

# USSR Visit Draws to a Close

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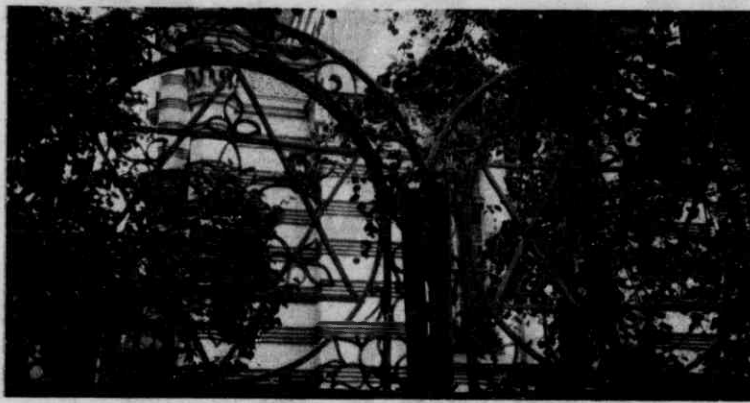
the theater two nights later with tickets costing half of what Intourist would have charged. We assume he made a nice profit on this deal and could just imagine how much Intourist must make.

Outside the theater we were ready to board our bus when we bumped into Murry Glickman, a tourist from Florida, whom we had met in Riga. We invited him to come back to our hotel and he joined us on the bus. After a long day everyone came to our suite to have a snack before bed. Out came the leftover cherries from the Farmer's Market in Riga and the dried fruit and nuts, still good, from home. We sent a few "runners" to the bar for soft drinks and had the makings of a party. Murry couldn't believe the huge size of our suite and neither could we. However, we would have traded the extra space for some pure water to drink. The water in Leningrad is so bad that we could not even use it to brush our teeth, and the mineral water is the most foul tasting liquid I have ever tried to swallow. So we tried using Perrier. This was an amazing experience that I will not describe other than to say that there is absolutely no room for Perrier and toothpaste at the same time in one mouth.

It was on to Petrodvoretz the next morning. The spectacular grounds at the summer palace are filled with hundreds of wonderful fountains. One section, the Great Cascade, is made up of three waterfalls, 64 fountains and 37 statues. It is amazing that the system of waterworks built in 1721, without pumping stations, is still working unchanged today. It was a sparkling, sunny day and I felt like Alice in Wonderland walking through the garden being sprayed by trick fountains and looking at huge fake flowers that became fountains. Just outside one of the pavilions were some people dressed in 18th century court costumes. Our daughter Marcelle and I took pictures with them and wished we could speak Russian, or they English.

Amazingly, the interior of Petrodvoretz is almost completely restored from near total destruction by the Nazis. In each room is a picture of the condition in which it was found before restoration. Apparently the Soviets had the craftsmen and were willing to spend the astronomical amount of money necessary to restore the malachite, silk, lace, gold leaf, bronze and art. The results are wonderful to behold and no visitor should miss this.

The next day our cousins from



Wrought iron Star of David gates in front of Leningrad Synagogue.

Moscow, Michael, Alla, Boris, Larisa and Artem met us at the hotel. They looked very American in their jeans, jean jackets and tennis shoes we had given them while in Moscow. Boris really looked great, wearing a hat to complete the "look." We all left the hotel to look for the Leningrad Synagogue which was difficult to locate and closed when we arrived. It is enclosed within a brick wall and large wrought iron gates which are joined in the center by two large Stars of David. Tall trees are behind the gates and shelter the ornate, Baroque style building topped with a green dome. There were long stained glass windows of which it was difficult to get a good view. The interior will have to remain a mystery until the day we return and find it open.

Walking to the bus we passed one of the many former palaces now being used as government offices. This one had been the residence of Prince Felix Yusopov. We went inside to look and saw a magnificent hallway and curving grand staircase with all the accoutrements of that "palace look." There was a lady who wanted to know what we wanted. We told her we were just looking and we left. Our cousins told us that it was Prince Felix and his friends who murdered Rasputin, the evil monk who manipulated Empress Alexandra. They shot him, rolled him in a carpet and threw him in the canal across the street where he was found the next day. Alla said that her father's friend was there when he was pulled from the water.

That evening was spent at the Baku Restaurant where we had

another typical dinner of zakuski (cold hors d'oeuvres) and a non-descript main dish. The floor show was fun with live music and lots of costumed singers and dancers.

The next day found us and our cousins on Nevsky Prospect, Leningrad's main shopping street. Michael and Boris wanted us to see the park on Nevsky where the artists come every weekend to display their wares. There were probably 100 young artists trying to sell prints, watercolors, pastels and oils. Some of them had set up easels and were doing portraits of customers seated on stools or folding chairs. Shelton and Jeff's wife Bari sat to have their portraits made while the rest of us shopped for art to bring home. Alla told us not to speak to the artists because if they knew we were Americans, they would charge more for their work. She and Larisa negotiated for two lovely watercolors which we purchased for very little money. I needed her negotiating skills in Charlotte at the frame shop. It cost considerably more to frame the paintings than what we paid for them. Our next stop was an antique book store and Dom Knigi (The House of Books), Leningrad's main book shop and formerly the offices of Singer Sewing Machine Co. Books are hard to come by, and because the best ones get sold out immediately, shopping for favorite books is a popular pastime.

We walked two blocks from Nevsky Prospect to the Metropole Restaurant where we had reservations for dinner. This is

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Entrance of former home of Prince Felix where Rasputin was murdered.



Todd standing at spot on canal where Rasputin's body was found. Photos/Patty Gorelick



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