

9:45 p

JAN 3 Train sitting at Helsinki station. Apprehension sets in. Before all the jokes about watching what you say or do were just a game. Now I have to watch it - and I don't like it. I suppose that the border crossing is the only tense part. Certainly none of us knows what to expect. The train certainly encourages a creepy feeling. We never saw a true passenger train (gone the way of the brontosaurus in the U.S.) - much less been on one. This particular train is (seems) ancient - black bulky cars caked in snow - steam coming out tiny spout on the roof. Reminiscent of the Transylvanian express or something. It moves out slowly. It is surprisingly quiet.

Up to this point the trip has gone off without a hitch (and w/out much sleep - I can hardly keep ~~the~~ awake now). All transfers and luggage arrangements fine. Amsterdam airport was a big laugh. We ~~were~~ stopped over for 45 minutes to do this and that and we cruised around the airport and found it to be just like Toronto. So was hard to believe we were in Europe at all. Helsinki

was a different story. We arrived to snow instead of rain, for one thing and we couldn't read anything for another. The city was clean and the downtown area was loaded up with little windmills. We wandered extensively through the city, never really knowing where we were going. We found our way back to the hotel anyway.

JAN
Leningrad See 4 3.36

Customs on the train was less of a hasty than I thought. Things finally quieted down on the train about 1:20 AM and I hit the sack and figured did be roused about two o'clock by gloaming and then the Russians would be nasty to us for a couple hours. As it turned out the Russians came on about four as we entered the town of Viborg. They were very polite but terse. To get the impression that they are very short on patience. The customs people were also very inconsistent. They made me count out all my money in front of them without asking anyone else. He checked the bags in our compartment with a fine-tooth comb that would have pulled

talk about
mixed metaphors!

a needle out of a haystack the size
of the Winter Palace with one stroke
— all the logs except two, which he
left totally untouched. As far as censorship
goes, he didn't like my ~~Farewell to Moscow~~
~~Monte Carlo~~ Farewell book but let me
keep it. They took all the ~~other~~
~~histories of Russia's~~ but gave them
back on the condition that Berezov
would give them one. He did. While
one official and his cronies were scrutinizing
this book outside our compartment they
were laughing and having a good old
time with it. Such is life.

Beijing is a very beautiful city. No
thanks to socialist realism. The
Communist relics really intrigue me. I
did not realize so much of the city was
filled with enormous palaces and
such. As far as a skyline goes it is not
much; it is flat. Also I am used
to seeing buildings lit up at night. None
here are.

Our interviewist guide is interesting,
though probably typical. Does obvious
that guides are glamour people. Those
furrs stand out along with her corduroy
pants. I assume she can buy in special
stores; I don't think she buys her western
cigarettes on the black market. Ditto.

for the cosmetics. For the states representative to us she does not seem to be a champion of the workers. When talking about the reviewing stands in front of the Winter Palace she mentioned they were for "teachers, engineers - all the best people of Leningrad."

"0200 MILEAGE"

LEARN GRAD ITIN 805 TO PUSHKIN 2:20

Yesterday we went on a "Troika ride." Actually the whole thing was quite an event. We were met at the gate of the park by dancing bears and girls in traditional garb. They were young bears with incredibly long fur. Then we were met by a buffoon with a loaf of ~~salty~~ ^{soft} bread (no-pyschevii - ~~crispy~~ ^{soft} ~~crunchy~~ ^{fluffy} ~~crisp~~ ^{fluffy} ~~crunchy~~ ^{soft}) We were encouraged to dance around and have fun. I can't really convey the exuberance of all of it. We were entertained by "Father Frost." I was glad to see that he did not speak English. After more fun & and games we went inside for ... more fun and games. There were musicians and dancers. We all danced and sang and drank vodka. Finally we went outside again for the troika ride. We were in the troika with the cutest little kids. The driver was

an engraver whom we good gave a
pack of gum for another ride. Inside
way out we went down these ice slides
and Natasha our tourist guide really
got into that. The things she gets paid
for!

A couple observations: First of all, the
people at the troika park were all so
enthusiastic that it seemed feigned.

On the other hand I found out that
in the past the whole deal had never
been so extensive. Additionally they
were fresh from their New Years Vacation
so that may put them in a better mood
than usual.

