

REPORT ON THE RUSSIANS.....



W. L. White

INSTALLMENT ONE

The Soviet vice-consul spoke creaky, schoolbook English. He was an agreeable young man, helping me fill out my visa application. His office was pleasant and airy, but I was uneasy. Maybe because the office of the consul, upstairs, had double doors. The kind when you open one door, you are left staring at still another closed door, about six



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inches in front of your nose. If the knob of the first door is on your right, the knob of the second is on the left. So no one could possibly listen through both keyholes at once. I was uneasy because I had been with the Finnish army in the winter war of 1939-1940, which was bad news in connection with a Soviet visa. Of course, they knew I had been in Finland, but I wanted them to know I knew they knew it.

The consul was an urbane, stocky little diplomat. It soon became clear that he was on a fishing trip for information. There is nothing sinister about this, for it is the avowed business of all diplomats, including our own, to report to their home governments on the state of the nation to which they are accredited.

There was no need to withhold anything from this consul, as his questions did not concern military matters but were all in the sphere of politics.

Just before I left the consul switched the conversation from politics to literature. I wished to go to the Soviet Union as assistant to Mr. Eric Johnston, but I was also connected with the Reader's Digest? Yes, I said, I was one of its editors. I bowed myself out and the whisper-proof double doors and back to where Mr. Vavilov was waiting with the questionnaire. It began with a large blank space for a brief autobiography, into which I inserted the fact that I had been with the Finnish army in 1939, a fact that Mr. Vavilov, reading at my shoulder, seemed again not to notice.

It continued with other questions, obviously designed for White Russians, about political affiliations. I showed some dismay at all this, and Mr. Vavilov, smiling reassuringly, said there was no need, in my case, for detailed answers.

But at the end was a most curious question: I had hastily written "no" in its blank, but then I hesitated. Had I, they wanted to know, ever been associated with the armed forces of any government in opposition to the Soviet Union? I explained—this time clearly—that in 1939 I had been associated as a reporter with the armies of the Finnish Republic during its earlier war with Russia. So perhaps my answer should be yes?

Smiling broadly now, Mr. Vavilov shook his head.

"The proper answer there, Mr. White, as you have already written, is 'no.' Because in Finland in 1939, we understand that your opposition to the Soviet Union was purely verbal."

My visa came a week later. All this had come about as the result of an impulsive letter I had written a few weeks before. Reading that Joseph Stalin had issued a special invitation to visit Russia to Eric Johnston, president of the United States Chamber of Commerce, I had sat down at my typewriter to tell Johnston I would like to go along.

Eric Johnston was to me a complete stranger, except that I had read a good deal of what he had written and liked most of it very much. He "believed in" this country; he had been an eloquent voice preaching optimism and courage for the postwar period; saying clearly that never again must we allow American business and industry to stagnate into a depression, but must continue to produce for peacetime needs and luxuries at almost wartime velocity: there would be free markets for everything if there were free jobs for all, and vice versa.

He had opened his career as president of the National Chamber by calling at the White House—a precedent-breaking step, as American business had not hitherto accorded

the New Deal official recognition. He had even sat down across a conference table from John L. Lewis.

He has a theory, that before you denounce an opponent, you should first go over with him the points on which you agree; you will both be surprised, Johnston points out, at how many of these there are and often the fight can be fairly compromised.

In somewhat this frame of mind he was approaching the Soviet Union; I wanted to go there for the very obvious reason that Russia is clearly the biggest and most unpredictable factor with which America must deal in the next few decades.

A week after my impulsive letter I met Eric Johnston across his desk in Washington. Eric Johnston is handsome. At forty-seven he has all of his white even teeth, all of his wavy brown hair, and a clear, ruddy skin, and blue eyes. He has a longish, sensitive face and a Hollywood profile. Together, these make him unusually and conspicuously handsome. He might have made a successful career as an actor, were it not for his brain, which, considered as an organ, is uncommonly good. It starts with a phenomenal memory. He never forgets anything he thinks he will ever need. He is healthily competitive; he wants something like almost anything you have, or if possible, one just a little better. But he takes disappointments well. When I first met him he was being mentioned for the presidency; he had a small



Eric Johnston

but definite chance. He watched it carefully, never overestimated or underestimated his boom. When it faltered, he pronounced it dead and instantly forgot it.

I was pleased when he told me that, because he wanted to feel free to write and say what he thought on our return, he was insisting on the Russians that we pay our expenses wherever possible. He was taking along money for that purpose, and suggested that I do likewise.

