

I CAME, I SAW, WHO CONQUERED?

Jonah, it has been said, travelled much but saw little. It is not recorded that he followed his trip with a travelogue. This is one of the several differences between myself and a prophet. Instead of telling you about a taxi-ride across Bulgaria, or a Turkish bath in the Empress Theodora's pool, or a mistaken identity in Niamey, or even about a wonderful boarding house in Talinn, I suggest that cities are made of people, of whom bricks and stones are the reflection, and I ask you to join me in re-newing acquaintance with a few of these.

The main street of Sortavala, a village in what was then Finnish Karelia, runs precipitously from depot to dock. The train arrived late because we passengers had been slow about throwing birch logs into the tender when stopping to refuel. But now the excursion boat's whistle sounded merrily 'though urgently, leaving no time for a prudent person to run into a shop for a loaf of bread. Happily my lack of prudence was requited by patience, forbearance, exuberant gesticulation and - delayed departure.

The trim little steamer was spotless white and was owned and operated, for the convenience of pilgrims, by the monks of the Russian monastery to which we were heading. The entire ship's

company from stoker to captain had long hair and beards, wore tall, black brimless hats, and dark brown woollen habits, in many cases tucked up into their girdles to facilitate strenuous work. Approaching the island of Valamo, after crossing twenty-five miles of Lake Ladoga, we came upon an unforgettable picture: The sparkling blue waters of the lake narrowing into a long and rocky fjord bordered by tall, dark pines and birches just losing their red-gold leaves. Ahead the white buildings of the monastery nestled into and crowned the rugged island, culminating in the spires and gilded onion domes of the church with its crosses of St. George and St. Andrew reaching into the clear October sky.

Here, as I was to find again years later in Russia, the language barrier stimulated redoubled efforts to help and to show a friendship not always apparent in the serious expressions of every day. I had been taught how to ask to eat with the monks but, unfortunately, forgot the words so, for three days I existed on my loaf of bread and what apples I could furtively shake from the trees. However, in the evening a kindly monk in the neighboring cell brought me a samovar of boiling water, assuming, naturally, that no-one travelled without their own tea.

The cells were spartan in their simplicity - stone floor, stone walls and barrel vault, a heavy oak door, tiny window and a tile stove built into a corner so it could be shared with the cell next door - to be lit, probably, when the frost on the

pumpkin exceeded an inch in thickness. A straight chair, a table, and an iron cot with two pine planks instead of mattress or springs provided the creature comforts. The single blanket could be rolled up as a pillow, folded as a mattress or wound about for warmth.

Long before dawn the next morning the strange harmonies of the church bells called the monks to their devotions and I was right behind them, feeling that candles and the body heat of the worshippers would provide greater warmth than my cold cell. I also hoped to follow the monks to breakfast at the conclusion of the service. Gradually in the gloom of the crypt I made out the low vaults and the scattered, solitary and motionless figures of monks veiled in black from crown of hat to floor. Now and then the flicker of a candle or a votive lamp would pick out a detail of the ornately gilded ikonostasis through which one or more priests might appear in the most gorgeous vestments at certain climaxes of the mass. Through it all a deep chant in a minor key alternated with sudden bursts of heavenly song from the unseen choir. Truly a heart-felt expression of thanksgiving for a life entirely lacking in the blessings by which we set store. The morning light had just begun to penetrate the deeply recessed windows as the singing stopped and the monks filed slowly out. I fell in at the end of the line, determined to do as they did in every way. When I, too, bent to kiss what I thought was an altar, I

discovered that only the smudged glass top of a coffin intervened between my lips and those of a saint deceased long since. For a moment fresh air seemed more important than food, and my craving for it resulted in losing the procession of monks. I never did discover where they ate.

On a bitterly cold day in March of 1940, the monks formed their last procession. For the first time in almost a thousand years the lamps were put out and the doors locked. There had been occasional bad times since the monastery's founding in 992 as the northern-most outpost of the orthodox church but the peace which Stalin dictated after his disgraceful invasion of Finland resulted in the evacuation of half a million Karelians in three days and sealed the fate of Valamo. Throughout the gray winter day and all that night the monks walked across the frozen lake, carrying their holiest relics, singing their most bolstering hymns, as they sought asylum in a country hard-pressed but undefeated.