Secondly I mentioned the cute kids.

They were very cute; rosy round round faces
bundled in wads of fur. The problem is
they don't stay that way. People are not
very good looking in Russia. I have seen
only a couple of cute girls. Or may be just
the drab environment or it may not. I tend
to think that I can see beyond clothing etc.
and these two people are just as drab.

In the afternoon we saw the
fathers of Peter and Paul. The Cathedral
was OK. The tombs of the Romanovs
are there. The prison was dull.

The ballet in the evening was a
crashing bore, & was very tired at it.

was. The thing passed over too good opportunities for ending and kept right on going.

Afterwards we lit the fire upstairs. What a racket. They charge American prices when they buy at wholesale Russian ones.

Oh I almost forgot. After seeing the fortress we ~~were~~ went to the Nevsky store - Rothen. The selection was not that good and nor were the prices. I picked up some trinkets and dropped ~~the~~ 2.

This morning John, Char, and I hit Nevsky Prospekt. That was really interesting. We were in the big department store off Nevsky Prospekt (no one bothered to check on the name) that had a large selection of everything. The only que was where a new shipment of boots had arrived. There ~~were~~ ^{was} an old woman (aren't they all?) was sweeping ~~the~~ dirty melted snow from around the entrance, & wanted to take her picture but I figured I would get punched. I tried to take a picture of this big tapestry of Lenin but a lady at the counter ~~counter~~ got very hyper.

We checked out the Metro. & was impressed. They ~~are~~ deep the bottom is visible only as a tiny hole. Coming out of we were debating the proper return route to take when a Russian approached

as and offered us assistance. Being American
I am skeptical of such things but he
turned out to be honest enough. I don't
know what he was on his way to do
but he dropped it and went with us
on the Metro and on a tram back
to the hotel. As it turned out he
basically wanted to exercise his English
with someone who spoke it better than
he did. He spoke it very well. He said
he was an unemployed laser technician
who, because engineers make only 1300 rubles
a month was looking for a job as
a meat ~~distributor~~ distributor at 200 rubles a month.

To

Comment: I sure wish Cleveland had
a mass transit system like Leningrad.
It is painless to go to anywhere in the
city for about 10 cents. There are so many
different types and routes of transport
that virtually anywhere may be reached
with very little walking.

Jan 8 11:30 AM Moscow

I can't deal with those night trains. I
didn't sleep a wink last night, even though
I could barely keep my eyes open before we
left Leningrad.

Yesterday morning we went to the ~~Hermitage~~^{Hermitage}.
I was disappointed because we couldn't

see the living quarters of the Winter Palace. The floors were being restored. The galleries were big and large quite beautiful. I found the sections of modern art boring though. I find that the things I like most about this country are those that show generosity and grandeur. The Czars had a flair for splendour and incredible岸ativeness. For these objects themselves are a memorial to the incredible cost in human sacrifice.

One thing which impresses me here: the people would make the most interesting photographic subjects. Unfortunately they are also the most reluctant (as opposed to buildings which are relatively docile) consentive). I finally decided to stop owing to people's wishes and take some. I started small on the old ladies (I mean what could she do). So I walked up to this sour faced museum attendant and nailed square in the face at about one meter. With my confidence thus bolstered I'm ready to move on to soldiers and 11 Government men (ha).

In the afternoon we went to St. Isaac's Cathedral. Again massive splendour. Huge vaulted domes and gilded moulding. I get sensory overload after a while.

is only so much "Cooking and eating" you can do.

That evening we saw the floor show in the hotel. DULL. The whole thing was reminiscent of a cheap Las Vegas hotel. The dancing was typical of Soviet quality - third rate. The party shut down before it had a chance to get going. Fortunately the 10th floor bar provided social relief. An interesting thing happened there as far as personal interaction goes: I got into a deep discussion with Peg Kerr. She was about 21 or 22 but ~~deep nonetheless~~. It is interesting because I don't think she likes me very much. Actually it may be because I can't relate to the prep faction around here. Anyway since I hadn't said a word to her before (or since) it was interesting. The same goes for the other people in "that crowd." All the girls seem to get along fine however. Oh well - big deal.

