

No Common Ground Exists In American And Russian News Ideas, Says Gilmore

By EDDIE GILMORE
NEW YORK, June 7 (AP)—The basic conceptions of a free press are so different in Russia and in the United States that it is extremely difficult to see how any agreement presently can be reached on this question within the United Nations, or elsewhere.

The two countries are pages apart on the very definition of what is news. Let alone how to present it, or what else to do about it.

Many defenders of the American press call it, along with the British press, the freest in the world. Many of these same persons will argue that the press is not free at all in the Soviet Union.

People in the Soviet Union generally argue that the U. S.

and the British press work against the best interests of the people of the world.

Definitions Differ

Both countries, of course, have a wholly different definition of a free press.

"Your press," a Russian said to me not long ago, "always seems as if it's trying to entertain, amuse or shock its readers, not to instruct, inform and guide them the right way."

I asked if he were referring to editorials or news columns.

"News columns," he said with emphasis.

"Guide the readers' mind the right way in a news column?" I asked. "We certainly don't try to do this. We simply try to present the facts and let the reader find his way—that is if he's looking for a way."

I remember an occasion during the war an American correspondent in Moscow criticized a Russian journalist for not being objective about the war and Germany.

"Objective?" sneered the Russian. "A journalist who is objective in time of war is a traitor to his country."

Differences Enumerated

Here are some of the great differences between Russian and American newspapers aside from the obvious one of public ownership and direction:

The Russians don't believe in publishing news about events before they happen. The fact that the big three may have agreed to hold a meeting is not news until there is an official announcement. In the U. S., a story of such a meeting ahead

of time is a scoop for the newsman who wrote it and of interest to the newspaper readers.

The Russians don't believe crime is news except a report of the trial and penalty as a means of teaching that crime doesn't pay.

In Russia a train wreck, a building burning, a ship sinking, is not news—except when it happens on a big scale abroad.

The private lives of prominent personalities are not news and the Russians can't understand why they should be.

The Russians cannot understand the explanation that a paper's acceptance of an advertisement does not give the advertiser a voice in the paper.

Clashes of personalities at international meetings are not news to Russians.

Beginning to End

The Russian writer writes his story on the assumption that it is going to be read from beginning to end, and generally is. He thinks it's idiotic to put all the news in the first paragraph. For one thing, he reasons, it

encourages people to read no further.

The Russian newspaperman seldom if ever questions the decisions or policies of his country's leaders. He believes they are better equipped than he is to handle such matters. He may raise the link on his paper with a castigation of some farm foreman who is lazy, or some factory director who is behind in his work, or is not providing the kind of facilities and conditions his workers need and want, but he won't criticize or complain about the system under which the foreman or director works.

To a Russian, society news, or personal news is so amusing as presented by American newspapers that I've frequently seen Russians laughing to side-aching enthusiasm at the account of a wedding.

The Russians have a low opinion of most American newspapers, their publishers, editors and writers. They class some of the most severe enemies of the USSR in this group.

The American newsman in

Russia—that is, in the mass—is not thought of too highly by the Russians.

A rather high Soviet official once said to a member of the state department who had brought him a particular problem concerning a representative of the American press in Moscow:

"My friend, you and I are too busy to waste time on neurotics."

An American newsman's job is difficult, and often an unpleasant one in Russia. At the same time, the job of handling these newsmen is just as hard, and unpleasant to the Russians.

The Russians do have standards of hospitality, of course, and a newsmen in the Soviet Union is not only a newsmen, but a guest. He gets the best the Russians have to offer in many material ways like food, clothes and living conditions. On the other hand he doesn't always get what he wants in the way of news.

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The handling of Russian news in Russia is, the Russians believe very emphatically, purely a Russian matter.

They bitterly resent interference or suggestions from abroad. They do not like to be told how to conduct their affairs, or to be criticized about the way they do it.

The Russians are convinced their way is the best way, the only way, and there is not the slightest indication that they are going to change their mind.

Any suggestions by the United Nations is likely to be met with rebuff or ignored. The Russian leaders insist their press is free and they want to keep it that way.

(Editor's note: The foregoing concludes a series of four articles by Eddy Gilmore, recently returned from five years as Associated Press correspondent in Moscow.)

Floyd Gilmore Dies In Tucson

Floyd Gilmore, a former resident of Klamath Falls, passed away June 2 in Tucson, Ariz. The Gilmore family for a number of years lived at Hornbrook, Calif.

Funeral services will be held at the Methodist church Saturday at 2 p. m. in Hornbrook, Calif. Intment will follow in the family plot in the Hornbrook cemetery. He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Theima Gilmore, two sons, Jimmy and David, all of Klamath Falls; three brothers, Henry of Redding, Calif., Joe and Elmer of Klamath Falls; his grandmother, Mrs. Rose Ampter and one aunt, Lena Burges of Hornbrook.

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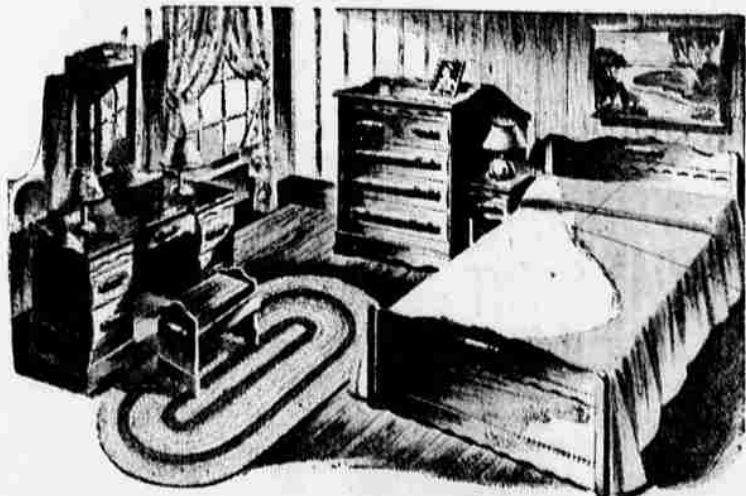
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