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Lenin's Human Side

By Anton Razmakhnin (text and photos) The Moscow News

The legendary Russian revolutionary was hardly a Che Guevara-like rebel; in Gorki, the ordinary side of Lenin's life is put on public exhibit



Gorki in this case has no connection to the famous Soviet writer. The estate Gorki is located 10 kilometers away from MKAD, near the old Kashira highway. In the Soviet times, visitors could distinguish the village by a huge entrance marker made of marble, which said everything: 'Gorki Leninskiye.' This was the very place where Vladimir Lenin, the author of the 1917 October revolution and the founder of the USSR, lived from 1918 until his death in

1924. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the place is simply named Gorki, but the marble tribute still remains.

Since 1938, the Gorki estate is protected under the State museum-reserve, which details the Soviet leader's life from 1919-1924. Since the Central Lenin museum in Moscow was closed, along with the memorial Lenin headquarters in the Kremlin, the most valuable and interesting exhibits were moved to Gorki where a special 'Kremlin Flat' exhibition has been opened in a small house. In 1987, a huge new building was erected, which includes conference halls and exhibition sites. Still, the heart of Gorki is the old estate where Lenin lived.

Gorki has existed as a beautiful suburban estate since the 16th century. The existing manor complex was built by Alexander Pisarev, who owned the estate until 1860.

In 1909, Gorki was acquired by Zinaida Morozova-Reinbot, the wife of Savva Morozov. After the death of her husband, she married Savva's brother. She outlived him as well, and became the wife of the Moscow police chief, General Reinbot. Zinaida contracted the star Art Nouveau architect Fyodor Shekhtel to update the house in 1909.

The main estate house was drastically changed. The western side of the house was decorated with an Ionic-style portico, while the eastern side was renovated in the Toscana style. From the north, a Winter Garden was attached and from the South a terrace was built. Changes were made to bas-reliefs and the decoration of the facades. Both exteriors and interiors of the buildings represent a careful fusion between the Classic and Art Nouveau styles. Finally, state-of-the-art amenities were installed - from the water supply to telephone (since 1913).

In 1918, Gorki proved to be the only estate near Moscow that was equipped with a phone and electricity, not to mention road access. This explains why Lenin chose Gorki as his retreat for relaxation. From here, the head of Soviet Russia could maintain communications with his officials by phone. However, Lenin came to prefer living and working directly from the Kremlin.

Lenin moved into the main estate house in 1921. For the first two years, Lenin and his family did not live in the main house due to a constantly malfunctioning heating system. Instead, the family used the small, four-room annex.

The actual room where Lenin lived is located close to the entrance; it is also the smallest room in the annex. The reason was not Lenin's unprecedented modesty: the Soviet leader chose this room because it was the only one in the house detached from the others. Here Lenin could concentrate on his work or just have a doze.

Despite the fact that 'Ilyich' (Lenin's patronymic, as he was tenderly referred to in Soviet times) was obviously an extraordinary person, his living habits differed little from those of most Russian intellectuals of the time. Well-built furniture, bookshelves, chairs and sofas in white dust-covers a standard interior for such estates at the time. The rather exotic wolf skins that lie in front of the beds of Lenin and his wife were a gift to them from hunters of the Tver region.

In 1918, the Communist leader was seriously wounded in an assassination attempt by a female terrorist; following that event, Lenin's health was a major concern. In the main estate house, a medical center was specially constructed for emergencies. In nearly every room, visitors can see signs of Lenin's deteriorating health. The leader was forced

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TO GET THERE

Gorki is among the closest places to Moscow; actually, the estate is within 10-km distance from the city via the Kashira highway (NOT M4 highway, but the old Kashirskoye shosse, blue arrows, not green). Turn left at the arrow "Topku", then drive about 7 kilometers.

One can also get to Gorki by train, via the Leninskaya station (trains from the Paveletsky railway station).

The estate is 4 kilometers away from the railroad.

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