

# Russians take city by storm

By MARIA GAURA

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SANTA CRUZ — A Russian delegation from Alushta had its first taste of Santa Cruz Saturday morning, sampling homemade quiche, brownies and Corralitos smoked turkey at an informal brunch at Mayor Jane Weed's westside home.

Only 10 hours after landing at San Jose, the three envoys — Boris Kalyadin, Slava Tzarev and Natalia Leontieva — were showing scarcely a trace of jet lag and were ready to see the town.

Helen Eidemiller, who greeted them at the airport, said the Alushtans landed in a "party mood," even after a grueling series of flights from Simferopol, USSR, to Moscow, to New York — and a five hour layover — to San Jose.

"We thought they'd just want to check into the hotel and go to sleep," said Eidemiller. "But they were awake during the whole drive here, and were asking questions all the way.

"They brought wine and vodka with them and when we got to the hotel they invited us in for a drop," she said. "We toasted with Alushtan wine and talked until after 4 a.m."

For the first two nights of their visit the Russians are staying in rooms donated by the Holiday Inn.

Kalyadin became the Soviet equivalent of mayor of Alushta just last year, and is the only one of the delegation who doesn't speak English. Tzarev teaches

English literature and serves as an assistant to Kalyadin, and Leontieva is an elementary school teacher who has been corresponding in Bonny Doon School's pen-pal program.

According to Eidemiller, Leontieva brought a "suitcase full" of correspondence with her, as flying would be quicker than mailing the letters.

The group attending the brunch was a casual crowd in the best Santa Cruz style. Very few socks were to be seen, and a flock of small children frolicked through a forest of adult legs. Children crumbled purloined brownies on the carpet while an orange bob-tailed cat snagged a hunk of turkey off an unattended plate.

Kalyadin shook hands and chatted affably with the assistance of local translator Kyra Gordenev.

"My parents are Russian," said Gordenev, who first learned the language at home, then followed it up with a master's degree in Russian linguistics at

UC Davis.

After the food, coffee and introductions, the group settled in to discuss the carefully planned itinerary.

The planning committee was surprised when the Alushtans insisted on staying together throughout the visit. Initial plans had the three staying at different homes for the night and splitting up to tour different public works.

Kalyadin insisted that he and Tzarev did not want to leave Leontieva alone, and after a momentary fluster, the planning group said "We'll do what we can."

Tzarev also asked to look over the official Sister City documents in both English and Russian so he could check the translation before the signing ceremony Monday.

With that taken care of, everybody piled into cars to drive to the Boardwalk and catch the train to Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park.

After boarding the train, the little group was besieged by journalists and television cam-

eras, which held up the train's departure for more than 20 minutes. Kalyadin mugged for the cameras with some of the children, telling them, "Smile, your teeth will look good on TV."

Curious tourists craned their necks, as interested in Mayor Weed as her exotic guests.

As the train rolled up the mountain toward Felton, the conversation strayed from high tuition costs in U.S. universities to local food industries to tree identification.

Kalyadin and Tzarev were amused at Weed's non-traditional views on the ownership of utilities.

"We heat our home with wood, mostly," Weed said. "We have a gas heater but we don't want to give the utilities any money."

After disembarking at Roaring Camp, the group took a guided tour at Henry Cowell Redwoods. Mayor Kalyadin would occasionally slip away from the group to light up a smoke.

"There's too much oxygen up here," he explained with a grin.

Tour guide Janet Wood-Duncan gave an animated lecture, and was rewarded with a medallion, some stamps and a vial of rose perfume from the Alushtans.

"I was impressed with the level of their love for nature," said Wood-Duncan. "They were a wonderful group."

A lavish dinner for 12 was provided for the delegation by Jack and Renee Chyle, owners of the Chez Renee Restaurant in Aptos. The Chyles are both of Ukrainian descent, and offered the dinner as a welcoming gesture.

The restaurant table was set with traditional Russian bread and a silver cup of salt, a symbol of wealth. The meal was prepared in French-California style with an extensive wine list drawn from local wineries.

Today the Alushtans will tour Carmel and the Big Sur coast, followed by a private reception at the De Anza-Santa Cruz Mobile Estates Clubhouse.

They are scheduled to leave Thursday.



Pete Amos/Sentinel

Mayor Jane Weed, right, rides the rails with Boris Kalyadin, left, Slava Tzarev and Natalia Leontieva.