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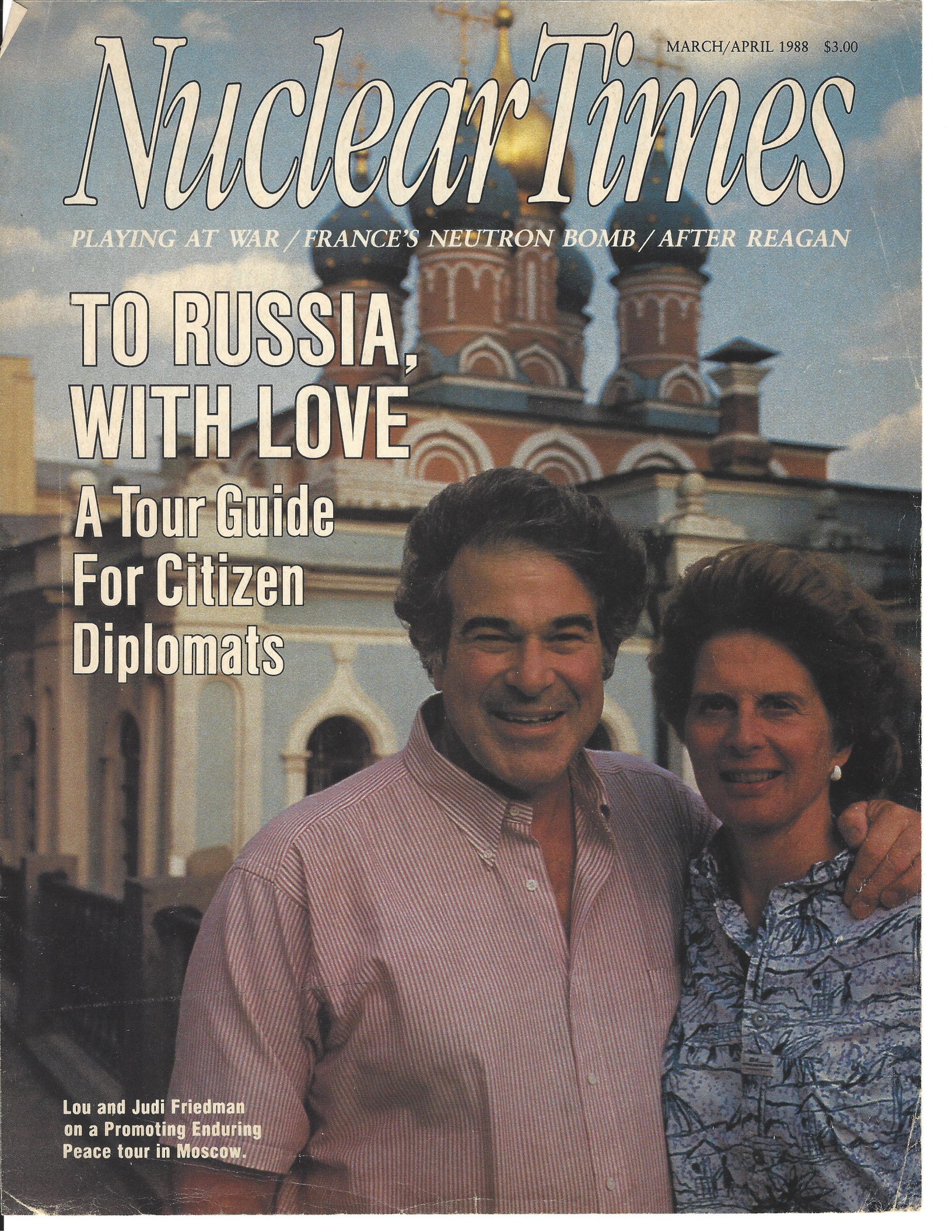
Nuclear Times

PLAYING AT WAR / FRANCE'S NEUTRON BOMB / AFTER REAGAN

TO RUSSIA, WITH LOVE

A Tour Guide For Citizen Diplomats

Lou and Judi Friedman
on a Promoting Enduring
Peace tour in Moscow.



