

# REPORT ON THE RUSSIANS.....



W. L. White

## INSTALLMENT SEVEN

Our Leningrad trip comes to a climax with a big dinner given in Eric's honor by Popkov, whose title I suppose would be Mayor of Leningrad. Anyway, he is head of the local Soviet and more important still, he is for this region Stalin's right bower in the organization of the Communist Party, second only to Zdanov. Like an American city boss, he runs the town, regardless of what title he holds.

Popkov apologizes because his wife and family were evacuated and cannot meet us. It is the first time this has happened in Russia. So far, these important Bolsheviks have entertained us like Moslem princes—without mentioning their hidden families.

Then at Eric's request he tells of the siege. He was in command the whole time.

The palace dining hall and table were what you would expect, something out of an eighteenth century set in the movies. We were impressed and showed it, and this



Signboard on way to Viipuri.

pleased Popkov, who had settled into his great throne at the head of the table.

The dinner now began to jog along. Popkov turned loose with a couple of Soviet funny stories, one of which was mildly dirty and the other mildly anti-Semitic. I begin with the latter.

"It seems," said Popkov, or rather the interpreter for him, "that the First Imperialist War of 1914-1917 created such a rumptus that it penetrated Heaven, so the Lord God sent Saint Peter down to find out what was the matter. Next day he got a telegram: URGENT. NOT HAVING PROPERLY COUNTER-SIGNED TRAVEL PERMIT HAVE BEEN THROWN IN JAIL BY THE CHEKA. PLEASE OBTAIN RELEASE EARLIEST. PETER."

"The Lord God sent Saint Paul, and next day got this telegram: WHILE MAKING INQUIRIES FOR PETER ENCOUNTERED CHEKA POLICE AND NOT HAVING PROPER IDENTITY PAPERS AM HELD IN JAIL FOR INVESTIGATION. IMPORTANT SEND HELP AT ONCE. PAUL."

"So the Lord God sent Saint Jacob, this also being a common Jewish name in Russia, and the following day opened this telegram: PETER AND PAUL RELEASED WITH APOLOGIES SITUATION COMPLETELY IN HAND. AWAIT YOUR FURTHER ORDERS. JACOB, CHIEF OF THE CHEKA."

Popkov, by now, was reasonably mellow, leaning back in his chair. He said he was delighted to have us with him. He hoped we were learning about Russia, which may be we hadn't understood. Now, for instance, he said, there were some things he certainly didn't understand about our country.

And the principal thing, he said, equating it as this: Here we were, fighting a war together, or anyway Russia was fighting, and maybe we would be soon. But in spite of that, we let a Fascist Press exist in America, clearly fascist because it frequently criticized Russia. That, he said, he certainly could not understand; why we let Russia and her leader be criticized in America.

Now, of course, this was Eric's show, but I wanted to handle this one and signaled as much to Eric. He gave me a nod to go ahead.

I said I could well understand his confusion and perhaps could clear it up because I was not a business man but ran a newspaper. America was a free country, and therefore had a free press. And while most Americans supported both President Roosevelt and Russia, all of us would fight anyone who tried to stop criticism of them. Because a country where criticism is dead is not free. This right to criticize, I said, is the most important freedom for which we are now fighting.

Then a curious thing happened. Some of Popkov's henchmen at the table were old-timers—men in their fifties and sixties. They were smiling and nodding approval. One thin old man even had his hands poised to clap, but then he looked at Popkov and he didn't clap.

At this point Joyce got up and said that in a free country we always criticized our friends. We had been supporting and criticizing the British ever since this war began in 1939, and we saw no reason why we shouldn't do the same with Russia.

Then Eric got up and smoothly settled everything, freedom of the press, Russia, England, and even Popkov, who had been a little bit taken aback by it all, and who now said that this freedom to criticize was a most interesting thing, and he hoped we didn't mind that he had himself used some of this American freedom to criticize America.

So then he filled up his glass and mine, and grinning, said he suspected me of being a khitre moujik, a back-handed Russian slang compliment, which means "sly farmer"—one who knows more than he appears to.

So I said I was sure he was a khitre proletarian, and after that we got along very well. We all liked Popkov. He meets you head-on. He is tough but this is a tough country and only tough men can ride this broncho. Talkers don't last. Kerensky and Trotsky weren't quick enough on the draw. These combination city manager-Little Caesar types are the only ones who can handle it.

