

2/22/72

Dear Paul,

Thanks for the letter from your friend (did you note one of the two letters is the one of which I asked you?) and the surprising clipping about Hamontov. By God! what will the police think of their Russian translator?

I never did any special work on him. I know there are others who had some suspicions. However, I would not assume this article has to mean he has had a change of heart for several reasons. The standard of living has improved in all Communist countries (as you can see on TV today from China). What has not improved, or has very little, is our concept of freedom, and there Ilya says the right things.

In fact, if one were to make out a defense of him, one could argue that saying it is merely boredom that makes the Russians drunk makes him a propagandist, for Russians have always been heavy drinkers. With the 'oles, they run a high percentage of drunks.

If you haven't read "Khrushchev Remembers, it is a pretty thorough indictment of Stalin and others. The Russians called it a fake, but I'm inclined to think it is real. In it you will find tale after tale of Stalin forcing drink upon his companions, making them drunk on purpose. Khrushchev avoids mention of his own public drunkenness, esp. in Yugoslavia. I am finding the book fascinating. It is available in a Bantam paperback if you are interested. It is a long book.

What Ilya says of the schools there is true, or was about 10 years ago or a little less, when our government had some ~~Britannica~~ Encyclopaedia Britannica people, as I recall, to make a study then supposed to have been used to goose up our own schools. I remember reading that study. In fact, most of Europe has more intensive education in the lower grades than we do.

It is not only the name your friend produced that suggests a fit. I have a little more checking to do when I can. Finger still limits.

Many thanks and best regards,

Dallas Professor Finds

'Mother Russia' No Longer

By OT HAMPTON
Staff Writer

Mother Russia is not the shabby old lady she used to be.

She's looking better, eating better and thinking better than she did 20 years ago. But she's still secretive and suspicious, especially of strangers.

That's the way one of her native sons — Prof. Ilya Mamantov of Southern Methodist University — sized her up after a recent study trip (with 33 SMU students to Moscow, Kiev and Ieningrad.

The Russian language professor, who emigrated to the United States in 1949, said, "I was very impressed with many of the things I saw in Russia. Their fine primary and secondary education system was a delight. They teach their children English all the way from the fourth to the tenth grades. Science is stressed too."

He said he also was "extremely impressed" with the quality of Russia's new apartment buildings and their rapid transit subway systems.

"THE QUALITY of their construction has improved greatly since the 1940s," Prof. Mamantov said. "They seem to be using better materials and better engineering plans. The building elevators and plumbing systems work perfectly. It's not like it used to be."

He said the subways in Moscow and practically every other one of Russia's principal cities "are properly laid out" so you can reach any suburban area "quickly and cheaply." He said the fare is 5 kopeks (about 6½ cents) and the trains run every two minutes.

The food, he explained, is "starchy, like most Russian food has always been, but good."

"We stayed in the Kievskaya Hotel for several days and the food was excellent," Prof. Ma-

mantov said. "There was plenty of good meat, fresh fish and baked dishes. Fresh vegetables, of course, were not available during the Arctic-like winter."

HE SAID "Russian medicine" is different from that practiced in the United States, mainly because the emphasis is more on prevention rather than cure.

"Doctors in Russia get rewarded for keeping workers in a healthful condition," he said. "They don't have the American equivalent of a family doctor."

Prof. Mamantov said he noticed many children "praying in the churches" during the Orthodox Christmas season (Jan. 6 and 7).

"This really surprised me," he said. "St. Vladimir's Cathedral in Kiev was packed and overflowing on Christmas Day. I am positive religion will have a revival in Russia some day. There are some 7,000 churches in operation now in Russia and many of the people, even the young, are religious. This is encouraging."

ON THE MINUS side, Prof. Mamantov said "the lack of freedom of speech and the press" is the worst thing he noticed. And, too, he was distressed to see "long lines of people waiting for such items as loaves of bread."

"I stood in line for 15 minutes

in Moscow to buy a 2½-pound loaf of bread," he said. "When I finally got it, it was cheap enough—only cost 17 cents—and it was delicious. I just don't know why they have so many lines. Their bureaucracy is to blame, I imagine."

'Shabby Lady'

He said the Russians have a much worse "drinking problem" than the United States does. He attributes it to boredom and with a lack of entertainment facilities for the working people.

"My students enjoyed their visit to Russia," he said, "and we hope to take another group over there next December. Every one of them, however, was happy and thankful to return to America. God really has blessed America."