." Yes, he acknowledged. "But the roughest part is that I used to work, right here in this shop, with all these guys!"

Did he ever feel like going back to the shop, quitting his job?

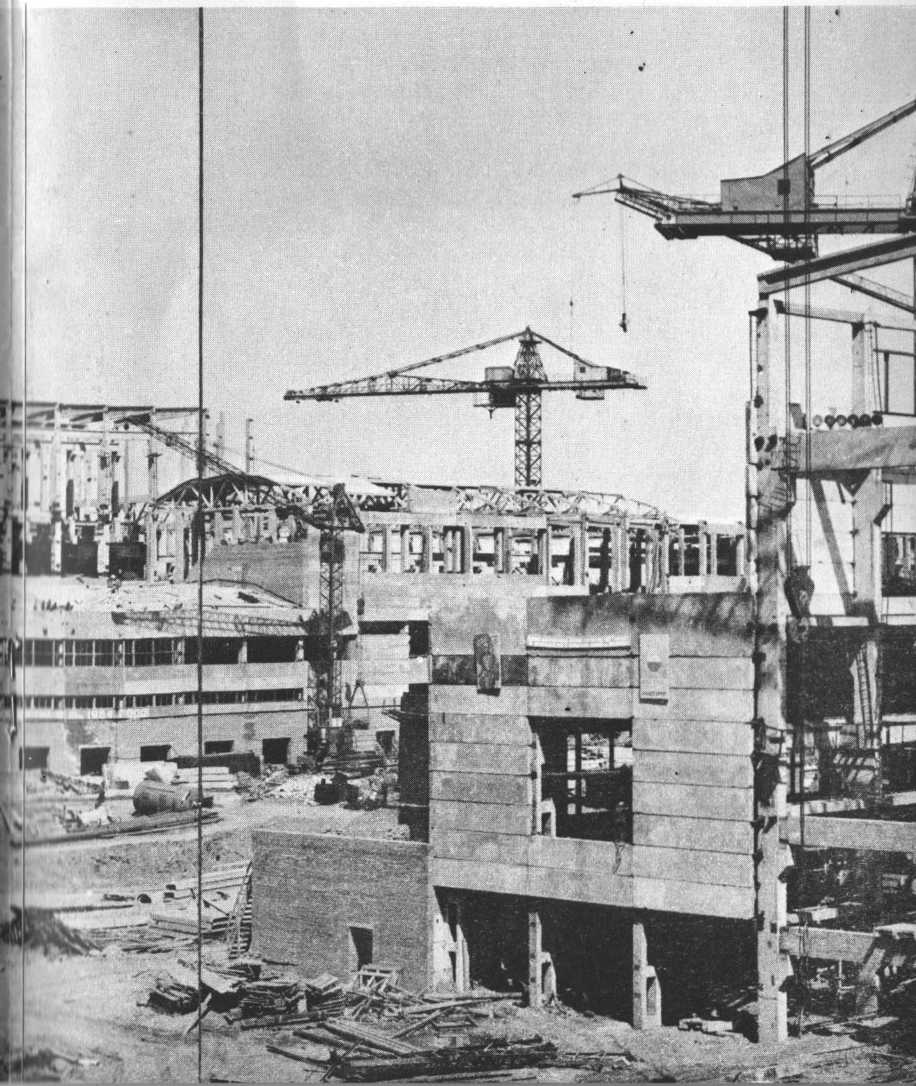
He was a young, handsome Georgian, with a deep olive complexion, thick, black hair, a heavy moustache and snapping, black eyes. He smiled somewhat wistfully, his white teeth flashing: "Sometimes. But the job of administering production is important. We get along—we better, otherwise they can have *me* fired, you know!"

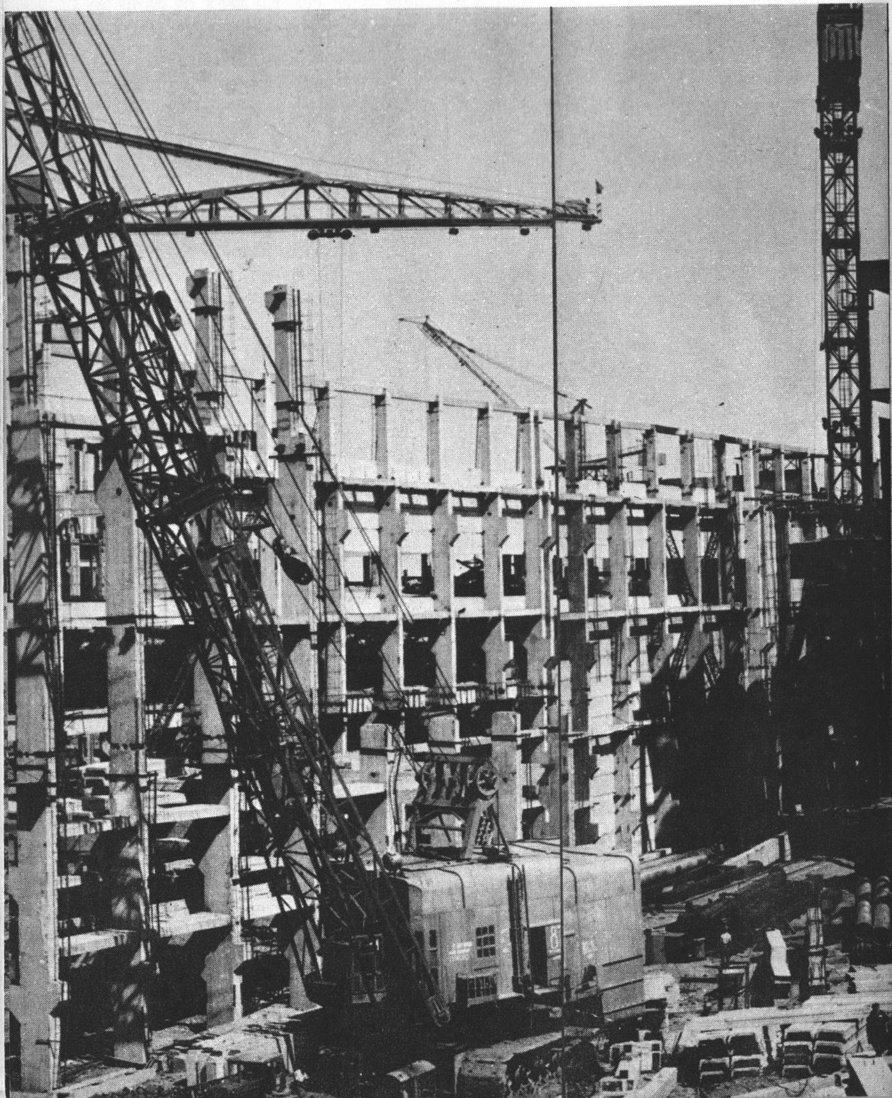
I saw too many such meetings not to accept what is a deeply accepted part of Soviet work-a-day life; the trade unions can get rid of a boss. Moreover, one could tell easily from the very attitude of ordinary line-workers that nobody can be fired without the approval of his union. I encountered innumerable instances of such happenings and, on several occasions, met the individuals involved in them.

