THE GREAT CITIES/MOSCOW

TIME-LIFE

MOSCOW

By Leo Gruliow
and the Editors of Time-Life Books

With photographs by Pete Turner
and Dick Rowan

THE GREAT CITIES · TIME-LIFE BOOKS · AMSTERDAM

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Cover: Red stars—celestial symbols of the Soviet state—glow on the Kremlin's ancient towers under a full moon.

First end paper: Twin doves and flowers decorate part of a stained-glass panel in the Novoslobodskaya Metro Station.

Last end paper: A swarm of white-limbed Muscovites, taking advantage of a hot summer day, sprawl on a grassy bank in Gorky Park, the most popular of Moscow's many open spaces.

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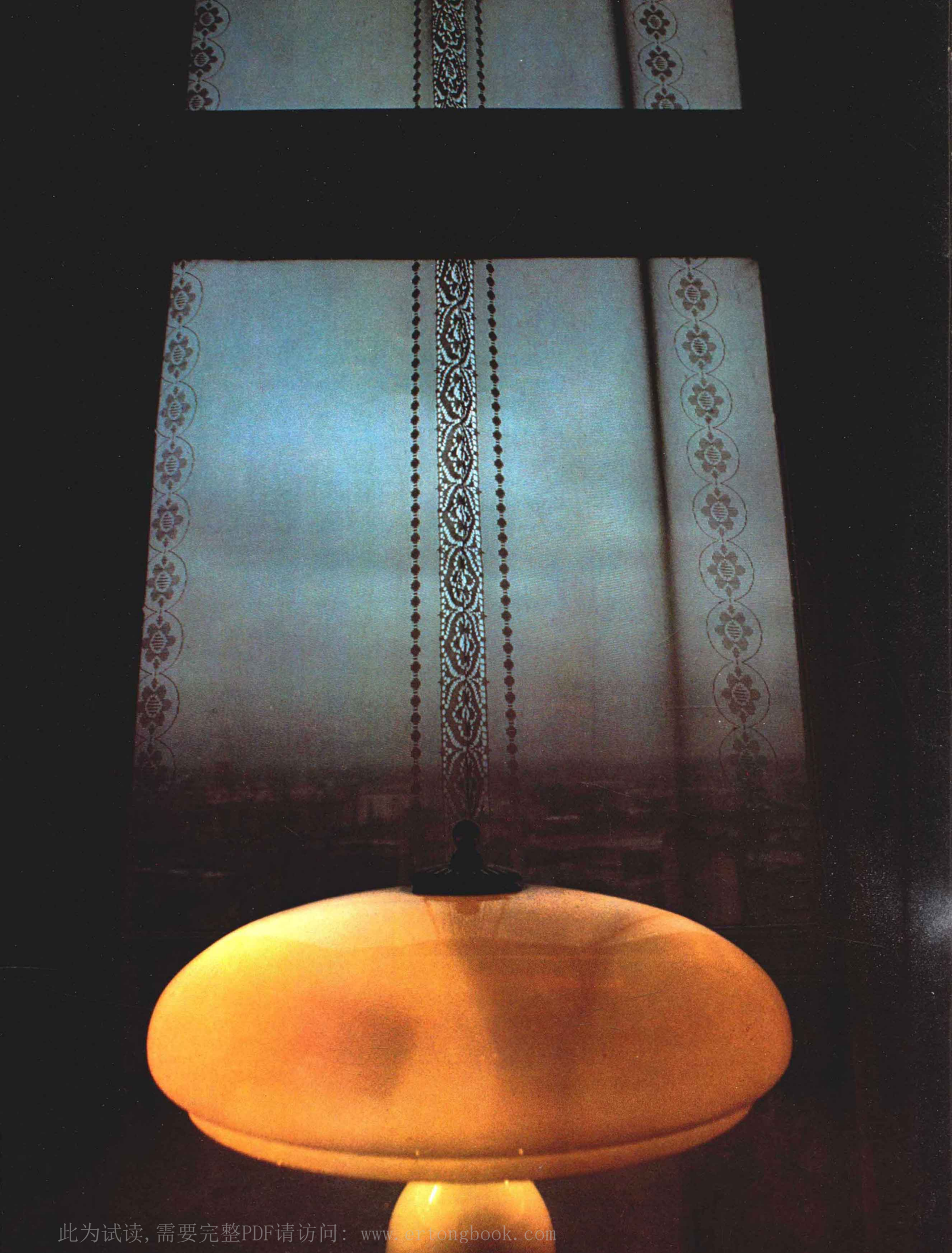


I

A View behind the Curtain

Moscow has existed since the middle of the 12th Century, and most of the foreigners who visit it go there to view the splendours of its past. But today's Moscow—the Moscow of the Muscovites—is a new city that spreads out in concentric rings from the medieval core.