"Where are we, sir?" I asked of a young ensign leaning on the rail, gazing at a palm-fringed, tropical beach. "I can't say," he replied. The anchor had just been dropped, boats were being lowered, all sorts of barges and landing craft appeared from nowhere to swarm around the transport which had

been our home away from home for the past six weeks. Since before dawn preparations for unloading and disembarking had been frantic, as the captain had announced that six hours was the limit of his span of attention to the charms of iron-bottom bay.

Being in the last group to leave the ship, I had watched my mates' performances on the cargo nets and hoped that my own would be more dexterous. Not so! After I had been assisted in strapping ^{ON} my pack, I was decorated like a Christmas tree - sun helmet, steel helmet, helmet liner, gas mask with a roll of toilet paper and a copy of Walden stowed in its case - 1903 rifle, machete, 5-gallon bucket, and my home-made deck chair all were hung, slung, strapped or tied on. With difficulty I swung myself and my appurtenances over the side and groped for a foot-hold in a net that seemed always to be swinging away from me. Halfway down I turned to see if the barge was still below me and this caused my rifle and deck chair to get tangled in the net. Further progress in either direction appeared impossible. Just then the air-raid siren sounded setting off the most feverish activity both above and below. The clank of the anchor chain convinced me that the time for meditation had run out. I wriggled and squirmed out of my pack, threw my impedimenta onto the heads of my mates and scrambled down the net faster than the winch could pull it up. Before the

barge could get to shore the troop ship was disappearing over the horizon.

The motto of the Navy is "Hurry and Wait" so, once on the beach, as any American does on a hot day, we peeled off our packs and our clothes and went swimming.

My next landing on Guadalcanal was over a quarter of a century later. I had come from a sing-sing at Goroka, high in the mountains of New Guinea where the population was in that exciting transition from a tribal society to consciousness of the world around them, having the sophistication to worry about preserving their primitive customs and dances and yet the simplicity to enjoy them. Henderson Field presented a different picture than I had remembered - far less activity but more officious bustle and a seemingly greater concern for security. The town of Honiara, capitol of the British Solomon Island Protectorate (now independent) straggled along two country roads on Lunga Point where the unloading of Liberty ships and the loading of L. S. T.'s had once been so frantic. Where, in fact, the 63rd Seabees once completely outclassed a rival battalion by stealing a steam shovel from the dog-faces.

One missionary had managed to hold out and to keep his Boys' school at Cape Esperence going throughout the war. Some of us had hitch-hiked there, largely because it was off-limits and also to bring them cans of spam or powdered eggs. This time

I drove in a rented car over a passable road and found a large, well-developed, co-educational school with a preponderance of native teachers. The nuns were taking the afternoon off and had gone fishing. They gave me my most piquant recollection of the Solomons: As I well remembered, the water is shallow for a very long way out so they had waded far and, stood silhouetted against the horizon with full skirts floating on the calm sea, starched white head-dresses sparkling in the sun, and fishing rods firmly in hand.

It took me some time to find the site of our camp between the Ilu and the Tetere rivers and a search for my erstwhile garden proved fruitless. Not a trace was to be found of the zinnias or marigolds, of the tomatoes or watermelons which I had planted and tended, supposing they would replace the tangled brush. As our swords were beaten into plough-shares, my garden had reverted to jungle. However, civilization might triumph yet for, walking back to the road, I met a party of surveyors making a feasibility study for an American Golden Years Club where our camp had been.

It has been said that getting there is half the fun. In the case of Timbuctu I would revise this estimate to seven - eighths. It all began in Bamako in 1963 when a fonctionnaire

of the Mali Bureau de Tourisme, looking as if Grouch Marx had got into the burnt cork and borrowed a sheet from the Ku Klux Klan, responded to my inquiries. We spoke, without communicating, each in our own version of French. As soon as he had considerably lightened my load of travellers checks, giving me neither tickets or documents in exchange, he departed with firm instructions, in sign language, to be at the hotel entrance at four the next morning.