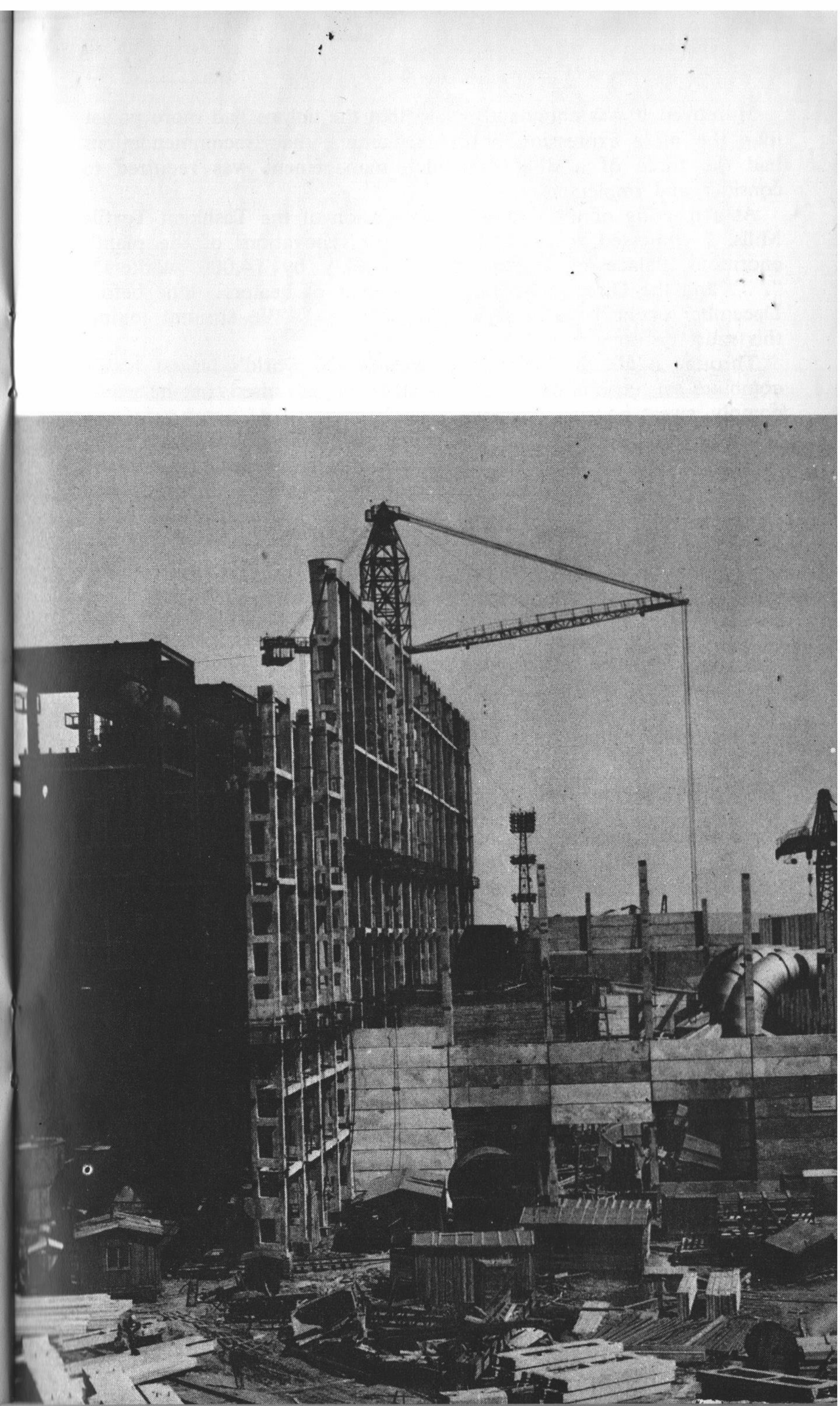


SOARING INDUSTRIAL ESCARPMENT rises dramatically out of the legendary Siberian taiga just a few hundred miles from the Arctic Circle. Here 30,000 youngsters—scientists, engineers, technicians, skilled and un-

skilled workers whose average age is 25—have in less than three years hewn the world's largest forestry complex (enormous chemical, wood pulp and paper by-products factories). View here is of central area of complex.







Moreover, it was abundantly clear that the unions had more power than the mere expression of dissatisfaction; their recommendations had the force of a directive which management was required to consider and implement.

At a meeting of the Cultural Commission of the Tashkent Textile Mills, I witnessed repeated demands for renovations of the plant's enormous Palace of Culture (used weekly by 14,000 workers): ". . . and the Director better get it [repair of heaters] done before December or he'll be in serious trouble. . . . We are not joking, this must be done. . . ."

Through it all, the Director of one of the world's largest textile combines sat, unsmilling, nodding assent, and promised that he would comply, sweat pouring down his face.

I was told (and had read in the literature) that the Factory Committees have been granted increased authority in recent years—as a result of a 1958 decree—particularly in the area of production and management. If that is the case, then in the short years of its implementation, the Factory Committees—on the basis of my observations on the spot—are already a dynamic force in the Soviet labor movement .

The smallest unit of trade union organization is the labor brigade or team. Each team is composed according to production—be it welders, sweepers, lathe operators, turners, fitters—and varies in size depending on its function. Each team elects a leader, called the organizer. He or she is elected for one year, but can not be re-elected more than once in succession.

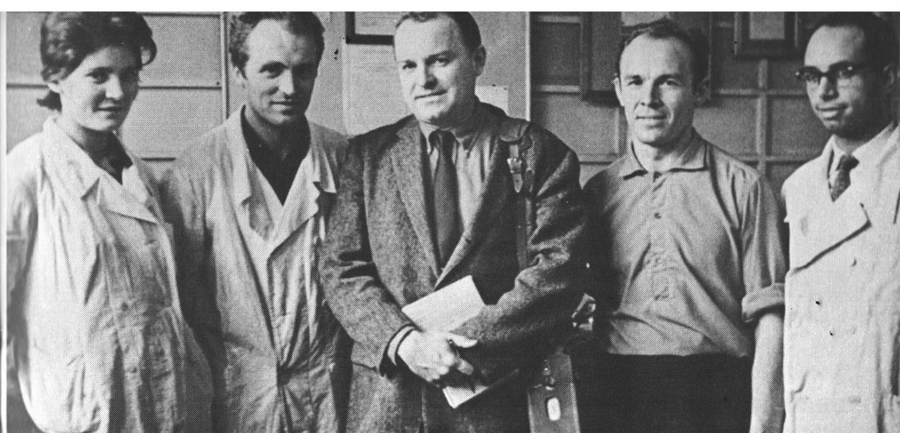
The organizer is not an official of the formal trade union committee apparatus. He is the closest approximation to the steward in American trade unions. The principal duty of the organizer, aside from concern with production, is to police the collective agreement just as the steward is supposed to do in the United States.

Yet the organizer is involved a bit more intensively in things in the Soviet Union. "Do you have beefs piling up in the shop," I constantly asked wherever I went.

"Piled up grievances are poison here," I was told by an organizer in Alma Alta in the Kazakh Republic of the USSR. I found that —like Soviet medicine—there is great emphasis on preventive care of, in this case, not the patient, but the contract. Each week, the organizers of a plant review with management the working of the collective bargaining agreement. Every three months there are *two full days of meetings* involving the organizers, the Trade Union Committee as a whole, and top management.

"In this way, we often catch abrasive conditions before they degenerate into grievances," several organizers claimed. The organizer is the "first step" between an aggrieved worker and management; the step is informal, not requiring an official, written complaint.

What if that fails to satisfy the worker, I asked. "Then he and



COMMUNIST LABOR TEAM—Most plant production is organized on a "team" not an individual basis. According to the dictates of production, workers are made up into groups assigned to specific aspects of manufacture. The teams work in such a manner as to increase the productivity of its individual members and, in turn, increase their rate of pay. A labor team, or brigade, which scores impressive gains not only in production but in cultural, educational, civic and organizational activities equally both inside the shop and in the community is awarded the title of "Communist Labor Team." One need not be a member of the Communist Party to be elected to a Communist Labor Team. They are usually the high earners and best workers in a shop. While no bonus is given them automatically for being a Communist Labor Team, any member of the team who wins a bonus for improving productivity also wins bonuses for his team members. Shown above is a Communist Labor Team in an optics plant in Leningrad (with an American visitor who dropped by). This is also a team with an additional distinction; it is an *international* brigade. The worker on the right is from Egypt. At an optics plant in Egypt is a Russian optics worker who is part of an elaborate "exchange" system which the Soviet Union has with many countries, socialist and non-socialist. Moreover, while a foreign citizen is working at a Soviet establishment, he has all the rights of a Soviet citizen, including the right to vote and the right to membership in trade unions. All wages, rates and seniority are guaranteed. I found such international brigades in several large cities.