This new city has shot up in a single century. Most of old Moscow disappeared in flames during the 39-day occupation by Napoleon's Grande Armée in 1812. The great fire destroyed more than two-thirds of that "Asiatic city of countless churches, Moscow the holy," as Tolstoy called the "mother city" in *War and Peace.* Although Moscow was soon rebuilt, it remained a muddy, sprawling town—an overgrown village, the aristocrats of St. Petersburg called it. Not until the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 did it begin its steady rise. That was when peasants poured in from the countryside to man new mills and factories. The city became the country's rail hub. It went on growing in spite of wars, revolution and famine. It is still growing. Traffic rushes down 12-lane avenues. Wrecking crews are ripping out rows of buildings to carve additional boulevards across the city. Building cranes stand against the sky everywhere: one day I counted 88 within a single mile. Construction plans run to the year 2000. Meanwhile the city remains raw and unfinished.

Approaching Moscow from any direction is a surprise. One moment you are in the gently rolling countryside, spinning past fields and woods. Tipsy, log cottages, their window frames trimmed with elaborate fretwork, dot the roadside. They are redolent of old Russia and they stir your imagination. You anticipate historic Moscow: St. Basil's peppermint-stick domes, the red-brick Kremlin walls, the golden cupolas of the cathedrals and monasteries. But the next moment thick clusters of apartment houses loom, 16, 18, 22 storeys high, half of the buildings unfinished and topped by cranes. The transition from country to city is abrupt. As Moscow has grown, it has swallowed up outlying towns and villages. Its rim is an advancing wall of tall, white concrete buildings.

The scale of the construction, the pace of change, can surprise even a New Yorker like myself, used to the sight of his hometown being torn down and built up again—but in New York I take such development for granted. Here the new buildings impress me, and for a very good reason. I know what it took to build them. As an American newspaperman, I have had an advantage denied most other foreigners who have only visited the Soviet Union: I have lived in Moscow off and on over a span of 40 years and have seen it grow from a turbulent city of three million inhabitants,

The urban sprawl of modern Moscow beyond the window serves as a backdrop to a hotel room whose décor—the patterned lace curtain and mushroom table lamp—is redolent of the 1930s. Although much of Moscow has been built since the Second World War, the interiors of many of the city's buildings still have a dated look by Western standards.

still marked by traces of revolution and civil war, to today's ambitious metropolis of seven and a half million.

I first saw Moscow in the 1930s when its people were caught up in one of the most sweeping programmes of industrialization the world had seen. I spent more than four years there then. I returned in 1943 for another two years, shortly after the Muscovites had beaten off Hitler's armies from their gates. I visited it again in the late 1950s, during the Cold War. And I returned in the early '70s, there to live in one of those postwar apartment buildings with my wife and daughter for another three years. Each time I found a different city, a new Moscow. It is still changing.

I know that today's frantic construction is simply a rush to catch up with overdue needs; I know that, when I enter these tall buildings, the signs of the haste with which they were put together dismay me. Yet the sight of them still stirs me, for I know what they mean to the people who built them and who call them home.

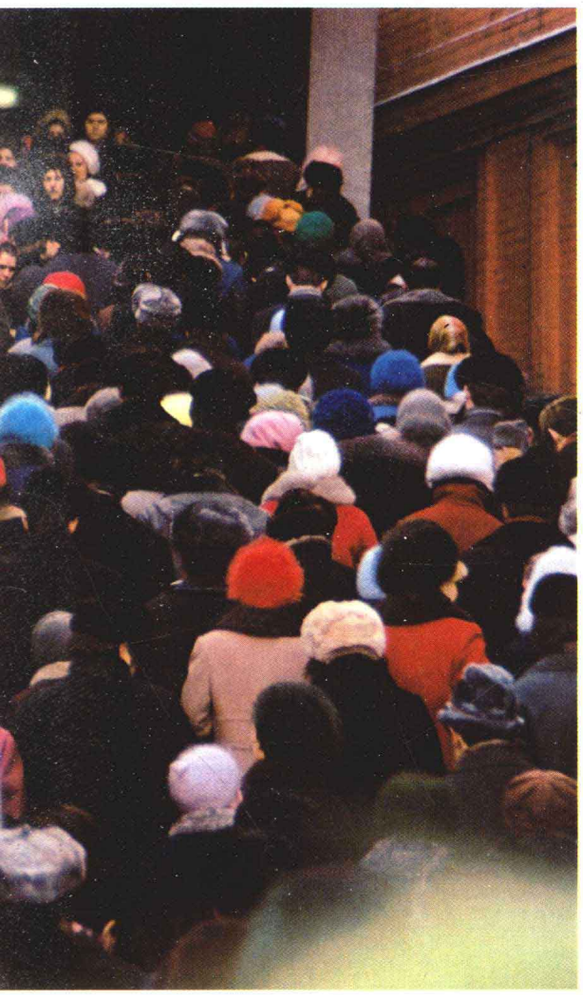
I propose, therefore, to tell the story of Moscow in terms of my own experience—to reveal it to you a decade at a time, starting with the 1930s, before examining its historic past, its present and its future.

I came to Moscow in 1933, when a whole generation of correspondents was reporting on the growing pains of the young Soviet state. The Civil War had been over for little more than ten years, but already change was sweeping the city. The Soviet Union—largely peopled by peasants, the majority only newly literate—had set out by decree to catch up with the Western industrial powers in one decade. It had reorganized its strip farms into huge collectives and in 1928 had embarked on the first of a series of five-year plans—massive programmes of industrialization. Uprooted peasants poured into Moscow to work in the new factories. The city's population had grown by a million in the space of three years. Moscow was bursting at the seams.