The other member of our party was Joyce O'Hara, Johnston's regular assistant in the Chamber of Commerce. He is a blue-eyed Irishman of fifty with regular features which, anywhere outside the radius of Johnston's dazzling profile, would be considered uncommonly handsome. Not too many years ago he exchanged a successful newspaper job for a career in the public relations division of the Chamber of Commerce in Washington.

Joyce and I were thrown together constantly from the beginning of the trip. The protocol of our entire voyage was that if the hotel or guesthouse boasted an Imperial Bridal Suite complete with sitting room, sitz bath, and breakfast nook, it would always be assigned to Johnston in solitary grandeur, in his capacity as President of the Chamber of Commerce, while Joyce and I would share twin beds in the second-best room. For a few days we watched each other shave and listened to each other snore with considerable reserve and some suspicion.

Slowly and after days of appraisal we got down to a solid basis of friendly jibes at each other's weak spots, and he gave as good as he got. We ended up warm friends.

We departed from Washington and our plane stopped for a meal in the Azores where we were met by staff officers of the American base and picked up sketchy information about these Portuguese islands.

Johnston fell victim to an infected sinus at Casablanca. We waited in considerable luxury in a spacious villa, once the property of Jean Maas who formerly owned a string of collaborationist newspapers.

The Allied command were using it as an overnight hotel for high officers and distinguished guests, as we seem to be classified.

At Cairo an American nose and throat man peered into Johnston's ear and instantly forbade us to fly over the 16,000 foot pass between Iran and the Soviet Union, which meant a few days' delay. Anyway

we would get a good look at ancient Cairo, which none of us had ever seen.

The next morning Eric, Joyce and I continue our trip, and that afternoon at Teheran we see our first Russians. Their planes with the big red stars on the field as we circle, and as we get out of our plane, the Russian Ambassador to Iran and a half dozen of his staff are there to welcome Johnston. They are very solemn and do not smile as they shake hands.

These solemn Russian diplomats are all in their thirties or early forties, and they wear curious, badly cut Soviet suits—somber in hue and of shoddy materials. You could take an American mail-order suit, boil it, press it lightly, and get the same effect.

Next morning Averell Harriman, American Ambassador to the Soviet Union, who has just arrived in Teheran, is taking us to Moscow in the official ambassadorial Liberator.

Most fascinating of all is a fact which I knew but not until now could believe: that in Russia there are few connected paved highways. I see wagon trails from the villages out to the fields, and sometimes faint ones from town to town, but not one strip of clean, flowing concrete or black-top.

Also I'm trying, through this plexiglass window, to see the socialist revolution as it has affected the villages, but I can't. For all this might have been here in the middle ages. If new thatched-roof huts have been built since czarist days, from 5,000 feet I can't tell them from the ancient ones. Looking down on every village, the biggest building is still the white church, built in czarist days. In twenty-five years the Soviets have constructed nothing half as big, although here and there is what might be a school or an administrative hall.

The co-pilot comes back to say we will swing low over Stalingrad. Diving, we follow the bends of the city itself as it follows the river—or rather, as once did the city. For Stalingrad is gone, and there remain only roofless walls like the snags of decayed molars staring up at us. Factories, with twisted machinery rusting under the tangle of roof girders.

Finally, just out of Moscow, we see an electric power line running from horizon to horizon. It is the first thing I have seen in the past hour that I am sure was built since 1917. But soon we see the first hard-surfaced road, and that black smudge on the horizon is Moscow itself. Then its railway yards and the smoke from its factories. Tiers of workers' apartments surround each factory and are in turn surrounded by a crazy quilt of potato patches. A spacious outdoor theater is on the river banks. The roofs of the big buildings are mottled with brown and green camouflage paint.

As we let our wheels down and begin to feel for the runway, I see, rushing past, great rows of American-built C-47s stacked on the field in orderly rows with the big star of the Red Air Force painted on each.

A considerable crowd is waiting at the airfield. First, the welcoming committee; a row of solemn Slavs in the same boiled mail-order suits we saw at Teheran. But the minute Eric Johnston emerges, a battery of lenses—movie cameras and Soviet copies of Leicas and



W. Averell Harriman

Grafxes—close in on his profile. This over, we smilingly shake hands with the unsmiling Russians and work our way through to the American reporters. Practically all of Moscow's tiny foreign newspaper colony is there. They tell us the Russians have given us an unusually big official turnout—"better than Donald Nelson's."

