

TOUCH FOR HEALTH VISITS THE SOVIET UNION

I just returned from the Soviet Union in my Touch For Health T-shirt . I was accompanied by Jean Bonde, another Touch For Health Instructor who is presently attending Acupuncture School in Maryland. This was a nursing study tour that focused on Cancer Care in the cities of Leningrad, Kiev, Minsk, and Moscow. We were fortunate to enjoy a Soviet Winter without dealing with snow or rain during our tour in March 1986.

It was evening when we arrived in Leningrad, We enjoyed a delicious dinner in our hotel -Hotel Pulkovskay - that overlooks Victory Square. Leningrad (formerly named St. Petersburg after Peter the Great) is the second largest city in the Soviet Union with approximately five million people but has only 25 days per year of clear skies. To brighten the city all the buildings and monuments are painted in colors of blue, red and yellow with white trim. Victory Square could be reached from our hotel by crossing underground (on many of the highways the pedestrian crosswalks are underground). The monument is to commemorate the 900 Day Siege in 1941-Hitler tried to destroy Leningrad and had cut all rail transportation - food shelters were bombed and the extremely cold weather killed more than a million people. There is a war museum within Victory Square and many eternal flames are present with classical music always playing in the background . In the Soviet Union it is the custom for brides, after the wedding ceremony, to bring flowers and leave them

at the monuments to honor Lenin and those that died during the war. In Leningrad one in four died during the war. The Heart of Leningrad is the Palace Square- the site of the former imperial residence, the Winter Palace. In the winter of 1905 "Bloody Sunday" took place in the courtyard where over 1,000 peaceful demonstrators were gunned down by soldiers. During the days of the October Revolution the Winter Palace was the temporary refuge of the Kerensky Government which was finally overthrown by the Bolsheviks. In the 1800's the Hermitage was added to the group of buildings and is divided into seven main sections containing exquisite works of art. When we visited Leningrad there was a flu epidemic so we were unable to visit their hospitals however they sent Professor I.V. Polyakov, M.D. to our hotel from the I.P. Pavlov Medical Institute of Leningrad to explain their health care system. We were told the average Soviet visits the doctor 13 times a year in the cities and 8 times in the rural areas. Preventative Health Care is obligatory and at least once a year, depending on your profession, a health check up is mandatory. This includes a chest x-ray, blood test, dental, eyes-ears, nose and throat check up. We were told health education is very important in the USSR. They use pamphlets and posters to keep people informed and several times a year a 35 minute television special on health education is shown. They emphasize diseases of the heart, lung and cancer. Many posters endorse no smoking, stop drinking, alcohol, etc. We were also informed that the average salary in the USSR is \$250 a month and usually both family members work. They have day care centers for children- although at the present time children start school at age 7 - Next September this will change to age 6. To encourage population

growth the state gives a \$100 bonus for the first child and \$150 bonus for the second and third child-however most families only have one child. Large families, apparently, are not popular. Pregnant women are given a year and a half maternity leave with full pay. Education is free and the Army is obligatory for men for 2 years- Navy is 3 years. The cost of a car is \$5,000 and there are long waiting lists - Although, in the large cities, the mass transportation system is very good and most people would prefer to save their money for vacation. There is a banking system - and depositors receive approximately 2% interest on their deposits. - Look out E.F.Hutton ! Here are some of their 'everyday' expenses -rent (2 bedroom apt) \$30, Electricity (winter) \$5, milk (1 quart) .25, Eggs(10) \$1.10, Potatoes (1kilo) .15, Meat (1 kilo), \$3, Fish (1 kilo) \$1.50, Bread (1 kilo) .15, Movie Theatre .75. Maybe after seeing these prices you can understand why we had potatoes, rice and cabbage at almost every meal - often served together. A note of interest to me was the fact that they served Pepsi (warm) - in most foreign countries that I have visited Coke is the familiar drink. The items we missed on the family dinner table were fruits and salads.