To a romantic, footloose young journalist, revolutionary Moscow was a magnet; but I got there only by chance. I had lost my job on an American newspaper during the Depression and, when I heard that the Russians were starting an English-language daily newspaper aimed at the many foreign engineers who had been hired to set up factories, I applied for a job as make-up man, and got it. I did not know quite what to expect of Moscow. My parents were Russian-born, but they had emigrated from St. Petersburg at the turn of the century. I knew very little about the country of my ancestors, and I could speak no Russian.

I sailed from London to Leningrad, the old St. Petersburg, and travelled on to Moscow by train. In those days the First Class compartments had plush seats and heavy sliding doors; I rode Third Class, well-named "hard", for the compartments had plank seats covered with thin pallets for bedding, and no doors. At night, as we swayed and rattled across the flat

Bundled up in wool and fur, Muscovites surge up and down the staircase leading to a Metro station. The most efficient transport system in Moscow, the Metro carries about five million people a day—more than any other subway system in the world—on its 100 miles of track.



northern plain, dim electric bulbs mounted in the old brass lanterns cast a feeble yellow light in the corridors.

We reached Moscow in the early morning. I walked along the station platform and entered a cavernous waiting room packed with humanity—like a Breughel painting in monochrome. Grizzled peasants and kerchiefed women filled the rows of benches; others sat on luggage in the aisles or slept on their bundles. Several mothers were nursing babies. A smell of sweat, disinfectant and the peasants' strong tobacco—*makhorka*, smoked in a twist of newspaper—filled the room.

The scene was reminiscent of Ellis Island, America's disembarkation point for immigrants like my parents in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. In a way it was an Ellis Island. The first five-year plan had just ended, the second was just beginning. Russia had still not recovered from the turmoil of collectivization: bewildered peasants were streaming into the cities by the thousands. Moscow was both a crossroads and the focal point of this mass migration.

The street outside the station was also jammed with a steady stream of human traffic. Passengers with cardboard or wicker suitcases, wooden trunks and luggage sewn into protective cloth covers were pouring out of the station; some carried their possessions in sacks slung over their shoulders. They parted to make way for a group of young men and women marching raggedly behind a banner and singing. One young man bellowed out the verses, the others took up the refrain. As the street crowd closed behind them, I wondered who the marchers were. Students, mobilized to help gather in the harvest, or off on an excursion? Workers, leaving for jobs at one of the new dams or other industrial projects? I could only guess.

Wooden trams, trains of three cars hitched together in tandem, rattled noisily through the cobbled square. Bells clanged a warning as pedestrians darted across the tracks in front of them. At the tram-stop, passengers swarmed aboard; those who could not squeeze inside clung like clusters of bees on the steps of the moving vehicles.

A Moscow guide, sent by the newspaper, met me at the station. As we took our places in a line to wait for a taxi, he pointed out a wooden barrier from behind which came the din of pneumatic drills: Moscow's new underground system, he said proudly, the Metro. It would be some years before that efficient transport system came into operation; now it was difficult even to find a taxi. After a fruitless wait, my guide hailed a *droshky*, one of the last of those antiquated, horse-drawn open carriages. He bargained with the bearded, surly coachman and we clambered in. As I took my seat, dust rose from the worn padding. The nag started up, hoofs clattering on the cobbles, and went jogging down a narrow street that led off the square.

From my perch in the *droshky*, the crowd was reduced to a bobbing sea of kerchiefs and caps. Wherever the pavement narrowed, the pedestrians spilled on to the road. I spotted villagers shuffling along in belted smocks

Moscow's old architectural treasures no longer stand supreme against the open sky as they did in 1860 (inset). Now, huge modern buildings dwarf the Kremlin's cathedrals, while the giant Rossia Hotel (right foreground) almost hides St. Basil's Cathedral and the Spassky Tower. But even the hotel's overwhelming bulk cannot subdue little St. Anne's Church, standing defiantly before it as a reminder of the past.

and, here and there, a leather-coated manager or bureaucrat striding along purposefully, swinging a briefcase. Some of the pedestrians ambled down the middle of the road as heedlessly as if it were a country lane.

Between breaks in the crowd I glimpsed shop windows. They were bare except for posters portraying Red Army soldiers in greatcoats, or brawny workers with upraised hammers. On a few streets loudspeakers, mounted on lamp posts, blared martial tunes. Everywhere there were signs of construction. Many of the buildings were encased in scaffolding, some were boarded up. Workmen were mixing mortar in large wooden troughs on the pavements, others carried loads of bricks stacked higgledy-piggledy on two-man barrows. Many of the workers were women, dressed in black smocks and black kerchiefs. Occasionally, trucks loaded with building materials passed the *droshky*, honking.

