

Students say Russia was nothing like home

By BOB LANK

It was quite early on the morning of May 4th that we sat for our last meal in the free world until the 14th so when we would be returning to our 'Hospiz' in Helsinki. Enthusiasm was high as we were bussed to the train station and shown the car that was to be our home until we arrived in Leningrad late that evening. The Russian car pulled by a Finnish Locomotive (as far as the border) would certainly not be considered anywhere near luxurious by North American standards. The seats were upright, immobile, and certainly not spacious with a small table between the two facing benches. Luggage was carried on by the passengers which created some havoc because of the lack of space. Yet we all settled in quickly in anticipation of the departure.

It wasn't long after the departure from the train station in Helsinki that we arrived at our last stop in Finland and everyone stocked up on their favorite beer and other commodities that we would not be able to buy for the balance of the trip. At this point we were a few miles from the frontier and a border crossing that was not to be easily forgotten. The entry point that we used was at "Vainkalla" and for the next couple of hours

people talked in hushed voices as the seriousness displayed on the faces of the Soviet hours indicated that they meant business. Only a small striped post and a cleared section of land had marked our transition into the Soviet Union from a geographic point of view. The Soviet soldiers on the other hand gave us our first glimpse into another culture, one of discipline and demanded obedience.

A number of these soldiers came onto the train in pairs and began phase one; the examination of each passport. This was done with a minimum of conversation:

"Kennett, Robert?"

"Yes"

"Buchanan, Bruce?"

"Yes"

"Lank, Robert?"

"Yes"

Each person was carefully matched to his or her passport photo, and the passports were then collected together and kept for another 30 minutes.

Now phase two was begun; examination of luggage and personal effects. Each person was asked to expose any written material in his possession for examination by the border guards. Several persons were relieved of Time and Sports Illustrated mags and any other form of literature that by their standards was considered immoral. (It is interesting to note here that the Black Market

price of a Playboy Mag is about 12 dollars Canadian.) We now started to feel the wall of censorship that has so effectively kept these people in the doldrums as far as an international development of understanding. What better way to learn about others than to read their literature as reflection of their culture and gain insight into the way peoples act and react—but NO!

We had to next make our monetary declaration. All currencies had to be listed as to country and amount in that currency. Every third member of the group or so was asked to match their declaration to the physical amount of money on their person. If it so happened that you underdeclared the amount of total monies you had the guards would help you out by relieving you of the excess funds. This tight monetary policy is to prevent people from selling foreign currency on the Black Market at three times the government exchange rate.

The final phase of our entering the Soviet Union, which by this time seemed to have all the complications of child birth, was the luggage check. Picture if you will 70 Canadians with over 210 pieces of miscellaneous baggage trying to accommodate the gestures of the Soviet Guards in a very limited space as the train raced at 50 mph towards Leningrad. The

seemingly impossibility of the task did not in any way deter the guards from checking mostly the male members effects at the end of the luggage check. Our passports were returned in the same fashion as they were collected but in reverse. Again the comments were brief and void of any humour.

Our total travelling time to Leningrad was about 8 1/2 hours of 'hard class' card playing, singing, and visiting of a certain car full of Swedish girls a few cars down. Most of us were quite hungry and tired as the tour bus let us off at the hotel. Our tour guide said "SPOKOYNOY NOCHI", and promised us that she would see us bright and early in the morning. Again at the hotel we had to surrender our passports and then shoulder our bags up to whatever room we had been assigned to.

Even as tired as we were we couldn't help but start to notice a number of physical reminders that "this was nothing like home". Colours were drab, luxuries such as elevators that could accommodate two or more people, hot water and warm food, would have to be put aside as we were tempor-

arily assimilated into the land of LENIN.

Gradually the term "Mother Russia" started to take on a certain significance. At each corner of each pair of halls sat an elderly Russian lady totally incapable of smiling with a face shipped from rocks of the Urals. IN fact I'd say that all these women looked remarkably alike. Of course the one thing they all had in common was that none could speak English. As our stay in Leningrad lengthened, we saw women in just about any occupation you would care to mention. Indeed "Mother Russia's" backbone was made from a broad range of types and sizes of the fairer sex. From brick layers and street cleaners to doctors and Bolshoi dancers and all for the Soviet Ideal.

The Soviet Union has indeed emancipated the female but is this the kind of equality that some western women see as the logical progression of the ideals? Both men and women alike have got it fairly good in our part of the world. Above all we have freedom...can you really see a worker saying "Pass me the sledge hammer Tania"?

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PLEASE NOTE: First year students are not considered for university loans until the SECOND TERM.

Residence establishes alumni chapter

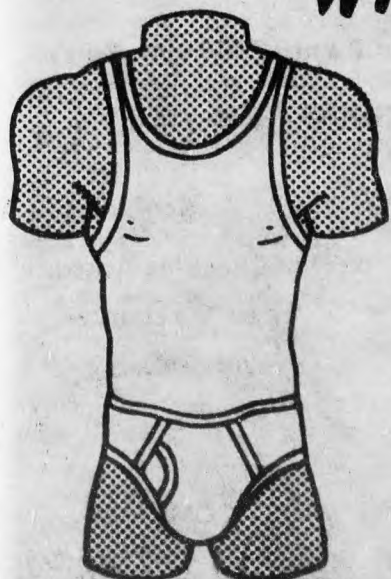
Bridges House has established the first residence alumni chapter, in recognition of the tenth anniversary of the residence which opened in the fall term of the 1962-63 academic year.

During the summer, with the assistance of Art Doyle, the UNB Alumni Affairs Director, the provisional executive compiled a list of nearly 500 names and addresses of former residents, around the world. In August, a welcoming

letter was sent out to all chapter members. Response so far has been quite favourable.

The purpose of the chapter is to promote academic and cultural interest in the house on the part of former house members. It is also hoped that it will promote a sense of community between past and present house members. Anyone who has lived in Bridges House during regular session for a term or more automatically qualifies for membership.

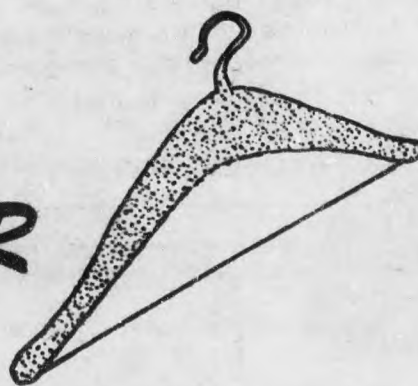
The provisional executive foresees many activities involving the house alumni. Some projects under consideration include, a newsletter to keep members of the chapter informed of house and alumni events and personalities; a Bridges House Reunion to commemorate the 10th Anniversary of the house; an Old Boys Dinner; and the awarding, at some future date, of a Bridges House Alumni Chapter Scholarship.



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