

COULD RUB SHOULDERS

By JAMES LAING

ANY one of these faces could be seen in London on a Circle Line train or on a No. 88 bus trundling along Bayswater-road.

They are some of the men who staff the Russian Embassy in London—men like Ivan Skripov, who was yesterday given a week to leave Australia for making "elaborate preparations for spying."

And you may even have seen the same Ivan Skripov when he was stationed in London from 1954 to 1957.

These are the faces of men who would prefer to remain faceless.

They are envoys, attachés, secretaries and delegates at the embassy in Kensington Palace-gardens—Millionaires' row.

There are many more. There are cooks and chauffeurs, porters and telephone operators, caretakers and spies.

Special school

There are more than 200 of them in London. They live a life of slight restriction and self-imposed segregation. It is a life where the men can choose when to come into contact with British people—and where their wives live in crushing boredom.

The ever shifting population of the Russian Embassy in London has grown in the last 18 years from under 30 to its present huge size.

After the war it occupied one mansion, No. 13, in Kensington Palace-gardens. Now it is overflowing from four.

Small sub-units have been established in quiet furnished flats in Kensington and Holland Park where minor officials live.

In Highgate a permanent school occupies an estate. A school despite for embassy children and the electrically-operated doors. The curriculum follows the teaching in Moscow.

Life in Russia, W.8, tends to be isolated. The red plush interior of the main embassy building is faintly like a comfortable Victorian hotel . . . except for the switchboard operator who guards the door.

Their own bar

To him no one is ever in or ever available to see callers. His stock remark is: "Come back tomorrow."

The Russians at one time walked out to bars around Marble Arch and in Highgate, drinking their favourite—mild beer.

Now they enjoy themselves within the embassy, drinking at their own bar or playing billiards.

Few Britons are ever invited to the embassy—except when the Ambassador or their tourist agency throws a party.

None of the Russians is allowed to travel beyond a 25-mile radius of Hyde Park Corner without asking permission in writing 48 hours beforehand. They can go to Wimbledon to see the tennis but they can't go to Southend to see the sea.



ALEXANDR SOLDATOV,
Soviet
Ambassador.



VITALIJ LOGINOV,
Minister
Counsellor.



ALEXANDR ROMANOV,
Counsellor.



ANADLIJ PAVLOV,
Counsellor.



M. CHIZHOV,
Second
Secretary.



VLADIMIR CAVYUSHKIN,
Second
Secretary.



LEONID ROGOV,
Second
Secretary.



PAVEL FILATOV,
Second
Secretary.



DMITRIJ SVETANKO,
Third
Secretary.



MIKHAIL LYUBIMOV,
Third
Secretary.



OREST PLOTNIKOV,
Third
Secretary.



V. S. SHAPOVALOV,
Third
Secretary.



KOWJTANTIN SUKHORVCHKIN,
Naval
Attaché.



IVAN SAKULKIN,
Naval
Attaché.



FEDOR ROUMIANTSEV,
Air
Attaché.



VLADIMIR KNOBEEV,
Air
Attaché.