LATIN AMERICAN JOURNEY

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NEW ORLEANS **December 9th, 1971**

We arrived in New Orleans at the beginning of December, so it was cool. But the sense of being in the tropics could not be avoided, what with the dank still humidity and the tendency to rain with a ferociousness that suggests the water cannot wait to splash the earth. And, of course, the vegetation – made up of "moss-trees" whose eery effect is as if normal trees had been strewn with the delicate embroidered finery of a giant witch. They create intricately detailed confusion and chaos, reminiscent of the slightly sinister surrealism of Hyman Bloom´s paintings.

The highways, the Texaco stations and the modern part of the city cannot make you forget you are in the tropics, and that this is inherently "wild" country. A palm tree in the corner of a 75 cent parking lot makes the latter seem out of place rather than vice versa. I felt the same thing as we crossed the long bridge over the steamy swamps when approaching the city from the east. I marvel at, yet at the same time resent, the powerful taming process of the "American way", something which originates from the north-east of the country, yet with its unprecedented economic enormity can bring a measure of uniformity, efficiency and Anglo-Saxon bureaucracy to a jungle or a desert. Of course, many tropical countries have sky-scrapers and tarmac roads, but none has ever had the financial strength and cultural hold to make a way of life and a way of building, (which in this case belongs essentially to a temperate climate and a Protestant work ethic), pervade such vastly varying geographical conditions. Louisiana is not, any more than Nevada or Arizona, a hinterland being successfully "opened up" by the cultural and economic centres of the north-east. Rather "New York" is already here and working on its own.

As one crosses the Mississippi on the ferry, (full of commuters from New Orleans going to Algiers), between the active and messy docks can be seen short stretches of trees with branches dipping into the muddy-red waters of the majestic river. From such a glimpse, one can envisage how it was for La Salle, the Frenchman who navigated the waters of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers all the way from Canada to New Orleans, in order to claim the vast uncharted territory for his country. As a result, an area of over one millions square miles was named after and put in the possession of Louis XIV, who really could hardly have cared less about it. Spanish explorers had travelled periodically in the area, but since gold did not glitter on every river-bank, and nothing else was immediately found which could provide distraction at the court of Spain, they did not bother to stake a claim. Later, after France had not been able to realize quick profits from it, she equally apathetically gave it to Spain to administer, merely to avoid its falling into the hands of the British. The extraordinary behaviour of the European giants is like that of spoilt children playing with toys, keeping some to spite a rival, giving others to secure the transaction of a royal girlfriend. For two years after the French gave the territory to Spain (which was somewhat unwilling to accept) the people of Lousiana were not even aware of the fact, and when finally a Spanish governor turned up with ninety soldiers he was turned about. Interestingly enough, the people of New Orleans were the first in North America to rebel against their European masters, and for a short while to exist without such rule.

Later, Napolean must have thought he was a clever business-man when he took the territory back from Spain, and 20 days later sold it to the U.S. for 15 million dollars. But he was dealing with an

unopened package, and the U.S. was certainly showing superior and longer-sighted business manship. So apathetic to the land itself was Napolean, that the borders of the territory were not exactly defined, and Spain thought it owned some land still in what is now West Florida. The European giants were too caught up in their own intrigues to realize what was really happening, to see that a new giant was emerging that before long would be buying them all up. Is it nor ironic that Spain, in control of Lousiana at the time of the American revolution, helped the revolutionary states so as to put a thorn in the side of her hated enemy? And that Britain herself was relatively unconcerned with the "unruliness" in this one of her dominions, the East being at that time of more importance? Neither knew that in the midst of the squabbles of their era, destined to last not so much longer, they were planting the seeds of a new nation, a new phenomenon, a new world.