I'm going to screw up the chronology here because I forgot to tell about the trip to Pushkin and we saw the floor show on that night, not our last night (the 2nd). Pushkin was really sharp. The town is named after the guy (smart boy). It is also called Tsar village. Alexander I's palace (immense - yellow pastel) is now

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a secondary school and library. Catherine's palace (more than immense - blue pastel) is the museum. It is only partially restored, having been mostly destroyed by the Nazi occupation (our guide Natasha says "Nazi" in the collective singular).

Once more the grandeur is amazing, here especially the size of the place is the ~~over~~ overwhelming dominant factor. Jesus Christ, that place was enormous! An entire room walled with amber! Ugh!

Now, about Moscow so far. Our guide here is not quite as nice as Natasha I think. Also she spouts more socialist stuff (I suppose this is the place to). The city is beautiful. I don't find it drab at all. There are more "onion domes" around Red Square than I ever knew existed. I feel uncomfortable with a monument to Pushkin nearby, by the way.

This hotel is pretty elegant. It has a lot of atmosphere (room excepted), lots of marble, old rugs and French doors. The waiters are assholes. JAN 12
THURS

The Pushkin Art Museum was rather nice. I felt a little guilty when we passed up the huge queue of Russians and went in the back entrance. They were all waiting because of an exhibit of American art. The most interesting

stuff were all still life. There was one
of a Gran Torino wagon sitting in a
suburban driveway and a painting
of a desk with a lot of trivial stuff
on it like, tickets and pamphlets. They
interested the Russians the most; they
sat intently at the picture trying to
decipher every last bit of writing.

The next day we went to the
Cathedral. No dom, The Armory, where
very few (all) their earliest weapons were
really interesting. The Cathedral seemed
so old (compared to Leningrad), primitive
might be a better word. I like that
kind of image though. I can just imagine
some monk sitting long hours in the
night below those frescoes transcribing
manuscripts in the light of a flickering
tallow candle. So much for that.

The Metro was very anticlimactic.
The pictures I've seen ~~had~~ portrayed huge
vaulted ceilings and huge chandeliers.
In actuality the metro is elegant but
not nearly as much as I anticipated. Its
cleanliness is its best feature. People
in Russia tend to take much better
care of "public property" than we do.
Again the extensiveness of the transit
~~system~~ system is amazing (great).

Shopping -ugh! Do they want you?

money, and they're so bitchy. What's more the stuff they peddle is a good deal of junk.

I was very dead that evening so I hit the show you say) sack really early. The next morning we went to GUM. This is typical of all Soviet Dept stores; narrow crowded aisles and closed in departments and lots of people. No one produces in the Soviet Union because they all spend their time buying. Well everyone wants jeans or dollars or gum.

The Tolstoy museum was dull stuff. God knows why they needed a whole room for Lenin. He just had the longest meeting & gave ever ~~seen~~ seen.

The ballot night was really nice. The Palace of Congresses on the Kremlin grounds stuck out like a sore thumb but the building is quite sumptuous. Here I got really appalled at the Russian way (literally) of the Russians. They all jam their way through everything without a thought for each other. The ballot itself was really great. I usually don't like Prokofiev because of his discordant sounds but this had some very nice melodic themes running throughout it.

second ballet was a strict classical piece which I found found slow and uninteresting. One part of it was fairly interesting though. The birds seem to have such supple heads. They expert an engine after the end of each dance. At the end of the performance they did repeated curtain calls even as the theater was emptying - tacky, very tacky. My experience in the theater has shown me that the easiest way to end a show is one neat crisp quick call. If anything it leaves a good memory and doesn't drain down like these guys did.

After the ballet I tried out the setger lotto & got at 6 M - sharp. I've always wanted a real old fashioned "setger lotto" just like this on the three stooges. I still haven't figured out why they put it in the sporting goods dept though.

This morning went to the Soviet Economic exhibition. The space exhibit was okay the rest of it was pretty dull. The Pavilion of Brain Storage is not my idea of a fun attraction.

In the afternoon we had a meeting with students at Don Tyaschi. I was fortunate in that I was talking with four graduate students at the university. Some other

people in our group were talking with schoolgirls who really could not participate in a meaningful interchange.

