



“Ya budu vas ob-sluzhivats” (“I will be serving you”).

Turning from the window, I saw a woman conductor. She would be attending our overnight train from Leningrad to Moscow.

At midnight our train pulled out of the station. Soon we were out in the open countryside, passing lakes, marshes and stands of birch trees. It's still daylight in late June at this latitude, which is the same as Anchorage, Alaska. Leningraders call this season of the year “white nights.”

Our conductor, who was about to serve tea, looked like she would be willing to talk, so I asked her about the homes and gardens that scrolled by. Soon we were talking about our backgrounds and families. She introduced herself as Ludmilla.

A warm people

Russians quickly warm up to someone who speaks their language. Inevitably they will tell

‘Why Do You Want War...?’

After a trip to the Soviet Union, a Good News correspondent offers a unique perspective on the Russian people — and on the ultimate peace that will soon grip this earth!

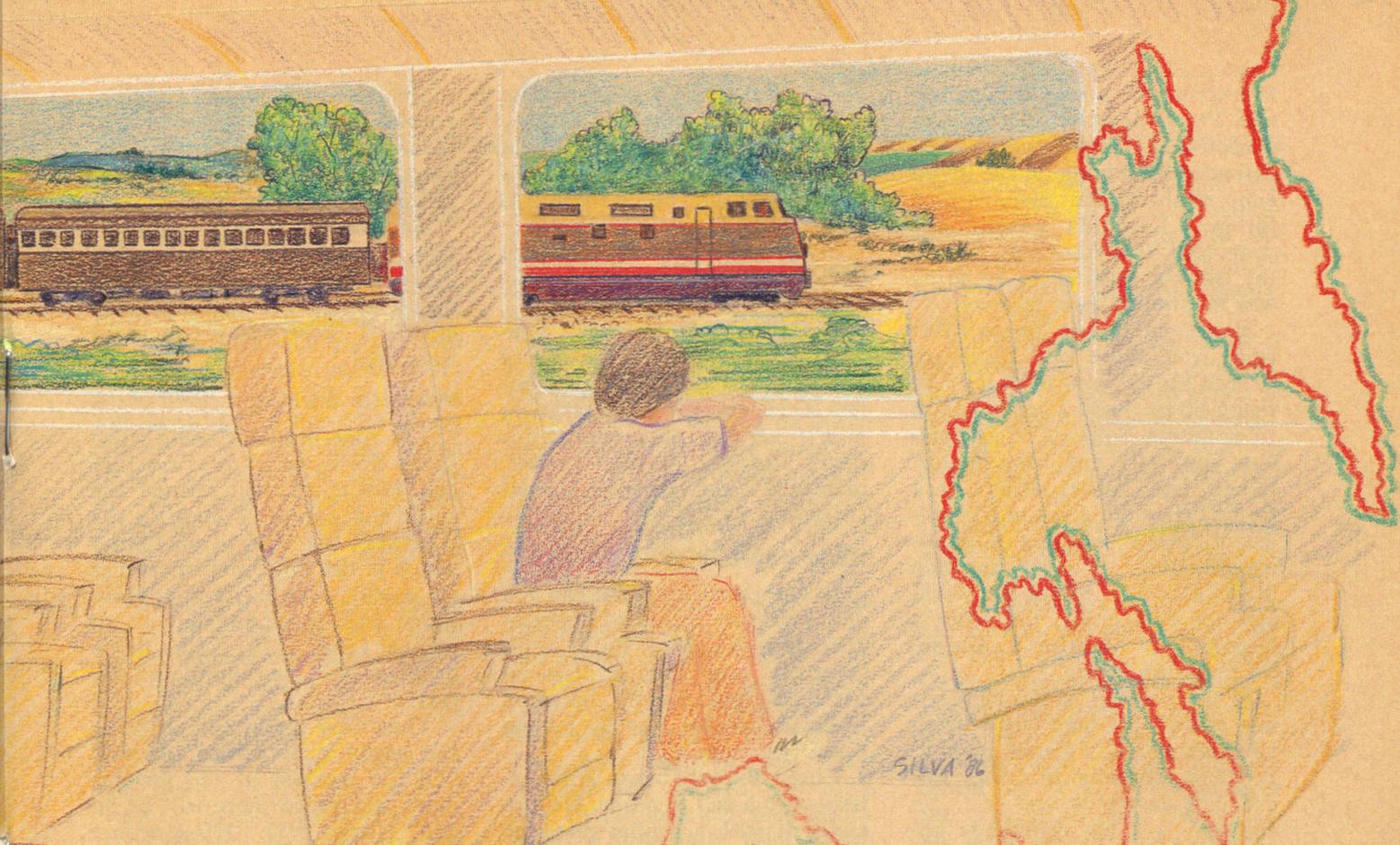
By Victor Kubik

you all about their families — especially their children. They are not embarrassed to speak affectionately about them. Ludmilla discussed her problems of caring for her teenage son while working on the railroad.

Our conversation shifted to the nature of the Russian people. In

her direct manner, Ludmilla instructed me about their generosity and, as she described it, their “wide-heartedness.”

I found this to be true in a number of personal contacts I made. One was with an editor for an art-book publisher. I saw this editor twice while in Leningrad;



she insisted that I take several beautiful books about Leningrad that she helped produce. Another contact was with a set designer with a prominent Russian ballet, whom I had met in the United States. While in the Soviet Union, he took my wife and me to dinner, and we spent an evening sharing our lives and thoughts. He proposed toasts to our friendship and the friendship of our children. We parted with the traditional Russian kiss of friendship.

Often Westerners have a preconception of what Russians are like because of media reports about continuing international tensions. But when you visit the Soviet Union and talk to Russians, you learn not to equate their political system with the people.

