

## VERS PARIS

"Getting there is half the fun." The posters had not lied. Getting there WAS a lot of fun.

There was New York, for example.

Not the New York that everyone knew. But a city of Italians and Porto Ricans and Negroes and Jews. A city of great misery and lonesomeness. That fascinating city within a city, the village. The New York of dockers and Bowery men. The city of good jazz and laughing colored people listening to it.

I took a room in Greenwich Village. Then I went out, looking for some genuine jam sessions. Outside, a young negro asked me for a light. We began talking. He worked as a waiter and dishwasher. Every evening he'd go out for some jazz, "just to forget", as he said. Strangely enough, the little he knew about religion he didn't believe in. Nevertheless he has always wanted to meet a priest, ever since he had seen Bing Crosby in "Going My Way". But priests don't usually frequent restaurant kitchens or jazz clubs! I told him I was one. He evidently didn't believe me at first, because he smiled and remarked that priests "don't go for our kind of music". I laughed and said he was wrong. I liked him immediately, because he knew that jazz belonged to them, the black, before belonging to us, the white, and he didn't mind saying so. He was outspoken, full of radical ideas, earthy, knew life as life is in the slums of Harlem and in the South, possessed a remarkable knowledge of the history of jazz, and was very much preoccupied with ideas of morality. I explained a few things to him, and he seemed to accept them. Then we listened to some music together. He had a lot to tell me, and I learned much from him. I hope he learned a little from me.

I spent half a day at the Catholic Worker. Dorothy Day looks so tired and old. The firm kindness written on that woman's face is a tremendous thing in itself. While there, I lead in the recitation of the rosary and litanies. That, I consider an honour. All around me, there were those "least of my brethren", men whose lives had been a long sadness in corruption and disorder, in suffering and sin, and who, one day, had met a kind face giving them soup in the name of Christ. It was not soup paid for by the Rockefeller Foundation, or the Federal Relief Funds, or anything like that. It was a food of Charity, and a food of mercy. It was given away with love. This is why any amount of humanitarianism will never be worth a grain of the Charity of Christ. It fills up the bellies, it never converts the hearts.

My last night I spent at a play: "Kafka's Trial". I knew the play was an extraordinary one. In fact, one of the greatest philo-

sophical  
come of  
which h  
crime. A  
demned

Ev  
live, bu  
after se  
God fo

Al  
for mo

But

Ho

fornia,

used e

She w

Jews v

questio

and he

O

me, (

do the

they d

I

me to

some

I thin

I

first

knew

gethe

religi

what

conta

gene

taine

after

beco

of m

musi

to. I

love

beer



sophical plays of the century. But I had never dreamed that it could come off so forefully on the stage. A man is accused of a crime for which he will be hanged. But he is never told the nature of his crime. At the end, he goes mad trying to find out why he is condemned.

Evidently, it's the image of today's MAN. He is condemned to live, but cannot find out why he is living. It's a terrible play, and after seeing it, it's so good to go to one's room to pray and thank God for one's Faith and understanding.

Aboard the *Liberte*, life was generally gay and useless, at least for most people.

But God has strange ways - - -

He must have put it in the mind of a young lady from California, that she should convert me to Pantheism. She tried hard, used every argument, gave me books . . . I felt very sorry for her. She was Jewish. Hated the religion of her childhood. Hated all Jews who still believed in Jehovah. Her family was divided by this question of orthodoxy, a brother and sister had committed suicide, and her father had left the home.

One day, after a long story, she started to cry, then she asked me, (I could see she meant what she was saying), "But why, why do the Jews have to suffer so much? Why do people hate us like they do? What have we done to the world, anyway?"

I have seen her once, since I am in Paris. She had phoned me to come and see her. She was lonely, and wanted me to visit some churches with her, and explain the different things in them. I think she is on her way to Christ.

I also got to know a very fine young Persian, a Moslem. (The first Moslem I had ever spoken to). He seemed surprised that I knew anything at all about the Koran. We spent many hours together. He talked about his home and the custom in his land, his religion and his liking for the Mormons. It was interesting to hear what he thought of Christians. I was sorry he had never come in contact with monks. He only knew the type of Christian one generally meets at the University of California. (He had just obtained a degree from that university). He was going home to live after spending four years in the United States. He would have to become an Oriental again. He would have to get used to the idea of many wives. He would have to put his western suit aside. And our music, and dances, and food . . . everything that he now was used to. It was not going to be easy. Particularly the occidental idea of love. Romantic love. I learned a lot from him.

Then there was this Mexican from Monterrey. He might have been anything between 25 and 40. He had so many millions he

Getting

Italians  
sery and  
age. The  
jazz and

ut, look-  
ro asked  
nd dish-  
forget",  
igion he  
meet a  
y Way".  
z clubs!  
because  
kind of  
mediately,  
before  
He was  
s in the  
e know-  
ied with  
seemed  
He had  
learned

ay looks  
n's face  
ecitation  
around  
ves had  
ing and  
p in the  
kerfeller  
hat. It  
n away  
ll never  
ellies, it

new the  
t philo-



didn't know how to spend them. He had built colleges, churches . . . He was very child-like about everything, and hated the government of his country. He was even dreaming of becoming president of Mexico! With money, one never knows what one can do in a Latin country! Strangely enough, he knew the Trevino family whom we had visited in Mexico. He gave me a bottle of tequila, and a small sombrero.

There were only three of us at our dining-table, a mother and her child and I. The mother was the most beautiful woman imaginable. She was Belgian, and had married an American because, she told me, he looked like John Wayne! She was very, very proper, very very much cultured, and very very mysterious. If this had been the nineteenth century, I might have fallen in love with her. She was so much "la belle femme fatale" of Romantic literature! The young fellow was a real little devil. She said he took after his father.

Quite naturally there were many young Europeans returning home. Mostly from France and Switzerland. I did more apologetics during those six days than during my whole life before. The problem of religion would always come up. To answer the questions and to the objections, one had to know something about Pacifism, Aldous, Huxley, Santayana, Yoga, Pantheism, Existentialism, Dialectical Materialism, Christian Science, Gide, Paleontology, Primitivism, Hinduism, Phenomenology, Henry Miller, Mickey Spillane and Prophet Jones! (If I had only read more when I had a chance to do so . . .) Because Apologetics IS a defence of our religion against ALL those people and ideas. One soon finds out that in all discussions, one must never forget that in the arguments of the adversary, there is always SOME truth. The only way to win the argument is by first of all admitting that truth. As the Persian said: "I'm a Moslem because my father was a Moslem, and you're a Catholic, because your father was a Catholic."

Answer: "Yes . . . I suppose that's true . . . there's certainly some truth in that, all right . . . BUT.

Greetings from Paris.

Don't forget that, if only to visit Paris intelligently and enjoy this marvellous city, it's worth while studying French for six long years!

ADRIAN ARSENAULT.