Our talks got off to a false start about American literature. I was really not ~~equipped~~ equipped to discuss the works which they seemed interested in, i.e., Steinbeck, Salinger & authors (American). I could have talked about Tolstoy but they were not interested in him. They did want to know about the "sexual revolution" of the 60's. I told them whole period was crazy. They were interested in Pornography. One had read The Happy Hooker. They asked if jeans were still in fashion in the U.S. and about the past three American Presidents. Regarding politics one thing is clear. They don't really appreciate the difference between the Republicans and the Democrats (that is almost none). So among the Russians they are two severely opposed factions. Undoubtedly this has something to do with the notion of belonging to a party as it is interpreted in Europe and here.

I discussed with them the idea of feminism as a religion. They

definitely disagreed on this point. I sort of got the feeling though that we were not discussing on the same track.

A rather interesting thing happened at this point. One guy started talking to me about the freedom of religion clause in the Constitution and the girl next to him interrupted him saying: "No, no! he wants to know what is in the minds of the people - how they act." The difference between note memory and analytical thought comes out. Nicht wahr?

I also asked about whether the attainment of Communism by the Socialist State will ever ever be achieved. They chuckled and one of them said, "Do you want us to answer sincerely?"

The personality differences of the students were revealed in some part during our talks. The guy who quoted the Constitution to me was strict party line, yet he was the one who also asked ~~the~~ about the "sexual revolution". He also was very interested in the idea of space exploration as a medium for international cooperation. I'm afraid he thought I was obsessed with the idea of space as a field for competition. One girl seemed to be the most intelligent or maybe just

the most expressive. She had realistic lucid political views and was most perceptive. I though thoroughly enjoyed talking with her. Another girl was quite foxy, if not a little buxom and she drove me crazy with her eyes. all in all it was a most satisfying experience.

that night we all went to the Moscow Circus. The show was really fun. all the acts were perfect. It was a little surprised to see no high wire act or trapeze act. The show was interrupted for a "commercial," protesting the neutron bomb. The whole thing was pretty valid and clever (a gas mad scientist representing the military industrial complex pouring dollars into the bomb and in the end a dove still weighed more than the bomb) but I don't see why it belongs in a circus (political satire and cotton candy don't go together) I especially didn't like the faceless stormtroopers in tights marching around to disco music. Natasha couldn't understand my point about the skits inappropriateness. She could only reply: "The circus is a reflection of current events(??)" or "People all over the world are protesting the N-bombs." Other than



This I had a very good time. The Russians are still too pushy. ~~The~~ ¹¹⁵ The next day we did nothing except walk around. We saw Lenin's tomb in the morning. The line was enormous but ~~the~~ it moved rather fast. Lenin was incredibly preserved he bore a much lifelike look as a sweet made doll. His hands were devoid of any wrinkles or features, they were very smooth, hard-looking, and glossy. He did not seem to have any legs. The sheet was covering him to his waist curved downward below the waist and was flat. If there were any legs on him they were stuck below the level of the rest of the case. His face looks like it does everywhere else. He must have stayed the same age all his life.

In the afternoon we walked down Gorki street. There was not much to see. One interesting site was the building of the organizing committee of the 80 Olympics. We stopped in to get the address of NBC's office in Moscow but never got the chance to follow up on it.

The flight to Kiev was terrible fatigued wise. The 11:59 plane did

not leave until almost three. The plane was a little prop job that made the devil's own noise, & have never been so tired in all my days. At least we didn't have anything until 1 p.m. that day so we had a chance for some sleep.

In the afternoon we took a city tour. This city is quite big. I was surprised. From our hotel window we see a wide circular intersection which I thought was the center of town - it is not.

The biggest difference between here and Moscow is the crowds - there aren't any. One can walk easily on the streets. I get the impression that most of the people in our group didn't like Moscow for that reason.

For 16 man Silvis

That evening we went to this little Ukrainian cabin restaurant in the equivalent of a State Park. The atmosphere of the place was great. The tables and chairs were wooden planks and the walls were covered wood. In the center of the room was a huge ceramic fireplace. Pots hang radiate heat from the point of burning. This fireplace heats up

these tiles which heat up the room.
The place could seat about 30 but
we were the only ones there. A Ukrainian
folk band played during the meal.
The meal was truly sumptuous. The
"gopelyas" was the best part. The table
was really loaded down with great stuff.
Natasha really went nuts there. She got
really worked up and was enthusiastically
dancing. Barazap said she was
really "showing her Russian soul."