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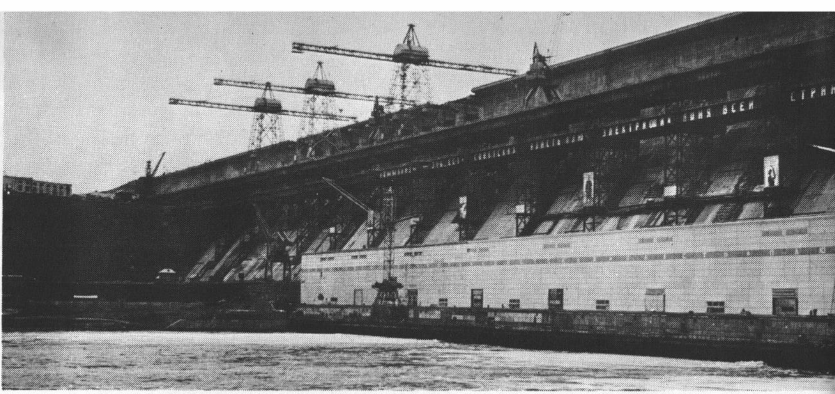
the organizer get together with a member of the Trade Union Committee," I was told.

If that fails? "Then the Disputes Commission of the Trade Union Committee meets with management," it was said. "The worker may be personally present at each step. If the Disputes Commission fails to settle the issue, then a written report is submitted to the plant's Trade Union Committee sitting as a whole."

Any worker dissatisfied with the Committee's decision may then appeal to the People's Court for settlement. When a worker takes this step, his legal fees and lost time are paid for by the union regardless of the case's outcome.

It is quite clear too that management can not fire or transfer an industrial or office worker without prior consultation with and ap-



BRATSK.—World's largest Hydro-Electric Power Station deep in Siberia.

proval of the trade union committee. I heard too many stories, all credible, and observed closely the responses of too many arbitrarily selected line workers not to know that this is a basic, deeply realized fact of Soviet working life.

One night at a Red Club in Moscow, I was enjoying an evening with a bunch of guys from the Moskvich automobile plant. One of them told the story of how somebody had speeded up the line. "It probably was a foreman out to make a big name for himself at our expense," the Moskvich employee said.

What happened?

The organizers called in the Disputes Commission. Right on the spot, the department's production was shut down and the factory director was called in. "It interrupted production for a few hours," said the auto worker, "but we were within our rights. The speed of the line exceeded what the Committee had agreed it would be. We never could prove who did it, but if we had, we would have kicked him the hell out!"

The right to strike is not prohibited by law, according to the Soviet trade unions. Moreover, they say that the 1929 law protecting strike funds—still in force—clearly grants this right. I brought up this question everywhere I went.

Quite frankly, their attitude toward this issue is entirely different from ours. The usual answer to the question regarding the right to strike is: "Strike against whom? Ourselves? We get what we want without having to strike. We own the means of production. Why do we have to strike against ourselves then?"

There was something a little too pat about this response for me. I had heard numerous other stories of spontaneous stoppages, such as the one at the Moskvich auto plant, to accept the claim that the Soviet Union is some workers' paradise. I heard people talk openly about conflicts against bureaucracy, personal spite, and red tape, which apparently are no strangers to Soviet plants and offices. I myself heard complaints in various plants about inadequate supplies of spare parts and production facilities; and the existence of the

Disputes Commission in which conflicts over wages, output, firings and transfers, incentive payments, and bonuses are handled indicates conclusively that conflicts do occur.

Yet the conflict does exist in a manifestly different economic system than what I know. When I told the Rustavy steel workers that a national strike by the automobile or steel workers was *not* against the national interests of the United States (I was referring to the 1964 UAW strike and the 1959 steel workers' walkout), I touched off a hot argument which was not resolved, but did point up the essentially different points of departure on the issue of strike.

Space does not permit a full account of the numerous encounters I had with the Labor Inspectors all over the USSR. They are public figures, elected from out of the shops to service their shops or aid in keeping a check on safety and hygiene conditions in the district. They usually do their work after-hours. Any irregularities they find are reported to the Committee and management. A Labor Inspector has unusual powers; on his say-so, a plant or a department can be closed down for safety reasons. They are, I found, universally respected men and women.

It has been law in the USSR, since the Revolution, that an office or plant worker gets equal pay and rights for the same job regardless of sex, religion, ethnic, national, or racial origin. One of my most favorable impressions of Soviet working life was the amazing degree to which this principle has been realized. No matter where I went, I observed this as a normal, casually accepted fact of life. In some fields—medicine and education for example—women predominate. In many of the light industries—textile being the most vivid example—they also predominate, leading the trade union committees and running things with complete, casual acceptance as men's equals.

The extent of the Soviet form of industrial organization and, most incontrovertibly, the degree of involvement of this critical performance by the union rank-and-file in Soviet society can be judged from certain key statistics that, according to the latest esti-

Moskvich Automobile Plant.—Day's Production of Compacts.—"A foreman out to make a name for himself speeded up the line . . . We shut it down . . . (and) we'd kick him the hell out of here!" . . .

mates and projections I received from the AUCCTU, certainly say something about the scope of what they consider is a democratic trade union movement.

There are now some 70 to 72 million trade union members in the USSR: 4.3 millions belong to factory, plant, or office trade union committees; there are about 1.6 million organizers (stewards); and there are about 8.7 million commission volunteers, unpaid working people engaged in union work *outside* of regular shop affairs. In all, therefore, some fourteen and a half million people are actively engaged in trade union work. They must periodically—usually weekly, monthly, or quarterly, over the course of one to two to four years at the most—account to the membership, face secret elections and, then, make way for additional new millions. This suggests an ever increasing involvement of people in determining their working conditions—a large part of their daily life—which is bound to have political implications; for this kind of industrial self-government generates power.

IN THE COMMUNITY

"The activities of the unions . . . may affect the position of a worker within an undertaking, or influence his welfare as a dweller on a housing estate, a customer of a shop, a patient in a sanitorium or a member of an amateur dramatic society. The omnipresence of Soviet trade unions cannot fail to strike any visitor who has had an opportunity to go a little off the beaten track and to get briefly into touch with industrial and agricutural enterprises."

ILO Report on Soviet Trade Unions, 1960.

Hours, wages, and conditions in the shop and office are not the only concerns of the Soviet trade unions. They also are active in areas we normally do not associate with trade unions; areas which are usually reserved to private enterprise, or local, state and federal government in the United States are not only concerns of Soviet trade unions but *they own and run them.*

An American trade unionist, who himself had visited the Soviet Union, told me just before I left the United States: "Well, you'll find out a lot of things. Some you'll like, some you won't. But there's one thing you'll sure as hell find out: the trade unions run the place."

In my experience, I could not agree. The government and the Communist Party in Soviet society are dominant. But, as the American unionist put it, this characterization "sure as hell" is true of the broad public activities of the trade unions.

When it comes to all questions of social insurance, pensions, rest and vacation resorts, the trade unions run the show completely. In matters of housing, social welfare, education, child care, youth programs, cultural and sports pursuits, catering facilities and so on, they play a main role in connection with the establishment and the community with which they are identified.

Several basic facts of life must be borne in mind when considering these powers of the trade unions. First, hundreds of millions of people are involved; basically nothing less than the working masses of the USSR. Secondly, billions of dollars are involved; the annual budgets of the unions in these vital, basic areas run into multi-billion dollar figures. Thirdly, of necessity, the trade unions, in the capacity of employer, hire scores of thousands of qualified men and

Strikes? Soviet trade unionists insist they have this right but . . . Author putting tough questions to tough forestry workers in Northern Siberia . . .

women to administer this incredibly vast social undertaking. While I was quite impressed with the powers of the trade unions in the shops and offices, I was, frankly, overwhelmed by the powers of the trade unions in the Soviet community at large.

