

Remembrance from an old friend.

Rotarian Jack Mayo who during May of 1991 served as Governor-Elect of District 5340 in Southern California. At that time Laszlo called Jack to attend the Rotary Club of Coronado in Coronado, California (close to San Diego). The following is from his old friend Jack Mayo who now resides in Austin, TX. Jack remains very active in Rotary and is a member of the Rotary Club of Austin. He is Chair of the Airport Greeters/Transportation Committee for the 2007 Rotary Institute, chair of District 5870's Club Program which will convene in Austin this coming September 2007.

Laszlo's quest for world peace

"Jack, there is a guest speaker you should hear," said **Laszlo Racz** while I was telling him about our upcoming cruise into the communist port of Leningrad.

Laszlo and I sign in as visiting Rotarians from a neighboring community.

The speaker was **Andrei Ibragimov**, Charter President of Leningrad Rotary Club – then still a Soviet city. When Mikhail Gorbachev's *glasnost* and *perestroika* opened Russia to new ideas, Andrei remembered speaking about Russian art and culture to Rotary Clubs while he had been a Cultural Attaché in Soviet Embassies. During these Rotary club meetings Andrei had heard business executives *volunteer* to serve on community *self-help* projects—with no need for approval from a party boss. Andrei had always thought that the *proletariat* did not need the *ruling class*. Rotary made sense to him.

Perestroika let Andrei establish the **Rotary Club of Leningrad** as an experiment with a new approach to community issues. But just in case his comrades thought he had gone **too far**, Andrei moved his wife and children out of town into a nearby rural village.

When Ibragimov finished his speech, **Laszlo** sprang to his feet. "Many of you know how I feel about Russians," he said.

I knew. After **Laszlo** lead an uprising of **Hungarian Freedom Fighters**, his father and most of his friends lost their lives. He had barely escaped before the Soviets closed the **Bridge at Andau**.

"Today," **Laszlo** continued, "I heard a Russian who sounded like a brother. He spoke with the voice of a Rotarian. It feels good to put my hatred for Russians behind me. I will make my new Russian brother a **Paul Harris Fellow**."

Then a **second thought** hit **Laszlo** and he hastily added – "But I don't trust the communist mail. I will donate the \$1000 if my friend Jack Mayo agrees to hand deliver the Paul Harris medallion to Leningrad."

When this retired naval officer delivered a Hungarian Freedom Fighter's **Paul Harris Fellow Medallion** to a Soviet Foreign Service officer, we knew that Rotary does build bridges for *world understanding and peace*.

I have often told this story with **Laszlo** at my side, and upon its conclusion he would point to the Rotary pin in his lapel and say, "the little wheel works."