To Russia, with Love

Goodwill ambassador or just curious about glasnost? There's a Soviet tour just for you.

BY MIRANDA SPENCER

During a cruise down the Volga River, when most of his shipmates on the *M.S. Maxim Gorky* had gone ashore to see a circus, Edward Rothberg and a few acquaintances stayed behind. A contingent of Soviet visitors was expected. Sure enough, they came aboard, and the group found themselves sitting in a circle, chatting about families and jobs. "Suddenly," Rothberg, a Staten Island, New York, peace activist, recalls, "the leader took out a guitar and started playing Russian folk songs. Before you know it, he was playing 'Oh Susannah.' Then, before you know it, he was playing 'We Shall Overcome.' There I was, 5,000 miles away from home, in an 'enemy' country, singing. I had tears in my eyes."

Club Med it's not. And yet the Soviet Union is "the hottest travel destination this year," according to one travel agent. A record 100,000 Americans visited last year. And with detente making encounters like Rothberg's easier, peace activists now have an unprecedented opportunity to meet face to face with Soviets from all walks of life.

"Tourism is good for diplomacy," says Michael Shuman, co-author of *Citizen Diplomats*. For one thing, "Americans are walking banned books," by which he means that our presence in the Soviet Union spreads information and new ideas,

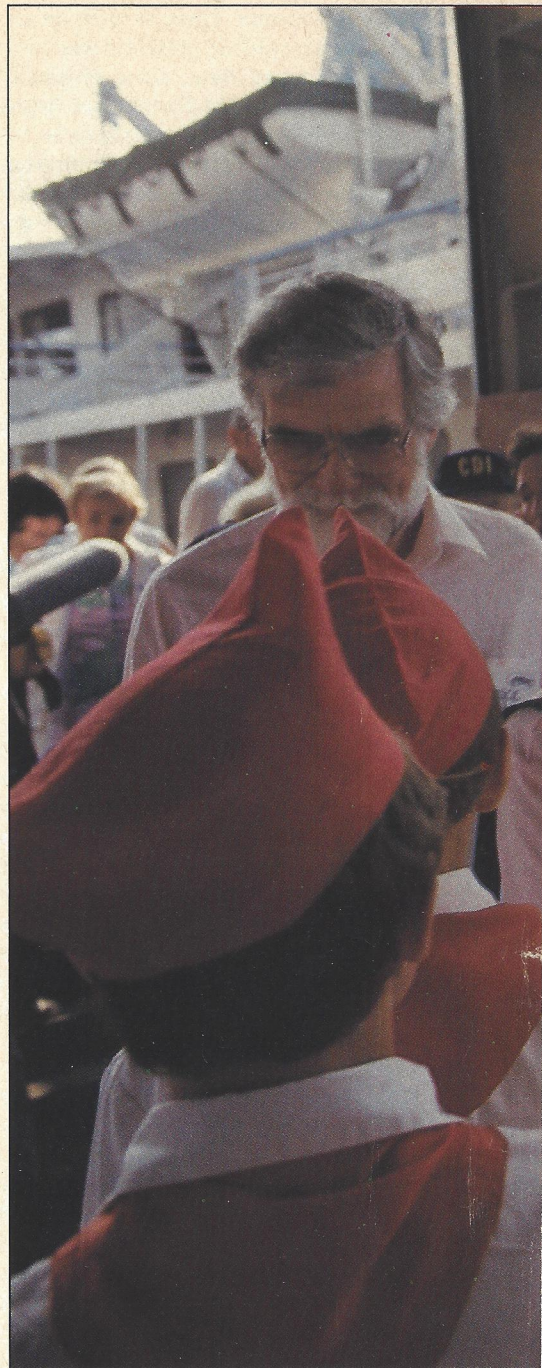
Miranda Spencer is a graduate student in journalism at New York University and a researcher at the Center for War, Peace and the News Media in New York City.

gives us a chance to "lobby" Soviet officials for change, and builds relationships that help dispel Cold War misconceptions.