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The French quarter of New Orleans is like a stage-set from "How The West Was Won". It seems this way round since although quite authentic, it is encapsulated in a different world. Unfortunately, Bourbon Street is commercialised (although elegantly and without a trace of the vulgar detergent-style commercialism). However, with the street barred off from cars to allow people to wander up and down, it seems to exist now to take money from vacationing New Yorkers, Bostonians and Chicagoans, rather than as living still in its own spontaneous pulse of all-night jazz, bar-gossip, and delightful debauchery. One very pleasing phenomenon in the French Quarter is that the Black people are dignified, self-confident and un-resentful, which allows them to be much warmer than in the north, much to my surprise. Perhaps it is because they made the place what it is, and they know it, so there is no question as to the rights and respect due to them. Jazz is an exclusive art, and more important it is less political than Rock music for example, which could only be so if its originators do not question, and therefore do not have to exaggeratedly assert, their self-respect. Louis Ar mstrong was no Malcolm X. The social outcast, the tragedy of disintegrated self-esteem, is rather to be found in the white alcoholic, in the new part of the town on the other side of Canal Street.

MEXICO: Coahuila, Saltillo, San Luis Potosi, Lagos. **December 29th, 1971**

This part of Mexico is a strange and wonderful paradox. From a road, the countryside is rolling, vast and colourful. Close up, or when you are walking through it, it is dry and harsh and spikes or burrs get into your clothes to continually harass your flesh. It is somewhat like the Spanish language – soft, lilting and Latin at first sight but on closer inspection full of harsh, dry sounds, with a texture similar to much of the spicy hot Mexican food.

Coming from Texas and the United States, I felt the continuity of the American continent, rather than the break between North and Latin America which one assumes from an intellectual or historical perspective. Firstly, the enormity of geographical features and the distance between towns in both the U.S. and Mexico is so New Worldish in character; secondly, the south of Texas (e.g. San Antonio) is very Mexican, presenting a gentle break-in to what you later find south of the border. But most important is the realization that, for all the differences in culture, the essential mode of life is the same – dependence on cattle in a dry water-short land and the corresponding life-style of

ranch and cowboy with round hat. The similarity came across to me more powerfully than the difference, although in Mexico the ranch-house is of mud-brick, has no water nor electricity, is often far from a track where motor vehicles can drive, and the lands are divided up by fences made from locally-collected branches. One is presented with the results of two peoples faced with the same challenge; on the one hand the Anglo-Saxon, on the other the Spaniard-Indian or mestizo.

I tend to ask the question: which other cultures that I know is the Mexican way of life similar to? The small towns present an obvious fusion of Indian and Spanish influence. On the one hand the houses are of mud-brick or cement, often painted in brilliant colours, suggesting a rather non-European childlike (I do not mean primitive) simplicity. On the other hand, the small courtyards, the neatly-lined streets, the aesthetically laid-out pot plants at the fronts of the houses and the village church are distinctly Spanish. In Saltillo I was struck with the thought that it was extraordinarily similar to a Turkish town of the same size, in the sense that both represent a bridge between European and non-European cultures.

The centre or shopping district of a town like Saltillo is an atrocious American imitation. Shops with sterile fluorescent lighting display American-style products giving an overall plastic glitter which you never find in the U.S. itself. A tumble-down cinema has flashing neon lights as a poor attempt to give glamour in the American way. Perhaps this is because Saltillo is only a few hundred miles from the border, for San Luis Potosi, a town of similar size, has none of this, but rather a beautiful unself-conscious market, reminiscent to me of a middle-eastern bazaar.

We were very lucky to stay over a week in a little village in the country near Lagos. This sublimely peaceful place was composed of several rancheros, the houses of the farm-workers, a couple if shops selling primarily Coca-Cola, and a church. The people live frugally but not in squalor. Each family had a mud-brick house with ceilings of wood beams which was built by the man of the house. Most had only two rooms – kitchen with stone fireplace and bedroom in which all the children slept slept with the parents. The houses, the courtyards with pretty flowers, and the coralls and chicken pens were all meticulously neat and delightfully cosy. Each family owned a little land, a couple of pigs, possibly some cows, chickens, and dogs to prevent coyotes stealing eggs at night. The traditional self-sufficiency of the hacienda was evident. People ate mostly what they produced themselves, or else bought from nearby friends what they lacked. For example, our hosts who owned a shop bought alfalfa to feed their two or three pigs from a friend who most probably returned the money through the purchase of soft drinks and cigarettes. Only for clothes and a few commodities not grown locally such as tomatoes, would they go once or twice a week to Lagos, 8 km. away. Each family also had on their plot of land a water-hole for washing and for the animals to drink from, human drinking-water coming from elsewhere.

