

# HOW HERRIOT CAME HOME

BY WILLIAM BOLITHO

From the *Outlook*, August 30  
(LONDON SEMI-RADICAL WEEKLY)

[THE graphic account of Premier Herriot's return from London to Paris after the acceptance of the Dawes Report is no longer current news; but it has not ceased to be a document of Paris sentiment.]

WHEN it saw M. Herriot standing in the doorway of his compartment, the inconstant crowd at the Gare St. Lazare rushed the detective cordon, like a mob ready for murder. The faces of his Ministers smiling out of the train windows paled and ducked back for an instant. But M. Herriot, braver or better diviner, abandoned the brass handrail and lifted his hand, palm upward, with a large sweep that meant conquest and joy and a rosy, prosperous triumph.

Three months ago Paris was for war and Poincaréism. Now at M. Herriot's wave the Parisians are yelling, formidably, '*Vive la Paix!*' The vanguard — the hatless, breathless first fringe, with flowing fancy ties and desperate notebooks that even a hand-to-hand crowd cannot wrench from them — are the journalists. In lunatic imitation of a band of schoolboys round a master who has some vitally interesting lesson to impart, they ring M. Herriot round, knowing that to forget the least banality he may utter will mean their ruin. The young, the cubs at their first big story, fight unashamed for the nearest place. The old hands, red-faced, panting, indignant, and despairing, use their

weight, and pass the fragments of speech they can catch to the confrères of their own age in camaraderie.

The rest of the ear-splitting mass that is struggling for inches of forward room down the platform, down the complete length of the immense Hall of Lost Footsteps, now covers the cobbled courtyards a quarter of a mile apart and every street that gives into them. It is an uncontrollable, boundless horde, yelling for Herriot, for Peace, for excitement, most of all for a better sight of what is going on in the centre of their dark multitude. Outside the interlocked ring of journalists are twenty thousand Radical fanatics, army-haters, election victors who have come from the suburbs and the city to make Herriot's arrival a success, whatever he may have brought in that bulged wallet, of worn brown leather, that hooks on the doorhinge and impedes his descent for a moment on to the platform. They are fanatics for their party, for their chief, in this furnace of enthusiasm. The party whips, the party organization has brought them to wait and cheer. They cheer as they would vote, for Herriot, for continuance of their party in power, for sweets of office, for destruction of their foes, decisively, plumping for Peace. *Vi, Vah, La . . .*

Round this kernel, there is an enormous shapeless rind of the Public — women, newsboys, bourgeois, typists, Communists, business men, white-

haired Pacifists, enthusiasts, indifferent; in the main good Paris people who were glad before they came that peace was made and the Ruhr expedition over. Now in the infection of resonant enthusiasm inside, which is shaking the sooty steel girders and rattling the dirty glass of the vast hall, by contagion of numbers, by mere contact with that new cry, which for ten years has never been heard in Paris, 'Long Live Peace,' they have been set on fire. A brown scuffling knot appears in the station entrance, MM. Herriot and Clementel; and hot-faced journalists are forced, in spite of their resistance, away from the telephone booths where they want to go. The whole courtyard salutes them: 'Herriot, Herriot, *Vive la Paix!*'

The train had been late. When it arrived it was past six. It is the hour when hundreds of thousands of working Parisians catch the trains to the outer suburbs. The whole of the St. Lazare contingent had been caught in the first flood of Peace greeters. Their wives and allotments were waiting, but there was no protesting. For whole minutes together the composite impatient mob as one man, with a voice like a cyclone, acclaimed the new gods, Herriot and Peace.

