



## BOOKED FOR TRAVEL

### Jet Trails Around the Globe—3: Tamur's Territory

#### SAMARKAND.

**T**HE lone stop on the byway from Moscow to New Delhi, which is flown both by the Russian Tupolev 104, a two-motored jet, and Air India's Constellations, is the strange metropolis of Tashkent, the capital of Soviet Uzbekistan, one of the fifteen republics of the USSR. It is the sixth largest city in the Soviet Union in population and because of its susceptibility to earthquakes, it has become, with its carpet of low buildings, second only to Moscow in municipal acreage. Sixty per cent of its population is Uzbek, a strange and colorful race that embraces Islam, or at least did before the arrival of the Soviet state, and which is descended from the Turkik strains of the Middle East. Uzbeks look like Turks as compared to their neighbors, the Kazakhs, who bear the slanted eyes and the high cheekbones of Mongolia.

Lest there be any other mix-up, the Uzbeks are almost never without their *tubetekas*, which are skullcaps—black with white embroidery for everyday, and fanciful creations of red velour strewn with beads and sequins for formal affairs. They drink soup out of giant bowls called *kasa* and green tea from a *piala*, which is a cup without a handle. Although I was never able to determine whether it was done by custom or for sanitary reasons, I never saw an Uzbek drink a cup of tea, nor was I ever handed one, unless some tea had first been swirled around the cup and then spilled out. Uzbeks eat Uzbek bread, which is a round loaf with a flat center and a swollen rim, and two loaves would have been sufficient ballast to keep the Kon Tiki on keel from Peru to Tahiti.

The Chinese knew Tashkent in the first and second centuries before Christ as Shih or Che Shih. It was invaded by Alexander the Great, by the Persians in the fifth century, the Arabs in the eighth century, the Turks in the ninth, and the Mongols under Genghis Khan in the eleventh. The tsars spilled over from the north in 1863, and alongside the ancient settlement with its adobe houses and its flat roofs, they built a new city along European lines. Now an overlay of Soviet influence has been stretched over the two, and despite the singular ways of the Uzbeks, Tashkent, in its new city sector, at least, has the aspects of a European

city. The first sight to which the local interpreter took me was to the Park of the Railway Workers, which is renowned in some circles for its mass grave of the "soldiers, peasants and workers who fought against the *bas-machy*, a counter-revolutionary force." We drove past the Cultural Palace of Shoemakers, and the old residence of the tsarist governors, reputedly a hotbed of counter-revolutionary groups during the revolution. Now it is safe at last, a Pioneer Palace decorated with a plaster statue of Stalin as yet unpurged from its front lawn.

The newest of buildings is the Tashkent Hotel, a multistoried edifice facing a large open square anchored on the opposite end by the opera house. It is decorated with the curlicues of Uzbek architecture and topped with a roof of turquoise tile. Under the roof is a large terrace that perhaps one day will become a roof garden. The lobby inside is really a long corridor connecting the administrative office with the restaurant, a long route paved rather unevenly with rough marble, covered with a red straw runner, and bordered with plants whose pots are wrapped in bright green crepe paper with deckled edges. There is a television set on each floor but we had a private one in our room, as well as a radio equipped with a multitude of push-buttons, dials, and the Magic Eye

that RCA first put on its sets years ago. One channel came over the television set after much fiddling, and the radio could bring in anything from the English language programs broadcast daily by Radio Tashkent and the Voice of America beamed from its transmitter on Okinawa.

Yet with these modern accoutrements, I could swear the mattresses in the bedroom were stuffed with straw, the ceiling, less than four months old, was beginning to peel, and the bathroom with clumps of raw cement patched around the fixtures, tiles slopped over with cement drippings, and ragged masonry, looked as if it had been put together by a Sunday do-it-yourselfer on his first day out. It is a strange irony that the Russians who have conquered the cosmos are still having trouble with the trowel.