A big Russian in his middle thirties wanders toward me. "Is everything all right?" he wants to know. "I am Kirilov, in charge of protocol for the People's Commissariat of Foreign Trade." We did not then know that, representing this commissariat, our official host, he was able to say about our lives?

IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL Lesson

By HAROLD L. LUNDQUIST, D. D., Of The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago. Released by Western Newspaper Union.

Lesson for March 17

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THE EVERYDAY LIFE OF A PEOPLE

LESSON TEXT: Ruth 1:8-17. MEMORY SELECTION: Treat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.—Ruth 1:16.

A good life in the midst of a corrupt and confused age—such is the life of Ruth in the awful chaos of the time of the judges. One is reminded of the poet's words:

"How far that little candle throws its beams! So shines a good deed in a naughty world."

It is refreshing to have a glimpse into the home life of God-fearing people who live right in spite of the low standards around them.

Ruth knew life's sorrows and its bitter disappointments. She was a widow, destitute of all she held most dear. Yet she, because of the sweet purity of her life and her devotion to God and those she loved, became an example for others.

As we read our lesson we first hear how logic speaks, then love replies, and finally a life says the final word.

I. Logic (vv. 8-13). Tragic misfortune had visited Naomi, who with her husband and two sons had gone from Bethlehem to Moab in a time of famine. Not only had her husband died but also her two sons, who had married Gentile women, leaving three widows in one family to mourn together. Naomi craved the fellowship of her own people in her hour of trial, and she arose to return to her own land.

Her departure brought out in the two daughters-in-law the expression of kindness and loyalty which should exist in every family, but which is all too often lacking. Her own testimony concerning these girls of Moab is that they dealt kindly with her and with the dead. That word speaks volumes. There is so little genuine kindness in the world.

Both Orpah and Ruth went with her on the way, protesting their loyal purpose to go with her all the way.

Naomi met their kind offer with the only sensible answer. There was no point in leaving their homes and loved ones and going with her to another country.

Logic is so conclusive and so final. Yes, and sometimes it reaches the wrong conclusion. Love has something to say about the matter. Let us listen to its voice.

II. Love (v. 14). Orpah loved her mother-in-law. That is evident. She wept at the thought of parting, and was affectionate in her final farewell. We must not be too quick to censure her. She did what Naomi told her to do. She responded to her love for home and kinfolk. She gave up reluctantly, but she did give up and turn back.

How glad we are that Ruth showed a deeper love. "Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clave unto her." There is a difference. Such love cannot be denied. It is the most precious possession that a man can have, apart from his fellowship with God. The love of a devoted father or mother, of a noble helpmate, or of a little boy or girl, these are the things that really make life worth while.

Life has put into the hands of many of us the opportunity of showing just that kind of love in these postwar days. A boy comes home crippled and disabled and a loyal sweetheart shows her undiminished love for him, even though he can never again be what he had expected to be. That is love. A mother and a father take to their hearts a promising young son who returns from overseas with a shattered nervous system, and give their lives anew to him. One could go on and on with such illustrations, but what we are saying is that it takes more than a kiss and some tears to express real love. "Ruth clave unto her." Such love expresses itself in a

III. Life (vv. 15-17). Literature knows no more beautiful declaration of faith and devotion than these words, and nothing could improve on it. Lord Tennyson said of the book of Ruth that "no art can improve on it." And of these verses another said, "We cannot hope to contribute to literature a sentence so exquisite and thrilling as that into which Ruth poured the full measure of a noble heart, but we can imitate her devotion" (William Jennings Bryan).

The conclusion of the story finds Ruth married to Boaz, her kinsman-redeemer, and "living happily ever after," as a true romance should end. God gives happy endings.

Here we find the right attitude toward marriage, something which needs emphasis in our day. Above all, as we remember that Ruth was an ancestress of Jesus, we see anew the importance of clean, noble, godly living. What will the generations come to be able to say about our lives?

NEWS BEHIND THE NEWS

By PAUL MALLON

Released by Western Newspaper Union.

NEW STATE POLICY RETREAT TO RUSSIA

WASHINGTON. — In complete official privacy, the state department has spent some weeks getting up a new statement of American foreign policy. The only great question of policy, of course, is how to treat Russia. On this, the paper was not illuminating in its original form.