Although the village was small, the houses were scattered over considerably more ground than one finds in a similar sized village in Africa, the Middle-East or the Orient. I was tempted to speculate on whether this is a part of the New World tendency referred to before, of being accustomed to greater distances and larger scales in natural and man-made phenomena than are Old World counterparts. Levi-Strauss made this simple but significant point in *Tristes Tropiques,* when he noted this feature common to a New York office building, the slums of Chicago, the Andean mountains or the statue of Christ in Rio de Janeiro.

When walking in the rugged, stupendously beautiful countryside around the village, out of sight of house or human being, I found myself expecting a nomadic Arab to appear if anyone at all. When I remembered that a Mexican, were he to appear, would be wearing western clothes, I was jolted. This made me feel the closer historical roots of the people to myself and therefore less of the sense of strangeness and exoticness experienced in the Sudan for example. The similarity of the terrain to that of North Africa (which is on the same latitude) led me once again to a realization of the different ways that the same challenges of nature can be coped with. Instead of the *jelabia* and the *emma* (turban), here it is the round Mexican hat and the poncho which protects the skin from the sun. In common, the two cultures use goats and mules, but use the horse in one and the camel in the other.

Much of the vegetation is the same as in N. Africa – the acacia tree, succulents, spiky grasses, but what is totally unique to the New World is the cactus. Such extraordinarily expressive forms, telling of the difficulties of their existence! Some species grow into distraught tangled shapes, as if holding eternally a frightful story they are not allowed to divulge in their sentence of silence. If you look at one for a while, and imagine it was a human face, you see paranoia, a fear turned into bristling aggression against itself and the outside world. Van Gogh should have come here. He would have found comfort in seeing a natural expression of his internal agony, outside his own imagination. Other species form gentle lobes like the faces of cows or the ears of huge mice or mules. They grow in patches, the lobes of one plant relating delicately with its neighbours, like human body sculptures from Living Theatre.

I had expected the Mexicans to be frivolous, flamboyant and loud in a characteristically southern European manner. So far they seem far from this. They are level-headed and quiet; often a group together will talk very little, though when they do it is warmly and gently. But it is certainly not a land of wine and song. Actually, ther is a slightly stoical dourness - the Indian *geist* that shows through in the mestizo tempermant.

We happened to be in the village for Christmas Eve, when we were invited to see a traditional pageant. This was a highly allegorical portrayal of the Nativity with bright costumes and banners. But the emphasis was on the conflict between Good (portrayed by a boy dressed in white with angel´s wings) and Evil (portrayed by three men dressed as devils). There was also a wise hermit from the mountains with a flowing white beard, who was harassed and chased around by the devils to the accompaniment of shrieks of laughter from the children in the audience. One by one the devils had a symbolic sword-fight with the angel, the resolution and victory of Good being symbolized by all of the devils bowing before the crib. I wondered if the main characters were Indian in origin, the Christian Nativity offering little more than the symbol of Goodness and the names of the devils (Lucifer, etc), the latter being most probably Indian evil spirits. Certainly the whole portrayed a pantheistic sentiment, and no Maria was identifiable. When we questioned our hostess about this point, she told us that all the women present represented Maria – a warm and humanistic interpretation of Catholic spiritualism.

MEXICO: Guadalajara, Lake Chapala, Jocotepec, Morelia. January 5th-9th

Living cultures can be observed for what they are, and a certain degree of understanding is a attained from seeing them in their concrete contemporaneous detail. But for an understanding of real depth, a historical consciousness is essential. Nothing ever arises *de novo*, and nothing ever ends completely. Influences stretch and ramify through time and across continents, fusing with others, and sometimes fading out to reappear elsewhere in time or space. The American continent is a complex historical sea, fed with waters from a vast variety of rivers: If one were to analyze he chemical composition of a sea, the explanation for the presence of a certain compound might require an expedition up one of the rivers feeding it, to find out what rocks it passed through. An interesting expedition of the mind in the content of Mexico could be made along the historical path of Islam.

