

Soviets donate day of chores

By Nikki Finke
Associated Press

MOSCOW — Millions of Soviet workers sacrificed a day off yesterday to sweep the Kremlin wall, till flower beds and clean up factories on the 60th celebration of "Red Saturday," the annual donated day of labor.

Saturday is usually a lazy day in Moscow, but the streets were alive as citizens swept and tidied park-grounds damaged by the ravages of winter and construction crews bustled about with their equipment.

Money gleaned from the work day usually goes to build hospitals and libraries, but this year 75 percent of the funds will go to Vietnam to aid its recovery from the Chinese invasion.

Last year's "Subbotnik," as it is known in Russian, raised \$240 million. The literal translation is "little Saturday," but since holidays are marked in red on calendars here, it has been dubbed "Red Saturday."

The work day was inspired by a team of railway workers who decided to donate eight hours of work to repair damaged locomotives after listening to a pep talk by Vladimir Lenin in 1919.

Lenin hailed their deed and proclaimed the first national "Red Saturday" for the next May 1. A famous painting shows the revolutionary leader digging a tree trunk out of the Kremlin's grounds as he took part in the first work day. Lenin once said that the day of work was "more significant, more important, more decisive than the toppling of the bourgeoisie."

"I don't mind, the work isn't too hard," said one sweeper working in a Moscow park. During the week she is a store cashier.

Dissidents active in workers' rights say the day is not voluntary because the trade unions often discriminate against members who do not participate by taking away privileges such as low-cost vacation deals or consideration for promotions.

For most Muscovites the outdoor work was invigorating since they toiled in temperatures hovering around 28 degrees Fahrenheit.

Many said, "Red Saturday" is viewed as a social event and a convenient way for single women to meet.

in the morning on a bright sunny day. The weather was perfect for the day.

File. Inquirer
4-22-79