Our next city was Kiev - one of the 13 Hero Cities-given that distinction by the number of people who lost their lives in the War. Kiev is a very green city with over 300 parks and they say "185 bushes per citizen". Kiev is the third largest city in the USSR and capital of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic with a population of more than two million. It is an important industrial and cultural center and called the Breadbasket of the Soviet Union due to the rich soil. It was

in Kiev that I gave a demonstration on Touch for Health - We were told that Acupuncture is practiced in the Soviet Union. We found acupressure rollers while shopping in department stores. Our tour guide informed us they are all take exercise breaks at 11 A.M. every day. That includes the work place, schools and even those working on the tours. We noticed on the morning TV they had a daily ten minute exercise program. We discovered the Soviets generally do not celebrate Christmas but they celebrate New Years with a tree that is decorated and they place gifts under it.

The the next leg of our trip was to the city of Minsk instead of the quiet luxury of a jet aircraft that we were all accustomed to we were treated to the noisy vibrations of a twin engine propeller driven plane that gave us all an opportunity to use our emotional stress release points that we had learned in our Touch For Health Demonstration. After leaving the plane we noticed several large dogs walking off the aircraft with their owners - I questioned this and was told, "Yes, you could bring your pet on the plane with you if you purchased a ticket for them". Minsk is a totally rebuilt city. It was destroyed in WW II and we were told it took four years to clear the streets of the ruins. One person in two lost their life during the War. Minsk is the center of heavy and light industry -most of their cars are made here but they are proud to claim the manufacture of more than 100,000 tractors a year. Is it any wonder that their sister city is Detroit, Michigan ? Minsk is reconstructed with large open boulevards and a strong emphasis put on Sports. One of the places still standing after the war is a one-story house in which the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party held its

first Congress in 1898. Now it is a memorial museum surrounded by a small park with an artificial lake. When we were there people could be seen on the lake ice fishing. The museum is in two sections - the first contained documents of the social and economic position of Russia in the second half of the 19th century. The second section is the former home of P. Rumyantsev, in whose apartment the secret Congress sessions were held. Our tour guide was a member of the Communist Party and was open and receptive to the questions I asked. What percentage of the Soviet population belongs to the Communist Party? Only 6% of the Soviets belong to the Communist Party. The requirements to be a member is to be good at your profession (18 years of age but usually 25 years before joining), and have a good moral character. You are on probation for one year before you can become a member. The dues are approximately \$5 annually and you must be active or you will be dropped from the rolls. There are monthly meetings to attend and every four years a Party Congress meet in the Kremlin in Moscow. The Party determines the policies and the State administers the laws. Women makeup approximately 30% of the Party. Our guide mentioned that his wife was not a member nor her family but that his father had been a member. We noticed a chart indicating there are currently 19 million members, an increase of 2 million in the past five years. 400,000 were dropped from the party during that period.

If you compare the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. in surface area, the U.S.S.R. is more than twice as large. The U.S.A. is divided into 50 states while the U.S.S.R. has 15 republics. There are more than twice as many hospital

beds in the USSR as there are in the USA. Medical care is state controlled and is free to all citizens. The major health problems in the Soviet Union were identified as cardiovascular and oncological (heart and cancer).

We visited the Oncology Research and Medical Center in Minsk -They celebrated their 25th anniversary last year. This center has 900 beds and treats patients that have been previously diagnosed and sent here for specialized treatment. In the Soviet Union they do not tell the patient they have cancer - we asked, "Why ?" and were told that they felt if patients knew they had cancer they would become depressed (that was the thinking in the USA over 30 years ago and maybe even less in some cases). This center is also a teaching hospital -with overhead viewing rooms above surgery units. The critical care center is built in a circular formation, similar to U.S. hospitals. However, skylights are over every bed. We watched nurses give back rubs with love and they even used a timer so everyone got the same treatment. Families are allowed to visit as often as they want -If death is near patients have a choice of remaining in the hospital or dying at home. Their hospitals main concern for terminal patients is that the patient should not have to suffer pain, they use many of the same therapies as we do such as chemotherapy, radiation and hyperthermia. We noticed in one of the large operating rooms that there were two operating tables - we were told that if a surgery was more extensive than originally planned they could operate on another - This would not happen in the USA because of the possibility of cross infection. During our question and answer period

