

Farewell to Moscow

by Eugene Lyons

What's in Russia for the American visitor? Mr. Lyons, for six years Russian correspondent for the United Press, speaks his impressions with the freedom and from the viewpoint of one who may be leaving it forever.

AT the moment it seemed commonplace and routine enough. The desperate hustle before departure for a long journey, last-minute chores, farewells ranging from verbose hand shaking formality to wordless heart wrenching goodbyes, naive concealment of innocent objects in a guilty awareness of impending customs inspections. The warmth of new adventures ahead and the chill of leave-taking, perhaps forever, from a scene long familiar. And running through it all, twinges of anticipatory nostalgia. It is not easy to tear up roots of six years' growth.

It was only later, in the dingy dining-car on the way to the frontier—even more so next morning as dismal snow-covered plains and half buried peasant huts jogged past my window—that the unique quality of my last day in Moscow came to me. The incidents that crowded it, the scramble for poor remnants of my belongings, the words and hints, everything seemed to me redolent of Moscow, impossible anywhere else.

"If I could somehow convey that day to outsiders," I thought, "I might give them an inkling of life in the capital of communism. Not statistics and sophistries but the pungent day-to-day realities of simple living people amid their jumble of fears and hopes and regrets. . . . That weary looking mass demonstration. . . . The tragic anticlimax of the stratosphere flight. . . . The vigil maintained by the *"Moscow Daily News"* over the space I was vacating. . . . Tremulous whispered requests for favors. . . . The pervasive apprehensions that I might say too much when I got out. . . . The last glimpse of the *Tverskaya*. . . ."

I despaired of the task. One might record the physical facts. But how is one to record the overtones and implications that give Moscow its special atmosphere? How is one, indeed, to set down the desperations and fears and envies of the immediate moment without blurring the larger issues?

It was another gray, sunless winter day, leaden skies pressing down on Moscow, with sparse wet snow more like a drizzle. Not weather but a smudge.



Every new arrival deepened the trail of mud in the corridor. Fur coats, fur hats and hand shakes were damp and beads of snow clung to people's eyebrows.

My office and living quarters were practically empty. A few belongings had been sent on to New York, others had been sold and the balance distributed among acquaintances and servants. What remained on the final day seemed scarcely worth throwing away. A few cheap cups were stacked on the windowsill, some utensils lingered on in the kitchen, a rickety table and several crippled chairs stood in the emptiness. Here and there, cast away in ignominy, were oddments of a dismantled house: some nails, bits of string and wire, medicine bottles, stray buttons, delapidated clothes hangers, torn socks and stockings.

Russians came and went, some on business, others to say good-bye. My own and neighbors' employees hovered about the place. Kind-hearted emotional people, some of them genuinely touched by my leaving, tears in a few eyes. . . . But through the tears and emotions eyeing the rubbish in corners, fingering some pathetic bit of frayed silk or a discarded pair of bedroom slippers. . . .

Gradually it dawned on me that a vast and complicated campaign was under way for the remaining things. Several claimants appeared for the shaky table. At first a little timidly, then more boldly under the impetus of competition, people rummaged through the rooms and packed away worthless treasures. My house-servant, as residuary heiress, glowered darkly at the marauders. Casually, a bit shamefacedly, a visitor asked whether I was taking the cups with me to America. Another supposed, just by way of small talk as it were, that I was throwing away those threadbare socks. . . . "Yes, you Americans are so prodigal. . . ."

The immense hunger for goods, for the five-and-ten cent blessings of civilization, was too sharp to be politely suppressed. Regret over the loss of the Lyons family may in some instances have been deep enough, but nothing could blot out the desperate yearning for things, for minor comforts and easements.

S——, whom I knew very slightly, skirted around the subject in embarrassment. Then he stumbled to the point. He showed me an address in a Mid-Western American city. His brother.

"Please write him a letter when you get out," he pleaded.

"Why don't you write him yourself?"

"I do, of course I do. We have a very affectionate



correspondence. . . ."

"Well then, why do you ask me to write?"

"It's like this . . . maybe you won't understand . . . but I think my letters are being read. I suppose all foreign mail is read. So I am careful what I write, maybe too careful. . . . You know, I am a *lishenitz*, one of the declassed, because I was rich before the revolution. I am afraid that if I say one wrong word it

will be the end of me. Maybe I'm wrong, but that's how I feel about it.

