

## CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

## INFORMATION REPORT

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25X1 Living Conditions at Krasnogorsk

25X1 Prices and Availability of Consumer Goods

- 25X1 1. There was a marked improvement in the standard of living in the Krasnogorsk area following the 1947 currency reform. Although prices were generally decreased by this move, the Soviet population experienced some very hard times immediately after the reform, as basic items such as bread had previously been rationed in limited quantities at lower prices. In fact, the improvement which set in after the price reform

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followed an irregular course. Some subsequent price cuts were more effective than others. Moreover, some price reduction laws were followed by an increase of production norms at Plant No. 393.

2. Prices of consumer goods sold in Krasnogorsk stores and markets were generally the same as in Moscow. Krasnogorsk could be considered a suburb of Moscow in this respect. Perhaps a few articles sold in Krasnogorsk State stores were occasionally a few kopeks more expensive than in Moscow. The only noticeable difference concerned open-market prices. Moscow open markets sold some items at lower prices because they were larger, and thus the scene of more competition.
3. Recent price cuts introduced in Krasnogorsk primarily affected luxury items such as wine and vodka and had little effect on basic food products. The local Soviet population regarded this development with dissatisfaction.
4. There was some variation in the availability of goods in Moscow and in Krasnogorsk. It was simple to obtain medium- and good-quality suit material in Moscow. Only cheap material was available in Krasnogorsk. It was also apparent that some goods which previously had been readily available in Krasnogorsk were difficult to obtain there after 1950. This was particularly true of textile goods. Butter and some meat products were also seldom available locally after 1950, although they had been relatively abundant in previous years.

#### Soviet Attitudes toward Standard of Living

5. Some, maybe most, of the Soviet workers and employees at Plant No. 393 evidently realized that living conditions in Western Europe were better than in the Soviet Union. This was especially true of former Ostarbeiter /Soviets employed in Germany during the war, who favorably compared their living conditions in Germany during the war with present conditions in the Soviet Union.
6. On the other hand, undoubtedly a good percentage of the Soviet population believed that they enjoyed a higher standard of living than inhabitants of Western countries. [redacted] a poor Soviet family whose son was serving as an army officer in the GDR. As he mailed them many packages of various products from Germany, this family realized that consumer goods were readily available there, probably more available than in the USSR. Nevertheless, they considered these goods to be expensive and believed that workers in the GDR lived under worse conditions than workers in the Soviet Union.
7. [redacted] former members of the Soviet Army, who had served in Germany after the war [redacted] all said that they had been impressed with the good housing and clothing of the German population. However, [redacted] impressions gained abroad had little influence on the average Soviet below a certain educational level. The average Soviet man was little concerned with some comforts of life which we take for granted. He was satisfied if he merely had a bed and a simple wardrobe in his home. He was mainly interested in eating well and having enough to drink. [redacted] if the wages of the average Soviet worker were suddenly increased to the level of Western European wages, he would squander it all on food and liquor.

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8. The Soviet women were different. It was astounding to see how well they dressed with the little money they had at their disposal. They evidently even cut down on their eating in order to dress a little better.

#### Housing

9. The German specialists lived in a group of apartment buildings which belonged to Plant No. 393. Many Soviet workers and employees lived in the same type of apartment building. These were two-story buildings, each containing eight apartments. They contained two standard types of apartments. One consisted of a kitchen, a toilet, and four rooms which were 18, 16, 11, and 11 square meters in size. The second type of apartment consisted of a kitchen, a toilet, a small room (five square meters) set aside for, but not used as, a bath, and three rooms which were 17, 16, and 15 square meters in size. [redacted] in an 18-square-meter room in the first type of apartment shared [redacted] the kitchen and toilet facilities with [redacted] inhabitants of the apartment. [redacted] paid monthly 29 rubles for rent, 11 rubles for heat, and three rubles for water.
10. Although the German specialists by no means had spacious accommodations, we were not packed in as tightly as Soviet families. As many as four Germans lived in two rooms, 16 and five square meters in size. However, it was not uncommon for six Soviets to live in a 16-square-meter room. The Soviet plant workers and employees complained about their poor housing, their dirty, crowded apartments.
11. The higher plant officials, as well as army officers from a nearby garrison, lived in apartment buildings which were far better furnished and maintained than those inhabited by common workers. Furthermore, they certainly were allotted more living space. For example, [redacted] one Soviet family of three [redacted] lived in two 11-square-meter rooms.
12. Soviet tenants paid less rent for the same space than did the German specialists, presumably because they lived under more crowded conditions.
13. A considerable amount of housing was constructed in Krasnogorsk in recent years. This construction included not only a large number of apartment buildings of the standard type, as described earlier, but also many small private bungalows. These bungalows were Finnish prefabricated houses, as well as frame houses of Soviet construction. The latter houses were one-story structures with external dimensions of five by six meters. [redacted] the interior of such houses consisted of nothing more than one room [redacted] such a house cost 10,000 rubles.
14. A few people in the town lived in privately owned houses which they had inherited. These property owners rented rooms at very high rates. [redacted] a tenant paid 100 rubles per month for a room eight or nine square meters in size.

#### Corruption

15. Bribery and petty corruption were extremely common occurrences at Plant No. 393. Plant authorities did not regard such delinquencies in too serious a light, perhaps because they themselves had to cover up for illicit activities. However, Party members were evidently not as susceptible to bribery as the general population. They were evidently under strict discipline in this regard. For example, the female chief of the guard detachment in our housing area borrowed money from me for a period of about six months. She was in

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financial difficulty as she had to pay for the upkeep of her husband in a tuberculosis sanatorium. Party authorities got wind of this practice. The woman was a Party member. Party officials then interrogated [ ] this woman regarding these loans.

the woman was cleared [ ]

16.

[ ] it was an accepted practice to offer a shop boss something in return for his services in filling a production order. A nachalnik would have been unable to fulfill his shop's plans if he did not "play ball" with this system.

17. The Soviet employees who inspected [ ] apartments eagerly accepted bribes. A few rubles or a package of cigarettes were sufficient to seal the lips of an inspector if he caught you using a hot plate illegally. The guards who were supposed to accompany us on trips to Moscow would also look the other way if they were offered five or ten rubles.

#### Foreign Radio Broadcasts

18.

it is noteworthy that Soviet plant employees were very interested in buying radios from German specialists when the latter were repatriated. They were always particularly concerned about the short-wave reception of the radios they purchased.

19. Most Soviet citizens purchasing radios in the local store bought "Baltika" models equipped with short-wave reception. The "Ural" model, which was next in demand, was also [ ] equipped to receive short-wave broadcasts. More radios were on sale in 1949 in Krasnogorsk stores than in later years.

20. [ ] all apartments in large apartment buildings in Krasnogorsk were equipped with loud-speaker network outlets. The Finnish prefabricated houses were probably the only dwellings not connected to the loud-speaker network. At any rate, it was an established fact that every apartment [ ] was furnished with such an outlet.

21. [ ] an increasing interest in television in the Krasnogorsk area. [ ] some seven or eight television sets were to be found in the town, to judge by the number of television aerials.

Comments: [ ] statements present almost no general information on Soviet plant operations and working conditions which has not been previously reported in this series. [ ]

[ ] production norms for Soviet workers were sometimes raised soon after the introduction of price reductions [ ]

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