The search for peace

Ludmilla wanted to find out something from me. She looked me right in the eyes and asked: "Why are Americans afraid that the Russians want to attack the United States? Why do you want war when we want peace?"

Ludmilla wasn't the only one

who expressed these fears. Many Russians are convinced that Americans will accidentally start a nuclear war.

Before she let me answer, Ludmilla went on about how much the Russian people want peace, and how much her people had suffered in the last World War, which the Soviets call the Great Patriotic War. Being a native Leningrader, she recounted the horrors of the 900-day siege by the Nazis, and how more than one million from her home city perished.

The Soviet Union indeed suffered unlike any other nation during World War II. To this day the Soviet mind is traumatized from the horrors of the carnage and destruction of more than 40 years ago.

Twenty million people died. One half of all housing was destroyed. Living space still hasn't caught up with demand. Hardly a family was untouched by suffering and death. My own parents were displaced persons who after the war found their way to the United States.

Peace slogans, banners and

posters abound in the Soviet Union. The government touts peace as the key word in its propaganda. The Russian word for *peace* and *world* are the same, and slogans often play on the similarities of these words.

It was now my turn to speak. I told Ludmilla that Americans do not want war. Like the Russians, Americans want peace for themselves and their children. Instead of blaming our governments and leaders for manipulating and stirring public sentiment, I simply told her that mankind in general *does not know the way to peace*. Thousands of wars and billions of dead have proven that. And until man finds that way, he will not have peace.

Man does not know the way

Throughout history man has tried almost everything to bring peace. Man has fought for, bargained for and prayed for peace.

But what man calls peace is usually only a deterrent to conflict, maintained by precariously balanced powers. Should the balance tip — watch out! War!

In a speech delivered just be-

Illustration by George Silva

fore coming to power as Communist Party Secretary, Yuri Andropov said, "Peace can only be defended by relying on the invincible might of the Soviet armed forces." Ludmilla herself was convinced that the only reason the Soviets maintained an army was to protect their borders.

Everyone wants peace. But when you name one boulevard "Peace Street" but another "Uprising Street," and a central plaza "Revolution Square," it is obvious you will not have peace. When the Nobel and Lenin Peace Prizes are given to champions of "peace" working in opposing directions, you will not gain peace. One side makes the world safe for democracy, the other a hegemony of Marxism-Leninism. So much for peace.

Is there a way to achieve lasting peace? Is there hope when you look at man's dismal record? Is there anything that *you* can do? The answer is yes!

There is a big difference between *wanting* peace and *making* peace. Jesus began His public ministry by listing essential qualities that make one a Christian. In Matthew 5:9 He said one of those attributes was being a peacemaker.

Isaiah, in the eighth century B.C., wrote, "The way of peace they have not known" (Isaiah 59:8). In the 20th century, man still doesn't know the way.

But lasting peace is coming.

In the sixth century B.C., the prophet Daniel interpreted a vision for King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. The contents of the dream were targeted for the "latter days" (Daniel 2:28), in which we live. Daniel explained the mountain that Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream: "The God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people" (verse 44).

The root of the problem with the peace process is people. Man's nature and spirit is contrary to peace.

Notice this prophecy about the returned Messiah: "And the government will be upon His shoul-

der. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, *Prince of Peace*. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end" (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Scripture makes it so plain. Only world government administered by God will bring peace.

In His Olivet prophecy concerning the events at the end of this age, Jesus declared that unless God actually intervenes in man's affairs and overcomes man's inability to rule himself, man will surely destroy himself (Matthew 24:22).

What you can do

In the meantime, what can you do? You have plenty of opportunities to make peace. But it won't come by your signing disarmament petitions, nor by marching in peace parades, nor by joining peace movements.

Christ not only began His ministry with a call to peace, He also ended it with a similar message. In John 14:27 Christ said, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you."

Christ gives a peace that is not available or known to the world. Where can you find it?

Paul describes this peace as a product of the Spirit of God (Galatians 5:22). Since man is cut off from God's Spirit, he doesn't know the way to peace. This is why the world's greatest intellects cannot find it.

The peacemaking process begins when there is peace between God and man: "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

Being justified means to be forgiven for our wrongdoing — our breaking of God's law. When we are at peace with God, we become at peace with ourselves.

The peace process continues as we abide in God's law: "My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commands; for length of days and long life and *peace* they will add to you" (Proverbs 3:1-2).

Then we continue by making

peace with our mate, children, employer and neighbor. We, then, truly live by Christ's statement, "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matthew 5:9).

Just as war is the magnification of individual bickerings, arguments and dissension, so world peace results from the combined efforts of those who are at peace with God.

Peace is coming

The time is soon coming when God's Spirit, which is His nature and His mind, will change the spirit and nature of man. In the context of the "Day of the Lord," which is the time God intervenes in world events, God's Holy Spirit will be poured out on all people (Joel 2:28). The peace process will be completed on earth.

Then God can go on to bring His peace to the entire universe! "Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end" (Isaiah 9:7). "His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him" (Daniel 7:27).

The Soviet people donated the statue of a man beating a sword into a plowshare that stands in front of the United Nations building in New York. Inscribed are words from Isaiah 2:4: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."

Before turning in for the night, I couldn't help asking Ludmilla about her faith in God. Considering the godless society she lives in, I was curious about her thoughts.

As far as believing in God, she said, it was like listening to politicians — sometimes you believe and sometimes you don't. We both chuckled. We both knew what it's like with humans.

But with God it's different. Soon His government will bring lasting solutions for our down-to-earth problems. Lasting peace will finally be a reality. God will not allow man's natural course to destroy him.

We can believe that! □