ago. Lines of shoppers at clothing counters and greengrocers are still evident, and a spontaneous queue will form in the street when a hard-to-get item suddenly appears.

Automobile traffic in Moscow has swelled considerably in recent years with herds of *Pobeda, Moskvich, Volga, ZIS,* and *ZIM* cars clogging the streets. The occasional foreign-made car, however, is still capable of collecting a crowd of admirers. Because of the growing auto traffic, the "will of the people" has decreed the closing of certain streets to pedestrians in downtown Moscow. Walkers have to cross by means of underground passages placed at not-too-close intervals. Once, while inching our way through one of these crowded subterranean walkways, I suggested to my Russian companion that these tunnels might have been constructed to double as air raid shelters. She indignantly disagreed. Visible evidence of air raid shelters does not exist anywhere in the Soviet capital, but it is rumored that they are there.

The Metro, one of the deepest subway systems in the world, continues to dazzle foreigners with its palatial ornamentation and art museum-like quality. The millions of Muscovites who ride it daily, regard the marble, crystal, bronze, and granite that have been fashioned into the Metro's murals, columns, mosaics, and chandeliers with respect for what they believe is a glittering promise of the luxury the future will bring them. The immaculate trains and platforms are a tribute to self-discipline and to the fines for littering which are strictly enforced. The newest innovation in the Metro is the photo-electric eye entrance. If you have forgotten to drop your five kopeck coin in the slot, a wooden arm swings out to bar your way. The trains are scheduled to arrive every three minutes and they usually do, on the main routes. You can prove it by the clocks on the platforms.

Much has been written about living conditions in the apartments of Moscow. New housing projects are springing up around the perimeter of the old city. Expansion plans are being implemented for a ring of suburban communities connected by bus and Metro to central Moscow. The rapidly rising dwellings, with private kitchens and baths, are a great improvement over the dingy, dilapidated, and overcrowded apartments in the older sections of the city.

A typical older apartment opens off a hall leading to the bathroom and toilet (two separate rooms, as in most European countries) and to the kitchen. All these facilities are shared by a number of families. Nine square meters, says the law, is the minimum allotment for each individual's living space. I saw many with considerably less. The Moscow municipality frankly admits the housing shortage and hopes to have it remedied in the next few years. In the U.S.S.R., being able to pay the rent is no problem. Only about three per cent of a Russian's salary goes to the landlord-government. Getting repairs made to an apartment is a problem, however, and one of the notorious sources of jokes for Russian comedians.

Natasha invited me for dinner. Her complicated address in my hand, I had to be shown the right entrance by several of her neighbors idling on benches in the courtyard of her building. I had the feeling it would have been better if I had not let them hear my badly-accented Russian. If a Russian is amiable and spirited enough to invite you into his home, it is better not to advertise your visit when you go.

Natasha herself opened the outer door which led to the three inner apartments and welcomed me warmly. Her small flat was divided and subdivided by hanging cloths to curtain off the beds of the three persons who lived there. In the far corner, her six-year-old daughter who wasn't feeling well lay on her cot. A sofa against another wall was where her eighteen-year-old sister slept, and Natasha, who was divorced, slept on a third bed against the opposite wall. A table, four chairs, chiffonier, radio, tiny electric refrigerator, and television set comprised the rest of the furniture. The furnishings, curtains, and woodwork were Victorian-styled and somber. The depressing effect of the room hit me full force when Natasha left me to go to the communal kitchen to fetch the food. Her buoyant personality had given a cheery warmth even to this dreary setting. While she was out, the shared telephone in the hall rang, and one of the neighbors answered it. The plainly audible conversation drifted into the flat, indicating one more lack of privacy in this cluster of households.

Natasha's dinner, prepared in a small kitchen with two other housewives bustling about, had to be tediously carried down the hall to the table. But from the savory *solyanka* to the sweet plump grapes, the meal turned out to be a delectable triumph over culinary hardships.

Pavel invited me to his tiny flat to see his frowned-on abstract paintings. He greeted me in his pajamas and bathrobe. His minute, heavily-curtained chamber was his retreat from a world he never made or wanted to share. For his own reasons, he preferred to have the radio playing while we conversed. Pavel was a sad, semi-bohemian figure who has his counterpart in almost any country of the world, with the difference that he was much more of an outsider in this rigidly conformist society, where individual effort is rewarded only when it is channeled toward the collectivist goals. Pavel was an enthusiast of things Italian. He had several dog-eared issues of *Oggi,* some recent copies of *Corriere della Sera,* and a few Italian popular records: a pathetic yet plucky display of independent interests.

I did not ask him whether he shared this microscopic flat, but if he did, it would be like Nicolayev and Popovich sharing the original Sputnik. A narrow bed, a table, and a chair made up Pavel's studio abode. On the walls were pure abstracts in imaginative forms and interesting textures, but drab in colors.