We start for the Finnish front and the reporters, against all experience, are hoping. All previous front trips have gone no further than the headquarters of a general. But Eric Johnston, even in America, was promised a look at the fighting.

We drive over one of Russia's few paved highways—from Leningrad to Viipuri, until 1940 Finland's second largest city. Russia took it by the treaty of that year.

In 1941 the Finns again reoccupied it, continued to their old frontier and then dug in a few kilometers beyond. In these trenches they stayed during 1942, 1943 and half of 1944.

They were there until a few weeks ago, when the Russian drive easily crashed through their first carefully prepared defense line, and then their second. We are told that they have now been pushed back to their third, just outside Viipuri.

The Russians profited greatly in experience by that little war. They were badly mauled in the first months of fighting because, being overly impressed by the success of German tank tactics in flat, treeless Poland, they had tried to copy them in Finland, a rolling, heavily forested country studded with lakes and swamps.

After early setbacks they corrected their errors. They abandoned all open tactics, brought up their big guns (which are excellent and which they possess in great numbers), banked them hub to hub in front of the Mannerheim line and blew it to bits, after which the Finnish infantry could offer only token opposition to the Red Army masses.

On June 22, 1941, Hitler attacked Russia. As his armies crossed the border he spoke over the radio. Several paragraphs were devoted to praise of Finland's 1940 resistance to Russia. Germany was ready to defend the integrity of little Finland, he said. And even now German troops were on Finnish soil.

Technically this was true. It had been explained to the Finns, who had no foreknowledge of the attack on Russia, that these German divisions were only en route to Narvik.

But the Russians jumped to the conclusion (as Hitler intended they should) that Finland was already in the war. The Finnish version of events is the Russians immediately began bombing Finnish cities, that the Finns sent unanswered notes of protest. Historians will settle this point. At present we only know that the Finnish declaration of war on the Soviets came four days after Hitler's attack, indicating the obvious reluctance of many Finns.

It was a beautiful June day, and the countryside was vividly green. The land is rolling, with patches of woodland and not many houses. We share the road with truckloads of Red Army boys rolling toward the front. None of them seemed to have steel helmets, also rare in Moscow.

Then we pass a curious sight—to our Western eyes—the wounded coming back from the front—heads in bloody bandages, arms in slings, but jolting along in horse-drawn carts. They are the kind we often whisk back across the Atlantic by plane.

Maybe it was not typical. From three creaking wooden cartloads it is not safe to assume that human suffering is so cheap in Russia that you take a man to battle by truck but, once his fighting usefulness is gone his time is not valuable, and a horse cart is fast enough. Only there were the trucks and the carts on the only front I saw.

We mount the crest of a hill, and below us in the valley and on the hill opposite we see the outworks of the Finnish defense line, behind which they camped from the fall of 1941 until June 12, 1944—about a week ago. The valley is thick with barbed-wire spun like spider web on a stubby forest of waist-high posts. The green hill beyond is scarred with zigzag trenches. A number of Russian tanks pass, big ones and good-looking, on their way up to the front.

Behind us comes a dull roar and we look up to see a formation of Stormoviks on their way toward the Viipuri front.

Finally at about noon we arrive at the little village of Terijoki, which I had visited almost five years before when it was a front-line town on the other side of the Russo-Finnish lines.

Kirilov leaves us to visit the local commander who will decide how much farther and by what road we may go to the front.

A quarter of an hour later, he comes back and imperturbably motions us to follow. We drive to the outskirts of Terijoki.

Kirilov strolls over. But the front, we ask.

"The commander has said today we can go no farther. There would be danger."

We argue, plead, expostulate. We express dismay, chagrin, consternation. We point out that we have been nowhere near the front.

"The commander has said no further. Now we picnic."

The Soviet standard of living is a shock to anyone from the Western countries. During the world depression, a number of young English and American workers, intellectually inclined, took passage to the Soviet Union because in this land there is always work for everyone.

Swept away by the enthusiasm of the first few weeks, they surrendered their British or American passports and took out Soviet citizenship. Within a year practically all of them were back, clamoring at the doors of their former embassies, pleading for help to get out of Russia.

It was, of course, impossible. They had freely given up their passports and with them their rights, and under any interpretation of international law they were indistinguishable from any other Soviet citizen, bound to their assigned jobs and with no hope of leaving.