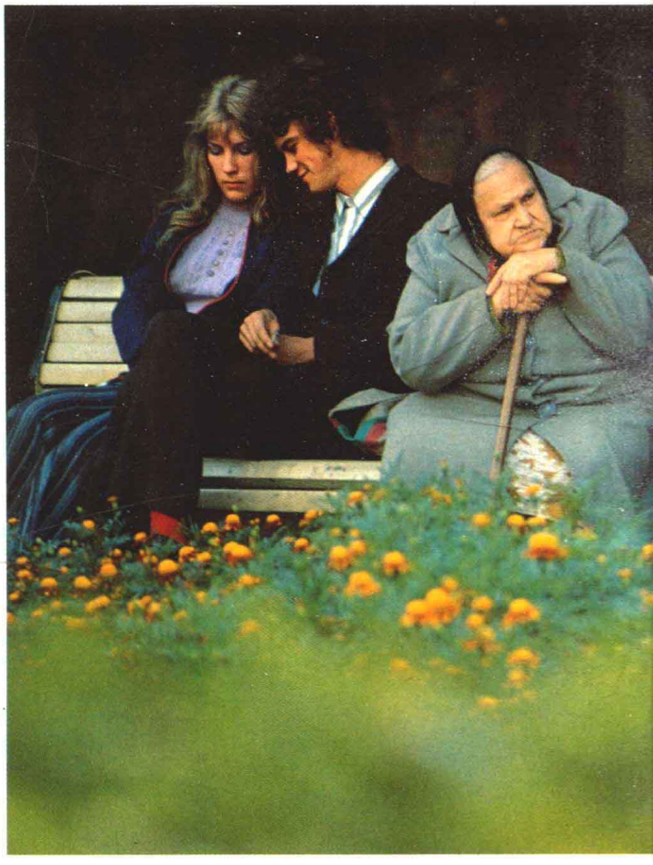
Later that day I tried to add up my impressions. I had spent a few days in Leningrad *en route*, and now I compared Moscow to the former capital. Leningrad was a stately European city, and even where it was run down it preserved an air of elegance; but Moscow was burly and rough. Vaguely it reminded me of something, and suddenly I knew—an American boom town of the 19th Century.

On the days that followed I explored the city. The bustle contrasted with Moscow's curiously old-fashioned air. The log houses that I saw tucked away among the taller brick buildings did not seem inappropriate, however: somehow they reinforced my image of a frontier town. It was the 19th-Century mansions with flaking plaster, the old archways leading into courtyards, that made me feel I had stepped back into the past.

Every day I visited Moscow's largest and most famous food shop, No. 1, better known as Yeliseyev's, from the name of its pre-revolutionary owner (it still exists and is still called by its old name). It was lit by great crystal chandeliers, and its furnishings suggested an age when women wore bustles and men sported high hats and watch-chains. I went to GUM, a large department store opposite the Kremlin on Red Square (it, too, is still very much in use). Its design of three-storey-high, glass-roofed arcades with fountains was reminiscent of London's Crystal Palace of 1851. Moscow's hotels were other relics of a bygone era. Art nouveau swirls decorated the façade of the Metropole; Atlantes—sculpted figures of men—supported the ceiling of the Hotel National's lobby; massive furniture filled its guest rooms, and spittoons adorned the hallways. Elderly, bewhiskered doormen in baggy uniforms trimmed with tarnished gold braid sat at the entrances of the hotels and restaurants.

My feeling of having stepped back in time was strengthened when I discovered that the décor inside many homes was also old-fashioned—if it was not spare and plain. Rooms were decorated with family group photographs, tinted chrome lithographs, sepia photos of Rodin sculptures,

Two generations of Muscovites relax on a park bench during a spell of fine weather. On the left a young couple are absorbed in their own world, oblivious to a group of babushkas, or grandmothers, huddled in gossip.



hearts-and-flowers postcards, tasselled lampshades made from pink, purple, or orange crêpe de Chine.