The next day we went to a school
in the middle of a mega-apt. complex.
Levin all over the place, the kids
were incredibly disciplined and dull -
the classroom had no life. The kids
had no life animation & I could not get any
reaction out of any of them. What's more
they were all greasy and wormy
looking. I expected the presence of big
kids from "Burevka" would cause
a big commotion in the classroom.
The kids never moved a muscle. In
the hall down the hall who started
coming up the hall we were standing
in turned around and we'd back.

In the afternoon we went
to a wedding. The place was a matri-
monial assembly line. Couples were
ordered into a room with a small

hoir a Soviet flag and a huge bust of Lenin. The "justice of the people" gives them their votes, reminding them of their duty to socialism and Lenin. Then they have not no fuss - no mess. Perhaps the most surprising thing was the fact that they condescend to have former foreigners, especially us kids, at their wedding.

My big personal contact episode came that evening. I met this guy in a bookstore. He was anxious to meet Americans. We quickly worked out a trade of two albums (Tumors and Boston) for a Ukrainian shirt & coat. Then he invited John Z. and I to his home for the evening. I was skeptical at first; he had a big pig ugly friend that was his sidekick, but he also had this cute little wife tagging along. While we were going to the store to get a shirt we talked and I decided to accept his invite while John did not. Alex the guy, spoke fair but broken English, his wife and friend none. Once back at his hotel I asked Becky to come with me because a) I didn't want to feel outnumbered and b) I figured she could profit most

by the experience. She was skeptical about accepting but I guess she trusted my judgement that they were O.K.

After meeting them and buying some vodka and beer we went to their apartment. It was a one room flat with a kitchen and bathroom shared by the other people. I was really surprised at the niceness of their room. It was dominated by a large wooden cabinet with glass doors. On the shelves was there China and a collection of Western cigarettes and gum. In one corner was a color TV, in another was the crib of their ~~or~~ one and a half year old daughter (who was with grandma at the time). Alex also had a stereo and a Sparan (at best) collection of albums - Creedence Clearwater Revival, Stones (Beggars Banquet). A few years ago was at one end. On a wall he had a bunch of album sleeves/posters, which the Fleetwood Mac album added to. He also had a spotty collection of western magazines. The ones he had ~~were~~ were agob. Most were of the Paris "Match", "Stem" genre. His V.S. maps were "People" and a copy of

"Rolling Stone." This must have created a very ~~topped~~^{distorted} impression of life in the west. Supplementing this he had a Russian language American spy novel à la "Picky Fillane".

They emptied their fridge for us; bread, fish, apples and eggs (raw) were on the table. We did much drinking of vodka with beer chasers - all warm and munching. For diplomacy I had to eat a raw egg which I suspect was the reason I lost it later in the ~~even~~ evening).

The men got drunk while the women remained sober. Also myself started to lose motor control about halfway through the night. He fell off his stool (as guests Pecky and I occupied the ~~couch~~ couch / bed) and bonked his head on the TV. Consequently he was out for about five minutes. Wifey was very tolerant of all this.

This is what surprised me the most. Anna, his wife, was very docile while he openly abused her. When we first arrived Alex found the needle on his stereo screwed up. He promptly bitched out his wife though it would was obvious that she

knew nothing about it. He criticized her and ordered her about quite often. He tried to talk to Becky alone on a couple of occasions and Alex always intervened. When the men go out to drink (very often) wife gets left behind.

Rena was really quite nice and quite pretty. She wanted to trade earrings with Becky because she admired their snowflake design (they were very pretty). Becky didn't want to because they were a gift from her sister but I think I convinced her sister would be proud. Rena then dug out her best pair and gave them to Becky.

We all got along quite well except for the fact that the big guy (his name escapes me) was constantly making over moves on Becky. After a while this got ridiculous so we decided to go. Alex wanted us ~~not~~ men to hit a bar but I declined. Then, on the bus home Alex was getting really fresh with Becky. This disgusted me and made me sorry for Becky. An American girl in Russia definitely is in for trouble. I didn't intervene much because both of them had been

pretty harmless, even if obnoxious.