Traveling alone to the Soviet Union makes for a less structured experience, but it also tends to cut you off from important people, places and things—you can't just "drop by" a workers' co-op, for example. Traveling with a group can be more productive and is *much* cheaper. Fortunately, with the growth of sister city and cultural and exchange programs, scores of both pre-packaged and custom-made grassroots diplomacy vacation tours have sprouted up to facilitate collective travel.

Tour Options

Although their itineraries and philosophies vary widely, peace groups, nonprofit exchange organizations and commercial travel agents can all provide the aspiring citizen ambassador with a well-organized, meaningful Soviet sojourn. Working closely with the Soviet state-run Intourist, friendship societies, peace groups and private contacts, they will take care of the considerable red tape involved in booking transportation, obtaining the mandatory visa and so on. Prices are still expensive: from \$1,500 to more than \$3,000 per person for two weeks to two months, not counting spending money. (Length of stay seems to have less bearing on cost than season.) However, the tab is usually all-inclusive, covering airfare, meals, accommodations (often first class—by Soviet standards), theater tickets, the works. Services include highly experienced leaders, some of whom have traveled in the Soviet Union more than a dozen times; Russian-



speaking American and/or English-speaking Soviet guides; extensive networks of personal contacts; pre-trip orientations and/or free handbooks to mitigate culture shock and help you get around.

Most groups (except on cruises) are small. Limited size helps ensure personalized attention, but the resulting high demand for few spaces and the need to book well ahead of time (four or more weeks) can keep you from getting the tour you want, for the dates you want it. Your chances of getting a trip at the last minute are not bad, however, since cancellations do happen. And if you are, say, a female ichthyologist, there may be a tour of fe-



Young Pioneers greet American visitors at the harbor in Volgograd.

male ichthyologists just waiting for you.

Soviet tour operators of every stripe tend to strive for heterogeneous groups to make the trip more interesting for everyone. Many tours, however, have been developed to accommodate a special vocational theme. Such tours may or may not restrict participation to, say, nurses or golfers, and most of the organizations mentioned here can tailor a tour to your own group's needs with about one year's advance notice.

Ultimately, the tour you select depends on your own personal goals and needs. If you intend to meet teachers and students in Soviet schools, be prepared to travel during the school year; if you want to jam with

Soviet musicians, make sure the plane trip you want can accommodate your drum set.

But most important to the success of your trip is probably your own attitude. "Going to the Soviet Union is not a veg-out vacation," stresses Lucien Weisbrod of Pioneer Travel. "It's active, focused on experience rather than self-indulgence."

"Be flexible and patient," says Helen Simonson of General Tours. "Intourist may change the itinerary on you." Be willing to forsake creature comforts: even fine hotels may lack hot water—*indefinitely*.

As preparation, it's smart to do some studying ahead of time to familiarize yourself with the customs and laws of the

land—especially since, under *perestroika*, they're changing all the time. For example, the once-banned *Fodor's U.S.S.R.* guide is now allowed over the border, but in some places, such as gas stations, taking photographs is forbidden. Changing money on the highly active black market is still a crime—not to mention a rip-off. Normal amenities such as telephone books and bathtub stoppers are virtually non-existent. Annoyances of this kind tax even the most seasoned traveler and can put a damper on your diplomatic mission. Two sources are



An American and a Soviet place a wreath at a war memorial in Volgograd.

your best bets for learning about such Soviet realities: *Information Moscow*, a comprehensive guidebook (\$20, from U.S. Information Moscow, 3220 Sacramento St., San Francisco, CA 94115, which also sells clear, full-color maps); and talking to people who have been to the Soviet Union.

Maximizing Contact

All the sample tours discussed below offer ample opportunities to meet people. But peace group-sponsored and hiking/camping tours will throw you in with the average citizen more readily than what Lou Smith, representative of Global Concepts travel agency, calls "cookie-cutter tours where you move from hotel to museum to monument." "It's easy to write 'people-to-people' in a brochure," he cautions.

Making friends and absorbing daily Soviet life is, in the end, up to you. There are several, some of them eccentric, ways to accomplish this. Helen Simonson recalls one man who would mount a local bus and ask loudly, "DO YOU SPEAK ENGLISH?" Someone would usually come over to talk.

