**Brighton Beach**

Many immigrants from the former USSR are great patriots of the United States, and these people sincerely love their new motherland. But their feeling of America is of a little strange kind; it is like a love of a parasite worm to the body of its host.

The way of life in the so-called Russian District in Brooklyn is very interesting. I have seen different countries and never saw anything like this. If you think that such thing as culture of poverty does not exist, I would strongly recommend observing life in Brighton Beach.

What do these people like in the US the most? Freedom? Democracy? Maybe nature? No! The right answer is welfare, and all means to get it are good. By the way, it is not difficult at all. The easiest way is to prove that you have a serious illness. “How can I possibly do it if I am perfectly healthy?” some naïve person might ask. Well, first of all, many newcomers know the addresses of necessary doctors even before leaving their native country. In fact, there is a perfectly organized industry in Russia that is sending people abroad. If you did not find it out in Russia, it is not a big deal because you always can get all necessary information through your friends in Brooklyn, or simply from a Russian newspaper. (I’m going to describe such papers later, it is interesting.)

The people receiving welfare are not lazy at all, and most of them have at least one job; of course, they work for cash. It just would not be wise to pay rent for your apartment by yourself if a kind government is happy to do it for you. I know a woman in Brooklyn, named Ludmila, who is receiving welfare as a disabled person, and the government pays for her apartment. Every morning, this poor, sick woman rides her bike from Brighton Beach to Bay Ridge where she works as a housekeeper. Besides, she rents one room of her apartment to two illegal girls. Each of them pays Ludmila fifteen dollars per night.

Oleg and Diana, a young couple, have recently gotten a divorce and each of them is receiving welfare and Medicaid now. I do not know how they managed to do it, because both of them are paid high salaries. Diana, by the way, never does shopping in such supermarkets as K-Mart or Wall-Mart; it is below her dignity.

Some welfare recipients are illegible for free personal care assistance, and here it is a good opportunity for a mutually beneficial business. A “sick” person keeps half of his aide’s wages, and a PCA (personal care aide) has a medical insurance from the agency he or she works for. Usually, a caregiver never shows up at his patient’s apartment and works somewhere for more cash.

The newspapers in the Russian language are amazing things. What do you think the following announcement could mean? “I have a perfect credit history, and I’m leaving the country in two weeks. Who needs my service please call #…”. It means that, before leaving the States, this guy wants to buy some goods, such as computers, on his credit card and then sell them for half price. Let the bank try to find him somewhere in the Moscow region or in the plains of the Ukraine. At the very same paper, for example, you will learn where to get American documents and a social security card. Of course, the document will be false. To get a real one you’ll have to go to Chicago. In Chicago, by the way, they can stamp visas in passports of people who crossed the line illegally. Last year, the pocket of documents would cost you around five thousand dollars, depending on your particular situation. Amazingly enough, those papers are valid, so you could get a driver’s license or open a bank account without any problems. I know a person on Long- Island who opened his own business with such documents. I don’t understand what the police are thinking about. It is probably too much work to leave the office and get a newspaper at any shop in Brighton Beach.

Of course, not every one in the Russian district leads such life. Some people work hard, open their own businesses and make huge money; they use absolutely different ways to fool the law.