Once back at the hotel we all hugged and kissed and said goodbye.

As a parting gift I bought a carton of cigarettes for his wife (which he may have just kept and sold). He gave me his address and I promised to write but didn't think he will because it seemed some that he just wanted a letter to add to his collection of letters from Westerners he met - not to correspond.

Our last day in Kiev we did not do much. We walked around the city and spent money. Bill, ~~John~~ John and I went to Baba Yar. While originally I was not particularly anxious to go I was moved when we got there. I was a little surprised to see Bill rather lighthearted about the whole thing. Then we went to the Central Collective farm market where private enterprise finds a ~~home~~ haven. While we got there too late to see any meat vendors, people selling fruit and vegetables were abundant. The most notable people were the onion and mushroom ladies. They wander about the floor with long strings of dried mushrooms or onions draped about

their necks. When we tried to take pictures we were chased away by by a lady with a twig broom.* We bought some dried fruit there - plums and apricots and apples. They tasted quite smoky - not very good.

Of the first Aeroflot plane we took from Moscow to Kiev was the airline at the worst, the night flight from Kiev to Vilnius was Aeroflot at their best. Everything was on time our baggage was handled efficiently and best of all, we were allowed to bypass the security check altogether. We got into our Vilnius hotel about two P.M. No fuss, no muss.

In the morning we had our city tour. Very nice, very nice is about all I can say. The city is like any other Soviet city in most respects except just a tad more European. Merchandise in the shops is more tastefully displayed and they are less crowded. The mega-apartments that they showed us were nicer looking than other Russian cities; they actually

* As all brooms are in Russian. One morning we saw a bunch of old ladies cutting twigs off branches to make these brooms of twigs tied around a stick.

had some landscaping.

The old city is quite a place. In many ways it resembles a medieval ghetto. For just that reason it was quite fascinating. The streets are quite narrow and cobbled. Lining the streets were ancient gates to countless dingy courtyards. Many sections were restored and looked quite nice others were quite run down. They looked as if ~~they could be~~ ^{a pedestrian} could be hit by human waste thrown from a second storey window if not careful. We visited ~~as~~ a flat, not in the old city proper, but old enough, that was just abominable. Any flat in Moscow was first class compared to this pit. It was certainly as bad as any slum apartment I've seen. Yet this was not ~~for~~ for financial reasons. Better housing is not to be had considering their place on the waiting list. In just about every socialist country, housing is the most serious problem.

Another problem particular to Vilnius ~~and~~ (and other outlying republics) is the lack of food. "Russia gets the best of everything," is comment lament ~~to~~ there. From what I could see in Moscow and Kiev, the food stores were all

50

well stocked (The Ukraine does pretty well because it is an agricultural center). Vilnius deserved all right at a cursory glance, but several people told me that such is not the case (while there is bread it is cut with carts or stoves - the restaurants get the nice stuff).

One judgment I can make, that is the most subjective, concerns the appearance of the people in Vilnius. They seemed better looking than people we saw elsewhere in Soviet Union. I saw a few very attractive girls on the street.

I never saw any in Kiev or Moscow. Also most young men had long hair. This would indicate that western culture has penetrated Lithuania to a greater degree than Russia and the Ukraine.

This is also indicated by the fact that I (or anyone else to my knowledge) was accosted on the street for means or to change money. It does not seem to be as much of Ingelitz there (with the exception of Vilna - though that was really a special case - a friend of Parapatis).

It will be staying on Lenin Prospekt in Vilnius as opposed to Moscow, leninized

Kiev, Minob, Vladivostok, Murmansk, Bognitogor, Kalemjin, Archangel...) we stopped in at a well stocked sporting goods store. Purely on impulse I bought a couple tools. This is indicative of the carelessness I exhibited as far as shopping goes in this country. At TVP I bought two sebiger bottles and a backpacking stove (an exact copy of my old favorite the Optimus 8R). I was sorely tempted to buy a spear gun for twelve roubles, but thought better of it. One reason for this loss of control may be price: all of the items mentioned above cost significantly less than they do in the States. In the case of the stove, it cost \$12 as opposed to \$30 to in the U.S. These are ~~unusual~~ unusual items, however, and most people on are trip hunting to find things to spend their roubles on. The Russian stores just do not have much stuff worth buying. So many people on the trip were really hunting because of a surplus of roubles at the end of the trip. Fortunately I have a love for silly gadgets.