NATIONAL AFFILIATES OF THE
ALL-UNION TRADE UNION CONGRESS OF THE U.S.S.R.

- Aviation and Defense Industry Workers' Union
- Aviation Workers' Union
- Geological Survey Workers' Union
- State Trade and Consumer Cooperative Societies Workers' Union
- State Institutions Workers' Union
- Railway Transport Workers' Union
- Local Industry and Municipal Service Worker's Union
- Cultural and Professional Workers' Union
- Timber, Paper and Wood Workers' Union
- Engineering Workers' Union
- Metallurgical Industry Workers' Union
- Sea and River Workers' Union
- Medical Workers' Union
- Oil and Chemical Industry Workers' Union
- Food Products Industry Workers' Union
- Education, Higher Schools and Scientific Institutions Worker's Union
- Communication, Automobile Transport and Highway Workers' Union
- Agricultural and Agricultural Procurement Workers' Union
- Building and Building Materials Industry Workers' Union
- Textile and Light Industry Workers' Union
- Coal-Mining Industry Workers' Union
- Power Stations and Electrical Industry Workers' Union

(Note: Listings with English translations supplied author by the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions, 42 Leninsky Prospekt, Moscow, USSR, November, 1964.)

Housing: 'Countless Millions'

The late President of the United States, John F. Kennedy, described what has been clearly a major problem of the Soviet Union since the terrible destruction visited on the country by Hitler Germany:

> . . . no nation in the history of battle ever suffered more than the Soviet Union in the Second World War. At least twenty million lost their lives. Countless millions of homes of families were burned or sacked. A third of the nation's territory, including two-thirds of its industrial base, was turned into a wasteland—a loss equivalent to the destruction of [the United States] east of Chicago.

The Herculean task of providing housing for "countless millions" has been undertaken by the Soviet government in close association

LENINGRAD SHOE FACTORY: Gal chairman of the Trade Union Committee, American visitor and Director of one of the Soviet Union's largest shoe plants . . . standing before entrance to plant's large nursery. . .

with the trade unions, who coordinate and administer the pressing demands for dwellings.

The bulk of the funds needed for housing construction are raised and allocated through Republic, regional, and local government bodies. A certain percentage of the dues moneys collected by the unions are ear-marked for housing developments sponsored by the union in question. In addition to the financing, the unions play a major role in the public control of the multi-billion dollar housing program throughout the Soviet Union.

At the Red October Steel Plant in Volgograd, where the historic battle of Stalingrad devastated the city, I visited the enormous development which had been constructed, in part, from the moneys raised by the plant's trade union.

On the basis of need and working seniority (not income), the Housing Commission of the Trade Union Committee, drew up a list of applicants, allocated places on the waiting list, and distributed the apartments as they became available. In this manner, the trade unions of Volgograd have, since World War II, administered 17 billion rubles worth of new housing construction. (Moreover, this program included building loans and materials for anyone wishing to construct his own house.) No one moves into a dwelling unless it is first inspected and approved by the public inspectors of the trade union.

New apartments usually consist of two large and airy rooms, a hallway, kitchen, bath, toilet, and two closets. I noticed that in Moscow, Leningrad, and other European Russian cities ruined by the war, housing conditions were especially crowded in the old building which survived; there it was common to find families sharing cramped quarters. But where new projects had been built or were going up—in Siberia, for example—housing conditions were dramatically better.

The Soviet Union is one vast construction site. Everywhere one

Typical trade union-run housing developments from Moscow . . . to . . . Siberia . . . to . . . Soviet Asia . . .

goes, buildings are going up. Moreover, rents are unbelievably inexpensive. I found that the usual apartment, described above, ran about five to never more than ten percent of a worker's monthly income.

After visiting the modest but handsome apartment of Mr. and Mrs. Piminov (he is a Communist Labor Team leader in Volgograd's Red October Steel Plant's rolling mill), I asked her what the rental was.

"We pay 11 rubles a month," she said. "Gas and electricity are free. Urban telephone calls [within Volgograd] are free; we pay only for long distance."

Small-unit refrigerators were generally the rule in the newer housing developments I saw; and small, two- and four-burner gas ranges were characteristic. While a good many flats were equipped with television, most were not. In household appliances, TV sets, and the common use of incidental luxury items, such as color TV,

electric can-openers, and the like, the Soviet consumer is only beginning to realize the same home comforts which many unionized American workers enjoy. Barring unforeseen circumstances, the trade union leaders I talked to estimated that by the 1970's a great increase in consumer production would make itself felt among the average wage-earners, equaling, they insist, the American standard of living at all levels. This, of course, remains to be seen; but it already is evident that they are hard at work in this area.

What did Mrs. Piminov average each week for food, laundering, transportation, education, medical care, and the like?

She reminded me that education, medical care, and social welfare costs were provided free of charge. "I figure on a monthly budget of about 145 rubles," she said. Her husband makes a base rate of 200 rubles in the mill and, with bonuses, averages about 240 to 270 rubles monthly.

Across the hallway, I met a younger couple (not employed in the Red October mills) whose total income exceeded 200 rubles. Their apartment consisted of one large room, along with the other facilities of the Piminovs. Their rent was 7 rubles a month.

I found the same range of rentals and expenses generally pertained everywhere I went in the Soviet Union.

Children

Familiar sights in any Soviet city or town are young parents hurrying with their children to the nurseries or kindergartens early of a morning. The creche and kindergartens are commodious, bright, and airy, well equipped buildings, run by a trained professional staff (all of whom are employed by the union in question). I often found qualified nurses and doctors at the Children's Centers.

The Children's Center of the First Leningrad Shoe Factory was quite typical of the many day care centers I saw. It was a large, oblong building, located about two blocks from the plant. A field ran beside it, setting off the area from the surrounding apartments and plant buildings. The front of the grounds was given over to swings, see-saws, jungle gyms, and little huts imaginatively designed like toadstools for the youngsters to carry out their games. "Just like a fairy tale," the directress of the factory beamed.

There were pastel-colored sliding boards and large, open pipes through which the kids could run and romp.

The kindergarten inside was gaily colored and, as always, immaculate. Visitors—as is the custom—had to wear clean white smocks and antiseptic masks to protect the children. Flowers and potted plants were everywhere. There were several dining rooms, and neat, well furnished bed rooms for morning and afternoon naps. The rooms were all high ceilinged and bright, with the typical, big, Russian double-windows. The young woman director of the kindergarten emphasized the Soviet belief in fresh air: "As you can see,

Mrs. Piminov and visitor . . . rent chit . . . 11 rubles a month, free gas and electric and local phone . . .

the children are asleep virtually on an open-air porch when we open the windows during their rest periods."

The kindergarten accommodated 150 children of various ages, who were placed in one of five age groups. Their parents worked in the shoe plant and left the children on a daily or weekly basis (of course parents in the latter category took their children home on weekends). The monthly cost to maintain each child was 58 rubles. Depending upon the monthly income of the parents, the cost to the worker ranged from 4 to 12 rubles a month; the union paid the balance.

Painting, art work, games, languages and beginning reading skills were taught by the professional staff at the Child Care Center. Song fests, recitations were engaged in by the kids. (A delightful romp with the 200 kids of the Red October Steel Plant in Volgograd, when they sang birthday songs to me, helped lessen the impact of advancing age.)

The Leningrad Shoe Plant's center was built at the same time as the plant itself (1930), but was virtually destroyed during the Nazi siege of the city. Since the war, it has been rebuilt. "Some of our children have already grown up, taken jobs here and are now bringing their children to us!" the directress told me with evident pride.

