

Impressions From Twenty Days Behind The Iron Curtain

By ASA T. SPAULDING

Upon leaving the United States on September 1, 1969, for a twenty one day People-to-People Goodwill Tour which would take me to Russia, Poland, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, I tried to divest myself of preconceived notions of these countries. I wanted to be able, in so far as possible, to view them through objective eyes and to see the good as well as the bad, and what I might learn from their histories that is relevant to today's problems. When I returned on September 22, I brought with me the feeling that I had seen some of both, and that I had a better understanding of what is happening in the world today, and why.

Many times have I asked myself: "Is the glass half-empty or half-full? Although one's conclusions are influenced by his previous conditioning, based upon my impressions from twenty days behind the "iron curtain", and previous experience, I am inclined to think the glass is both.

Having visited all the continents save one, Australia, and attempted to get as much of an insight as possible into the history and development of the many countries and their peoples, and the various stages of their evolution, I have not found a single nation that has yet filled the glass of freedom for all its people. Anywhere one goes, he still finds varying degrees of lack of freedom, be it: from want; from fear; of speech; of movement; and/or of worship.

My overriding concern now is whether or not we are making the necessary progress toward filling the glass that holds the hopes, aspirations, and security of the peoples not only of our nation but also of the world. One is contingent upon the other if there is to be peace in the world. ENROUTE

After brief stops in Oslo and Stockholm, we landed in Helsinki, Finland at 1:30 p.m. on September 2, and were met by Ambassador Val Peterson. After refreshing ourselves, we made a sightseeing tour of Helsinki which has a population of approximately 570,000 and engages extensively in agriculture as well as industry. One of the largest industries in Finland is shipbuilding, especially of ice-breakers.

The market we visited was laden with agricultural products, and meats of every type with choicest of cuts. Seafood, fresh and dried, was plentiful.

The monument to Sibelius is a stainless steel organ in a beautiful circular park.

The city abounds in schools and colleges, mostly of new construction. We saw one building constructed of copper but with the appearance of wood. The buildings are in use the year-round. When school is out, the buildings (including dormitories) are used for international conventions and conferences.

45% of the population is under 16 years of age, according to our guide.

We left Helsinki at 7:35 p.m., September 2, for Leningrad, our first stop behind the "curtain." We arrived at 9:35 p.m., and cleared Customs without difficulty and with no inspection of our luggage. The officials were "correctly respectful."

Hotel Sowjetskaja (Soviet-sky) where we stopped was Leningrad's newest and most modern. The lobby is spacious but scantily furnished, and has a small snack bar in one corner which serves principally pastries and coffee.

My room was quite clean with wall to wall red carpet, one chair, a stoop approximately a fourteen inch board extending from wall to wall under the windows served as a desk, there were a desk and a bed lamp, a plywood closet against the wall with 3 wooden clothes hangers, a tile bathroom with tub about 30 inches in depth and a hand shower spray, one hand towel and a very thin bath towel, a small

piece of soap which was not used (had my own), one small waste basket, toilet tissue glazed on one side and rough on the other, constituting the furnishings.

The bed seemed to be of plywood or maple veneer with a thin padded mattress without springs and sinking in the middle. There was a telephone, and when I turned on the radio, popular American music was being broadcast.

THE CITY OF LENINGRAD
Leningrad is a beautiful, historic and cultural city, restored with such integrity that the extent of its destruction during World War II hardly seems possible. The City and its tragedies and triumphs is a story within itself. Its survival of the "900 Day Siege" by Hitler is perhaps the grimmest and most heroic story ever told, and Harrison Salisbury tells it so well.

The city was founded by Tsar Peter the Great, among swamps and scanty Northern vegetation, on marshy mainland and numerous islets of the Neva River Delta; and for two hundred years was the capital of the vast Russian Empire. Eminent architects, sculptors, artists, and hundreds of thousands of peasants were brought from all over the country to make Leningrad one of the most beautiful cities in the world.

When it was established in 1703, it was named St. Petersburg, and was so called until the First World War, 1914, when it was changed to Petrograd; and then in 1924, to Leningrad in honor of Lenin. It is a city of revolutionary traditions. It was here in 1825, under the leadership of the Decembrists, that the revolutionaries from among the Russian nobility and Russian troops rose in arms against the autocratic government.

BLOODY SUNDAY
In 1905, workers filled the streets to ask the tsar to make their life easier and to remove some of the worst injustices. Though completely unarmed, they were shot down by troops before the tsar's palace. "That

day went down in history as the "Bloody Sunday" which sparked off the First Russian Revolution."

THE 1917 OCTOBER REVOLUTION

In February 1917, the tsarist government of Nicholas the Second was deposed and Russia was proclaimed a republic. And later in the year, October 25, the revolutionary workers stormed the Winter Palace; and for the first time in history the working people of Russia won full political power in the country.