A real or feigned look of confusion can prove useful as well. "The Soviets are social and family-oriented people," explains Lou Smith. "They consider it their bound duty to rescue you." Indeed, the Soviets are said to be remarkably warm, outgoing and generous. Unlike Parisiens, Soviets love Americans and are eager to meet them, if only to practice their English. They'll often offer personalized, impromptu tours of their favorite haunts, even their homes, and are always looking to trade souvenirs, particularly ballpoint pens, postcards and Michael Jackson tapes. They are curious to find out, as one traveler puts it, whether "half the

people [in the United States] are homeless and the other half has AIDS."

Tours

What follows is a generous, but by no means complete, sampler of tours to the Soviet Union that have a diplomatic theme or that provide the chance to meet with the Soviet people.

■ **The Citizen Exchange Council (CEC)** offers 25 years of experience, the benefit of being the largest independent citizen diplomacy group of its kind, and provides scholarships. It also has a sterling reputation with the U.S. Information Agency, the Soviet Friendship Society, and Billy Joel, whose Soviet concert tour it coordinated.

All CEC tour guides are Russian-speaking Americans who can act as translators. According to CEC's Robert Satterfield, it is already too late to book a custom tour, but there are still individual openings in about a dozen trips leaving between May and October, priced from \$1,950 to \$3,445. Accommodations are first class. Just two of interest: **Historic Russian Capitals** (Moscow, Kiev, Leningrad, plus Helsinki) "traces the development of the Russian state from Kievan Rus to present day Soviet Union." It runs October 2 to 14 and costs \$1,950. **Three Russian Cities** contrasts ancient Russia (Novgorod and Leningrad) with modern (Moscow): June 15 to 25, \$2,450. *Contact:* Citizen Exchange Council, 18 East 41st St., New York, NY 10017, (212) 889-7960.

■ **Peace Odysseys**, led by long-time peace activists Richard and Jean Rodes, organizes annual pilgrimages to the Soviet Union.

An American at a peace rally in Rostov.

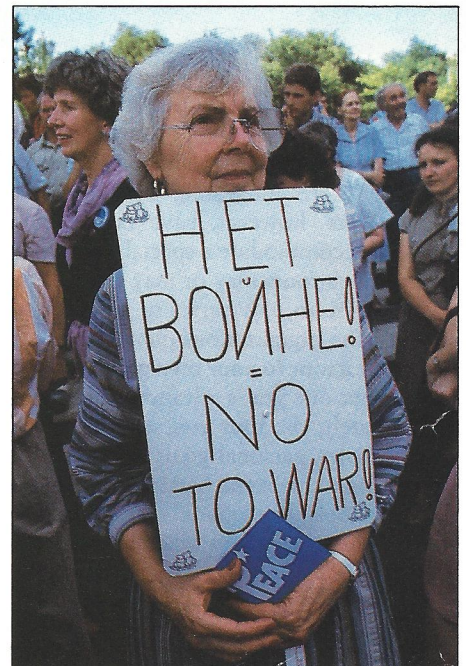
Tour itineraries vary according to the interests of the participants, who are hand-picked to ensure a diversity of backgrounds and according to the Rodes' judgment of "can contribute the most." You need not be a peace activist to join, but you will be asked to complete a form about your values and goals for the trip.

The group is oriented toward the performing arts and families. Musical and dance performances by and for the natives are often on the agenda, as are prearranged home visits. Indeed, this is a "warm and fuzzy" type of tour where you'll learn to sing "May There Always Be Sunshine" at a Soviet day-care center or deliver personal letters on peaceful coexistence to government officials.

The next odyssey, which includes singing in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, runs July 7 to 25 (and is already overbooked). *Contact:* Peace Odysseys, 5250 Patriot Lane, Columbia, MD 21045, (301) 730-8296 or 997-1048.