We ate our meals in the main dining room, a bare salon inhabited by Uzbeks still wearing their hats. A Russian orchestra with a formless girl singer in a vivid gray dress sang desultorily while the Uzbeks danced. Boys danced with girls, girls danced with girls, there was a case of two boys dancing together, and another of one lad dancing rather eccentrically alone. Across the floor an Uzbek boy romanced an Uzbek girl. From a rolling cart he had bought a box of chocolates for her. He had bought a bottle of Soviet champagne for himself, and as he drank he talked animatedly while she sat, her head inside her shoulders, contemplating the open candy.

Since our interpreter was ill, we were adopted in the dining room by our waitress, a plump Polish refugee



Samarkand's bazaar—caravan stop on old silk route and byway on jet route.

named Nadya who coddled us and clucked over us and stuffed us with food like a doting grandmother. Her English was meager, but her smile was both ready and gilded. One night she slept over in the hotel just so she could give us breakfast the next morning, which was ordinarily her day off. A note in the hotel comment book was the best we could do for Nadya, and so I wrote of her solicitousness, her great sense of responsibility, and her constant cheerfulness, and had it translated into Russian. Nobody was ready to explain the value of praiseworthy comments in the comment book, but we were assured that any waitress who was the subject of too many complaints would shortly find herself washing dishes. When we were ready to leave at last Nadya appeared with a string of yellow beads. "From Poland," she said, and handed them to my wife. Then she looked at us for a long lingering moment and said, "I love you," and then she was gone.

Our pockets bulging with tangerines and rolls—"put in the *tasche*," Nadya had said—we left at last for the mysteries of Samarkand, a flight of some fifty-five minutes on an Ilyushin 14. Tashkent might be the showplace of Soviet development in Central Asia, but Samarkand, which the Uzbeks say has existed since time unknown, is a showplace of the seething color of Asia. Over the brown rolling hills come the Moslem women in white sheets, their faces covered with stiff black horsehair veils. The long legs of the Uzbeks dangle over the flanks of tiny gray donkeys. Here the well-dressed Uzbek man wears no shirt and tie with his *tubeteka*—he wears a quilted cloak of many colors with the sleeves made extra long so he won't need any gloves. The villagers who come down from the mountains for market days which fall three times a week cloak themselves in huge coats of raw sheepskin.

The bazaar is a maelstrom of incredible excitement and color with all these types shouldering each other through the narrow alleys, while the merchants exhort them from every side with a handful of live chickens, or a pile of winter radishes that look like green beets, or bouquets of *padrasak*, which is a flower with an edible berry inside. On a small stretch of mud flats the spice merchant has

spread his many colored wares, the brightest of which is the green *nass*, a tobacco that is tucked in the cheek. The bazaar is a mass of bobbing turbans and flashing black mustaches and over it all the thin smoke that curls from the tea houses where the Uzbecks sit cross-legged on raised platforms, rather like tables, and nibble skewered meats and sip bitter green tea from handle-less cups.

**P**ROBABLY it has all been like this since the days when Samarkand was Tamurlane's capital. Rising behind the bazaar is the bulk of the Bibikhanim Mosque, which was named for Tamurlane's eldest wife, a Chinese. One dreamy tale says that she built the mosque as a surprise for Tamurlane who was off at the time plundering India. Rushing to complete it before his return she ran athwart a romantic architect. The architect was in love with Bibikhanim, also known as Bibi-Hanum, and consequently was in no rush to finish the building. He finally agreed to speed his work if she would consent to a kiss. She offered him many other women, and to prove girls are all alike she gave her architect several eggs. Taste them, she said, and you will see they are all the same. Ah, but the wily Don Juan of the drawing board had an answer. He produced two cups, one with brandy the other with water. Taste the difference, he said. Bibi realized she was outwitted and she accepted. The architect kissed her so hard he left a mark. When Tamurlane returned from India, carrying a treasure on ninety camels he saw the building his doting wife had built for him, but he also saw the mark on her face. He chased the architect who climbed the minaret and disappeared into the sky. End of fairy tale. Other historians say it's all a tall tale. Bibi was seventy years old when Tamurlane returned from India, and besides it took his whole India fortune to pay for the buildings. They stand today, covered with Arabic inscriptions, tiled in bright blue and green and turquoise, and the wail of Uzbek melodies from the frenzy of the bazaar waft over the ancient walls as they have for centuries.