All the countries of Western Europe acquired dynamic energy before and around the time of the Renaissance. In a sense, this was the legacy of the greatness of Antiquity, politically the regeneration of the Roman Empire, culturally the regeneration of Greek Civilization. The "Dark Ages" was a period of 1,000 years of dormancy, in which the latent dynamism had had to deal with the overlaying of Christianity. From the Renaissance till the 20th century France, Britain, Spain. Germany and Italy were the most vibrant world creators. Portugal and Holland were almost as important, but for this argument those five countries are sufficient. All of these five burst forth spiritually, three of them burst forth imperialistically too. They were the three nations that were already united. Germany and Italy were not united until the 19th century and therefore largely missed out on colonialism. Their expansionist energies could not be channelled until they were unified nations and then it was too late, so they put these previously untapped energies into a fascist-based 20th century attempt at world domination, and executed the inevitable act of Europe´s self-destruction.

Now Spain and Italy experienced similar histories at the period of Rome´s decline; both were invaded by Visigoths. Why was one united by the 15th century, the time of Columbus, and the other not? Was is not because Spain had been overrun for centuries by the Arabs? Foreign occupation often engenders solidarity in a people who would otherwise be made up of squabbling factions (as was Italy). And if they successfully oust the invaders, as the Spanish did, this is frequently accompanied by an outflow of national pride, optimism, military competence and a spiritual strength that only needs a new direction in which to be channelled. The power and fervor of El Cid found its new challenge in the lands discovered by Columbus.

Thus the phenomenon of Latin America owes much to the Arabs who invaded Spain. In a more profound sense, the whole of the American continent (and by this token, the whole world also) must recognize the significance of the Arabs. For during the "Dark Ages" it was the Arabs who held on to the philosophies of Antiquity, the spirit of enquiry, knowledge of science and astronomy, and kept much of the world open through trade. When Europe´s slumber ended, it reappropriated these ancient legacies which might well have died had not the Arabs been at a cultural zenith during Europe´s "Dark Ages".

Thus although superficial observation shows little Arab influence, the historico-cultural phenomenon of Mexico as a whole is strongly linked with that of Islam. On the observable level, it can be noticed that Guadalajara is an Arabic name, that Spanish has harsh sounds not present in its sister language Italian, that some Mexican-Spanish houses reveal Moorish influence, and that Spanish churches have spires very reminiscent of Islamic minarets.

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The state of the present world rest heavily upon the spirit and activities of the three major colonial powers of Western Europe: France, Britain and Spain. The U.S rests on a basis of the Anglo-Saxon mentality – the Protestant work ethic, philosophical empiricism and pragmatism, and a political framework derived from struggles in England between constitutional democracy and monarchism.

Latin America was colonized by Spain, which was very different from the essentially English settlement of North America. Firstly, the Spanish came over in large numbers to Mexico earlier than the English did to the U.S., so that the Mexican culture is older than the American, and partly for this reason has a more entrenched tradition. Secondly, the Spanish intermarried with the Indians, whereas in North America the Indians were killed off or segregated. This was partly because there were fewer Indians in the North and these had attained a less extensive level of organization and civilization, whereas the Spanish were dealing with a land already cultivated and politically organized. It was also because the Anglo-Saxon arrogance was of a different sort to the Catholic Spanish, the Protestant psychology of individual isolation and distrust of the Other being antithetical to intermarriage. At any rate, the Anglo-Saxon pioneer dealt with Nature, bringing order to the elements and extending a variant of the Protestant world-view to a truly New World. The Spaniard colonized by bringing his world-view to an indigenous race, by conversion to Catholicism. The activities of both had a largely religious origin, but the former was manifested in practical, secular forms to a greater extent.

Spain did not undergo an Industrial Revolution. In any case, the Spanish colonization was completed before the Industrial Revolution, and neither during it nor after was Latin America able to benefit from an influx of technological values from its "mother country". Spanish culture was in decline just as Britain reached its zenith. Though both lost their political hold on their American colonies, Britain was able to interact with the U.S. philosophically and economically in a way that allowed the material advancement of both. These facts go some way to understanding the differences between North and Latin America.

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The wonderful, softly beautiful Lake Chapala is spoiled by the "American Colony". All around the shores are smart houses belonging to Americans and Europeans. The result is that the wonderful sensation of having nothing to blight one´s vision in any direction is lost. It also means that one has difficulty walking around the lake without trespassing on private property, or coming up against walls and fences.