"Viacheslav, that's my brother, asks me how I am and how is everything in the old country. What can I say? I answer that the country is making marvelous progress and that I am all right and can't complain. In fact, I get scared that it mightn't sound true to a stranger, so I pile it on a bit about how much better it is than in the old times. I don't dare write him that I am living in horrible conditions. We have one room and the children are in rags and Masha, that's my wife, is dying of under-nourishment.

"So Viacheslav writes back how happy he is that everything is all right with me and the Soviets are prospering. He himself, he says, is not doing so well. Business is rotten in Youngstown. Of course he still has his house and his car and manages to keep the older boy in college. But he dreams of the old country where there are no damn capitalists and blood-suckers and maybe he will sell out and come to live with me. I have tried to tell him not to do anything so crazy, but I can't say it in so many words. I must go roundabout and he doesn't understand. For years now I've kept up this comic correspondence. . . .

"Now you understand what I want you to write him, only he must not let on that he knows when he answers me. Tell him that things are hard for me, awful hard. I don't want to beg, it makes me ashamed, but if you can hint to him that a few dollars through Torgsin. . . . Tell him it's not for me but for my Mashuchka. He'll remember her, we all played together. . . ."

For the past few weeks my upstairs neighbors have been observing the preparations for departure with undisguised and unflattering satisfaction. Their need for the space I occupied rather than the desire to be rid of my company motivated them; this must be pointed out in ordinary justice to myself.

A freak of fate had crowded the only English-language newspaper in Russia, the "*Moscow Daily News*," into the house where once I lived in bourgeois spaciousness. The bathroom, most of the kitchen and other non-essentials had been commandeered. But I had succeeded in retaining occupancy of several rooms, fortified behind Foreign Office documents and maintaining a barrage of eloquent letters in defense of those rooms. Meanwhile a flat bought and paid for in dollars and dolars was still unbuilt and the "*Moscow Daily News*" had to suffer my constricting presence.

When packing cases, furniture-movers and other clear signs that the space would actually be vacated appeared,

the neighborly satisfaction turned to joy. "So you are leaving us, eh?" Comrade Borodin would greet me cheerfully. Lesser functionaries measured the space with covetous eyes, deciding where desks would be deployed. I could not blame them. Although it is only a four-page sheet, mostly cribbed from the Russian papers, the English paper has an average of at least one employee per paragraph and finds existence painfully close.

Their joy was not unmixed with fear. What if someone else grabbed the rooms? Would their own publishing trust perhaps attempt to take possession? Or Lyons's successor as U. P. correspondent? A campaign was therefore begun to safeguard the "*Moscow News*" priority to the death. Comrade Borodin, trained in the Chinese revolution, was in charge of the strategy. The hall porters were instructed to report any sign of invasion and scouts prowled about the place. The innocent arrival of a trunk raised alarms.

On the last day a continuous vigil was maintained. I lived under its careful surveillance. No doubt every visitor was regarded as a potential squatter. Ten seconds after I stepped out of the place, before I shut the front door behind me, the "*Moscow Daily News*" had seized possession. For eighteen months it had awaited this glad moment.

The morning "*Pravda*" was filled with the XVIIth Congress of the Communist Party, a growing mountain of extravagant eulogy for Stalin the great, incomparable, infallible leader of the laboring masses of the whole world . . . something fantastically over-strained in the humility and belly-crawling, something that makes an onlooker vaguely ashamed for humankind. "*Pravda*" also displayed the splendid achievement of the stratosphere balloon, "*Osoaviakhim*," which had ascended 20,600 meters; three men sealed in a metal gondola had risen further above the crust of the earth than any human beings in all history.

I knew that the gondola had crashed, the three men had been killed and mangled: a world record, soaring glory—and death. "*Pravda*" knew it too. But the news must be timed: today the glory, tomorrow the death. Foreign correspondents were summoned in the afternoon and given the tragedy in a careful official *communiqué*. The non-Soviet world would know about it today, the Soviet Union tomorrow. Information is doled out, calculated for effects, controlled and timed, or suppressed entirely. What the 160 millions know or are forbidden to know is decided beforehand.

Yet some of it leaks out. A friend came and drew me aside excitedly.

"I'll tell you something," he whispered, "but no one must ever know it came from me. I'm risking my life in telling you. I got it by accident. But can I trust you? Will you promise? Well ———"

And he told me about the crash of the gondola. I decided not to spoil his palpitant triumph of inside information. I did not reveal that the whole story was already in the foreign press.

I went along to help my friend the American engineer fill out his application for an exit *visa*. It was a mere formality of questions, a photograph and "twenty-two rubles please." The engineer, however, confidently awaited complications.

