President's Page

William B. Spong Jr.
A TRAIN ride from Leningrad to Moscow—an eight hour journey—provides a bumpy and remote perspective from which to sketch out thoughts for this edition. My reflections on our Hot Springs meeting are dominated by a feeling of thanks to the many individuals who planned or participated in what was a delightful occasion.

The panel discussions, though hampered by restraints of time, were well presented and most informative. Hugo Blankingship's program on advertising, presided over by Harvey Chappell, was succinct and timely, as was Bob Buford's program on the legal ramifications of electronic banking. A Bicentennial flavor was given the proceedings by the splendid panel on the Constitution sponsored by our Young Lawyers' Section and the Resolution to early Virginia lawyers prepared by Martin Burks and Eppa Hunton. Our banquet speaker, Charlie McDowell, talked with humor, poignancy and perception.

A few days after our meeting, Virginia and I left on a three week trip to Europe as members of a People-to-People Goodwill delegation comprised of fifteen members of the Association and eleven wives to visit with lawyers in Belgium, Holland, Hungary, Britain and the Soviet Union.

At Brussels we were received by the President of the Court of Cassation, Belgium's highest court, in his chambers at the Palace of Justice. Also, we met with lawyers for the European Common Market and Belgian practitioners and law professors. Subsequent visits to the Netherlands and Britain confirmed that the Common Market is creating a new body of law in Western Europe.

In Amsterdam, we attended the trial of three men charged with bank robbery and found Dutch criminal proceedings much different from our own. At Leiden, site of the famous university, we visited the law school, originally a feudal prison and now somewhat cramped for space by ABA standards. Our Virginians exercised restraint and characteristic politeness at Leiden while visiting the Pilgrims' Museum where we heard an account of the trials and tribulations of the Pilgrims during the thirteen years after the landing at Jamestown and prior to the sailing of the Mayflower.

The delegation was given a lengthy tour of the Peace Palace at The Hague where the World Court sits when in session. A monument to Andrew Carnegie's hope of world peace, the Palace is one of the most beautifully appointed buildings in the world.

At Budapest, our delegation had a long and, I believe, somewhat unprecedented meeting with officers of the Hungarian Bar Association. After reviewing their systems of courts and legal education, the Hungarian lawyers gave each of the Virginia
lawyers a booklet on the criminal law of Hungary. We were then taken to hear the trial of a young man charged with extensive shoplifting. The Court was comprised of a presiding judge, trained in the law, and two lay judges—both women. Though it was difficult to understand much of the proceedings, the countenances of the tribunal did not bode well for the accused.

At Leningrad we met with Soviet trial lawyers and at Moscow with an imposing delegation of judges, law professors and lawyers. The Virginia delegation was zealous in asking the Soviets about their legal system and almost all our questions were answered in detail. We were not, however, questioned about the American legal system although we invited the Soviets to do so. I was surprised by the limited number of trial lawyers—four hundred in Leningrad; seven hundred in Moscow—and that a majority of these as well as judges, are women.

In London we found advertising by lawyers and mandatory continuing legal education to the questions of current controversy among British solicitors and barristers. The solicitors were interested in modern office practices in Virginia firms, particularly the use of electronic equipment and of para-legals.

Our guide was a Swedish lawyer, Ms. Inger Balkstrom, proficient in five languages who helped to

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distinguish the basic differences between civil and common law systems, as well as the differences between our own and European legal education requirements. We were saddened during our trip by the sudden death of Bradley Roberts of Bristol while we were in Moscow. Overall, the trip confirmed a long standing belief that, regardless of nationality, lawyers are uniquely equipped to promote better understanding among people.

Elsewhere in the Journal is Hugh Patterson's report to our Executive Committee on the Lay Leaders’ Conference at Woodberry Forest. Ned Slaughter, Chairman of the Executive Committee, has asked the Chairmen of our standing committees to review the results of our survey on the attitudes of Virginians toward lawyers. These results should be studied with Hugh’s report which confirms, in large measure, the cold statistics of the survey. It is important that lawyers in Virginia have an understanding of public perceptions of our profession. Such understanding is necessary if the legal profession is to remain strong and independent, and if we are to continue the positive role in our society played by lawyers from the time of this nation’s founding.

We are now at work on plans for the annual meeting in Williamsburg. Justin Stanley, the new president of the American Bar Association, will be on our program. The Joint Committee on Continuing Legal Education is planning a one day seminar for the Thursday preceding our meeting. It is hopeful that additional accommodations can be made available. They will be needed based upon the record attendance this past January. Make your reservations early for January 13, 14 and 15, 1977.