Before dawn, as directed, I got into a waiting taxi, awakening the driver and, without a word, was whisked through the sleeping city to the airport. There being only one plane on the tarmac, I boarded it. Having no ticket, the destination seemed immaterial. After a three hour flight the plane put down in a part of the Sahara where the view was limitless and uncluttered by anything man-made except a quonset hut. Since passengers and crew all disembarked, I followed them. Seeing my suitcase being carried to a landrover which suddenly appeared, I followed it and got in. After replacing a flat tire and running out of gas, we arrived at the market town of Mopti on the Niger by mid-morning. The next few days were spent in another, and fast disappearing, world; a world of rocky ledges and cliffs where pygmies had lived, waterfalls, forest and, tightly packed Dogon villages on the border of Mali and Upper Volta, where I was the guest of a Sangha chief.

Late in the evening, after I returned to Mopti, the whole town stirred and bustled and, in a carnival spirit, converged on the quay where the "Liberté" had landed. This was the weekly social event and was celebrated with music and dancing and gossip. Again, following my suitcase, which unaccountably appeared on the head of a tall young man dressed in a cotton damask tablecloth, I struggled up a slippery plank running at a rakish angle from quay to deck. Speculation on the likelihood of my arrival caused great merriment. I was, after all, a dark horse, although I was the only white participant in this carnival, as well as the only attraction then appearing in a bow tie. My progress was not as stately as that of my suitcase but the applause was more boistrous.

The "Liberté" has two decks: the first, at the plimsol and open all around, was loaded to capacity with sacks of flour, melons, a jeep, bicycles, livestock of all sorts, and people - families who had set up house-keeping wherever a crevice could be found in the freight. Day or night one or another family was singing, fishing cooking on a charcoal brazier or nursing children. The upper deck had the cabins, each containing an upper and lower berth with mosquito nets, a small cupboard, a wash-stand and louvered door and window, I shared a cabin with M. Keito, brother of the then, as now, president of Mali. Since the upper Niger is one of the slowest flowing rivers in the world and since the "Liberté" has no engine but is towed, this is undoubtedly one of the smoothest possible trips.

I awoke early that first morning on board, feeling that a good room-mate would relieve congestion by getting out of that tiny cabin as soon as possible. I set about my ablutions and, with soap in my eyes, reached for a towel but mistakenly grabbed the mosquito net. Just then the boat turned and I lost my balance. How could I have guessed that my room-mate was on the floor behind me, facing Mecca, praying. He must have wondered what Allah was trying to tell him when a half-dressed infidel, clutching a mosquito net, landed on top of him.

On the fourth morning the pride of the Mali fleet tied up at a grassy bank and we were given the chance to slither down that same slippery plank. Behind the crowd of native entrepreneurs, who were hawking just barely alive chickens, melons, rice and sun-glasses, was discovered a narrow and shallow canal in which several pirogues were waiting. In one of these dugouts, recently equipped with an outboard motor, my distinguished room-mate offered me a ride to Kabbara, the port of Timbuctu. At Kabbara I hitched a ride on a truck loaded with sacks of something exceedingly lumpy. In this prosaic fashion I traversed six miles of road which, in more colorful times, was reputed to have supported more bandits than any in Africa. At the edge of town, in front of the principal mosque, the driver let me off and I boarded a camel, whose owner was so pleased with the fare I paid for this livery service that he led me to the central market with a great flourish. I had arrived in Timbuctu on a camel! How else?

Other arrivals in Timbuctu had been more spectacular. On January 7th, 1923 the first horseless carriage crossed the Sahara and, without following caravan routes, arrived in Timbuctu five Citroens strong. In 1826, Gordon Laing was the first European to enter this fabled city but was murdered on leaving it so, will-he-nil-he, passed the palm to René Caille whose preparations had included learning Arabic, conversion to Islam and arrival with a Mandingo caravan in 1828. He stayed two weeks and, like Dickens or Kipling in America, wrote a book about it in which he said, "The slaves are not unhappy; they work little and from time to time receive a few cowries. Their lot is preferable to that of many European peasants."