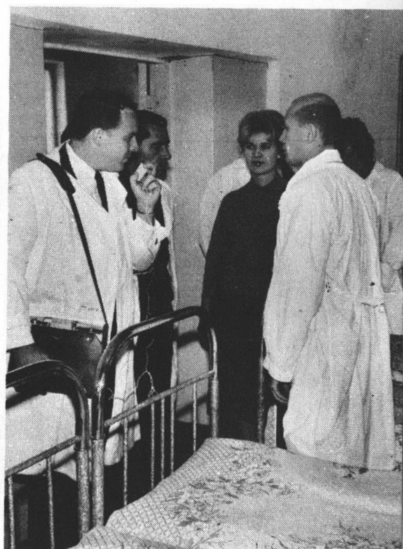
During the summer, most of the kids are taken for 10 weeks to a camp of cottages in a lake in the forest areas around Leningrad. The parents visit them weekly and, if they so choose, can elect to spend their own vacations in the same area with the children. This program is voluntary. The cost was again borne by the funds of the union.

I asked the directress what her salary was. "Ninety rubles," she said, "I also get bonuses from our work here. And I belong to the plant union." (In this case, the Textile and Light Industries Workers Union.)

One of the most exciting highlights of my trip to the Soviet Union was a stay at Artek, the Pioneer Camp on the Black Sea in Southern Crimea. This spectacular camp is situated on the sea, the rugged crags of the Crimean Mountains plunging right into the blue waters. Maintained by the Ministry of Health and the trade unions, it is the oldest (founded in 1925) of the summer and holiday camps—there are 6,500 of them throughout the USSR—run by the trade unions, ninety percent of all costs (including the transportation fare from distant places in the USSR) being defrayed by the unions.

Artek is open all year 'round. The dormitories, libraries and dining halls are modern and beautiful—glass and steel structures of grace and charm looking out to sea. More than 500 boys and girls from 12 to 15 years of age, are accommodated in a program that features courses and lectures in all subjects, including a fully equipped series of labs for working in physics, electronics, chemistry and other sciences. Extensive fields for hockey, soccer, basketball, and a big stadium for track and field provide a sports program for the children the like of which I have never seen. Artek is a camp which middle-class, executive money in the United States simply could never afford.

While I was bubbling over with enthusiasm for Artek, a trade



Trade union kindergartens . . .

Views of Artek . . . nestled at the foot of Crimean Mountains which plunge dramatically into the Black Sea . . .

union official from the Ukraine told me: "Ah, this is nothing. You should see the camps at Odessa and Kiev we have for the kids!"

Later, in Moscow, in discussing the unions' camp programs with an American foreign correspondent, he too acknowledged how impressive his visit to Artek had been. "Quickest way to make you a Communist!" he laughed. This program is widespread. The

Ukrainian Republic's Trade Union Council, for example, reported that last year it disbursed more than 200 million rubles on sending some 600,000 children to more than the 900 summer camps it alone runs.

Education

It seems that everybody in the Soviet Union is a student. The Ministry of Education runs the vast public educational program of grammar, secondary, and higher schools—universities and colleges—of learning. But the trade unions have over the years developed an ever-growing network of schools, generally referred to as the "factory university" by Soviet workers.

At each of the 29 establishments I visited, there were educational facilities and training programs of every sort and description. The Moskvich Automobile's "university" was a large stone building with several floors, each having about 10 large classrooms which accommodated 20-30 students. There were several mechanical and manual arts rooms where apprentices learned from working models the theoretical and practical aspects of automobile manufacture and functioning. Apprentices formed the bulk of these classes, several of which I visited. The classes were conducted with the same disciplined earnestness that characterizes the many high school and grammar classes I attended in the USSR.

Most of the students were teenagers or in their early 20's. The teenagers, minors under Soviet law, studied here as a part of their 6-hour day. The older students were given time off if needed (usually second shifters) to attend classes to prepare for examinations; all were given time off—with pay—two weeks in advance of the tests.

In addition to these courses, systematic programs in history, geography, biology, math, physics, languages, philosophy were offered for those who had not completed secondary education. Similar courses were offered by way of correspondence schools. The same privileges—time off for classes and test preparations with pay—are guaranteed by the union.

At the Moskvich auto plant, more than 2,000 of its 10,000 employees are taking educational courses. I witnessed the same drive for knowledge everywhere I went. Improved skills and education are greater factors in advancement and higher pay than length of service or seniority in Soviet plants. This undoubtedly explains the great popularity of education among the workers.

The Education Commission of the plants and offices assumes responsibility for raising the finances and setting up the educational facilities that an establishment provides for its workers. All of the plants have, in addition to large technical libraries, huge general libraries, containing the literature of the world. One of the biggest thrills was to discover three well-worn copies (in English yet!) of my book, *Heusinger of the Fourth Reich,* in the general library of the

Trade union sponsored schools . . . class in solid geometry at Volgograd's Red October Steel Plant . . .
L., Moskvich polyclinic: Doctor (in white smock) with members of auto plant's trade union committee before entrance to big polyclinic handling 750,000 visits annually by plant workers and families . . .

Power and Electrical Workers Union of Bratsk, Siberia. The library, typical of plant libraries of that size establishment (about 10,000 workers), had 76,000 volumes.

I found that Hemingway, Faulkner, Dreiser, Mitchell Wilson, Steinbeck, Mark Twain, J. D. Salinger, Albert Maltz and Jack London were the favorite American writers of Soviet working men and women everywhere.

Medical and Health Facilities

As in most up-to-date plants in the United States, Soviet plants had their own self-contained, well equipped medical center for the quick treatment of accidents or illness.

They were more than first-aid stations, however. In most of the plants—small or large—qualified medical personnel were always in attendance. Moreover, the doctors, nurses and orderlies were full-time employees of the establishment, who were hired and fired by the trade union. They were also the only consistent exception I found to the "one plant, one union" principle; the medical workers were not members of the plant union but rather belonged to the All-Union Medical Workers' Union.

All medical services at the plant (including drugs) were free, the union again footing the bill.

Another distinctive feature of the vast union medical services are their polyclinics. I myself in Moscow experienced a mixed blessing

COMRADELY COURTS

An institution which is unique in the U.S.S.R. is the Comradely Court. Not a court like a magistrate's court or a state or federal court in the ordinary sense of the term, the Comradely Courts are run by the people themselves at plants, apartment and housing developments, research institutes and state and collective farms.

They originated at the time of the 1917 Revolution but were abandoned after the early years and revived in 1960 in connection with the general trend toward giving the people a larger part in the administration of justice. They have become a recognized, powerful expression of public opinion dealing with what the Soviets generally term "anti-social" behavior.

In virtually every factory of the Soviet Union, there is a Comradely Court. Its judges are elected by secret ballot every year from the departments and shops of a given plant. There are usually three such judges at each court. They are unpaid and are not permitted to hold any other office at the plant. The courts meet only when necessary. Attendance is not obligatory but usually runs high. All workers in a plant belong to the court.

I attended a session of the Comradely Court at a Moscow optics plant. A worker was charged by his fellows with chronic lateness and absenteeism because he drank excessively, and abuse of his wife at home. The charges against him were detailed and documented with long statements from people in the shop and his neighborhood. The court, presided over by an elderly woman worker (not a Communist Party member), had on several occasions talked with the accused before a court was called into session. The court, the accused and his fellow workers comported themselves quietly and seriously. He had every opportunity to question anything said by anybody, and made long statements throughout the trial in his own behalf. The discussions were held in a reserved atmosphere yet were extremely frank. Although he had twice refused to appear before the court, he himself admitted that his drunkenness had been the cause of a lot of trouble.

I did not detect a trace of vengefulness or any mob spirit. On the contrary, women were weeping during the testimony and there was a good deal of sympathy shown the accused. He himself was obviously repentant.

When he was found guilty, the court promptly fined him 10% of a month's basic wages and reprimanded him. The court could have recommended to the trade union that he be expelled, that his union rights and privileges be revoked for a period of time and that management dismiss him from employment. While the court's powers are not those of a formal judicial body, its actions are unquestioned and its recommendations carry enormous weight with the unions, management and especially with the people as a whole.