Tamurlane's wives and sisters and nephews and members of his court are buried in the Shakh-y-Zinda, which the Russians call an "architectural ensemble." It is a succession of mausoleums each of which opens off a passageway. They are covered with gorgeous tiles in yellow, lilac, and turquoise, and are visited by troupes of Uzbeks, whose women wear bright pink shawls and bangles on their feet. Most holy of all is the tomb of Hussam Ibn Abbas

whose remains lie behind padlocked ivory doors at the end of the street, in the oldest building in Samarkand. Hussam was a relative of Mohammed, and indeed Mohammed himself said that Hussam was the kin who most resembled him. Now three visits to the tomb of Hussam are equal to one pilgrimage to Mecca. While all ages seem to visit the tomb of Hussam the five mosques in Samarkand and the sixteen in Tashkent seem only to attract the senior citizens.

Tamur was followed by Ulugbek, his grandson, and if the mighty empire which covered almost the same territory as the sphere of Soviet influence today began to dwindle, it did at least flourish for a time in science and the arts. The remains of Ulugbek's observatory have been uncovered. Here on a hilltop looking towards present-day Samarkand Ulugbek in the early 1400s discovered 1,018 stars. We know 1,032 today. Ulugbek's measurements of the astronomical year made in the fifteenth century are said to differ only by one minute and two seconds from the calculations made four centuries later.

Tamurlane and Ulugbek are buried in the beautiful tomb of Gur Emir, capped with a lovely bright blue-green cupola, which overlooks a sunny courtyard of many decorated arches. The tombs were opened in 1941 and of Tamurlane they found his beard, half his mustache and one eyebrow. Reconstructing the skeleton, it was proven that he was lame, had a stiff right arm frozen at the elbow. And true to history, Ulugbek's spinal column was severed at the neck, for he had been guillotined for progressive ideas.

**F**IRST mentioned in 329 BC, long known to the Greeks as Marakanda, serenaded in history by the Chinese, conquered by the Arabs in the eighth century, Samarkand was opened to western tourists only a few years ago. Of the few hundred tourists who came last year, better than a third were Americans, among them Eric Johnston and Adlai Stevenson. All of them stayed at the doddering Registan Hotel named for the ancient forum, the ruins of which still stand decorated now with Soviet slogans left over from the Tashkent Afro-Asia Writers Conference of last October. But a new era blooms and a handsome small hotel with terrace luxury apartments and every room with a bath is nearing completion. It will be ready for the spring and summer rush that is sure to come to the old home of Tamur the Lame, now just fifty-five minutes off the jet route from America to India.

—HORACE SUTTON.

## EUROPE

We'll see the usual, plus Africa to Sweden; Dublin to past the Iron Curtain. A different trip—for the young in spirit who want to be accompanied but not herded around. Also shorter trips. \$685-\$1340.

EUROPE SUMMER TOURS

255 Sequoia, Box B — Pasadena, California



# Man's Response to God Throughout the Centuries

By ROSCOE T. FOUST, *Director, Department of Special Services, Seamen's Church Institute of New York.*

**T**HE author of St. John's Gospel prophesied with clairvoyant wisdom when he brought his gospel to an end that it was to be the beginning for countless Christian writers after him. "There are," he wrote, "many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." (John 21:25.) He might, of course, have meant merely to say that he felt inadequate to do full justice to his subject, or to explain why he felt it necessary to pick and choose from the wealth of available material that which best suited his theme and purpose, thus to forestall and disarm the critics who might protest that his was a work of "special pleading" and heavy editorializing. It does not matter, for those of us who regularly scan the almost endless list of "religious" books constantly pouring from the press, and forever failing to keep abreast of them, are convinced that St. John spoke the sober truth—and that the world is indeed about to overflow from the deluge of books already written or soon to be, about the Christian religion.