The Byrnes policy established at Moscow and London since mid-December, has been substantially this: Press no point which would be offensive to Russian claims. Retreat on policy as much as possible and accept Russian contentions. The apparent but not professed purpose has been to entice Russia out of her nationalistic isolation into dealing in the world of affairs.

This has kept world news rather calm but events behind the news, particularly from Europe, are working up boldly and may break sensationally. Do not for instance, let yourself be currently misled into believing the domination of the French government by Communists and Socialists is a permanent arrangement, or that the name of De Gaulle will remain forever in retirement from French politics.

Give greater notice than has been given to the victory of the Belgian Catholic party over both Communists and Socialists. Belgium is half French, with all the same elements of French politics in miniature. Indeed throughout Europe, even in Yugoslavia, the resistance to Communism is taking the only effective form yet evidenced in the gathering together of Catholic elements.

I have heard American statesmen say these christian groups are the only ones in the world today who know how to resist Communism, ideologically or politically. These groups have a firm ideology themselves.

REDS PUT ENGLAND ON DEFENSIVE

Britain was the first nation to talk up to the Soviets, but the diplomatic resistance of Bevin at the London UNO conference was tactical rather than formidable. The Russians had raised the question of British influence in Greece, primarily to cover their own tracks in Poland, the Balkans, Iran, Turkey and other places where they are attempting to extend their influence. They forced Britain to the defensive by raising this question. After accomplishing this purpose, and succeeding in getting UNO to allow Moscow to deal separately with a pro-Communist Iranian prime minister installed at Teheran for the purpose — Russia withdrew her Greek charges against Bevin.

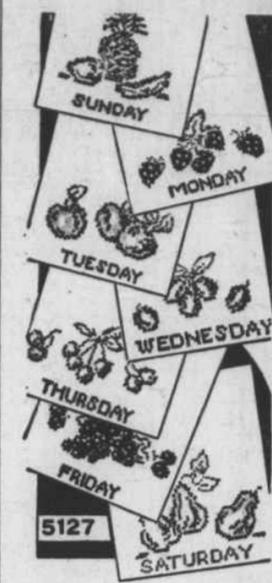
The common current belief that Bevin may have found a way of treating with Moscow therefore is unjustified. He twice passed "the lie" to them and they backed down, true enough. But when you add up the results, you will see Russia won the action she wanted from UNO, while Bevin won nothing except the red herring.

President Truman, meanwhile, is recognizing that the army seems to know how to get along with the Soviets, without losing their shirts, better than our timid and confused diplomats. He chose General Marshall to go to China to get Chiang into a peace with the Communists; and now he selected General Eisenhower's chief of staff to be ambassador to Moscow, instead of a diplomat or politician.

Army men, by nature, should be more interested in results than in the political ideas of justice for this and that, which have so confused our diplomats in recent years. (Latest example: Joe Davies, who thinks Russian spying on Canada justified, but no doubt would cry out against any Canadian spying on Russia, whereas any realist knows all nations have always spied on all others and always will.)

This new reliance on army realism is the most hopeful development in American foreign policy, in contrast to these childish but pompous accumulations of vaporous generalities the state department plans to put out under the claim that they are great state pronouncements. I mean it is most important, if a recent pronouncement by Mrs. Roosevelt does not outmeasure it. Mrs. Roosevelt has been recognized as a spokesman for the class-thought which pressured Byrnes into the appeasement policy, causing him to retreat.

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Household Hints

Doughnuts will crack and brown before they are cooked inside if the fat in which they are fried is not hot enough or if the "sinks" contain too much flour.

To clean an egg beater quickly, give it a few turns in cold water, then in hot water, and finally a few turns in the air. Keep cogs and wheels out of the water.

Fingernail polish thickens all too soon but you can delay it by storing in the refrigerator.

If the lid of your pressure cooker sticks or if the cooker leaks steam, rub the edges of the lid and kettle with cooking oil before sealing it.

Laces and embroidery should be pressed on the wrong side. Place a Turkish towel under embroidery so designs will stand out.

Cook a piece of salt pork with green string beans for good flavor without the addition of butter.

"THREE O'CLOCK... AND I HAVEN'T SLEPT A WINK"

WAKEFUL NIGHTS—how the time drags! Minutes seem like hours, we worry over things done and left undone. After such a night, we get up in the morning more tired than when we went to bed. Nervous Tension causes many a wakeful night and wakeful nights are likely to cause Nervous Tension. Next time you feel Nervous and Kept Up or begin to toss, tumble and worry after you get to bed—try

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