■ Similar in character and tone are trips orchestrated by the grassroots diplomacy and peace group **U.S.-U.S.S.R. Bridges for Peace**, which for five years has specialized in arranging dialogues between women's, peace and church groups. This year's two-week tours of historical sites include these major cities: Moscow, Tallinn, and Kiev, from June 19; Moscow, Odessa and Kiev, from July 3; Leningrad and Riga, from July 31; all, \$2,290. Tallinn and Leningrad, departing October 9, is \$2,150 (fall is the off-season). *Contact:* Bridges for Peace, Box 710, Norwich, CT 05055, (802) 649-1000.

■ **Global Concepts**, a full-service agency that calls itself a "citizen diplomacy service center," arranges people-to-people tours around the world and specializes in the Soviet Union. The organization works with group leaders to plan trip agenda, routing,



promotion and contacts, and also sponsors preparatory tours just for leaders. It is the group responsible for bringing Alcoholics Anonymous to the Soviet Union.

Global Concepts' tours, Smith stresses, are for travelers, not tourists. "We have [tour members] out in Soviet homes the first night," he says. Spontaneous contacts and going it alone are encouraged. "Leaders will kick [you] in the behind to do something. I tell [tour members] to either get lost or look lost."

Among others, Global Concepts offers three different tours, all running from August 21 to September 4. Each begins in Moscow and ends in Leningrad, with choices of Sochi/Tallinn, Kiev/Riga or Tbilisi/Volgograd for in-between. Cost is \$2,625. *Contact:* Global Concepts, 2860 Walnut Hill Lane, Dallas, TX 75229, (800) 322-4552 or (214) 352-8416.

■ **Pioneer Travel** has for 21 years focused on rugged, bare-bones camping trips in the Soviet Union. A company flyer calls its annual six- and nine-week adventures "maximally unrestricted." Participants drive the microbus in which they travel, and contacts multiply as you buy food, use public transportation and explore.

Pioneer's tours are restricted to 24 adults whom the operators believe to have sufficient "stamina and self-motivation." They also require you to have one year of Russian language study under your belt. Participants camp in tents in cities as well as in rural villages, and a few nights are spent at earthy hotels in obscure towns. Toilets, kitchens, and showers are available—and Pioneer supplies the toilet paper, tents and equipment (bring your own sleeping bag). Leaders provide a handbook for getting around, your personal expenses per diem and a wealth of advice. Dene Leitsch, a Russian major who "pioneered" last year, says, "They [aren't] all over you, yet they're there when you need them."

Departing June 26, both tours leave from Boston. The nine-weeker moves north to south, from Finland to Leningrad to the Caucasus and out through Eastern Europe; the six-week tour goes from Poland to the Ukraine through Byelorussia, Moscow, Novgorod and Leningrad. Both feature short cruises on one of two ships—one pleasant, the other nearly decadent—providing a break from roughing it. The first trip costs \$2,990, the latter \$2,490. *Contact:* Pioneer Travel, 203 Allston St., Cambridge, MA 02139, (617) 547-1127.

■ **Athletes United for Peace (AUFPP)**, which promotes international friendship through sports, sponsors an ongoing series of "delegations" to the Soviet Union, where athletes at all levels of prowess can engage in



Soviet women wearing traditional dress wait to greet Americans in Kazan.

their favorite form of recreation. Accommodations vary from roadside inns and hotels to tents. Participants must be members of AUFPP, which requires a \$20 fee; reservations are first-come, first-served, but applicants are screened to determine whether "you're in the spirit of promoting understanding between peoples of both countries," according to AUFPP Director Guy Benjamin. A former pro football quarterback with the San Francisco 49ers, Benjamin is a savvy tour leader. According to one runner, "Guy knew how to find a pizza place in downtown Leningrad."

Upcoming trips include the Moscow International Peace Marathon, a run over the 1980 Olympic marathon route, which offers meetings with Soviet athletes and coaches, then a stay in Sochi, the Soviet answer to Acapulco and Lourdes. A stop in Leningrad is included. The trip runs August 9 to 22, with room for two groups of 15 people each. It departs from New York and costs \$1,950.