"In Moscow one doesn't accomplish anything at the first try," said he, and I would be the last to dispute him. "Something is sure to go wrong. Some piece of paper or other will queer things." His was a mellow confidence of trouble ahead.

He was right. The *visa* department, having studied the questionnaire and photograph, decided that he must bring a piece of paper from his trust, a "release." He urged and threatened but to no avail. As we left the building he regained his mood of mellow assurance.

"Oh well, this means at least a few days' delay," he sighed. "Getting a piece of paper out of a trust is not as simple as it sounds."

Several hours later he was able to confirm this cheerful pessimism. He found work at the trust at a standstill. Orders had come through for a mass demonstration. In his office, as throughout Moscow, the laboring masses were mobilizing for one of those monster parades familiar to the Soviet capital. There could be no thought of pieces of paper.

"What's the demonstration about?" I asked.

"I don't know and nobody there seemed to know or care. A parade's a parade and the Party cell has the proper banners on tap. So why worry."

A messenger whom I sent to *Glavlit*—the chief literary control bureau at the Education Commissariat—returned at that moment. He had been working for some hours to have manuscripts and personal papers sealed by the censors to avoid trouble at the border. The written word is the most carefully watched item on the list of Soviet exports or imports.

"I had a devil of a job," the messenger reported. "Everybody was going off to the demonstration and wouldn't look at your papers."

"What's the demonstration for?" I tried again.

"Nobody seems to know. It came suddenly."

It was his guess, however, that the turnout was in celebration of yesterday's great stratosphere ascent. That was the guess of tens of thousands who trudged through the slime for hours that day. Other thousands, I am sure, never asked why; theirs was but to march when ordered. But the majority must have known that the occasion was in honor of the Party congress.

I have seen parades in Moscow that really pulsed with life, that were touched with a genuine spirit of celebration. I have seen others, more and more of them in recent years, that were stodgy and uninspired, a duty performed in apathy and weariness. Such was the parade that paralyzed business and blocked traffic in Moscow this day. Wide columns of unsmiling men and women moved slowly under damp sagging banners, hour after hour, without a lift of joy or emotion in evidence anywhere.

It is no edifying spectacle to see great masses driven like sheep, even if they are driven towards heaven. The Soviet population, someone has said, has been condemned to a lifetime of enthusiasm. There is just enough truth in the witticism to make it telling.

Friends took the trouble to caution me against political indiscretions when I should be back home in America. Taking the recent Soviet-American rapprochement as starting point, they argued that my personal interests required that I guard my tongue. Relations between our two countries would be sure to grow closer. Having been *by-lined* under a Moscow dateline since 1928, I would be in demand as a

specialist on things Soviet. . . . Look how So-and-So is cleaning up on Russia: books, lectures and the rest of it. . . . But my specialized reputation would fade and droop unless I freshened it every so often at the fount of knowledge by a visit to Russia. In brief, if I knew my *borshch*, I would do nothing which might close the gates of the Soviet land against me.

This reasonable, if not too big-minded, argument was repeated so often that I wondered if it had a common inspiration. But I was wrong. I discovered on the last day that such a thought came naturally to Russians in parting with a foreign writer.

Be careful what you write, was the burden of their advice, some of it outright, some by implication. Now that the restraining influence of censorship will be removed, don't let the new freedom go to your head. Even if what you say be true, it will be grossly misunderstood, exaggerated in the minds of Soviet observers and certainly will be used to bolster up *fascism* and reaction abroad. It may get the Russians who know you too well into trouble.

"Look how your American colleague X manages to tell a good part of the truth without offending anybody here," one person said. "He knows just where to stop, and the chief thing is that he never gets excited or bitter. He can come back here anytime he pleases. But what does the German correspondent who was expelled, Y , get out of being so loud and emphatic? He's cut off from Russia and already stale."

They wanted the gates kept open for me so that we might meet again, of course. At the same time, whether they did it or not, I could read the plea suggested by their tone: the plea not to embarrass Russians with whom I associated by saying anything which might be misinterpreted as "anti-Soviet."

I was able to assure them in all sincerity that I would write no differently, if I wrote at all, than I did while in Moscow. All the same, this pervasive uneasiness cast a shadow over the partings. These people seemed to say: "Our house is not yet in order. . . . It takes time you know. . . . Better say nothing about it. . . ." They do not realize that there is relatively little happening in Russia, good or bad, that can remain a secret indefinitely for the outside world. They do not know that censorship may delay the spread of certain information but cannot expunge it entirely. Their country is too enormous, its undertaking too vital, for concealment.

