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The Year 2017, According to a 1960s Soviet Filmstrip

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Diafilm / V. Strukova and V. Shevchenko

It's a new year, and before this one is over Russia will mark the centennial of the Bolshevik Revolution. A hundred years ago, the men and women who brought Communism to the Tsarist Empire had big plans. Decades into that experiment, the U.S.S.R. was leading the world's "Space Race," and it seemed there was nothing the country couldn't do. In 1960, the Soviet movie studio "Diafilm" released a filmstrip titled "In the Year 2017," by V. Strukova and V. Shevchenko, depicting a vision of the U.S.S.R. set 57 years in the future.

The 45-pane filmstrip is as spectacularly fantastic as it is dated. In Strukova and Shevchenko's vision of 2017, it's the "imperialists" of the West who have destroyed themselves, and the Soviet Union has mastered science to such a degree that "atomic trains" traverse the Bering Strait and flying power stations control the planet's weather. The story even captures the U.S.S.R.'s fascination in the 1960s with "meson energy" — a theoretical type of atomic energy later rejected as impossible to harness.

"In the Year 2017" is about a future world liberated by Soviet science, but it's also the story of a boy and his family. The full filmstrip is available here, in Russian.

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