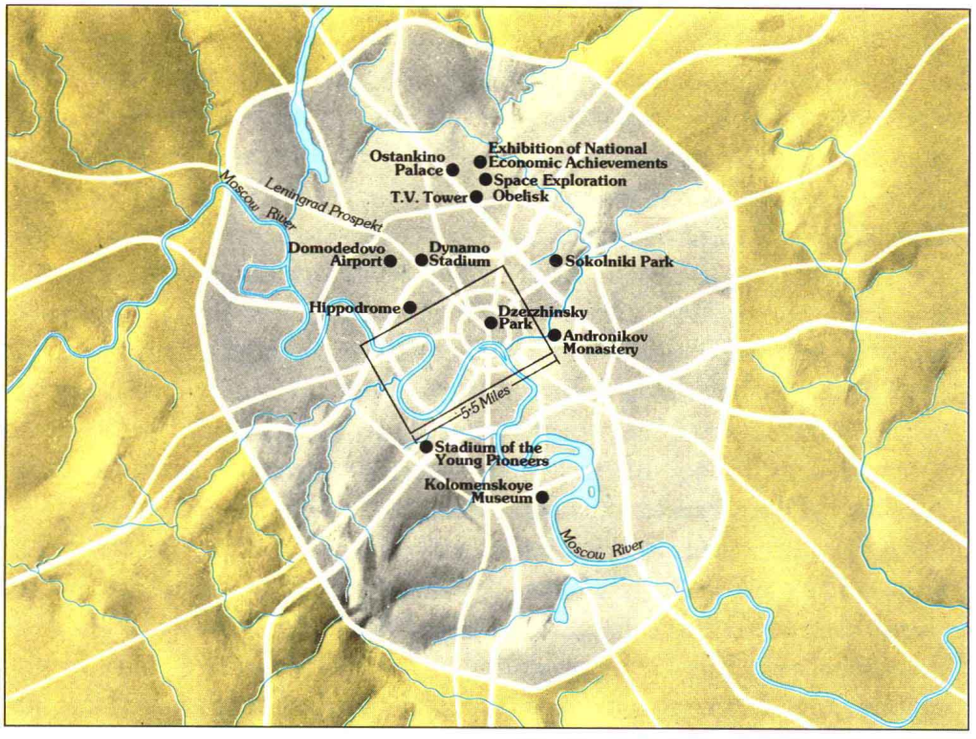
Much of what I saw was sadly worn or rundown. During the succession of upheavals after 1914—the war, revolutions and civil war—the fabric of the city had been neglected. Masonry was chipped; paint peeling, plaster crumbling. Steps were worn, balustrades broken. After the Civil War, which had ended in 1922, there had been a movement to rebuild Moscow in a truly socialist image ("Streets are our brushes, squares our palettes," wrote the poet Vladimir Mayakovsky, leader of the Left Art Front). The functional modern structures that had been erected during the 1920s, however, were too few in number to counter the image of a down-at-heel city. Every effort was concentrated on constructing factories, as the country rushed to catch up with the age of steel. New factories were mushrooming on the outskirts of the city and old ones were being enlarged.

The factories attracted new human tidal waves, forcing the authorities to ration housing space. Dormitory living and shared accommodation had been common in the mill sections of Moscow prior to the First World War; now communal flats were the general rule, with one family to a room, and several families sharing a bathroom and kitchen. I was lucky to get a room. Single people commonly settled for cots in the factory dormitories, or a curtained-off corner of a room. Shortly after arriving in Moscow I saw scaffolding on top of many existing two-, three- and four-storey buildings: workmen were adding new floors to the old buildings as the quickest—and cheapest—method of easing the housing problem.

Housing was not the only thing in short supply. The empty shop windows told the story of food and clothing shortages. Meat was scarce: the peasants, in their resistance to collective farming, had slaughtered millions of cattle rather than surrender them to the collectives. Flour was hard to come by: much of the grain harvest was being exported to pay for foreign machinery. Black bread, potatoes and cabbage were the staples; sunflower-seed oil was issued in lieu of butter, and jam or sweetmeats—when *they* were available—instead of sugar. A government-issued coupon entitling the holder to buy a sweater, suit, shoes or rubber galoshes was more highly prized than money. Little wonder that women called the net shopping bag they carried everywhere an *avoska*—a "perhaps" bag. Who knew what they might find?

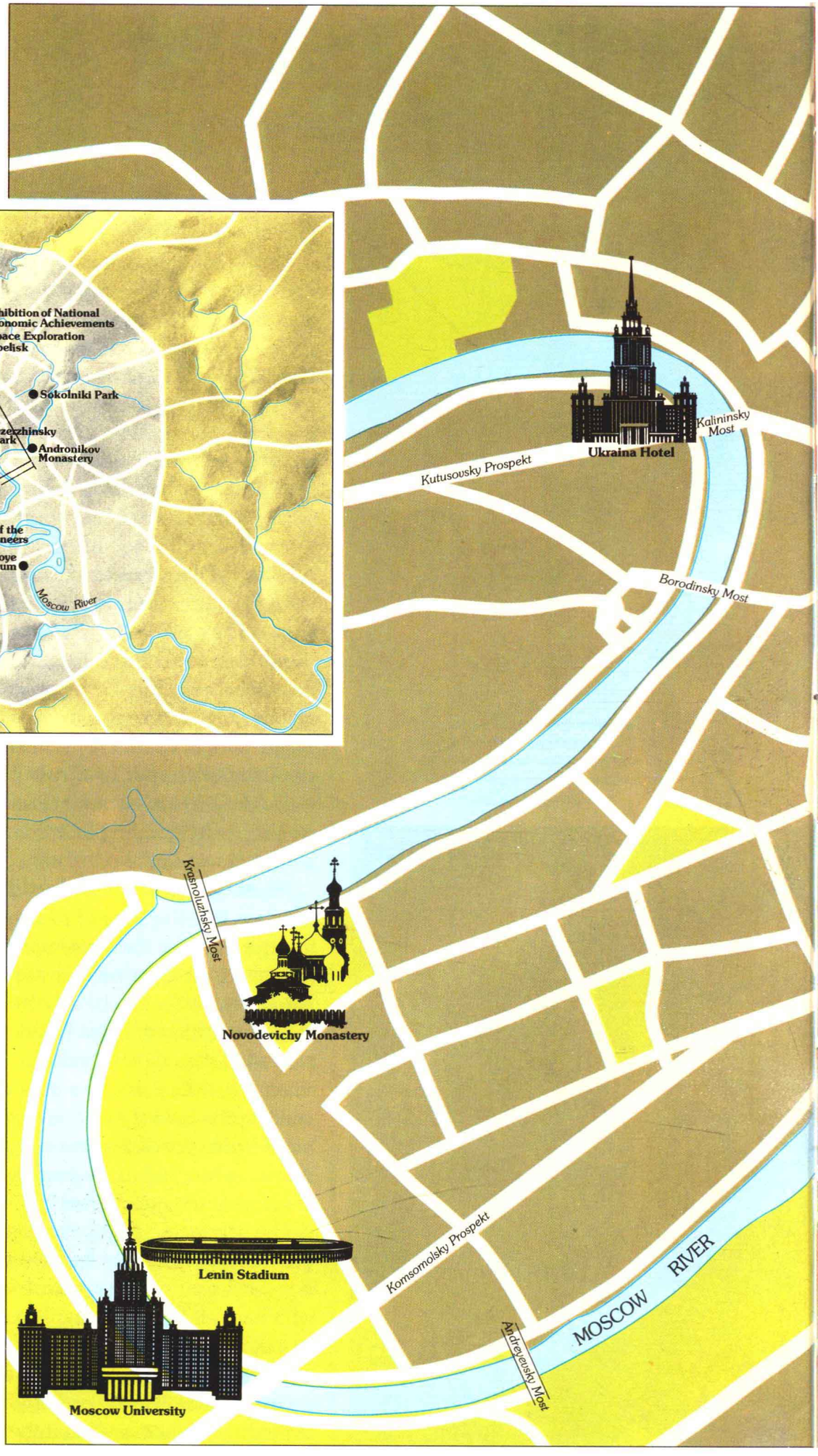
The new factories required power, and electricity was therefore rationed. The penalty for exceeding the electricity quota was a heavy surcharge. If it was levied on the residents of a communal flat, bickering arose over who had left lights burning late at night, thereby causing all the families to incur the fine. It was as hard for a family to get a separate electricity meter as it was to get a private apartment.

