

Lady cosmonaut touches down in Norwalk

By FRANCIS X. FAY Jr.
Hour Staff Writer

NORWALK — A Russian cosmonaut touched down here this weekend and attracted scores of interested Norwalkers to the home of Anatole and Rosaria Konstantin of 10 Live Oak Road.

Svetlana Savitskaya was one of more than four dozen Soviets taking part in the first Citizens Summit resulting from the official Summit last fall between the U.S. and USSR leaders.

Two dozen guests at a Sunday brunch hung on every word of the 39-year-old mother, who took part in two space missions of seven and 12-day durations in 1982 and 1984, respectively.

She answered every question posed by them without hesitation, most often, however, leaning on translations of the questions and answers by her host, a native of eastern Poland who learned Russian as a young boy.

She smiled occasionally and once or twice broke into laughter while listening to the translations.

She is not surprised by anything she has seen in America, she said, since she has visited western Europe many times and seen many Americans, even astronauts.

"I knew Commander Dick Scobee and his wife," she said of the captain of the ill-fated Challenger crew. "I know Sally Ride."

The daughter of Air Marshal Yevgeny Savitsky, a Russian air ace in World War II, she learned to fly at an early age and obtained her aeronautical engineering degree from a Moscow University.

She is one of about 60 men and women who have flown space missions who remain in relatively good shape should the call to service be made of them again. The group is more informal than the smaller group that is in training for scheduled space trips.

Mrs. Savitskaya didn't suffer any adverse reactions from her space experiences.

"Women adapt themselves better than men," she said. "Some people get nausea or headaches, but I was alright."

An experienced test pilot, who still holds the women's record for horizontal speed at Mach 2.6 set in 1975, was also international women's aerobatic champion in 1970 when she won the competition in Europe while flying a Yak plane.

Asked for an assessment of Premier Gorbachev's popularity in Russia, she answered, "He is a leader for whom everyone has

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SVETLANA SAVITSKAYA

Cosmonaut

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been waiting. He is courageous and not afraid of new approaches."

She explained that Glasnost and Perestroika don't signal an ideological shift from Soviet socialism.

"We are trying to build socialism in a better way," she said. "We are looking at everything so that we can make it better."

The Russians learned a lot about the Chernobyl disaster, she noted.

"We have a ministry of environmental protection now," she said through Mr. Konstantin, while noting that no planting is being or harvests made from anything growing within 30 kilometers of the plant.

An arduous endeavor to reverse the flow of major rivers back into the center of the Soviet was also dropped because of its potential for affecting the environment, she said.

She and the other 102 Russians selected for the three-week trip had spent two weeks in Washington, D.C., as guests of the U.S. Secretary of State and Gettysburg University and will go on to be guests of the UN in New York City before flying back next Saturday.

The 51 visitors to this area arrived on two buses Saturday afternoon at the Saugatuck Congregational Church, where Westport First Selectman Martha S. Hauhuth and Ruth Steinkraus Cohen, founder and chairman of the International Hospitality Committee of Fairfield County, welcomed them before they went off with individual hosts.

The three-week trip was sponsored by the Center for Soviet Dialogue in Seattle. Susan Eisenhower, a granddaughter of President Eisenhower, coordinated events at Gettysburg. The Soviet Peace Committee was established during Eisenhower's presidency.