Certainly the tourist who passed through Timbuctu with the greatest panache must have been Kankan Musa, making the hajj from Gao to Mecca in the year 1330. Five hundred slaves led the camels in his train carrying tons of gold along with all their tents, provisions and house-keeping apparatus. What style! The opulence of this religious fervor was only surpassed by the magnificent hajj of the Emporer Askia Mohamet in 1495 two years after he founded the University of Timbuctu and invented the "Junior Year Abroad" by maintaining student hostels in the principal centers of Arab learning such as Cairo, Damascus and

Marakech. He had conquered Timbuctu by recruiting a well-paid professional army among the slaves and prisoners of war, but it was the advancement of learning that assured his place in history while it was the good order of his empire which assured trade and prosperity. Ibn Batuta, the great Arab traveller, remarked that "The Negroes of Mali have a greater horror of injustice than other people. There is complete security in their country. Neither traveller nor inhabitant has anything to fear from robbers or men of violence."

The east-bound Trans-Siberian train made a triumphal entry into Irkutsk on a cold and frosty January fifteenth in 1920. Contrary to custom it was guarded and run by Czechs. From its principal car flew the flags of the new-born republic of Czechoslovakia as well as the flags of Japan, France, Great Britain and the United States. From triumphant to prosaic to despairing, the festive mood sank as the train bearing Admiral Kolchak, the "Supreme Ruler of Siberia", was met by ~~the~~ revolutionary troops armed with machine guns. It was a time of short trials and readily available firing squads. Thus was Siberia integrated into the Soviet Union.

The west-bound Trans-Siberian train on which I arrived made an uneventful entry into Irkutsk on a beautiful September day in 1976. It was met by Intourist guides, unarmed. The trip

of four and one half days from the eastern terminus near Vladivostock had been delightfully smooth, meticulously punctual, scenically indifferent and gastronomically uncongenial. The seventeen-car train was pulled by diesel engines in the few stretches where it had not been electrified. Each car in "soft" class was presided over by a benevolent despot, with the face and figure of a thug, and her assistant. In exchange for vouchers she issued linen and bedding, made sure that none of her passengers strayed from the platform during stops, locked the compartments of tourists too forgetful to do it themselves while in the diner, and brought glasses of tea at any time of day or night. She always charged the sugar for my tea to my room-mate, Victor, a young lawyer from Sakhalin, because I had given her chewing gum. This, of course, meant giving him another package of gum but, by drinking three cups of tea a day I came out even. Victor and I were separated by an almost impenetrable language barrier but were united by a desire for understanding. Maps, phrase-books, and dictionary were passed back and forth and pictures were drawn which resulted in more laughter than information. Still more laughter resulted when we decided to have a cocktail party in our compartment. The roster was international and multi-lingual although, as in any cocktail party, no one understood any one else. The refreshments consisted of a sunflower purchased from an ancient vendor on a station platform, stale bread liberated from the diner, and Vodka.

Proudly known as the "Paris of Siberia", Irkutsk is a delightful city on which Soviet regimentation sits lightly. In the 1860's the Governor General's residence was built as a reasonable facsimile of the White House and, in a riverside park, is a dance hall in the shape of a miniature Sidney opera house. Since all official - and there is no private - architecture is designed by committees in Moscow, to whom it seems to be drudgery, these engaging curiosities are as refreshing as the spacious old log houses with their intricately carved and gaily painted window frames. It is a comfortable city - from the hydrofoil skimming the Angara River to Lake Baikal, to the University night club with its muscular lady-bouncers and its loud but placid dance-band - or to the active but not rushed city market and the shops with more shoppers than inventory.

Strangely, for atheist Russia, it seemed to me that the heart of Irkutsk is the Znanyenski Cathedral, a sight to which Intourist guides point with pride and whose domes are being re-gilded at government expense. With diminished choir and mended vestments the orthodox liturgy gained in force what it lost in magnificence on the Sunday morning when I joined the devout old ladies and men at their services. Among the lichen-covered monuments in the shady church-yard were those to the still revered memory of Princess Troubetskoi and well-loved Princess Volkonski, both wives of Decembrists.

In December of 1825 an uprising of young army officers, as poorly planned as executed, was an instant failure like many forgotten mutinies before and since. The participants were well-educated, securely situated, scions of the nobility with little to gain and much to loose from a more liberal government, but they had been exposed to new perceptions of justice by travel and study in western Europe. The resulting trial was short. Sentences were so harsh, even by the standards of Nicholas I that, in his leniency, he allowed none to be quartered, only five to be hung and the rest sent to Siberia, either to exile or to hard labor. Many of these men were followed by wives who made the long, arduous journey under the most primitive conditions, in the hope of seeing their husbands perhaps once a month should they be in the dreaded mining camps of Chita.

