and there—are workers' apartments. You see the difference very clearly in the mornings. The lights in workers' homes go on at seven, or earlier. In cooperative housing they may not be on until eight or nine."

Most of the Soviet Union's smaller cities and towns are unexciting and short of meat, butter, and better quality consumer goods and services. But the authorities do not want Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Kharkov, and other better supplied centers to be overrun by migrants; permission to move to the Big City is rarely granted. No lists of "closed" cities are published, but entry is controlled by a system built around the *propiska*, a residence permit that is affixed to the internal passport that everyone must carry. To live in a large city one must have a *propiska*. To be eligible for this permit, one must have housing. For that one needs—a *propiska*!

For a would-be migrant from perhaps the Caucasus or Murmansk, success depends on several factors, among them the popularity of the city (Moscow is the hardest to get into) and the person's profession, need, and "trustworthiness" based on his *kharakteristiki* (references). The steps, from acquiring a *propiska* to receiving comfortable housing, may take decades.

Without the sponsorship of, say, a government agency or factory, or an apartment elsewhere to exchange, one's chance of moving to a prized city is next to nil. The more prestigious an individual's job, the greater the demand for his skills, or the higher his party rank, the better his chances. Ordinary laborers may also succeed, if their services are needed—and if dormitory beds are available. A person from the provinces may become a *dvornik*, the live-in concierge who cleans the hallways of an apartment building and serves as an agent for the local police; it has been difficult to get Muscovites to take such work.

Beating the System

How does the would-be urbanite proceed? First, a residence must be acquired; the *propiska* is always for a specific street address. Thus, to get on a waiting list for an apartment, one must first find a room to occupy as a subtenant. Then one goes to the local housing office to see the *pasportist*, the official in charge of residence permits. He takes the *propiska* application to the district police station, where it is processed.

The next hurdle, for one who gets a *propiska*, is to move into an apartment of his own. If one already enjoys the minimum "sanitary norm" of nine square meters of space, getting on the waiting list for new quarters is virtually impossible—without

Muscovites peruse apartment exchange notices. Compounding the urban housing shortage is the fact that retired people make up a large portion of the cities' population and have no desire to move to more primitive rural areas.

connections. In newer towns, of which there are now over 1,000 in the Soviet Union, housing is controlled primarily by the industries that "run" the area. In older towns and large cities, as much as half or more of the residential stock is owned by the municipality. A commission of the local district council decides who goes on the waiting list, and in what order.

In Leningrad, for instance, priority consideration is promised to (among other categories) long-time permanent residents with less than seven square meters of space, those living in housing declared unfit, and those who have worked for many years in some local enterprise. Some applicants can legally be taken out of turn, such as holders of high awards like Hero of the Soviet Union, and World War II invalids.

Still other categories of people may be entitled to more than the standard nine meters of space. Most of these categories were established in the early 1930s by Stalin as part of a campaign against egalitarianism intended to reward those citizens who could do most for industrialization. Those favored include a deliberately vague category of "responsible workers"—colonels and higher ranks in the military, inventors, and industrial efficiency specialists. Particularly blessed, presumably because many work at home, are writers, composers, sculptors, archi-

tects, and scholars who are Ph.D.s. They may have 20 square meters above the norm.

The *propiska* system, like other controls in Soviet society, is in the good Russian tradition—beatable. One quick route out of the provinces and into Moscow, Leningrad, or Kiev is to find a marriageable resident with a *propiska*. A 1970 *Izvestiya* article told of a "marriage broker" named Leonid Kazakevich. A resident of Baku, he got into the business when he married a woman named Marina to obtain his Moscow residence permit (it cost him a car). To recover expenses and make further profit, he married Lyuba, Natasha, and Margarita in succession so that they could live legally at his address. Then he began to arrange marriages for others. He made thousands of rubles before he was apprehended.

Fictitious divorces are another urban stratagem. A Soviet account in *Sotsialisticheskaya Zakonnost'* (*Socialist Law*) tells of a "Leonid" and his family of three who were all living in one room when they got on the waiting list for a larger apartment. By the time they were assigned a three-room flat, Leonid refused to give up his room, arguing that he had divorced his wife. Later it was found that all four still lived together and that they had exchanged their housing *and* the "divorced" husband's room for grander quarters.

In the Soviet "society of connections," who you know will dictate how well you are housed—as well as what food you eat, what clothing you wear, and what theater tickets you can get. While it may be essential at some point to "buy" an official, more important will be one's *blat* (influence) or family ties. Many commodities can be obtained only as a favor, which must be repaid, and a good apartment is one of the scarcest commodities. "Too often the decisive factor is not the waiting list," a *Pravda* article complained, "but a sudden telephone call . . . [after which] they give the apartments to the families of football players and the whole queue is pushed back."

Trading Up

And like any scarce commodity, housing is hoarded. Why give up something valuable when it can be put to good use in exchange for something else? As the woman in the Trifonov story well knew, two apartments (or parts of them) can be swapped for a larger apartment, held as a stand-by in case of divorce, or used for rental income and as a legacy to one's children.

Those discouraged by the official allocation process can also try their luck in the officially sanctioned housing market, a