

# A Town Left Out in the

Cassville, N.J.

**T**HE FIRST wave of Russian immigrants, those who had fled their homeland just before and after the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, bought a 1400-acre resort here in 1934. The emigres, in an organization called the Russian Consolidated Aid Society of America, paid \$50,000 for the land, money gathered from thousands of Russians.

The resort was named Rova Farms and Russians from across the country moved here and bought land. Many of those who settled were from White Russia, a geographical area around the city of Minsk in central Russia. They were the children of peasants and they had a difficult time adapting to American culture and language. At Rova Farms, they built two Russian Orthodox churches and brought up their children speaking Russian.

They were mostly craftsmen and laboring people; they paid their taxes, took care of each other and did not cause any problems for the local Jackson Township government.

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**T**HE SECOND generation became adults with many of the cultural and language problems that had plagued their parents.

Nicholas Zill, the son of a Minsk-born laborer, grew up in Manhattan and rode in buses full of Russian teenagers down to Rova Farms during summers in the late 1930s. Zill, now 60, says most of the people of his generation wanted to blend into American society, be successful, make money, but they didn't have the opportunity because there was not enough money for most to go to college.

During the youth of this generation, the late '30s and '40s, Rova Farms blossomed as a thriving Russian resort and community. On St. Vladimir's Day, one of the major holidays of Russian Christendom on July 28, crowds of 10,000 or more would swarm Rova Farms in the 1940s to watch a priest dip a gold cross in water, and then to dance and drink.

Their children who are now in their mid-20s, have made it in American society. They have gone to college and according to Zill, who has become a chronicler of Rova Farms, many have gone on to top professional positions across the country. Few visit Rova Farms and almost none have settled nearby. "They've outgrown it, it's that simple," says Zill.

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**O**NE OTHER group of Russians is the "displaced persons" from World War II, who were hauled out of Russia by the Germans and forced to work during the war in farms and factories in Bavaria and around Berlin.

After the war, they came to this country and, like the alleged spy Rogalsky, moved to this region of New Jersey because it was easy to fit in.

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Soya Alchevski, the wife of a contractor who had first invited Rogalsky to come to Cassville, was a displaced person, or D.P., as they are called. She is a short, chunky woman of 50 with a square face and reddish brown hair that is combed back straight and simple. Her eyes are gray-blue and intelligent. She speaks Russian, Polish, French, German and English.

When she was ten and growing up near Leningrad, the Communists sent her father away and he was never heard from again. When she was 15, the Germans stole her away to do farm chores near Nuremberg. She was married in Germany and came to New York and found a job as a cleaning lady in 1953.

Fourteen years ago, she and her husband bought a summer house here; last year they moved from a deteriorating New York neighborhood and settled perma-

# Cold

S.F. Chow

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nently. Like all the D.P.'s living nearby, her hatred of the Communists is visceral.

Her eyes seem cold and her face belligerent when she talks about the current Soviet regime. She thinks the United States far too ready to believe Soviet leaders. The Soviets will sign anything, promise anything to get what they want, she argues. The Helsinki accord, with its guarantee of basic human rights for the people of Eastern Europe, is for Mrs. Alchevski a bad joke.

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**B**ESIDES hatred, there is fear of communism among the fourth generation of Russians, the D.P.'s. Herman Schultz, 53, is the manager of Rova Farms. He, too, was hauled off to Germany during World War II and the Communists killed his father.

The children of the D.P.'s, most

of whom are in their early teens, are spoken to in Russian at home, but they often prefer to reply in English. Mrs. Alchevski is sending her 12-year-old son to a Russian church school.

"I think he should be proud of the person he is. Jews conserve their identity for 2000 years. Why should we forget we are Russian?" she asked. Yet, her son hates the school, which ruins his Saturday play time. He speaks English around the house despite Soya's threats to send him back to New York City if he continues to say "yeah."

The children of the D.P.'s, their parents admit, will slip away from their Russian heritage into American society as did the children of the first immigrants.

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**A**LTHOUGH the 800 or so Russia-born D.P.'s and their families who've settled around Cassville have breathed new life into Rova Farms in the past 20 years, they have not offset what many see as the inevitable dissolution and death of the community.





St. Mary's Russian Orthodox Church in Cassville, N.J., where the cemeteries are filling and the young are leaving.

Herman Schultz, who has been running the banquet and restaurant operation at Rova Farms for years, says his best and most steady trade is in funeral gatherings. The Russians celebrate death with hearty meals. With the almost weekly death of members of the first wave of immigrants, who are in their 70s and 80s, there is a lot to celebrate.

There are two Russian Orthodox churches near here. St. Mary's with its three gold cupolas, sits on a knoll in the Russian cemetery and most funerals are conducted there. St. Vladimir's Russian Memorial Church, with just one gold cupola, has no congregation. The church exists, solely to memorialize the dead and pray for the soon-to-be dead.

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