

Canadians gather Russian secrets about fine wines

Six Canadians have been gathering secrets in the U.S.S.R. — the secrets of fine Russian wine.

A six-man grape mission, representing the Canadian grape and wine industry and the federal government, spent two weeks this fall studying varieties and cultivation practices in Russia's grape-producing areas.

Tom Bennett, horticulture marketing economist with Agriculture Canada, in Ottawa, was a member of the mission.

"Our major objective was to discover new varieties of grapes that would improve the quality of Canadian wine, and be frost-resistant and winter hardy enough to let us extend our areas of production," Mr. Bennett says. "Before leaving Russia, we arranged for an exchange of plant materials between Canada and the U.S.S.R. There was also a strong interest, indicated on both sides, in having some of our researchers study and work at Magarach."

Canada mainly produces the American *lubrusca* type of grape that commonly has a foxy or fruity taste unpopular with some wine drinkers. European *vinifera* grapes cannot withstand Canadian winters, except for certain varieties in the most southern

regions of Ontario and British Columbia. The Russians, however, have had a great deal of success growing *vinifera* grapes in areas with cold winters.

The U.S.S.R. claims to be the third largest wine-producing country in the world, and by 1990 expects to be the largest. Altogether, 11 Russian republics produce grapes on 1,100,000 hectares (2,750,000 acres) of land. By 1990 they expect to have 4,675,000 acres in grape production. The Ukrainian Republic, which includes the Crimea, is the largest producer of grapes. The Crimea and the Georgian Republic produce the most famous Russian wines.

The Russian people consume most of the wine their country produces. The annual per capita consumption of grapes in all forms is 88 pounds, and 60 per cent of this is consumed as wine. This is roughly six gallons per capita. The per capita consumption of wine in Canada is only a little more than one gallon.

Some Russian wine is exported to eastern Europe, and soon Canadian and United States consumers will also be able to enjoy Russia's vintage wines, Mr. Bennett says.

The grape mission first travelled to Moscow, where the Ministry of Food handles the marketing and distribution of grapes and wine. Then they went on to the grape-producing regions of Krasnodar, Yalta in the Crimea and Tbilisi in the Georgian Republic.

"Our visit at Krasnodar in the Russian Republic was one of the most productive," says Mr. Bennett. "Because of its cold winters, this region most closely resembles Canada's grape-growing regions."

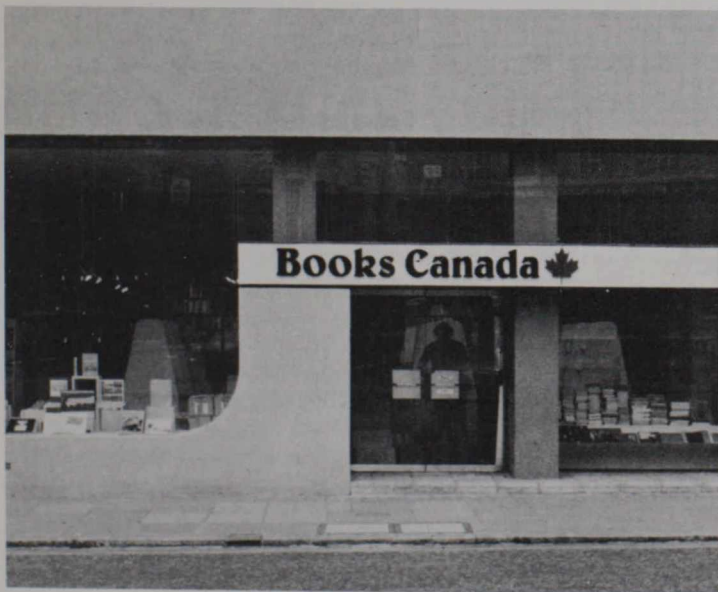
The state and collective viticultural farms in Krasnodar protect their vines from the cold by covering them with earth, Mr. Bennett says. The covering and uncovering of the vines is highly mechanized. Altogether 1,500,000 acres of Russian grapes are sheltered from the cold in this way.

Advanced technology, large, flat vineyards averaging 1,500 to 2,000 acres each (with some as large as 7,500 acres) and dry fall weather facilitate this kind of sheltering.

"It's possible that these methods could be adapted to a limited extent for use in Canada but the wet fall weather and the smaller vineyards would make operations less efficient than in Russia," Mr. Bennett says.

The government of the U.S.S.R. finances extensive research and development in the grape and wine industry throughout the country. Mr. Bennett visited a number of research institutes, including the important Magarach Institute for Viticultural and Vinicultural Research in Yalta. The 150-year-old Magarach Institute has a staff of 350. It also serves as a training institute. Three-quarters of the highly trained researchers and technicians at Magarach are women.

Mechanization is one of the main areas of research. Eighty per cent of Russia's vineyard operations are mechanized — only the harvesting now requires manual labor. The research institutes also breed new varieties of wine grapes and develop new, international award-winning wines. Many of the institutes have their own vineyards, wineries and wine museums, with artifacts dating back thousands of years. ♦



A bookshop specializing in Canadian books was officially opened in central London on 19 October. It is located in quarters at 19 Cockspur Street, just off Trafalgar Square and across from Canada House, where Canadian railways have had tickets offices in years gone by and the Canadian Government Travel Bureau had its London office until earlier this year. The Books Canada store is operated on behalf of a consortium of 48 Canadian publishers, who were assisted in establishing this outlet by the Canadian Government. The store now has available a list of titles totalling 2,500. In officially declaring the store open at a special ceremony, the Canadian High Commissioner in Britain, Mr. J. H. Warren, said: "This is great for our authors. It will serve to give a greater idea — which is perhaps overdue here in London — of what is going on in literature in Canada."

(Books Canada)



Three Canadian writers were in London for the Books Canada opening ceremonies. Seen together here at a Canada House reception following the opening of the bookshop, they made themselves available for media interviews and other assignments intended to publicize this new Canadian venture in Britain. It is intended to widen the readership market available to Canadian writers, along with similar shops being opened in Paris and New York. Max Ferguson (left) is one of Canada's best-known radio broadcasters, but his books based on his radio career and the satiric sketches that have been his speciality, have also won the Stephen Leacock Award for Literary Humor. Earle Birney (centre) is considered Canada's leading poet. A selection of his poetry was recently published in Britain (Chatto) under the title *The Bear On The Delhi Road*. It earned the comment from Guardian reviewer Raymond Gardner that the quality of Birney's work "emphasises the disgrace that this masterfully articulate Canadian should reach the age of 69 before publication of his first British collection." Margaret Atwood enjoys international success as a poet, novelist and essayist. Her two novels, *The Edible Woman* (1969) and *Surfacing* (1973), have been published in Britain by Andre Deutsch.