

COMMUNITY COORDINATOR

by Anne Roblson

One of the more enjoyable services which I performed as community coordinator in Moscow was the organization of visits to various historical sites in the area. The trip to Kuskovo, a former estate on the eastern outskirts of Moscow, was a particularly memorable one.

Arrangements for outings such as these were made with the help of one of the local staff at the Embassy. Intourist was the usual point of contact. For a fee, it supplied a bus, driver, and guide. On our way to Kuskovo it soon became obvious that it was not a site to which Intourist commonly delivered tourists. Our driver got lost and had to stop several times to ask directions. The estate was built in the mid 18th century by the Sheremetevs for summer entertaining. The house is large and beautiful, and constructed primarily of wood. It consists mostly of public rooms rather than private quarters, since the Sheremetevs and their guests seldom stayed overnight. The grounds include a chapel, a grotto, formal gardens and an orangery. This latter building is now used as a ceramics museum, and has an extensive and fascinating display of china, pottery and figurines from Czarist times to the present. We had brought picnic lunches which we ate beside the lake, an obviously popular swimming and picnic spot. My family's most vivid memory of the day was the lesson we observed in how to get a perfect tan. We watched a very large lady in what, on her, was a bikini. She stood, arms outstretched at shoulder height, and turned on the spot with precision timing. As she pivoted round and round, we had visions of a sunbather turning on a spit. It was a refreshingly humorous image to take home.

IMPRESSIONS

by Beverly Clark

As your flight approaches Moscow and the pilot announces that no photographs can be taken over Soviet territory, the stereotypical notion of the Soviet Union as a strongly regulated state may have been reinforced. Yet your stay in the Soviet Union will allow you to see many things which challenge this immediate impression.

Moscow has a population roughly equivalent to New York's. At first glance it appears drab and gray because of its many utilitarian apartment buildings. But a walk through a housing area brings many surprises: sculpted animals, seats carved into the trees, and community areas where children can play. In the spring, it is truly lovely to see the city in bloom, and the apartment dwellers and office workers outside "spring cleaning."

By our standards, the accommodation provided by the Canadian government is small. As well, the diplomatic grocery store is not stocked with the variety of goods we are accustomed to having. Any of the "extras" must be ordered and shipped in.

Yet the wealth of Moscow in other areas of life can quickly compensate for the lack of housing and shopping options. As you become familiar with the city, you will discover that theatre, ballet, concert music, and the circus are among the many entertainment opportunities available. For the sports-minded swimming, horseback riding, skating in Gorky Park, and hockey tournaments are all choices. In addition, the International Community organizes sporting and cultural events. The women's club has groups which travel, study ballet and yoga, paint and learn handicrafts.

The chance to travel through Russia and other parts of Europe is indeed an exciting opportunity and is facilitated by both the European Airline offices in the Soviet Union and the many people willing to help you. It is the best way to understand and appreciate the beauty of the country which lies just beyond the realm of first impressions and appearances.