Poland Fri-20

We said goodbye to Natasha on Tuesday evening. It was a "fond adieu" as they say. I think we thoroughly embarrassed her with our gifts and praise. I do not think that anyone on our tour was not in love with Natasha. While she was so intelligent and obviously a leader, she also had fun in such a childlike, innocent way. This was utterly entrancing. I can still see her merrily sliding on the ice outside of Catherine's palace at Pushkin or singing merrily at the Circus (which she didn't like?). Just right after the circus her and I got into an intense discussion about the N-bomb shit.

This happened often between us. Our break up because I did not hesitate to level point blank questions at her. She fielded them all well but incurred ridicule from others on the trip for pestering at her. I have to admit my accusers are right but I can't help thinking about Natasha and I got to know each other better because of it. After all I did get a goodby kiss from her.

But enough romantic digression. Natasha was a very competent and

fun fuck and I consider myself fortunate to have been under her auspices, especially so after hearing about the adventures of last year's group.

We left Vilnius about an hour after Platada. As always the trains do run on time - to the second almost. This train was Polish (of East German manufacture actually). It was much newer and much better engineered. Despite this I still had trouble getting to sleep, and having interrupted at the border for the inevitable (and interminable) paper signing and document checks didn't help.

When we crossed the border I understand it was a classic iron curtain scene with flood lights, barbed wire, and fences. While I surely ~~missed~~ missed it, at the time I was too tired to care. Nonetheless I will describe the scene as it was told to me just so I can read this when I'm old and very and know what went on.

The train pull into this "zone" and instantly the area was flooded with bright lights. Baracks swarmed

onto the train to begin the check. As the train rolled the zone guards at either end of the train strapped themselves to the ~~the~~ train by chains so they could lean far out to observe the length of the train. Inside they checked every nook and cranny, underneath they searched the undercarriage with flashlights. After the examination was completed most left the train but shortly before the train reached the border they all went spastic and came ~~on~~ swarming back to the train. Presumably they found nothing. I think they are trained to be fantastically paranoid. Before reaching the border all the Russians were off the train but it was still moving at a snail's pace. Guards were walking with the train at the head and tail as the locomotive reached the border fence. The zone guards stopped just ~~of~~ a few feet short and the train passed through. Once all this was over we stopped in Poland to rest the wheelbase as European gauge is different than Russian (no present invasion of Russia by train). Also the Poles come on for a documents check. Our luggage,

I was not checked, presumably, we could not get in, or bring into Russia anything we could not bring into Poland. Once all this was over I managed to get a few solid hours of sleep.

The conductors of the train were interesting guys. Americans on the train were a novelty, I think? Also they were pleased to meet a Polish American. They invited us to share conga with them, and they broke out coke for the occasion - payment for the coke and tea wagon U.S. coin, of course. Again the black market reared its greedy, lucrative head - the conductor offered to give us eighty zloties to the dollar. Banzai took his offer and collected money from all of us. Considering the Hotel rate was 32 per dollar, this rate was a substantial bargain. Additionally the going street rate was 120 z/l. I exchanged HC this way.

This type of exchange rate allowed us to enjoy generous discounts on items worth buying. Also we got substantial food bargains. An elegant restaurant we went to in the old town cost me only \$2.

for an ~~an~~ enormous meal of venison,
so delicately gamey it was orgasmic, and
French onion soup that was exquisite
and a beer.

The old town is a story in itself.
It is a small section (about ~~this~~
 $\frac{1}{2}$ square miles) but it has Bergtstown
beat hands down. For one thing
it is about 400 years older, and
much prettier. It is filled with small
private (!) shops that contain the
most wonderful stuff. On an ~~afternoon~~
we saw the greatest we received
weapons. The craftsman made a
superb coat of chain mail - something
thought was a lost art. I fell in
in love with a sword that had its
blade forged in 1510 and a handle
made in the shop fitted on. It was
the handle that enthralled me: it
was the kind of peer people had
fought with in the movies with a
number of perpendicular rings similar
to the radial equilibrium canals of
the ear, for those in the audience who
can't deal with biology it looks like this:

* Actually it is only 300 yrs old - it was
rebuilt completely after WWII. This is
an incredible beat in itself.