A "Bike for Peace" is also scheduled for Summer 1988, with 100 spots available. (Bring your own bike.) The cost is approximately \$2,000. A Class III/IV kayaking trip departs in late July. Participants will join Soviet kayakers for a run down Siberia's Katun River, camping in the mountains of Tashkent. There are seven to 10 places, and the cost is \$2,500. *Contact:* Athletes United for Peace, 450 Harrison #310, San Francisco, CA 94105, (415) 543-6671.

■ Speaking of white water, **Project RAFT**

(Russians and Americans for Teamwork) runs a rafting program as its contribution to citizen diplomacy. Americans and Soviets find themselves literally in the same boat, surmounting common obstacles (dangerous rapids) through teamwork—even contriving a hybrid vocabulary of rafting commands from Russian and English sounds. The trips are a wilderness-lover's paradise of peaks, glaciers and alpine meadows. Several days of training are provided, but you must be fit and know how to swim.

Trips offered in 1988 include a Class V (expert) raft trip down the Bashkaus River, from July 2 to 22, at \$3,000; and two other, more moderate jousts with the Katun River, one for the general public and one for college students. They run three weeks, depart July 20 and August 10, respectively, and cost \$3,500. *Contact:* RAFT, 3315 Sacramento St. #526, San Francisco, CA 94118, (415) 935-4528.

■ Soviet travel by vessel doesn't end there. **Promoting Enduring Peace**, which coordinates international peace seminars worldwide and developed the now-famous Mississippi steamboat peace cruise (offered again this year), is co-sponsoring a cruise on the Ukraine's Dnieper River this summer. An equal number of Americans and Soviets (150 each, including 20 translators) will ride the *M.S. Vatutin*, journeying from Odessa to Kiev via Yalta, with a stop in Moscow. This trip has everything: onshore peace rallies; meetings with peace committees; visits

(Continued on page 21)

to farms, factories and homes; onboard workshops on topics such as *glasnost* and disarmament; speakers (such as David Cortright of SANE/FREEZE); Russian language lessons; ballroom dancing; sightseeing; air-conditioned cabins; and plenty of vodka. The all-inclusive price is \$2,295 to \$2,745; reserve immediately, as the tour departs May 31. *Contact:* Promoting Enduring Peace, P.O. Box 5103, Woodmont, CT 06460, (203) 878-4769.

■ Youth encounters and language study are the focus of other tours. For example, the exchange organization **Youth Ambassadors of America (YAA)** coordinates two summer programs for intrepid vacationers aged seven to 20. A sleep-away camp among the rolling hills and waters of Pereslavl has American and Soviet children playing earthball, painting peace murals and catching fireflies together.

YAA will send a Russian language practice tape to American campers before their trip. The Soviet educational system, which starts English instruction in kindergarten, will help Johnny and Jill break the language barrier. But campers can also always communicate through music: singing and musical instruments are also emphasized.

YAA also offers a computer camp, where youth at all levels of digital literacy learn to program and run Apples and their Bulgarian clones. The sleep-away camps run from July 3 to 17 and from August 6 to 20; computer camps from July 17 to 31 and August 6 to 20. Costs range from \$2,950 to \$2,695. *Contact:* Youth Ambassadors of America, Box 5273, Bellingham, WA 98227, (206) 734-6132.

■ **Voices of the Future**, the youth division of Anniversary Tours (see below) can arrange for 150 12- to 15-year-olds to attend Camp Artek, near Yalta. Run by the Soviet Young Pioneer organization, and a pit stop of the late Samantha Smith, Artek's itinerary ranges from outings and games to a "Peace Day" celebration. The camp runs from July 15 to August 20, and includes several days' worth of sightseeing trips in Moscow. Cost, including flight from New York, is \$1,750.

Voices of the Future recently organized another youth/educational tour that will likely run again next year: a two-week Young Journalists trip. ("Young" means under 40; "journalist" means journalism students and also practitioners.) At \$900, it's quite the bargain.

