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Tass puts a correspondent on U.S. West Coast

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The Russians seem to have finally discovered the U.S. frontier. Tass, the official Soviet news agency, which until now has had offices only in New York and Washington, has just opened a San Francisco bureau.

Correspondent Alexei Morozov will bring the Tass touch to significant West Coast events for 250 million people in the Soviet Union and, he says, be an ambassador of sorts to help "further the relaxation of tensions" between the two superpowers.

As part of his contribution to détente, Mr. Morozov recently kept a luncheon date with an American reporter despite the fact that his wife, Irina, had just had a baby and he had gone without sleep.

Labor, youth

"The labor and youth movements on the West Coast are the most interesting in the United States . . . a social phenomenon," he said. And by following them closely, Russians will "get to know the tendencies of the future leaders of the U.S."

Such as California Gov. Jerry Brown?

"He is considered by the Soviet Union to be one of the most interesting politicians in the U.S.," Alexei answered between bites of his hamburger (the American was buying). "What we like about him is that he is positive, he's realistic, very energetic, and he knows how to attract people to him."

Ronald Reagan, on the other hand, "is an extremist" and "if he had been elected, he would have been a very dangerous president."

Besides keeping its readers up to date on news from the American West, Mr. Morozov points out that the purpose of the Soviet press bureau here is "to form public opinion . . . to form the public's mind to the ideal of communism.

"We must show the people how they can participate in the building of communism and by what political means," he said, and he gave as an example his coverage of a recent speech by Gen. William Westmoreland:

"I criticized him quite strongly because he tried to undermine détente. I was mostly quoting him, but those quotes spoke for themselves." Mr. Morozov reported California's registering to vote of those people considered mentally retarded because it "showed Soviet readers the shortcomings of the American election system."

Interview with Bridges

He also has interviewed labor leader Harry Bridges, written about the meeting of an international space exploration organization, and covered chess tournaments and film festivals.

Alexei has found people here "very friendly, always ready to help" and "very like Russians . . . always in a hurry, very businesslike." Unlike drivers and pedestrians in Moscow, he thinks Americans are very courteous and obedient. (He hasn't visited Boston yet.)

But he finds living in the middle of a major American city disconcerting, even though Tass provides a penthouse apartment and automobile. Because his wife feels unsafe walking alone with the children after 5 p.m., Alexei next is "going to write a big story about the rise of crime in San Francisco." And he won't forget to include the politically significant fact that "crime is the child of unemployment."

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