In most cases, I learned, no penalties are imposed at all. In addition to dealing with lateness, absenteeism, drunkenness, theft and rowdiness, a great bulk of the cases concern themselves with discourtesies, slander, marital relations, uncleanly or slovenly habits at work or at home and other similar, primarily social, offences.

The Comradely Courts have a powerful effect. They certainly make individuals aware of a general standard of social behaviour in a way which I myself have never seen among large masses of people.

It appeared to me that the Comradely Courts enjoyed an almost independent existence, separate and apart from the trade unions as such. A reading of 1964 edition of "The Rules of the Factory Comradely Courts" which I secured reinforces this impression although, of course, the courts have full support of the unions. The Comradely Courts seemed to be the most public bodies I observed during my trip.

one morning late in October shortly after returning from the subtropics of the Crimea. I woke up with a pounding headache, a fever, and my joints exploding with each sneeze.

"Garold!" I said to my good friend, Harold Shchetinin of the AUCCTU. "I've got an important development to report. I got the Moscow bug! I'm sick, man."

"Oh, my goodness, Chuck. We'll get you a doctor right away!" he replied.

"Nyet, Garold," I said, beaming. "Now that I'm sick, I want to find out exactly what happens when a unionist gets the flu in the USSR. You dig?"

Harold dug.

We assumed that, as a journalist, I was a member of the Professional and Cultural Workers Union (Central Moscow District). Being ambulatory, I, along with my friends, ducked into the Metro, boomed through its subway (really an incredible combination of a sterilized hospital ward and opulent art gallery) and, after less than 10 minutes, emerged near the polyclinic used by Moscow's Fourth Estate.

It was a big, nondescript building. At its entrance, I signed in: name, address, union, union card number. (When Harold explained what we were doing to the old woman at the registry, she frowned: "He can pretend he's a Soviet journalist, but he can't hide his flu! Upstairs to Room 202.")

We went to 202, which was a reception room like nearly every physician's reception room in the world: overstuffed chairs, slick magazines on the tables, patients with red, dripping noses, inflamed eyes, and coughs. And, as in all doctors' offices, everybody sat there, saying nothing, looking at each other like a bunch of mutes.

In a few minutes an elderly woman in a smock came out and beckoned to me. "Tovarish, this way, please." We went into an office. (I found that "tovarish"—meaning, of course, comrade—was used largely by older people, by the generations over forty-five. In many cases it is used as a casual affection, in most as a sign of friendliness much in the manner of traditional trade unionists in the United States who address people as brother or sister. The younger generations, I noticed, did not use the term as readily.)

An attractive young woman was helping another patient into her coat. The elderly woman commanded: "Take off your shirt and undershirt and lie down." (It was then that I realized she was the doctor, the young one was the nurse. This was not to be my day!) Then she pulled out a stethoscope in the shape of an elongated horn, applied it to my chest and back with cursory orders for me to cough, and tapped my back and chest. "Here," she said, "put this under your arm," thrusting a thermometer at me. Three minutes passed while she asked me questions about where I had been, what I had been doing. Then she announced: "You've got the flu!" We all broke up in laughter.

"Nu, so what do I do?"

Take this, she said, filling out three prescriptions, go down to the pharmacy in your district, stay in bed for three days, force fluids and rest.

But that was impossible, I said. Too much work to do, too much running around to do. Couldn't she give me a shot and let it go at that?

No, she countered, Soviet medicine does not believe in shots. I must obey her, otherwise she would not take responsibility. She shrugged: "You men are all alike!"

OK, I smiled. Many thanks. What do I owe you?

"Owe!" she exclaimed. "Nothing of course. But you'll have to pay for the drugs. By 1970 we will have free drugs too. Come back then, and have the flu on us!"

On the way to the pharmacy, I learned that Slava and his wife were expecting their first-born within the next month or so. Has she her own doctor or merely one assigned at the local polyclinic, I asked. "Oh, no," he said. "My wife and I have had the same doctor as my parents. He delivered many of our friends too and will deliver all of our children. He is our doctor. We shall have four girls!"

The pharmacy was a busy, antiseptically spotless building on Gorky Street. I walked in, got on one line, gave the clerk my prescriptions, paid for them and was given a numbered card. I then went over to the counter, waited briefly until my number was called, and walked out with the drugs: 18 aspirin, a dozen mild sedatives, and three day's supply of what I later found was a strong cum-biotic. Total cost: 18 kopeks (about 22 cents).

The next morning there was a knock at my door. Two women dressed in white and carrying medical kits asked how I was. Better, I said, somewhat puzzled as to how they knew I had been ill. They were part of a roving team of medical workers who each day make follow-up visits right to the residence of those reporting ill at the polyclinic. (No charge.)

Were they doing this because I was a visiting foreigner? Oh, no, they explained after taking my temperature and making a quick check-up, this was part of the union's polyclinic routine procedure.

Another medical feature of Soviet plants is the prophylactoria. In the large plants, they can be quite elaborate. The Moskvich Automobile Works maintains a large building providing for more than 750,000 medical visits a year by the workers of the plant. Here they can come for an overnight stay, or for several weeks of treatment for ailments such as heart trouble, ulcers, nervous disorders, or chronic fatigue. It seems to function as a combination out-patient clinic and hospital. The worker will go to work as he regularly does, but check into the prophylactorium after his shift, take his meals there, sleep overnight and follow its regimen during the time he stays there.

A dynamic, grey-haired woman was the chief physician of the

tear off a stub, take your seat, pull the cord for your stop and get off.

I asked one of the ranking trade union leaders of Moscow how this started. He told me that the unions proposed it several years ago as one of the social steps toward communism, toward increasing the people's pride of ownership in their city. "Yes," I said, "and how many thousands of rubles are you in the hole because of cheating." He was adamant. "We operate in the black," he insisted. "In 1963 we had super profits."

One can not help but being impressed with this procedure. I talked with a correspondent of the *New York Times* (not now in Moscow) about the honor system. He had not realized that this was primarily a trade union proposal, and erroneously attributed it to the Communist Party. Well, no matter, I said. What do you think of a city the size of New York having such an arrangement: no less than fantastic?

No, he answered blithely, not at all. You must understand that in this way they release man-power for other more vital services. Has nothing to do with the people cultivating a sense of their own public ownership.

Perhaps, perhaps not. I shall never forget, however, my own experience in Yalta when I went with a cab driver to see how he was paid.

We went to his garage. There, set along a back wall, was a table holding neat stacks of ruble notes, a mound of coins, and an open ledger book. No one was in the building when we entered. He went over to the ledger book, found his name, traced his finger over to the edge to see what his monthly earnings were, signed his name on a line besides the total, counted out what was due him, made change —and we left!

He told me that this honor system of payment had been in effect for two years. Smiling with a casual but confident pride, he told me that several other industries in the Crimean area had instituted the same methods of pay.

Culture and Sports

There were two commissions on every trade union committee that proved, usually, to be the largest and most popular: the Cultural Commission and the Sports Commission.

Every establishment had its own Palace (or House) of Culture. Its size and complexity depended upon the size and financial resources of the particular factory or enterprise. I saw many huge Palaces and quite a few small ones; common to all was the fact that the trade unions, through the Palaces of Culture, have become one of the foremost promoters of Soviet cultural heritage and development.

There are now more than 17,000 Palaces of Culture in the USSR, owned and operated by the trade unions alone. In Leningrad, for

example, the trade unions have 56 Palaces of Culture, including 10 enormous inter-union Palaces.

I spent several days and nights with my tape recorder and cameras wandering freely through the Kirov Palace of Culture, erected by the Leningrad Regional Trade Union Council in 1933. It is open for the enjoyment and use of anyone, regardless of union membership; this means, especially, that tons of kids take advantage of its athletic gymnasia, scientific and cultural clubs (for instance, the children in the Archeology Club go on a field trip each summer to some distant part of the USSR as actual members of a professional team that might be digging for artifacts in the Gobi Desert or Carpathian Mountains. Expenses are defrayed by the union). Housewives also use the center, attending academic classes, choral clubs, orchestras, dances, art classes, ballet, modern dance, amateur nights, folk and classic opera, the cinema and drama.