Why should 121 Decembrists with neither political nor professional accomplishments and their wives with only drawing room skills be remembered with affection when Yermak, the first Cossack conqueror of Siberia, is virtually forgotten? Pushkin wrote an ode to them. Alexander Herzen, the leading revolutionary writer and publisher of the mid-nineteenth century, said that liberal thought in Russia started with them. Turgenev and Dostolevski counted the Decembrists as inspiration for their liberal writings. Tolstoi developed many of their innovations at Yasnaya Polyana.

However, Siberia, and Irkutsk in particular, was the scene of their greatest and most lasting achievements. Although the exiles lived under strict supervision, their mail being censored to inhibit the exchange of ideas, they managed to take a hand in improving agriculture by introducing modern methods as well as by botanical research. (Therefore, the Siberian diet had not included any vegetables because of the short growing season.) Their amateur medical aid, supplementing the labors of the one doctor per forty thousand people then available, culminated in Mme. Troubetskaya's visiting nurse association whose pattern of operation and tradition of mercy still exist. Both by training and by inclination they were able to make their greatest contribution in the virgin field of education. Mme. Volkonski's school for girls not only, in the opinion of the day, wasted learning on those with no need of it, but followed through with the innovative idea of getting them started in careers.

Prince Kropotkin, who arrived in Irkutsk a few years after the amnesty which liberated the Decembrists, credits their good influence as a major factor in giving Siberia the best provincial government in Russia at that time and says that the cultural activity in art, music, and literature was largely of their making. Even George Kennan, that doughty American investigator of the Russian exile and prison system, years after the last had died, noted the far-reaching

influence of the Decembrists both by accomplishment and example. Certainly their spirit lives on in Irkutsk.

In 329 B. C. Alexander The Great destroyed it.

In 711 A. D. the Arabs leveled it.

In 1221 Genghis Kahn totalled it.

In 1369 the Golden Horde abandoned it.

In 1868 General Kaufman brought the benevolent protection of the Tsar with such vigor that the city is only just recovering.

In 1923 the blessings of Soviet government were conferred with no less spirit.

In 1976 I came with the less dramatic objectives of a tourist.

Samarkand at sunset, as a golden haze hangs over the city and long shadows transform the intourist hotel into a caravansarai, while changing squalor to mystery in the tangle of streets, is romantic. Dominating my first view of the city was the blue-green tile dome of the Gur Amir - the tomb of

Tamerlane, majestic in its simplicity and strength, beautiful in its dignity, its limited palette of colors, and its solid proportions - the inspiration, it is said, for the design of the Taj Mahal which was built by one of his descendants.

Tamerlane made Samarkand the capitol of his ever-increasing empire but he was such a military workaholic that he was unable to spend much time there. However, with the help of artisans from Persia, the Near East, and China he and, in his absence, his favorite wife, rebuilt and beautified the city on a grand scale. The Bibi-Khanym, largest mosque in Central Asia, and its courts and gardens is now being restored to its original magnificence. The Shakhi-Zinda is a narrow, tortuously winding, and steeply ascending cobbled path, lined on both sides with mausoleums of stone and brick and the universal glazed tile facings in varying geometric patterns of turquoise, tan and brown. At the top is the most beautiful and intricately embellished mausoleum, built for Tamerlane's favorite daughter who died a virgin at age six.

Not far away is an ancient mosque with a graceful blue and green tile minaret from the top of which unfaithful wives were pushed to their reward - no doubt while unfaithful husbands plotted another conquest.

The center of old Samarkand is the Registan, a square of noble proportions bordered on three sides by moslem theological schools, known in Islam as Madrassahs. One of these was

founded, endowed, and largely taught by Ulug Beg, a grandson of Tamerlane. This remarkable man not only expanded the curriculum from memorizing the Koran, with the attendant hair-splitting, to include mathematics, astronomy and natural sciences but found the time to rule the country, bring peace to Central Asia, and to pursue his favorite vocation of astronomy. In his spare time he wrote poetry and a history of Genghis Khan's four sons.