Commercial Tours

Of the commercial tours to the Soviet Union, some good bets include: **Anniver-**

sary Tours, Tour Design, General Tours, and the **Russian Travel Bureau.**

■ **Anniversary Tours** is the premier choice for finding a people-to-people tour. For one thing, it is the agent through which many of the peace trips mentioned above make their arrangements. Founded in 1967, Anniversary Tours was the first U.S. travel agency to pioneer people-to-people



A Soviet peasant woman waves an American flag given to her by a U.S. tourist.

travel to politically unpopular countries. It now offers a regular series of tours open to individuals, including 150 standard tours and dozens of special interest trips. All of these tours combine scheduled visits to Soviet institutions with free time for more spontaneous encounters. *Contact:* Anniversary Tours, 250 West 57th St., New York, NY 10107, (212) 245-7501.

■ **Tour Design** packages tours to accommodate group requests and specializes in travel to the Soviet Union. Unlike many such agencies, it will also help you arrange independent travel. Two open tours, which arrange contacts with local residents and peer groups, include an arts and architecture trip through the Baltic republics or Russia/Georgia/Armenia, with an emphasis on ethnic aesthetic traditions. These run August 22 to September 5 and October 8 to 21, costing \$2,999 and \$2,475 respectively. *Contact:* Tour Design, 510 H St. SW, Washington, DC 20024, (202) 554-5820.

■ **General Tours**, which claims to be the nation's largest Soviet tour broker, offers 24 trips a year. It has a permanent American representative in the Soviet Union and has worked extensively with peace groups. *Contact:* General Tours, 711 Third Ave., New York, NY 10003, (212) 598-1800.

■ **The Russian Travel Bureau** also offers numerous Soviet tours, with the Trans-Si-

berian Railroad Adventure being the most popular. A nine-day-long ride across vast expanses of mountains and valleys, the trip allows ample elbow-rubbing with your affluent Soviet seatmates. Nine such trips are offered each year, with departure dates starting May 11 through October 5. Cost is \$2,793 during summer months, \$2,493 otherwise. *Contact:* Russian Travel Bureau, 225 East 44th St., New York, NY 10017, (800) 847-1800 or (212) 986-1500.

Academic Travel Abroad coordinates educational tours for universities and professional organizations. *Contact:* Academic Travel Abroad, 3210 Grace St. NW, Washington, DC 20007, (202) 333-3355.

Amity Tours arranges for special interest groups and educational organizations to visit the Soviet Union. Write for a free booklet, "How to Organize a Group Tour to the Soviet Union." *Contact:* Amity Tours, 1219 Arguello, Redwood City, CA 95061, (415) 364-5930.

Friendship Force coordinates ARMS (American-Russian Mutual Survival), an experimental program in which delegations of Americans spend a week in Soviet homes (and vice versa). Groups of 11 leave each month. *Contact:* Friendship Force, Suite 575 South Tower 1-CNN, Atlanta, GA 30303, (404) 522-9490.

Mountain Travel organizes mountain climbing trips in the Soviet Union. One this summer takes climbers up Mt. Elbrus. *Contact:* Mountain Travel, 1398 Solano Ave., Albany, CA 94706, (415) 527-8100.

And if you are ambitious, you can plan your own visit to the Soviet Union with **Intourist**, the official Soviet tourist information agency. *Contact:* Intourist, 630 Fifth Ave., Suite 686, New York, NY 10020, (212) 757-3884.

Once you have selected a tour, or if you are still at a loss for one that suits you, speak to **Working Assets Travel Service**, which acts as an information clearinghouse for "socially responsible" travel the world over. If you book a trip through Working Assets, two percent of your travel purchases will be placed in a donation pool on behalf of peace, human rights, environment, and hunger-aid groups. Although their file of Soviet tours has only recently been opened, the referrals they offer have been carefully screened. *Contact:* Working Assets Travel, 230 California St., San Francisco, CA 94111, (800) 522-7759.

Any and all of these tours should open your eyes and heart. Greg Levoniuk, a Queens banker who took an Anniversary tour, says, "You've got to see [the Soviet Union] for yourself to figure out what the hell is going on. It's not all bad." He adds, "I'd go back tomorrow." □