

June 24, 1984

P: As you all know tomorrow is the official 80th birthday of Joseph Osnos. To mark this occasion, Peter Osnos, along time observer of the Osnos scene, is with us to discuss the significance of the event, and to provide us with an analysis of Joseph's personality. Good afternoon Peter.

P: Good afternoon, Bob.

B: What do you consider the major themes in Joseph's life ?

P: Joseph Osnos has always been a dynamic person who has retained control of his own life, even under the most adverse circumstances. He has made numerous critical decisions which account for ~~his~~ his being alive today, and with us, rather than being in Siberia or Buenos Aires. I have scrutinized the decision making process in the Osnos household and it is still as mysterious to me as the Kremlin. There is always a great deal of open debate, and apparent dissension. But then the right decision is arrived at and implemented with zeal.

B: What are some of these major decisions?

P: There were of course decisions made before he met Marta Bychowska, but these are not important in the present context. He met Marta at the swimming pool and beach on the ~~Wisla~~ Wisla river in Warsaw. Falling in love under such auspicious circumstances does not require any further political analysis.

B: What about the decision to marry Marta ?

P: Joseph Osnos always responds to challenges. They were seeing each other for a year pretty regularly. Every time Joseph came to her house her father Dr. Zygmunt Bychowski introduced himself, as if the two of them had not met previously. Instead of being intimidated Joseph decided that the only way his name would be known in the house if he married Marta.

B: Right after they married they moved to Paris. What were the intellectual and economic considerations ?

P: Research into my grandparents leads one to believe that Marta and Joseph chose to get away from their respective in-laws.

B: Why did Marta and Joseph decide to return to Warsaw after a few years in Paris? Was the antisemitic climate in France an important issue?

P: The key issue was bridge. There are two versions of what actually happened. Joseph traveled regularly between Paris

and Brussels to purchase diamonds. Like all the diamond dealers of the time he played expert bridge on the train. According to him he was bidding a grand slam and had to interrupt the hand when the train arrived in Brussels. He felt that it made sense to return to Warsaw where the trains were less efficient. In the other version, Joseph bid a grand slam, and stayed on the train to finish the hand, thereby missing the Paris railroad station, and going back to Brussels. Marta decided at that moment to go back to Warsaw.

B: How did Joseph prepare for the possibility of war ?

P: He predicted that if there were a war there would be a shortage of food, so he started to buy canned goods which were still a novelty in Warsaw. According to contemporary accounts Joseph cornered the Warsaw market in sardines with tomato sauce.

B: the years 1939-1943 were filled with melodrama and many life and death decisions. First Joseph managed to escape to Rumania. During the family's odyssey to India, he was able to see the right bureaucrats and to obtain the necessary permit or visa. Was he proficient at bribery ?

P: Certainly not. In Bucharest, he was of course mistaken for King Carol. Otherwise he always wore a freshly pressed suit and a fashionable tie so that he looked like a VIP.

B: For a time a movie was planned describing his adventures in Bucharest, Istanbul, Baghdad and Bombay. Why was the movie never made ?

P: He insisted that the leading roles must be played by Robert Taylor, Norma Scherer and Roddy McDowell who were not available at the time.

B: What about more prosaic recent decisions ?

P: Joseph decided to settle on the West side of Manhattan rather than the east side because it was further from the Russians. He went into the airconditioning business because - shrewdly - he observed that N.Y. is very hot in the summer.

B: What about Joseph's role in the career choices of his sons ?

P: From the time I was two, Joseph would argue with me about politics and who would read the N.Y. Times first.

I followed logically that I should become a journalist, so that I could win an occasional debate and receive all the newspapers for free.

Regarding psychiatry as your career, it may have been a matter of continuing a family tradition, but he doubtless wanted you to have a medical specialty which would not require to treat either relatives or friends for gratis.

B: What are some of the decisions that Joseph did not participate in ?

P: These were few and far between. Most of the time he did not tell Marta how to conduct her research. He did not select his daughters-in-law nor the sex of his grand-children. The decision to leave the Belnord was clearly made by Marta who could not stand the cockroaches in the kitchen, though Joseph occasionally insisted that they were merely caterpillars.

B: What are Joseph's other assets ?

P: He is always optimistic. In every situation he is able to see the bright side, and frequently can convince everyone else that there is only a bright side.

Most importantly Joseph is the quintessentially good person. I have never seen him hurt anyone or speak evil of them. He is totally loyal to his family, friends, and coworkers. That is why he has had one family, the same set of friends, and same coworkers for 35 yrs.

B: What are Joseph's prospects for the future ?

P: Joseph plans to reduce the federal deficit and control the medicare budget by staying healthy and he insists that Marta do likewise. He is not planning any major career changes, though somewhat unreliable sources indicate that he is going into the swimming pool maintenance business.

Also he has offered to be a dollar a year man for Mr. Mondale and Mr. Koch advising them on the middle east, relations with the Kremlin and urban affairs.

B: Thank you Peter.