In addition to new volumes of solid scholarship in theology and history whose most likely destiny is the seminary classroom and library, each new list that appears inevitably covers much old ground already trodden hard by much traffic, as well as many books whose authors can scarcely expect to do more than bolster up the wavering prejudices of those who seek to maintain a narrowly sectarian position in a shrinking world. Nevertheless there are always to be found several titles of unusual significance and importance to the general reader. A few of these just published or about to be published seem to me to deserve the attention and endorsement they now receive.

As I see it, there are currently six books from as many different publishers that demand our attention. Their common subject is man himself, and each in only slightly different ways is concerned with the full, abundant, and healthy life as human be-



ings which God must will for every man. "The Ministry of Healing," by John Large (Morehouse-Gorham, \$3), calls attention once again, and most vigorously, to the proper interrelationships between a man's faith and his essential well-being, physical and spiritual. As forcefully as his well-chosen words permit, Dr. Large sets out to rescue "spiritual healing" from the bad company it so often keeps in the minds of many. "It is not," he says, "a black-magic hangover from the Middle Ages, nor a timid step-child of psychiatry." Still less is it "a back-door way of bargaining with God, whereby, in exchange for a few muttered prayers, your ulcer, or arthritis, or migraine headache is banished forever. . . . It is simply an ancient, Biblical, and classic way of reopening, realigning, or otherwise reactivating the thoroughway of the soul between man and his Creator." That this highway eventually leads a man through death only validates the argument, for, though all men must die, they don't have to die sick—not sick in mind or heart. Dr. Large is an Episcopal clergyman who has had a wide first-hand experience in these matters, and he makes it clear that it is the deep healing within the spirit that means most; whatever else is necessary God will add in measureless measure.

"Discovering Love," by Lance Webb (Abingdon, \$3), spells out the nature of the healing love which is the basic ingredient of "The Ministry of Healing." We all know by now that we either love or perish, but to yearn for love or to will to love is not enough. What is this thing called love,

both human and divine? Dr. Webb believes we are in difficulty because we confuse two kinds of love: the giving-love, which heals, inspires and exalts our human relationships, and never fails, and the desiring-love, which may hurt and devour them, thus always failing. It all begins with man's response to the steadfast love of God for his children. When a man accepts that, he may love himself and therefore others. The author quotes to good effect the story of the society woman who wrote to a prominent social worker in New York, offering her services in his crusade to help the poor children of New York. She described her imperfections at length but concluded with the hope that her zeal for the cause would make up for her shortcomings. The social worker wrote this brief reply: "Dear Madam: Your truly magnificent shortcomings are at present too great. Nothing could prevent you from visiting them on victims of your humility. I advise that you love yourself more before you squander any love on others." Through such light-giving windows as this apt illustration Dr. Webb leads his readers to see what it is really like truly to love, and to be loved.

**I**F NEXT we turn to "The Creative Years," by Reuel L. Howe (Seabury, \$3.50), we will be asked to focus our attention on man's middle years, an area which psychologists tend to neglect in their preoccupation with childhood, adolescence, and old age. Yet these very years are the heart of every man's life, and they are constantly threatened by the twin impostors, success and failure, both of which demand a better understanding if man is to move toward "a maturity that transcends the need for security." Whatever the crisis a man may have to face—in his married life, his family, his business, in a world which he knows will one day make an end of his physical life—Dr. Howe succeeds in making his own convictions plain: the answer to most of man's deepest needs come from God through each other.

I have tried [he says] to spell out specifically the meaning of the personal as experienced in the common relationships of life. We take our daily encounters with each other too much for granted and rush away from each other