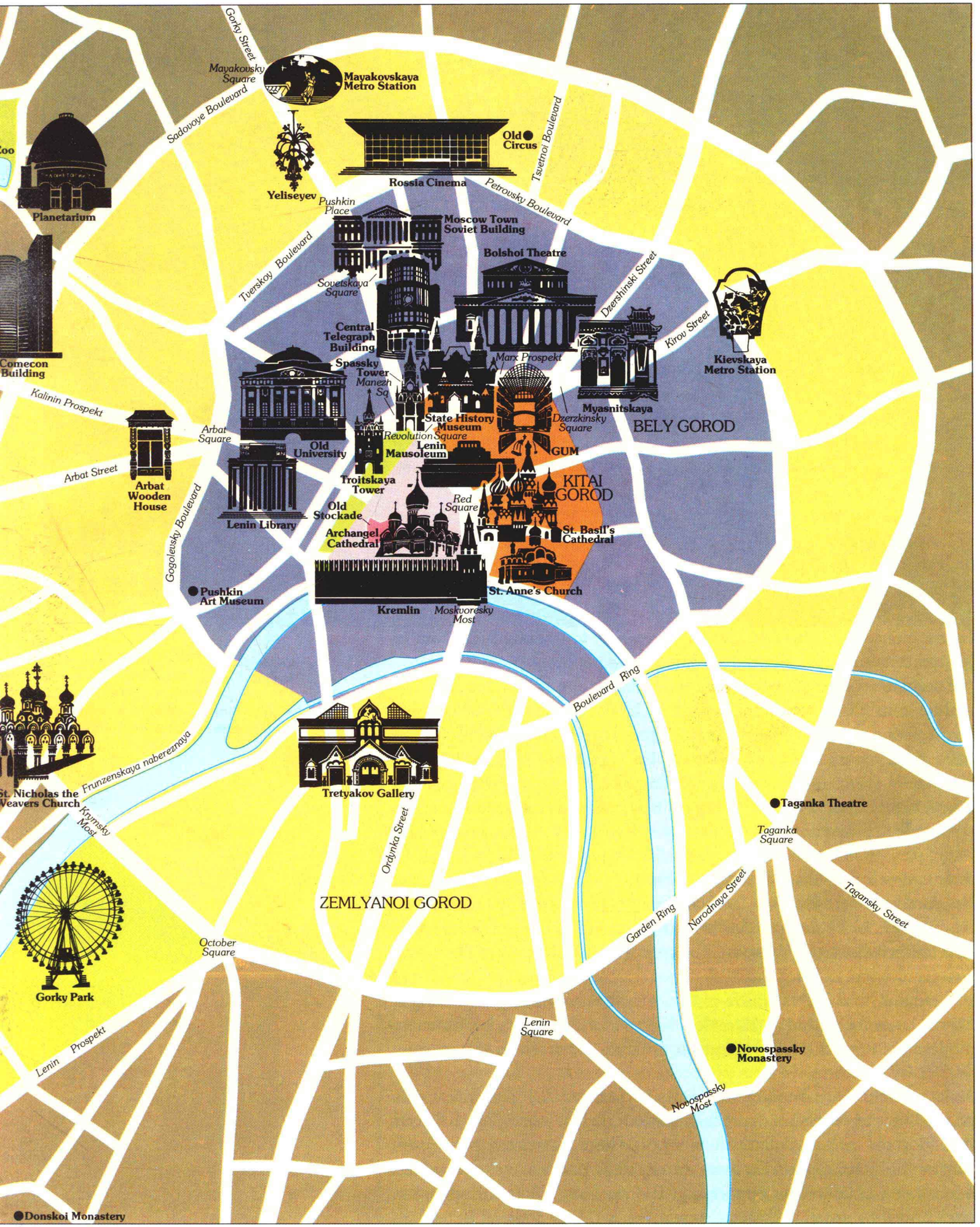
Spartan conditions applied to all aspects of life. During my first winter in Moscow, I discovered that the wooden tramcars were unheated. Hoar-