we were told that nurses and doctors made the same salary - Nurses work a six hour day and have two days a week off. Their housing and uniforms were provided. They shared with us that there is no birth control in the Soviet Union and that women have an average of 15 abortions in a life time - this along with the problem of alcoholism adds to their high infant mortality rate. Gorbachev implemented new rulings on the sale of alcohol in October 1985. Only certain stores are permitted to sell alcoholic beverages from the hours of 2 pm to 7 pm and on only a few days of the week. This causes many long lines, as happens at many stores when only certain items are in stock. When attending a play or opera you may no longer purchase vodka - instead you see the patrons eating ice cream (that is very tasty).

Our last city is the heart and capital of the Soviet Union- Moscow. Holy Moscow was its name for centuries and is the administrative, legislative, educational and cultural capital of the USSR situated on the banks of the Moskva River. The Kremlin which means citadel (fortress) was first built of wood and now is mostly brick. It is one and a half miles in circumference-65 feet high and 10-20 feet thick. The nucleus of Moscow is the Kremlin and its Red Square. The walls are reinforced by 20 towers, five of which are gates - on top of the gates are five large revolving red stars (6 feet high) . The Red Square was known as the market place in the 15th century and became a ceremonial place in the 16th century and is used mostly today for military parades and celebrations and is resting place for Lenin. We stayed at the Hotel Rossia, just across the street from Red Square with a fabulous view of

St.Basil's. Our modern hotel could accomodate 6,000 people. While in Moscow we enjoyed a tour of their fantastic subway system - decorated in marble and at various stations had stained glass walls of their most famous composers, authors and artists. Another station would have mosaic tiles to recount various moments in history. In Moscow we visited the Polyclinic System. This one was built for the 1980 Olympics located across the street from the Olympic Village. Polyclinics are designed to provide services for approximately 50,000 people. In the USA we would call them outpatient clinics. The basis for building these clinics is a projected 1,300 visits per 10,000 population per week. It is anticipated that one physician will be able to provide service for approx.2,000 adults and 8,000 children. The Ministry of Health has worked out an urban ambulance service also federally subsidized, with units so located that they should never take longer than 20-30minutes to reach a patient. It is from these polyclinics that a patient is sent onto a hospital or specialist if one is needed. For long-term and continuing care or rehabilitation they have sanitoriums at restful locations.

One afternoon we had about two hours free time - a few of us decided to visit the zoo (always a good place to meet the people -families-of another country). While there I met a lady,named Olga, with a 4 year old daughter, Tanya. She spoke english and asked me after chatting awhile if I would bring something back to a friend of hers in the United States. We arranged a meeting the next day outside of my hotel. We tried to enter the lobby so we could continue our conversation but she was

refused entrance by the doorman - saying "she did not belong there". This was my first strong encounter that there was much control exercised and often we were not aware of it. Outside the hotel she gave me a little salt and pepper shaker to bring back and mail to her friend in Iowa. She gave me cookies, perfume, medals, and spoons for being so kind. The people are very hungry for reading material - every restaurant that we went into we were asked if we had anything they could read. One of our tour guides told us she had over 3,000 books in her personal library. We were surprised when visiting the largest department store GUM in Moscow - that although decorately with grandeur - they really just had stall-like areas to sell their goods. Their goods were priced higher for the Soviet citizens and the quality lower than prices that visitors paid at foreign currency stores - Beryozkas for tourists.

During one of our lunches at the Hotel

Rossia I noticed several gentlemen with many medals on their suits. I asked our guide if she would arrange for me to be photographed with them. They were pleased and they asked me "to tell the American people, when I returned home that the Soviet People want peace on earth." I came home from the Soviet Union realizing how fortunate we in America are - not to have suffered a war (recently) on our land - the Soviets have and lost much - they don't want to live through this again - I agree with the posters I read - PEACE IS THE COMMON WILL OF ALL PEOPLE !