The October socialist Revolution established the socialist or state ownership of the means of production and of consumer goods, and proclaimed all the wealth in the country "people's property", and which has so remained.

PALACES OF TSARS NOW OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
The palaces of the tsars are now public buildings, museums and great cultural centers. The Winter Palace has 1052 rooms. The Hermitage is one of the world's leading treasure stores of art and attracts tourists from all over the world. It has such a collection of art pieces that it would take three years for one to look at each piece.

MUSEUM OF ARCHITECTURE
Many consider it worth a trip to Leningrad to see the wrought-iron railings of the parks, gardens and bridges. The most common architectural styles are baroque and classical; however, Gothic Cathedrals, and replicas of the Palace of Doges in Venice, and even the Tamberlane Tomb in Central Asia are found also. This has caused the city on the Neva River (Leningrad) to be referred to as "a museum of architecture." It is also said to be the first European city constructed according to a plan.

INTERNATIONAL HOUSE OF FRIENDSHIP
At 3:00 p.m. on September 3, we attended a seminar at the International House of Friendship, originally built by a tsar as a palace for his Mistress. Its size, furnishings and splendor are almost indescrib-



LITTLE QUEEN — Vecoda Elaine Lockhart, 11-month-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Lockhart, Jr. won first prize in the annual baby contest sponsored by the Junior Department of the Durham Ushers Union held Sunday, May 17, at St. John Baptist Church.

About 99 per cent of Nebraska's land area, or 48 million acres, is devoted to farming or ranching.

able. Here we were given a general outline of the system of education in the U. S. S. R. It appears that the Russians have done an exceptional job in this area and universal education. This was attested to by some knowledgeable educators in our group.

COMPULSORY EDUCATION
The literate group was reported to us to have been almost eliminated in the Revolution thereby leaving primarily an uneducated peasant population. Compulsory education was instituted and in 13 years - by 1930 - illiteracy was practically eliminated in the younger group. The illiteracy rate in Russia now is reported to be practically zero. Dropouts are not permitted. If a student leaves one school for good reasons, he is sent to another more suitable to his talents.

Education is free on all levels. 15% of the national budget is now going for education and 20% is the goal.

BALLET
At 7:30 p.m. we witnessed the Russian Ballet, "The Swan," at the Academic Maly Theatre of Opera and Ballet. The dancing and the music by the orchestra were superb. The whole experience was a Feast for the soul.
(TO BE CONTINUED)

Raleigh and Durham Ministers Endorse Oxford Citizens' Actions

OXFORD, N. C. — The Raleigh-Durham Interdenominational Minister Alliance in a unanimous decision endorsed the action of the citizen com-

mittee of Oxford, North Carolina. It went on record as denouncing the wanton killing of Henry Marrow and of the causes that gave rise to the incident. They also noted that a great lack is shown in the law enforcement department in that no immediate arrests were made even though the killing was supposed to have been reported to the police department.

The ministers expressed deep concern for the family of the deceased person, for the family of the guilty person or persons and concern for those responsible for the deed.

They pledged themselves to helping to create a society where hate which breeds murder and killing will not be a

common place thing, but where men can realize the brotherhood of man. The ministers expressed a willingness to support all those who are struggling to erase hate in our society.

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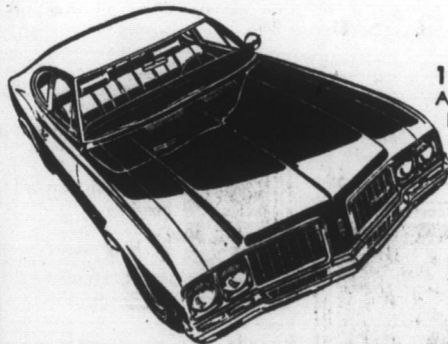
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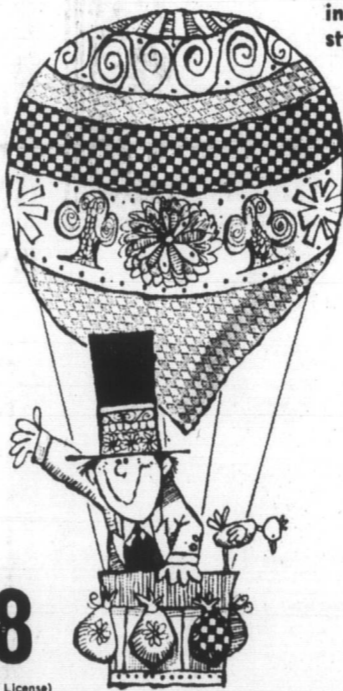
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