1. Verstek? I would have bought
the thing but I could not take
an antique out of the country.

C'est à la vie. Oh yes the price -
about 60 buck with our exchange rate.

Perhaps my most interesting experience
in Warsaw was the one and only
"disco" in town at the Hotel Bristol.

John, 2, 3, etc and Bill and I went
there one night to see what a Polish
disco looks like - boy was it funny.
First off, it was outrageously priced - for
a pole. With our exchange rate it was
downright cheap - cover charge was 150z
and drinks were 80z. That's about a
buck a drink. The atmosphere was
very seamy - slot machines on one
wall (made by Bally), fishnets hanging
on another. The music they played
was not really disco, but a hodge
podge of early-middle & seventies dance
music (I. S. of course). The people dance
either apathetically or very limply - depending
on the state of inebriation. The single
funniest thing was the abundance of
prostitutes - the place was loaded; we
all had a great time watching the
goings on. Many of the girls were
quite cute actually. In any rate we
all got drunk and danced and

had a very good time.

This morning bail, Cheryl Dean and I got up to go to Auschwitz with our Orbis guide. I'm not really sure the trip was worth \$25 but I suppose the opportunity is one that does not come along very often. I'm not sure why I wanted to go in the first place since I'm a pretty nationalistic German. When we went to the Warsaw ghetto I got to feeling, not guilty, but sorry that my people could commit such horrors. Strangely enough after that, Auschwitz was anticlimactic; I was not that moved. Perhaps it's because the horror of the place is inconceivable to me. How can anyone of us who lead comfortable, affluent lives, free from any persecution imagine a mile after mile of stables sacked to the brim with starving humans awaiting death in the gas chamber and crematorium just "down the lane." Thousands of people waiting to be murdered - its incredible. And despite the reality of it, unbelievable.

The word about our guide - he struck me as a very conscientious family man, very concerned about his car, and almost afraid of us. I suppose it would have

been his ass if anything were to go
wrong with a caravan of Americans.

tonight we had our farewell dinner.
I found it quite anticlimactic, even dull.
For all our togetherness on the trip, I
think few lasting friendships were made;
we'll all go our separate ways once
back at school with only a passing nod
in the halls to mark our acquaintances.
Outside of the context of the trip most
of us have little in common. Maybe
I'm wrong but it's sad nonetheless.
So it ends.

~
P.J.R.
~

Reflections

Crazy travel mates

Lahr Z - He is of course a good friend of mine to begin with. We are an interesting pair. He is the good All-American boy and then where is me. I think we get along so well because we both have a complimentary amount of craziness. Both of us love to weird people out. When it comes down to it I think these bizarre things up but he is the only one who has the guts to carry it through. I thoroughly enjoyed rooming with him.

Becky D - She also was a friend of mine prior to the trip. Our acquaintance is slightly strange because of our opposite positions in the Denison social structure. I spent a lot of time with her on this trip and I got to know her even better. I'm afraid I may have kidded her about her 'downfall' status to much but out of the Denison context I think we both laughed at our stereotypes.

Charlotte A - John, Char and I were a frequent trio on this trip; it got to be funny after a while. It seems as though she is quite taken by John. As far as I am concerned we got along better at the beginning of the trip than at the end. She began to get on my nerves because of her aggressiveness and her ethnocentricity. I'm afraid I showed this by cutting her down a lot towards the end. As a result I'm sure I got on her nerves also.

Bail H - Originally I had heard from my roommate of last year that Bail was really weird. Despite this I made an effort to get to know her early on because I wanted her bid (why I don't know). Once I did get to know her I found her "normal" and intelligent and I've had some interesting talks with her. Towards the end of the trip she began to bother me also. I couldn't believe she didn't have the foresight to limit the amount of stuff she was bringing home. Also, she seemed so fickle as to her own feelings about her faith. At each memorial we saw to the slaughtered

of the views she was either hot or cold
but I could never tell which. Once
I realized this (could not understand
may be a better term) I began to
dwell on her fawfulness in our conver-
sations. This may have alienated her
somewhat.