But in the pauses one heard another sound, shrill, hateful, that cuts like a wire whip—the whistle of protest. Sharper than any other sound, in a theatre, when a poor singer has missed her note, is this Paris whistle, bitter as Hell. It ripped the monotony of the shouting. M. Herriot, on the steps, hears it, lifts up his broad, gratified face, changing his look. He can do more than make peace, he can fight—this good-humored, honest-tempered man. He stares down, searching the enemy, challenging, with a half-frown. The

police, who have pushed next him through the routed reporters, follow his look—severe men as broad-backed as their supreme chief, not fellows to trifle. A girl who is standing in a niche among the cement pillars staring, quiet, catches their eye. 'Move away,' says the nearest Sûreté man, in that tone they have. She had not whistled, I am sure, but she had not applauded. A face and allure like the Berton girl—thin, delicate, disquieting. 'What's up with you? I'm doing nothing,' she answered, in the accent of the Barrier. The detective motioned with his hand. She had the habit of obeying: in a second she was lost in the vague masses behind.

The rest, hearing the thing that had changed the scene, paused a little, as if puzzled and at a loss, then began again, a degree louder. The acclamation rose irresistible, drowning, while it lasted, all other sounds. From the station to his car and far down after its smooth back as it disappeared by degrees, held up by the outliers of the crowd, or by the flow of traffic that had now again begun in the lower streets, that cheer pursued him. Paris had given the man who gave up the Ruhr a bigger reception even than President Wilson had in 1919—the most magnificent applause from his fellow creatures any man ever had in our times before, I suppose. Leave it at that. M. Herriot's reception made all that Poincaré or the war men had received before small, tepid affairs. But in the intervals, when the crowd, hoarse and tired, slackened its cry, there was always—piercing, hateful, reckless—that shrill counter-music from the hidden corners of the whistling dissenters, monosyllabic, indisputable, punctuating with menace the chorus of '*Vive la Paix!*'

# WHEN I WAS TSAR

BY ALBERT ENGSTRÖM

From *Strix*, March 27  
(STOCKHOLM HUMOROUS WEEKLY)

I CHANCE to resemble the late Russian Tsar, and this resemblance on one occasion nearly caused me trouble.

It was in 1905. I was a guest on a steam-yacht that dropped anchor late one evening off a small city across the Baltic. It was the first time I had ever been in Russia, and none of our party had ever visited before this little, out-of-the-way, harbor town.

Rowing ashore, we entered a restaurant where a majority of the guests seemed more or less the worse for liquor, and champagne was served freely at most of the tables. Among the diners were several officers, including an elderly, gray-bearded general, covered with decorations, who orated continuously. At times this gentleman seemed to be furious, and gesticulated and rolled his eyes; but a moment after one of these explosions he would fall on his neighbor's neck and kiss him loudly on both cheeks. Another uniformed gentleman in the same party was the city chief of police. He was evidently the host of the evening, and I have often seen soberer officials. Suddenly all the officers rose and reeled into the next room, and the door was slammed behind them. After a while we began to hear songs, roars, and yells.

As we were paying our bill, preparatory to leaving, a gruesome shriek rose above the general tumult in the private room. For a moment there was absolute silence in our part of the restaurant.

The next instant the head-waiter and two garçons rushed forward and opened the door. Inside a wild fist-fight was under way, and the chief of police and the old general were rolling on the floor under a billiard table, trying to choke each other. We had barely time to grasp the situation before the door was banged shut again.

The next day we put on our best clothes and went ashore to visit an old historic castle, which is the city's ornament. It was a Sunday of brilliant sunshine, and people in holiday raiment were promenading along the quay. Before we landed someone proposed: 'Why not let Albert, who looks like the Tsar, play the part of the Russian autocrat? Here in this off corner of the world no one has seen the Tsar. Only a few Russians have ever been near enough to the monarch to recognize him with certainty. But they all have seen pictures of him, and Albert looks like him to a dot. With a little dignity on his part and deference from us, he ought to play the part with success.'

All agreed to this. I was helped ashore with slave-like devotion by my companions, who stood at attention when I passed them on my way to the city. I walked slowly and with dignity a few steps ahead of the others. I allowed one of them to hand me a cigarette. While it was being lighted for me all stood at respectful attention. With a gracious wave of the hand I thanked them and continued on my way.