puppet shows, concerts, and buffet bars. But the little Hermitage Garden, tucked in the center of town not far from the Bolshoi Theater, has the liveliest atmosphere of them all. Crowds of young folk swarm in here on a summer's evening to listen to jazz, have a go on the dance floor, dine in an elegant restaurant, grab a snack and a beer from an automatic dispenser, or watch vaudeville and audience participation shows. Friends hail and meet each other, and even the auxiliary police (volunteer youths without uniforms) work at curbing "hooligans" and the tipsy in a good-natured way.

The cinema is Moscow's most popular form of entertainment. It is possible to see films nowadays with little or no lesson in "socialist realism." The ideological line has swung into de-Stalinization; the movie *Clear Skies,* which won first prize at a recent Russian film festival, is a good example. The hero, a wartime pilot, returns home after internment in a German prison camp and finds he is no longer trusted to fly Soviet airplanes. He fights for reinstatement but is frustrated by suspicion, buck-passing, and indifference. In one memorable scene, a boy comes to tell him that Stalin has died—at which point, the movie audience startled me by breaking into loud applause. Subsequent scenes portray, in corn-fed style, dramatic symbols of the post-Stalin "great thaw" as river ice melts, trees blossom, and birds sing. Needless to add, the pilot is rehabilitated.

The bewildering contrast that is Soviet Russia manifests itself in astonishing ways. The technology of this country, which has developed the most intricate types of electronic computing machines, does not extend to the clerks at Moscow's largest department store who use the calculator of ancient Egypt —the abacus.

Spindly television antennae bizarrely decorate even the most decrepit of clapboard houses in the hamlets outside Moscow, where townsfolk still must trudge to the village well to draw water.

This Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, with its vast store of scientific know-how, which dispatches travelers into space in comfort and with increasing regularity, can also offer a depressing tableau in a railway terminal like the Kazansky Foksal. There one sees hundreds of shabbily-dressed travelers in baggy, weather-beaten clothing; tired mothers and grandmothers peering out from under babushkas at red-faced infants and children who sleep on benches and sprawl on the stone floor, using bundles, bags, and suitcases as bedding. The horde, overflowing out onto the sidewalks and around the corner, patiently waits, often overnight, for trains taking them to the distant cities of Chelyabinsk, Magnitogorsk, Omsk, or Alma-Ata. A queue waits to fill glasses, canisters, and bottles from a water tap, while others buy rolls, sausages, and cheese at a counter. This depressing spectacle, repeated night after night, reminds one of a vast refugee camp.

Roaming through Moscow with a curious eye and a friendly approach, the visitor may not meet a true cross-section of the five million inhabitants, but he finds many interesting types:

¶ The eighteen year-old champion wrestler whose soul was enraptured with classical music. His prodigious knowledge of symphonies, composers, and musicology was as expert as his dexterity with toeholds, body-presses, and half-nelsons.

¶ The elderly gentleman on the park bench whose inquisitiveness brought him to ask who I was, what was I doing in Moscow, where was I staying, what brought me to the park, and on and on. Only after I had mentioned my profession did he reveal his own. He was a retired KGB [Committee for State Security] man, who had left his work as a security policeman years ago. Apparently he carried on as an amateur from force of habit.

¶ The intelligent but plain-looking young girl with woefully neglected muddy blonde hair who asserted that Soviet information media told the truth one hundred per cent of the time. As to the United States, "They tell the truth about fifty per cent of the time—not so much lies as outright slander," she said. When I asked her how she felt about having to serve three years at an assigned work project, after graduating from her technical university, she replied firmly, "I must repay the government this way for having given me a free education."

¶ The lady who had left Russia as a child, lived abroad many years, and returned a few years ago to reclaim Russian citizenship. About thirty of the repatriates had formed a club, she said, and got together regularly.

¶ The two attractive ladies with whom I struck up a conversation on a street corner while they were trying to hail one of Moscow's elusive taxis. They were both obviously non-Russian. They turned out to be the wife of a Western European diplomat and her sister. "You are the first stranger in my two years in this city who has spoken to me in the street," said the diplomat's wife.

When the cab that was taking me to the airport drove through Red Square and I heard the mellow chimes of the Kremlin's Spassky Tower clock for the last time, I wondered what impressions of Moscow would remain the strongest. "Every stranger," Tolstoi wrote, "who looks at her without knowing her maternal significance is nevertheless struck by the feminine character of this city." Until now I had recalled little of the beauty, grace, and gentleness which one associates with femininity.

The taxi swung up Gorki Street and I reflected on certain touches of tenderness which I knew would be remembered. I would call to mind the sentimental little gifts that friends bestowed as mementos of friendship—a tiny, broken gold earring; a carefully hoarded Dutch cigar; a treasured heirloom belt; farewell bouquets of flowers.

What has remained as the most vivid memory are the words of a quiet young man just after the voice on Radio Moscow had exhorted, "Remember, comrades, the needs of our state come uppermost. Then come the needs of the individual." "How unnatural," retorted the young man bitterly. "How against all human nature!"