In fact, 7,000 persons use the Kirov facilities weekly. Its modern theater and wide-screen cinema seat 1,750 and 750 persons respectively. Its library has 100,000 volumes and its reading room services 10,000 subscribers.

I laughed uproariously at an amateur night put on by the workers of the Ball Bearing Plant Number One in Moscow. Their amateur nights were very similar to our variety skirts, but its participants were all amateurs, guys and girls out of the shops and offices simply having a good time.

Specially talented workers are often encouraged by their unions to take formal courses at the art institute or the conservatory, and a good number of the professional artists, actors, singers, and musicians in the USSR got their start in this manner.

I heard an unusually gifted young baritone in Siberia, whose advanced training was sponsored by the Bratsk Power Workers for the past several years. He was scheduled to go on a European tour with a troupe of Soviet artists during the winter-spring of 1965. He receives full pay while on leave, and his job is guaranteed him upon his return to Bratsk, where he is an engineer.

Perhaps the most beautiful palace of culture I saw was the new steel and glass structure built by the Power & Electrical Workers Union of Bratsk in northern Siberia.

There, while a Siberian snow storm roared outside, I saw the

workers' children studying ballet. Fifty little girls, dressed in ballet costumes (part of more than 250 youngsters taught ballet by a staff that included a former first ballerina from the Bolshoi), went through their exercises in a mirrored room which looked out over the delicate white birch groves and a park that surrounded the palace.

It was difficult to accept the fact that outside there was a swirling Siberian snow-storm and that these were the youngsters of the Power and Electrical workers of Bratsk.

In smaller communities and on state farms, the palaces of culture are not as elaborate or well equipped, but nonetheless they are dynamic extensions of what is very nearly a cultural obsession with the trade unions.

The Soviet trade unions have their own publishing house, called Profizdat, which issues tens of thousands of books, pamphlets and booklets each year. *Trud,* a 40-million run *daily* newspaper, is the official organ of the labor movement, and the AUCCTU also publishes numerous magazines like *Soviet Sport, Soviet Women,* and *Amateur Talent.*

The key to the unions' cultural program is involvement. I was told that in 1963, some 3,700,000 trade unionists volunteered to work after hours on their Cultural Commissions, helping to run the palaces of culture.

Most Americans are familiar with the Soviet Union's achievements in sports. Last year's Olympic Games at Tokyo were again largely a contest between the two giants of sport, the United States and the Soviet Union.

While the Soviet government appropriates billions of rubles for sport, few people realize the fantastic involvement of the Soviet trade unions. Every large factory has its own gymnasium and stadium. Many of these trade union stadia seat from a couple of thousand to upwards of fifty and seventy-five to one hundred thousand. Through their various clubs—like Trud (Labor), Spartak, Dynamo, Lokomotiv—the 22 national unions of the USSR sponsor a local, district, regional, Republican, and national program.

The unions provide the funds, build the stadia and gymnasia, hire the professional coaches and staff, provide courses of instruction at all levels from beginner to advanced in all sports the year 'round.

I saw innumerable trade union-sponsored contests, both within the plant and in inter-union competition, and became an addict of Soviet football. Crowds of 75,000 were common at many of the trade union clashes.

The new Volga Stadium at Volgograd is an example of union involvement. It is a beautiful bowl, seating 57,000 people, and overlooks a bend of the Volga River. The stadium is not unlike the multimillion dollar marvel in New York city, Shea Stadium, home of the professional Mets of National League baseball and Jets of the Amer-

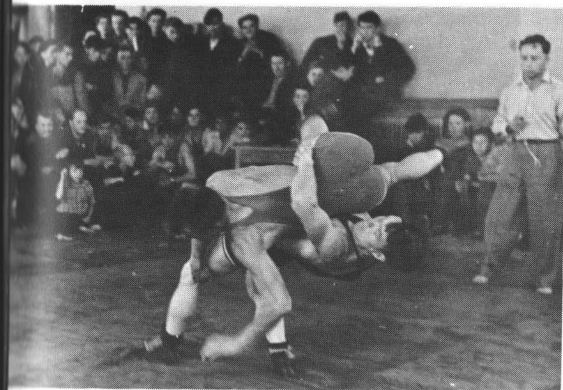
ican Football League. Instead of professionals, however, amateurs avail themselves (without cost) of its facilities. At either end of the bowl are two huge gymnasia housing swimming pools, boxing and wrestling rooms, a half-dozen basketball courts, indoor tracks, and indoor tennis courts. Soccer, track and field, bike racing, basketball for men, women, and children, are played in the stadium itself.

The stadium was built at a cost of 5 million rubles by the Volgograd Trade Union Council. Much of the labor needed to construct the stadium was donated after-hours by the working men and women (as well as the kids, through their Young Pioneer and Komsomol clubs) of the city.

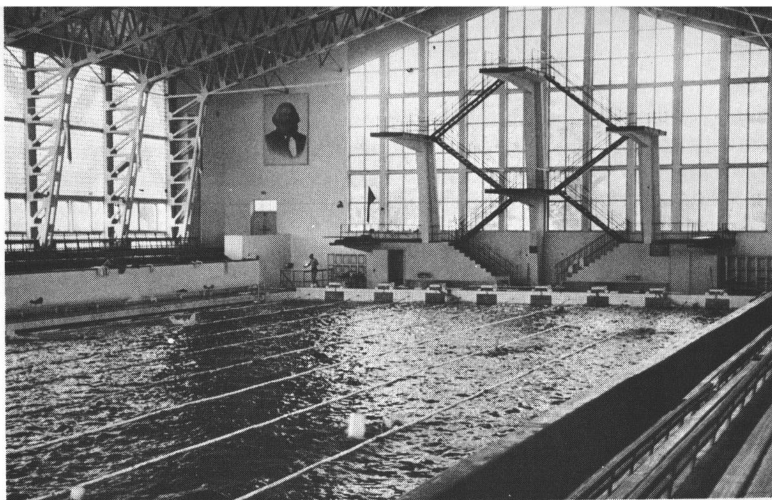
It is not only a handsome structure but its seating accommodations are very comfortable, and the price is low. I saw the Volgogard Sheenik Auto Tire Plant whomp an Austrian trade union club in basketball at the Volga Stadium for 30 kopeks, and had the best seat in the house.

I myself participated in basketball, swimming and diving, and weight lifting programs of trade union locals throughout the USSR.

There is a common notion in the U.S. that the explanation for the Soviets' success in sports lies in the government's subsidy of professional athletes, who, we are told, are misrepresented as amateurs.

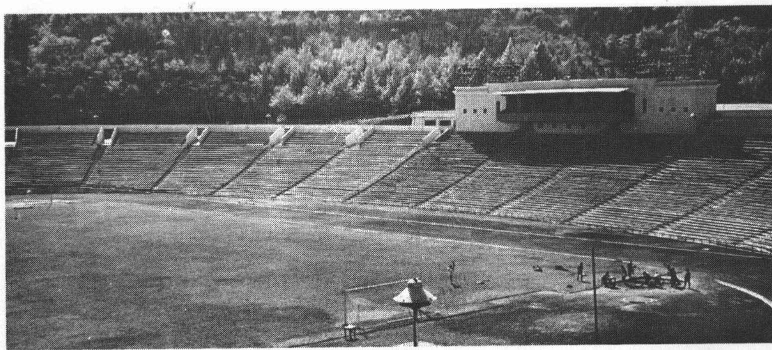


Siberian sports scenes . . all trade union run . .



Tashkent's new indoor Olympic pool . . . where author tried a few half-gainers off diving towers . . . drew laughs when asked if big portraits on back walls were former swimming stars of Tashkent (they were blow-ups of Marx and Lenin) . . .