Moscow's Rings of Growth

For centuries Moscow was as much fortress as city, growing behind defensive walls pushed out in widening rings. Most of the old walls have vanished, but they have left their concentric imprint on the city and affect its development today. On the map at right, the areas the walls originally enclosed—gorods—are coloured in different tints. In 1156 a wooden stockade was built to protect the busy little trading community that grew up beside the Moscow River (pink). Over 350 years this was enlarged into the present brick-walled Kremlin (grey). In the early 1500s an earth rampart enclosed the artisans' quarter now called Kitai Gorod (brown). By 1593 the expanding city had a new wall surrounding the Bely Gorod (the blue area on the map), and within seven years yet another wall, which enclosed the Zemlyanoi Gorod (buff area). Today ring roads—the Boulevard Ring and the Garden Ring respectively—follow the boundaries of the Bely and Zemlyanoi Gorods. The last wall erected was a Customs Rampart built in 1745 (encompassing the central area seen in the inset above). Where it stood a railway now girdles the older party of the city.




Gorky Street
Mayakovsky Square
Mayakovskaya Metro Station
Sadovaye Boulevard
Old Circus
Tsvetnoi Boulevard
Yeliseyev
Rossia Cinema
Petrovsky Boulevard
Pushkin Place
Moscow Town Soviet Building
Planetarium
Bolshoi Theatre
Tverskoy Boulevard
Sovetskaya Square
Dzerzhinski Street
Central Telegraph Building
Kirov Street
Kievskaya Metro Station
Comecon Building
Spassky Tower
Manezh Sq.
Marx Prospekt
Kalinin Prospekt
State History Museum
Myasnitskaya
Dzerzkinsky Square
BELY GOROD
Arbat Square
Old University
Revolution Square
Lenin Mausoleum
GUM
Arbat Street
Arbat Wooden House
Troitskaya Tower
KITAI GOROD
Red Square
Old Stockade
Lenin Library
St. Basil's Cathedral
Gogolevsky Boulevard
Archangel Cathedral
Pushkin Art Museum
St. Anne's Church
Kremlin
Moskvoresky Most
Boulevard Ring
Frunzenskaya naberezhnaya
Tretyakov Gallery
St. Nicholas the Weavers Church
Taganka Theatre
Krymsky Most
Taganka Square
Ordynka Street
ZEMLYANOI GOROD
Narodnaya Street
Taganski Street
Garden Ring
October Square
Gorky Park
Lenin Square
Lenin Prospekt
Novospassky Monastery
Novospassky Most
Donskoi Monastery

frost formed on the inside of the windows, building up into a layer of ice a quarter-inch thick. I learned to scrape a tiny hole in the coating of ice to look out. The conductors—almost all of them women—wore stovepipe-shaped, warm, felt *valenki* boots, padded coats and woollen head-scarves. They managed somehow to collect fares and give change in spite of the clumsy mittens they wore.

Against this background of shortages and hardship, the slogan that I saw plastered over the city, a summons to "overtake and surpass" the West, seemed sheer hyperbole—and so did some of the grandiose construction projects that were then under way. Entire blocks along Gorky Street, leading off Red Square, were being towed back, inch by inch, as much as 45 feet and set down on new foundations—not to create space for housing, I discovered, but to widen the existing road into a ten-lane boulevard for traffic that did not exist.

The most ambitious project was the Metro. The spacious marble stations that were being built for this underground system, many to be bedecked with mosaics, statuary and gold leaf, seemed senseless when I contemplated the shabby housing above ground. Even in the factories there was extravagance of a kind. Expensive machinery had been imported, but the hastily-trained workers often did not know how to operate it, and out of ignorance sometimes wrecked sophisticated equipment.

