

By James Collins

Alex Carnarvon was of the Russian intelligentsia. In fact, he was a genius, had a scientific PhD and was Director of a major laboratory in Moscow. Unfortunately, for him he was born Jewish. The Russians frowned on this part of his ancestry. He had previously spent a few summers and winters in Siberia when Jews were very unpopular. Then in the 1970's the climate modified, he was resurrected and put back in his position in Moscow. Then the political environment started to change back and he was given an opportunity to leave Russia with the proviso that he had to leave everything he owned. He thought this was a blessing in disguise and took this opportunity to leave mother Russia and come to America.

American industry grabbed this creative genius and put him to work in the defense industry. That was where I was lucky enough to run into Alex and he became my friend. Every day at lunchtime, he and I would walk around the facility and the campus of the company. As our friendship developed, we exchanged information and amusing stories of our families. The conversations were always light and in many cases humorous. We had just gone through the period when Alex learned how to drive. We laughed about the problems he encountered with the physics of moving the car and reading the road side signs.

One day Alex looked quite pensive, and I questioned him about this.

“Alex, is anything wrong? You look worried”

“Jim, I might have to ask you for a big favor. Would you mind helping me?”

“Alex, if I can help I will.”

“Jim, will you come with me to the Merrimack Police Department tomorrow?”

“What happened, Alex? Did you get a parking ticket or a speeding ticket?”

“No Jim, I go Philadelphia.”

“Alex, I'm confused. Do you have to see the police or do you have to go to Philadelphia?”

“Jim, I go Philadelphia and I need help from you to fill out the paperwork at the Merrimack Police Department.”

“Alex, I don't think I understand what paperwork you have to fill out, at the Merrimack Police Department?”

“Jim, I go Philadelphia and I have to tell the police.”

“Alex, is this something you had to do when you were in Russia?”

“Yes of course. If you go from one city to the other, you go to the police department ,fill out the paperwork. This told them where you are going, when you were going, and how long you would be there. Then when you get there, you go to their Police Department, hand over the paperwork and they check everything off. Then they give you back the paperwork. When you are planning to leave that city to go back home you go to their Police Department and fill out all the paperwork again. This is why I need your help.”

“Alex, in this country you don’t have to tell the police you are going to Philadelphia. You don’t have to tell them anything. Just get in your car and drive away. Spend the time you need there and drive home. You don’t have to talk to the police anywhere along the line unless they catch you speeding or going through a stop sign.”

“This is true?”

“Alex, I would not lie to you. America has none of those rules. The police don’t need to know where you are going, how long you will be there or anything like that.”

Alex went to Philadelphia transacted his business and had a wonderful time. I really believe he was probably looking over his shoulder all the time looking for the police. Having lived in that type of tyrannical background, it’s hard to forget that in Russia big brother is always watching, but in America, he doesn’t care.

THE END