Ensnared behind suitcases and jammed in by talkative friends, I was motoring up the *Tverskaya* to the station: the first street a Westerner normally traverses when he arrives in Moscow and the last when he departs. The thought that I was looking at it for the last time came to me too late, as we neared the station, and went through me like a knife thrust. With a sort of desperate intensity I stared at what remained of the *Tverskaya*, trying to fix the scene indelibly in memory: the huddled men and women, drab shop windows, church cupolas against the night sky like Arabic writing, a company of Red soldiers singing lustily. In themselves none of these things sound impressive. Yet I knew then—I know it even better now—that together they spelled Moscow, with an accent and flavor peculiarly its own, hard to put into words but never to be forgotten if once experienced.

Several dozen people were on the station platform to
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Life Among the Bureaus

By Anthony North

The effort to legislate and govern America out of the Depression has created a new type of bureaucracy and bureaucrat in Washington. A survey of their organization, power and purposes throws new light on the New Deal revolution.

A TOTAL of 17,576 different letter combinations is possible from the twenty-six letters of our alphabet. The available supply of alphabetic designations for the new American bureaucracy therefore is still far in excess of the inventive genius of those who believe that America can be socially planned out of the errors and sins of her recent economic past. Although we already have two CCC's—a beginning of confusion—a ramble through the maze of the new divisions and sub-divisions of governmental functioning at Washington cannot produce any evidence that France has lost her supremacy in bureau production. Nor has the American product achieved anything approaching the obtuse autocracy of the Russian Soviet bureaucrat. But there is no real cause here for chagrin upon America's part. The New Deal is still young.

There is, however, a significant characteristic of the American scene to be observed from the Washington Front of today. If we cannot point with our "bigger and better" pride at the sum total of our ABC functionalism, nor yet to anything approaching an effective interlocking feature, such as is to be found in the bureaucracies of other countries, we can at least marvel at the fecundity and the self-reproducing powers of our "one-year-olds." Take PWA. Of its legal paternity in the halls of Congress there can be no doubt. But watch closely and observe how two bureaus suddenly appear where one was before, and note how PWA becomes not PWA alone but CWA as well. But this parturitional process does not then stop, for no sooner has an entirely new organization come into existence by the simple change of the prefix initial than a new metamorphosis begins at the other end of the new organization, and behold now we have a third bureau—CWS. Twenty-six such organizations alone have been hatched from the original NIRA.

How do they do it? In the last analysis these alphabetically designated units in the beehive of our government are but the symbols of change, of new direction. Neither their

number nor their names are really important to any social critique of the purpose, intent, or value of New Dealism. They are important alone as the setting in which there is beginning to function a new ruling class in America.

Two young friends who lately interrupted their endeavors to achieve Masters degrees in a certain eastern college to follow their favorite professors into the Washington breach and to the saving of America meet on Pennsylvania Avenue.

"Why, Joe, I haven't seen you in a long time. Where've you been? Not gone the way of all good professors, I hope?"

"Not me," answers Joe, who will be twenty-seven years old in the not distant future. "I was sent over to help out in CWA. But I'm coming back to AAA soon."

"N'how are things going over in CWA?"

"Say, we've been busy," says Joe. "But we've got almost all our money spent now. 'N I tell you I want to get back to AAA, anyhow, 'cause that's where the whole problem is really going to be licked, you know. It's the guts of the thing."

"It's the guts of the thing, all right."

"Well, so long. I'll be seeing you," answers Joe and goes back to his temporary rescue work at CWA, where he functions efficiently throughout a long government day, which in the matter of length seems to have no respect for NRA regulations nor for the increasing frown of the Blue Eagle; where he is assisted by two efficient secretaries, three stenographers and four telephones into one of which he was once heard to bark, "I don't care what General Johnson says, Newark can't have five hundred thousand dollars to finish drainage on a job like that. The land is privately owned and the lease makes no mention of *intent to acquire*. You'll have to find another place to spend that half million dollars."

There you have the picture of a Junior Brain Truster in full operation. He is the new emerging type of bureaucrat, although he would strongly resent the designation, resent it mainly for its historic connotation. Certainly there is nothing in this new type that has anything in common with the old style government employee who was content to grow old in service and in a frayed office alpaca coat, constantly improving his efficiency at time-killing in the intricate art of sharpening pencils and letting Civil Service worry about his future.

It is true that in other times and under other circumstances, twenty-seven-year-old youngsters would not have been invited to enlist in government service quite so near