And when they exercised their former Anglo-Saxon rights to protest about living conditions they got the treatment meted out to any other Soviet citizen who stirs up discontent: they were arrested and thrown into labor battalions. All trace of them was lost and no longer could they plead with their embassies in Moscow.

But one man's family made persistent inquiries for news of him, and his legation brought pressure to bear on the Russians for at least some information. So after some months, it was announced that the man had died in his labor camp, that according to law his effects had been sold, and the legation was given a check for 15 roubles to be turned over to his next-of-kin abroad. These relatives, however, would not believe that he was dead, and darkly suspected that it was worth those 15 roubles to the Soviet government to be rid of the tedious inquiries.

Americans frequently express amazement that the Red Army



Bit of Old Russia in Finn town of Viipuri in 1939.

should have been able to resist the German attack, and feel its exploits are a miracle.

The Red Army is good. Russians make good soldiers. They are well disciplined, competently led, and equipped with good rifles and plenty of heavy artillery which they handle with skill. But this is not all. Soldiers must be young, and the military strength of any nation is determined not only by its total population, but by the number of boys in their late teens and early twenties.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

## 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 April 28

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#### DECISIVE MOMENTS IN PETER'S LIFE

LESSON TEXT—John 1:42; Mark 8:27-29; Luke 22:54-57, 61, 62; John 21:15-17. MEMORY SELECTION—We ought to obey God rather than men.—Acts 5:29.

Men are of primary interest to God. Our Lord Jesus has always been concerned about men, eager that they should be filled with all the fullness of His love and the beauty of His grace. He it is who stands by in the hour of weakness and failure to give renewed strength to His repentant child.

The life of Peter runs the gamut of human feelings from the height of joy and assurance to the depth of despair. He learned many of his lessons the hard way—by a stubborn struggle in the school of experience—but he came out into a glorious and triumphant faith in Christ.

I. A New Name and a Great Confession (John 1:42; Mark 8:27-29).

When a man comes to Jesus in true faith and devotion he becomes a changed man. The Bible speaks of it as a new birth, a radical change from darkness to light, a going from death to life.

A name is important in its bearing on the individual's life. How often parents hinder or embarrass a child with an unworthy name, or a foolish imitation of the name of some giddy individual in the public eye, but lacking real character.

Simon, which means "hearing" was completed by the name Peter meaning "rock," a token of this change of direction of life. The Lord gave it to him, and he knew all about the man, his past, present and future, the longings of his heart which were to be fulfilled in service for Him.

The great confession of Christ (Mark 8), which became the foundation of the church (see Matt. 16:16), was the expression of the heart of this spiritually changed man.

"Thou art the Christ!" Such is the conviction and confession of the man or woman with the reborn life!

II. An Awful Failure and a Deep Repentance (Luke 22:54-57, 61, 62).

Peter had ventured himself in declaring his everlasting loyalty to the Lord. His old self-satisfaction and boastfulness had overcome him. He had even come to the place where he felt capable of telling the Lord that He was mistaken.

He made the grave mistake of following the Lord "afar off" (v. 54). He did not intend to deny the Lord, but he had allowed himself to get into a position where it was hard to stand up for Him.

The lesson for us is evident. If we want our faith to be steady and true in the hour of the enemy's attack we must not get far from the Lord, nor may we find our fellowship with this Christ-denying world.

Peter's strong denial of our Lord, his use of language unbecoming to a believer, his quick falsehoods—all these mark the thing he did for what he knew it to be when he heard the cock crow—a terrible sin against the Christ.

The look of Jesus doubtless carried conviction, but one somehow feels that it was even more a look of tenderness and of assurance of the Lord's promised prayers for him.

The thing which brought the tears of repentance was the remembrance of the Lord's own words (v. 61). It is the recollection of the Word of God which brings a man to his senses spiritually.

Peter's repentance was real. So we find that Peter was restored and reinstated in his place of service for the Lord.

III. A Complete Restoration and an Obedient Service (John 21:15-17).

Jesus met Peter on the first Easter morning, so he was assured of forgiveness. But Peter and the others had returned to their old life as fishermen. They seem to have lost their vision, or had become discouraged.

But the Lord had not forgotten them. He appeared and told them where to catch fish, and then we have the lovely scene around the fire as they breakfasted together.

There it was that the Lord met Peter, and as he had denied Christ thrice he is asked to thrice declare his devotion to Him. He is standing by Christ's fire now. There is no hesitancy and no uncertainty in his vision now.