Foreign tourists, engineers and newspaper correspondents who gathered in the hotel dining rooms ventured all kinds of explanation for such incongruous planning. Some believed that the elaborate Metro and the wide streets were designed to divert the Muscovites' minds from the chronic shortages (circuses instead of bread). Others assumed they were promissory notes, intended to give the public a foretaste of some resplendent, but remote, future. One bizarre notion was that the gleaming Metro stations were designed to teach cleanliness to the influx of peasants. A few shook their heads at the vast streets being laid out and cited Russian historical allegories: the 16th-Century bronze cannon that was so big it could not be fired for fear it would blow up; the Kremlin's ancient 200-ton bell, the world's largest, that cracked and never rang. But some observers were not so sceptical. Several shrewd American engineers pointed out to me that much of the imported machinery, including a Detroit automobile plant sold to Moscow by Henry Ford, was not the most modern or the most expensive, but just the kind "for peasants to learn on".

As time went on, I made some Russian friends. The fact that I was puzzled by such activities and goals puzzled them in turn. They believed that Moscow, as the Caucasian folk poet Rasul Gamzatov put it, was "where the world began". To them the city was open sesame; it promised education and boundless opportunity. But my friends felt more than the attraction that draws ambitious Americans to New York or Britons to

Shoppers crowd one of the three huge galleries of GUM, one of Moscow's largest department stores. Completed in 1893 and partly remodelled in 1953, the three-storey complex still retains its original lofty glass roof.

London. Rather, they felt about Moscow as the French do about Paris—the focus of their country, if not the world. In this highly centralized state, Moscow was "The Centre"; that was the name they unself-consciously called it by. All else was "periphery". In their eyes, Moscow was a favoured city, the pinnacle of urban civilization. It got the best of everything the country had, from books to food. They felt privileged to be there and harboured none of the foreigners' doubts about what lay in store for the city. When I asked them how long it would be before all the vast construction plans were completed, they answered: "Wait."

They accepted implicitly the glowing promise of the future that was dinned into them from large loudspeakers on street corners and from the small, cone-shaped cardboard ones used in apartments and dormitories. The small loudspeakers, wired to central receivers, served as substitutes for radios, and gave forth a stream of bravura symphonies, folk music, marching songs and pep talks. The most common words on the posters were "struggle" and "battle": battle for steel, struggle for machinery; battle for motor cars and a tractor industry, struggle for grain harvests.

Most of my friends were students who, like most Muscovites in the 1930s, were not native-born. One had come from a factory in the Ural Mountains. His Young Communist League unit had sent him to a Moscow *rabfak*, a school that prepared young workers for higher education. He hoped to become an engineer. In those days anyone worth his salt wanted to become an engineer, including women; but his girl-friend, a bob-haired, 19-year-old student of English, told me that she wanted to become either a trans-

lator or a literary critic, or, if worse came to worst, a teacher. One of her classmates enjoyed drawing and toyed with the idea of transferring to an art school. She was the daughter of a prominent physician and the only native Muscovite among my friends. In her spare time she coached the family's housemaid in a *lik-bez* course, designed to eliminate illiteracy. In those days, a domestic staff was still employed by some well-to-do professionals. The influx of peasant girls provided a steady supply. The only problem was how to house the maid; usually she had to sleep in a curtained corner off the kitchen or at the end of a corridor. Most maids went on to factory jobs after they had learned to find their way around the city. My friend's maid was still mastering how to read and write.

The older generation must have found the struggle to hasten progress a grim prospect after the privations of the Revolution and Civil War, but to my young acquaintances it was an adventure. They laughed and sang—they sang often in those pre-transistor days—and if they were lucky enough to get balcony tickets at the Conservatory Concert Hall, they sat entranced. Sometimes we went swimming at suburban villages along the Moscow River. My companions did not have bathing suits; the men swam in their underwear, the girls in bras and panties. At beaches that were separate for men and women, they swam naked.

Once I was invited to accompany a student couple when they went to record their marriage at ZAGS, the registry office for births, marriages, deaths and divorces. The office was a gloomy room in the basement of an apartment house. The couple filled in forms, a disinterested woman clerk inscribed their new status on the internal passports that Soviet city-dwellers had to have, and that was that. The bride asserted her right to keep her maiden name. Afterwards there was a party, held in a dormitory, where the guests ate sausage and cucumber, and drank vodka and wine. A tinny phonograph played sentimental arias, then someone produced an accordion and the guests sang. The songs were punctuated by cries of "*Gorko!*" (Bitter!), a signal for the couple to kiss—to sweeten bitterness—while the guests drank toasts to them. I noticed that the girls at the party primly refused the vodka and drank only sweet Crimean wine.

The newly weds did not have their own accommodation, but friends who were on holiday had lent them a room. They expected to be assigned to the same out-of-town construction project when they graduated from their technical institute, or to be given jobs together in Moscow. That was one of the reasons why the couple had registered their marriage: registration gave them the right to work in the same city and eventually to claim a room of their own. Had it not been for these benefits, they might not have bothered to record their marriage. There were many stories of students who married simply to remain in Moscow or to obtain a share in a room, and there were jokes about the suitor whose first question was, "Do you have a room in Moscow?"; or the country boy who married an elderly

The dazzling décor of Gastronom No. 1, a food emporium in Gorky Street, overshadows both the provisions stacked on the shelves and the queuing customers. Still often referred to by the name of its pre-revolutionary proprietor, Yeliseyev, the shop offers a wider variety of foodstuffs—all at fixed prices—than is found anywhere else in Moscow.