Tbilisi University stadium in Soviet Georgia . . . holds 20,000 spectators . . . built by students and the unions . . . part of union's mass sports program . . .

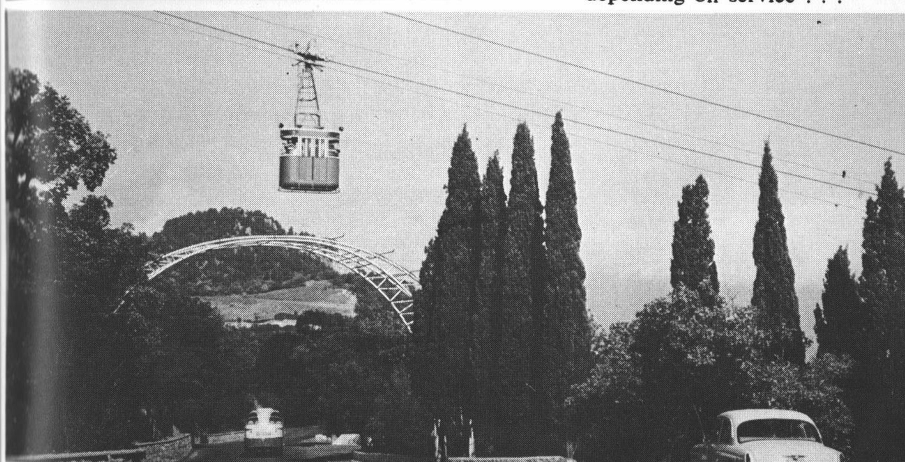


This is not true.

Their secret is *mass involvement*. Largely through the trade unions, great masses of athletes are developed each year. They come out of the shops and—after inter-union or international competition—they go right back into the shops or offices. They do receive time-off (with pay) for a month prior to a big international competition like the Olympics or the All-European Games. But this is for the very best athletes on the national teams (Tamara Press, for example, works as a technician at the Optics Plant I visited in Leningrad; I saw her photographs all over the plant's trophy room and talked with her fellow workers while she was busting world records in Tokyo.)

HOLIDAYS, VACATIONS, PENSIONS

Crimea: major resort and rest area . . . more than 2,000 spas in use throughout USSR under authority of trade unions . . . holidays and vacations are fixed by law, starting with two weeks with pay for first year and going up through two months depending on service . . .



The overwhelming majority of union "activists" in sports do not go to the Olympics; but they do provide the enormous reservoir by their sheer numbers—along with top equipment, excellent coaching and a keen competitive drive—which accounts for Soviet achievements.

Two figures alone suggest the nature of the trade union commitment to sports in the USSR. One is local; the other national in scope; both have consequences far beyond the USSR.

Last year, the Leningrad Regional Trade Union Council, representing a little more than 1,000,000 organized workers, spent 7 million rubles on its sports program alone. This year, they will expend close to 8 million rubles.

seamen to exchange delegations, so that great numbers of both working groups could pay each other visits and see for themselves how the other lives and works.

"It is our belief, after this trip, that our position is correct," the NMU Report concluded. "Exchanges of delegations—officials at all levels and rank-and-file members—should be encouraged. With the world in the condition it is in, our labor movement has a responsibility to do whatever it can to develop understanding and friendly relations with people behind the Iron Curtain. We have nothing to fear from such efforts; we may accomplish some good."

These are words of reason; the stuff of which sanity is made. The very best way for American working men and women to learn about the Soviet Union is to go see for themselves.

On that last day I was in Moscow, I was just leaving a session of an optical plant's Comradely Court and was heading out the plant gate when someone called to me: "Tovarish, wait!"

I turned and saw a middle-aged man running up to me. I did not know him, nor did I recognize him.

"Yes?" I asked "You're speaking to me?"

"Yes," he huffed, somewhat out of breath. "I work here. I was at the Comradely Court where you were asking questions afterwards. It is obvious that the American working class differs with us on many things."

That's right, I told him. You can't blink at facts.

"Nichevo," he said. "It is not that important. While we differ, there is no reason why we can't live together in peace."

I think most Americans would buy that, I said. "Americans are basically decent people, no matter what you may hear. And they are fundamentally peaceful too. The working people are especially so. They live and let live for the most part."

He then said: "Will you take my greetings to the American working class?"

I laughed and explained that I represented nobody but myself. That I spoke for no one and was empowered to speak on no one's behalf.

"Well then will you take down what I say?" he asked.

Certainly, I'm reporting anything of pertinence.

"Tell the American working man and woman that we will one day catch up with them in production . . ."

(Oh, oh, I thought to myself, am I going to get that "we-will-bury-you" jazz?)

He continued: ". . . we will catch up. And then we will match strides and, shoulder to shoulder, no matter about our differences, we will go forward together to have real peace. Tell them that much."

I'll tell 'em, I promised.

He seemed satisfied and turned to go back to the plant. He said, "Dosvedanya."

I said, "So long."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Charles R. Allen, Jr. — shown on the cover with the tools of his trade — has had extensive experience as an active trade unionist. He was also a labor journalist, contributing to *Labor's Daily, United Mine Workers' Journal, AFL-CIO News* and numerous other labor publications and was for five years national director of public relations for the electrical workers' union, the UE.

As a professional writer, Mr. Allen was a senior editor of *The Nation,* has script credits for such films as *The Moving Finger* and *Better Than Money* and has published more than 275 articles in a wide range of periodicals from *The Atlantic Monthly* to *Punch.* His most recent book, *Heusinger of the Fourth Reich* (Marzani & Munsell) exposing the step-by-step resurgence of the German General Staff, has been critically acclaimed and published throughout the world. Five Nobel Prize winners — among them Bertrand Russell — characterized the work as "brilliant . . . one of the most important books in the growing literature of the Cold War." Mr. Allen is now at work on a book, *Since the Revolution: The Working Peoples of the Soviet Union Today.*

Mr. Allen is a graduate of Kenyon College where he had a distinguished career as both an all-around athlete and an all-around scholar. He is married and has a 13 year old son.

If you enjoyed this booklet, it is only an appetizer for —

SINCE THE REVOLUTION:

The Working Peoples of The Soviet Union Today

In 1917 the working men and women of Russian led the people through an enormous upheaval — the first proletarian revolution. Of them the Soviet poet and novelist Alexei Tolstoi sang: "Thrice wrung out in water, thrice bathed in blood, thrice boiled in caustic! Who so pure as we?"

What has happened to these working men and women — *as a class* — since the Revolution? Has it indeed won power? Does it direct its own destiny? Or is it a docile giant manipulated by a Communist dictatorship?

The questions multiply. Has the Revolution spent itself? Does the upcoming generation of industrial workers seek the goals of the Revolution or has it slipped into a middle class materialism of "socialist affluence," a Marxist *Dolce Vita?*

What about the specifics of a working man's life? What is life like when the shift is over? What about his working conditions? Job security? Freedom of movement? Relations to management — whether the foreman, the plant manager, the government as ultimate authority. What's it like to work in one of the "electric cities" or one of the "intellectual cities" located deep in the legendary taiga of Siberia? *And what about automation? Alienation?*

Above all, what's the truth about Soviet trade unions? Are they like those of the West? Or are they merely "agents" of the state as many Westerners insist? How can a factory manager be a trade unionist? Is there any reality to the claim that Soviet trade unions are a major vehicle to realizing Lenin's anticipation of the "withering away of the state"?

Mr. Allen travelled tens of thousands of miles throughout the USSR and had hundreds upon hundreds of interviews to report in human terms the answers to these and numerous other questions. *Since the Revolution* is the major contemporary study of Soviet trade unions, definitive for this time. It will remain historically a major work contributing to our knowledge of the USSR. That it is written — like this pamphlet — in warm, human terms, giving an exciting story, is only an extra bonus for the expectant reader.

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