The man who thus declared his readiness to serve Christ to the end had many an opportunity to prove the sincerity of that profession. He met persecution and imprisonment, but to every effort of man to close his mouth or to change his witness he had the simple reply of absolute obedience to the Lord.

Tradition tells us that this faithful servant finally led Peter to a martyr's death, but he was ready even for that. So we see a life made over, made powerful, made glorious by God through the matchless grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. He can do it for you, too. Will you let Him?



### NO PLAN FOR ARMY

WASHINGTON. — After the last war, we let our best officers leave the army, were content to make the army a refuge for hundreds of misfits who couldn't adjust themselves in other walks of life, and settled down to complete complacency regarding the armed forces.

Usually history repeats itself. After this war, however, there is a little less complacency regarding the future — thanks to Russia. But there is almost as much do-nothingness regarding the internal organization of the army.

President Truman has now demanded that we have a big peacetime conscript army. But aside from Secretary of War Patterson's healthy board for probing caste, no steps have been taken to reorganize the army's long out-dated system of promotions, its methods of selecting officers, and, perhaps most important of all, its system of eliminating misfits.

A thorough re-organization of the army might make it more enticing to good men and thereby eliminate conscription. Even Sen. Chan Gurney of South Dakota, most ardent conscription enthusiast, will admit that a volunteer army is more efficient than one composed of men who are forced to serve.

### COULD USE HORSE MEAT

An important debate has been taking place among food experts inside the administration regarding the use of horse meat for feeding Europe.

Horse meat is a type of food which Americans know little about. Within Europe it is standard diet and certain countries, especially France and Belgium, have repeatedly informed the United States that they would like to buy more horse meat here. If two and a half billion pounds of horse meat could be sold to Europe — which is the amount available in the U. S. A. — it would take care of most of Europe's feeding problems and eliminate any need for U. S. A. rationing.

Such a program has been urged by UNRRA officials and also by some experts in the army and navy. However, the plan has run up against several snags, chiefly that of U. S. meat packers.

The big packers don't want the American public to get the idea that horse meat is processed in their plants. They fear that the suspicion would linger in the consumer's mind. However, Harry Reed, who does most of the meat procurement for UNRRA in the department of agriculture, leans toward the big meat packers and they never have wanted small state packers to get into the inter-state business.

### HORSE MEAT FEEDS ZOOS

Another source of opposition is expected to come from the many horse lovers throughout the country who probably would claim that the United States was being denuded of horses.

Officials point out, however, that several hundred horses are slaughtered weekly all over the United States to feed the zoos of the nation. Furthermore, the United States today has a larger surplus of horses than ever before in history. Agriculture department estimates are that three million surplus horses are now on the ranges and farms of the country. The grain which they alone consume would go a long way toward feeding Europe.

Officials estimate that these three million surplus horses would supply a total of two and a half billion pounds of meat, also give fats for soap, together with hides to ease the scarcity of leather.

NOTE—While prices of almost everything tended upward during the war, the price of horses did not. Government buyers purchasing draft animals for UNRRA report that the country has thousands of four to six-year-old horses which have never been harnessed. Farmers haven't had time to break them in, would like to sell them if prices were right.

### BUMPTIOUS GENERAL VAUGHN

Twelve years ago, famous Filipino Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo sent President Roosevelt a 9½-foot carved table of Philippine hardwood designed to serve as a cabinet table. The other morning, however, Brig. Gen. Harry Vaughn, White House military aide, hurrying through the White House lobby, bumped his knee on a buffalo. Promptly the four carved buffalo heads came off.

### CAPITAL CHAFF

Secretary of Labor Schwollenbach is secretly considering resigning from the cabinet, in order to again run for the senate.

Bernard Baruch is hopping mad at the state department for releasing its report on atomic energy before he, Baruch, could make his own investigation. Baruch has admitted privately that the state department report is an excellent one. However, it's not known as the "Baruch report"—which is important to Bernie.

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### Locks in Large Hotels Operated by Seven Keys

Door locks for large hotels are complex and costly because they are operated by seven different keys, says Collier's. Besides the regular key for the guest, a hotel lock has a submaster key for the chamber maid, a master key for the supervisor of the floor, a grand master for the housekeeper and a great grand master for the manager, the last being the only key which will open a door that has been locked by the sixth or seventh key—the "display" key given a guest who does not want any employee to enter his room, and the "shutout" key which locks out the "nonpaying" guest.

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