In 1424 Ulug Beg built a three-story observatory on a hill at the edge of the city. It is long gone but in 1908, the foundations were discovered and further excavations revealed the largest sextant in the world, a marble-lined trench 51 cm. wide with a radius of 40.04 meters, known as the Fakhri sextant. From observations made with this instrument Ulug Beg compiled the first astronomical tables since Hipparchus of Rhodes 15 centuries earlier and dared to suggest that the world is round.

Obviously a man with such an enquiring mind was a dangerous radical so, for the tranquility of the country, he was beheaded by his son. He rests, in martyr's robes, in a simple sarcophagus next to the jade one of Tamerlane under the great dome of the Gur Emir.

The colossal abstract sculptures of Henry Moore framed my first comprehending and certainly most unforgettable view of Florence. They had been assembled for the great Henry Moore retrospective on the ramparts of the Forte di Belvedere. This fort, designed not only for the defense but for the supervision of Florence, affords an intimate panorama of the entire city and the surrounding Tuscan hills dotted with such jewels as Fiesole, Settignano and Poggio.

Looking north-east across the Arno, the pointed spire of S. Croce marks the majestic Franciscan gothic church where splendor contrasts so markedly with the teachings of the order's founder and whose monuments advertise so opulently the wealth and power of those who professed to reject the world's vanities. Looking carefully one can just make out in the cloister of S. Croce, my favorite building: the Pazzi Chapel. It is a modest addition to the transept of the great church with a well-ordered but not dramatic exterior quietly leading up to the perfection of the interior. Here Brunelleschi established the goal toward which architects such as Mies van der Rohe have been struggling ever since ... beauty and serenity expressed through clarity of structure, economy of detail and integration of ornament. In addition to the nearly perfect proportions, a minor miracle of the Pazzi Chapel is the complete harmony resulting from the combined talents of such rugged individualists as Brunelleschi, the architect,

Luca della Robbia, the ceramist, and Desiderio, the sculptor. To cap it all, the donars were probably the most disreputable of bankers; having attempted the murder of their rival banker, Lorenzo the Magnificent, during mass at the cathedral. The rationale for the sacred scene of this caper was that they hoped thereby to get the vatican bank account away from the Medici.

Looking due north, the grim mass of the Bargello, formerly the police station and jail, remind one that, in skillful hands, a not quite square room can be roofed with a groin vault and that the niche containing the dominant sculpture - Donatello's St. George - can effectively be placed off center. Nearby is the austere Palazzo Vecchio, a fortified city-hall suggesting the stormy scenes it has witnessed.

The center of the composition, as with almost any view in Florence, is dominated by the great dome of the Duomo flanked by Giotto's Campanile and the Baptistry with Ghiberti's "Gates of Paradise". Further to the left is the Basilica of San Lorenzo where Michelangelo, in seeking immortality for his patron, earned it for himself through his powerful sculptures on the Medici tombs.

Completing the sweep of the city panorama to the west would be the Church of the Carmine on the Oltr'Arno, were the view not blocked by the tremendous bulk of the Pitti Palace. It was in the Brancacci Chapel of the Carmine that the young

Michelangelo, studying the new science of perspective drawing in Masaccio's frescoes, became involved in an argument so spirited that his nose was broken. Since Michelangelo was the favorite Medici protege, it seemed advisable to his assailant, Torrigiano, to pursue his career elsewhere as soon as possible. Thus he brought the renaissance to England where he found favor with Henry VIII and executed the tomb of Henry VII in Westminster Abbey.

I came to Florence as often as possible. I saw more than time allows me to tell. Who conquered?

In 1364 Sir John Hawkwood and his White Company, anxious to use the skills they had learned at Poitiers and Crécy in the Hundred Years War, took the field against Florence as mercenaries in the pay of Pisa. To prevent needless bloodshed the White Company then accepted equal pay from both sides and, for the rest of his life, Sir John was the commander-in-chief of the Florentine Army. It was said that the Florentines trusted him so implicitly because they felt that no englishman was astute enough to enslave them.

