

Russian Visitors Compare 'A Wonder Of Nature' To 'The Garden Spot'



Marvin Witmer (left) describes his dairy operation as Dimitri Kretsy takes notes. An interpreter translates as other Soviet visitors from Moldavia look on. Kretsy is manager of a collective farm of approximately 13,000 acres.

LANCASTER — The fertile black soil of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldavia is the standard by which other soils in the Soviet Union are judged. Called "a wonder of nature," it is responsible for the productivity of the agriculture there which accounts for 54 percent of the Republic's income, and employs one out of every two people in production.

It was only fitting, therefore, that eleven visitors from this rich agricultural area should travel to Lancaster County, "the Garden Spot." The eleven stayed in homes in Lancaster County, and were able to observe Lancaster's mix of agriculture and industry at close range. The visit was arranged through The Friendship Force, a citizen's organization which believes "a world of friends is a world of peace."

The Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic is located on the western border of the Soviet Union, between the country of Romania

and the Republic of Ukraine, long known as the "breadbasket" of the Soviet Union. Its agriculture is varied, and they have developed an "agro-industrial complex" which includes processing of many of the products produced there.

The group from Moldavia represented a diverse mix, including scientists, educators, a welder, a health minister, a furniture factory manager and an official with the Communist party. But there was none as interested in agriculture as Dimitri Kretsy, a collective farm manager, who took lots of pictures and often made notations in his notebook.

Kretsy's collective farm encompasses nearly 13,000 acres, including nearly 2,000 acres of grapes and 1,000 acres of garden plots cultivated by workers on the farm. They cultivate corn, wheat, barley and make hay from grasses, with four or five cuttings a year. The 1600 workers on the farm and their families live in villages.

They also raise 3,000 beef cattle, purchasing them as calves from neighboring collectives and growing them to about 1500 pounds in the next 18 to 24 months.

But his real interest was dairying. The farm operation he oversees has 1,000 black and white cows which are milked three times daily. Average daily production is about half of Lancaster County's average.

Their ration is a mixture of grains and hay, and the grains are stored in trench silos.

Kretsy was especially delighted with a visit to Turkey Hill Dairy near Conestoga where he watched the milking operation for the 1,000 cow dairy, and viewed the processing plant.

At Atlantic Breeders Cooperative he showed a fascination for learning about the way the bulls are selected and put into production. He told his local hosts that artificial insemination is common in the Soviet Union. Indeed, there is a small amount of Atlantic semen which makes its way to the Soviet Union through their marketing group, Worldwide Sires.

He also visited the family farm of Mr. and Mrs. Claude Miller, Jr., where he saw an 80-head dairy operation and was especially interested in the six children who each had their own chores to do. Clearly charmed by children, Kretsy was interested in the baby who played in a wagon in the barn during the milking.

The entire group visited the farm of Marvin K. Witmer, near Lititz, with Kretsy leading the questioning about the ration for the day and the cows' production. Witmer had filled containers with the amount of feed one cow consumes in a day, visually communicating with the group which used a translator.

The grapes produced in Moldavia go into winemaking and represents 25 percent of all the wine produced in the Soviet Union. Tobacco is another crop which grows well in Moldavia. Kretsy said the tobacco is processed elsewhere.

Other members of the Soviet group visited the mushroom facilities of Needham Mushroom Farm near Kennett Square. They were interested in seeing the houses where the mushrooms grow,

"All I have to say is that Pounce guarantees cutworm and true armyworm control at about half the price of Lorsban. So you can use all this space to figure out how much you're saving."