In 1494 Charles VIII of France entered Florence as a guest but soon assumed the role of conqueror and demanded exorbitant reparations. When the Florentines demurred the French King said, "I'll sound my trumpets" to which Confaloniere Caponni replied, "We'll ring our bells" well knowing that this would produce barricades in every street

and snipers in every window. The queasiness induced by this reply hastened the King's departure for Naples where, as it turned out, his reception induced a feeling of home-sickness for France. The only spoils he took home to France was the latest import from the New World - syphilis. (I digress to remind you that it was our own Al Capone who said that he was afflicted with syphilis or, as the English called it, gout.)

Even goodness failed to conquer this cradle of humanism and it was not long before hysterical puritanism and its advocate, Savonarola, went up in smoke.

During the second World War, when the advancing allied troops were destroying everything that the retreating Nazis had not blown up, it was the German Consul who, at great personal risk, saved the art treasures - most notably the Ponte Vecchio which, being impossible to hide, was saved by the diplomacy and universal trust in the honor of this man equally beloved of Germans, Italians, Americans and all who care for things of the spirit.

I have tried to spare you the amusing little anecdotes that usually follow the upside down slides in the magic lantern. Nevertheless, I ask your indulgence for two tales of cities:

After enjoying an experimental ballet in an out-of-the-way theatre, I emerged into the brisk autumn air of Leningrad and headed for the Nevsky-Prospekt. There I joined a queue at the streetcar island and, when No. 47 came rattling along, I boarded it, as I had earlier been instructed to do. When it was noticed that I had dropped an excessive fare into the coin box an ad hoc committee of passengers immediately formed to discuss and to rectify this error.

After crossing the Neva the streetcar, instead of turning to the right and skirting the Fortress of Peter and Paul on the way to my hotel, turned to the left and entered a poorly-lit maze of streets somewhat resembling Chicago's near west side. Since the motorman persisted in continuing in the wrong direction - probably because that's where the tracks led - I tapped him on the shoulder and showed him a card on which the name of my hotel had been written in cyrillic characters. As soon as he understood that I was a lost and functionally mute foreigner asking only to be returned to assigned quarters, he stopped the car, locked his cab, abandoned his passengers, and walked me to an island in another street. Having written on my card the number of the car I was to take, he pointed me in the right direction, shook my hand, and left. On returning to his car he must have been assailed by doubts for he deputed two ancient women to go home by a circuitous route in order to accompany me and make sure that I made the

proper transfers. By this time it was two o'clock of a chilly morning and they had probably been working the swing shift. However, they neither left me nor stopped smiling - our only communication - until I got off within sight of my hotel!

Could this happen to a stranger at home, I wondered?

It could.

My latest venture into the outside world took me to Kansas City. There I worked industriously all day, dined with old friends, and barely caught the airport bus. As I was the only passenger, the driver made conversation by asking on what flight I was booked. When I told him he said that was impossible - I should have taken an earlier bus. I began to look forward to a greater familiarity with that airport than I had anticipated as the next flight to Chicago was scheduled for 1:45 A. M.

Obviously, I had reckoned without the team which sprang into being, successors to Mess'rs. Tinker, Evers, and Chance. The radio-phone to the bus company crackled: "Hurry up, you can make it! Where are you now?" Landmark identified as we cut across three lanes of expressway. "Is passenger ticketed? What's his name?" Long silence as we rounded the next curve on two wheels, then: Reservation confirmed. They'll hold the plane as long as they can. Step on the gas. Where are you Now?" Another landmark identified as we overtook one car after another. Finally, we swung into the Terminal drive as conversa-

tion between driver, dispatcher, and airline agents became more excited. "Stand at the door and be ready to jump" brought me to attention so that before the bus had fully stopped, I was crossing the sidewalk, ticket in one outstretched hand, briefcase full of brick samples in the other. "Follow me", said an Olympic quarter-miler disguised as a ticket agent and we ran through the security check, down back stairs marked "Employees Only", across the tarmac, and up the emergency stairs at the back of the plane. By the time I sank into the nearest seat we were taxiing down the runway. Miraculously, it arrived in Chicago on time!

Who conquered? I don't know, but the quest for an answer is exciting.

Herman H. Lackner