Is seems so wrong to be able to "own" a lake or even part of it. This is not an intellectual or political view, rather it is a feeling that such ownership is discordant with the universe. A lake can only own

itself, or be itself. That is the first reason for my dislike of Lake Chapala. The second is the insensitive wholesale deposition of the "American way". This has to do with what is "natural".

There is no reason for feeling one culture´s way of existing is any more or less natural than another´s, though one may be more or less natural than another´s, though one may be more or less destructive of nature (as with industrial pollution and technically efficient hunting of rare animals in the West). What gives one the impression of unnaturalness is one people imitating or having forced upon it the style of another culture, particularly when this is the Western one. Petrol stations, billboards, and telegraph poles do seem naturally ugly to me, but they are much more so in non-Western settings. American houses around a lake in California would not jar on the senses, but in a country like Mexico they do because they are out of place. The Mexican houses and villages blend with and seem to grow out of the landscape, because of their shapes, colours and the types of materials used. Western architecture often seems alienated from natural forms. Houses are always put there from the outside, the styles are conceived of outside their physical context; they never emerge from the earth.

The effect is even worse when non-Westerners use Western methods in building etc. Semi-Westernized towns are so often messy, uncoordinated affairs like junk-yards. The same people who build so aesthetically in their own style, seem disorientated with the Western one, not knowing how to deal with it either inside the buildings or in overall town lay-out. The sight of a pile of petrol drums at the edge of a cornfield, the sound of crackly radio music instead of live native music, or people drinking Coca-Cola instead of coconut juice; these are all tragic examples of the phenomenon of cultural influence following the lines of economic influence (or domination in the Marxian sense), regardless of the intrinsic values of the dominant or usurped culture.

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In the presidential palace in Guadalajara is an impressive mural by Orozco. As you ascend a flight of steps, first the pounding fist and then the defiant, angry face of Hidalgo appears. With bulging eyes and flushed cheeks, the face is fanatical. Below him is the human insanity symbolized by gaudy battle-scenes, death and the banners of various 20th century ideological powers: the swastika, hammer and sickle, and also the cross. The idea is desperate, direct and unsubtle, yet it is not banal. It is interesting that Orozco (a very socially conscious artist) chose the national Abraham Lincoln as his symbol of freedom, and modern Western European political movements as the symbols of repression and slavery. From this and various statues of Hidalgo, it is interesting to compare this hysterical personage with the staid, upright appearance of Lincoln. Hidalgo abolished slavery in Mexico at Guadalajara fifty years before Lincoln did do in the U.S. This fact is carefully put as an appendage to the English translation of the Declaration, obviously for the American tourists!

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At Jocotepec, we climbed a mountain. At first up a path, and then up a steep slope, holding onto trees to prevent ourselves from falling. High up most of the lake was visible and the nearby mountains looked as if they had been sculpted with a giant finger-nail. The distant mountains looked ethereal, as they disappeared into the haze. Passing clouds cast shadows over mountains, and created strange effects of light on the water surface.

As we got higher, we could notice how the vegetation changed. Lower, near the town, it was sparse, much of the land being cleared for mescal (cactus) cultivation. The rows of these cactuses looked like the stubble of a two-day old beard. Higher up, there were trees, and the undergrowth was thicker. Obviously the rainfall was considerably greater higher up.

The mountainous area south of Lake Chapala is like the Alps in Europe. Compared with the vastness of scenery elsewhere in the country, the lush green and the way each kind of vegetation covers only a small area, give the effect of a country garden. Nevertheless, the mountains are huge. Morelia is like Bern in Switzerland; it is small, quiet, with mountains right up to the city edge, and like Bern, the streets are lined with arches it is small, quiet, with mountains right up to the city edge, and like Bern, the streets are lined with arches. The architecture is early colonial. White stone houses, square or rectangular, make up a very uniform style over all the town. A dignified yet gentle style – it seemed strange that the architecture of glorious conquers should have struck me in this way, and not as pompous or loud.

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We went to a folk-dance festival in Guadalajara. Most of the dances were in Spanish styles, exuberant, elegant, sometimes frivolous, sometimes melancholy – but missing a profundity one would expect in such high-quality music. One Indian dance was sombre, slower and more deliberate.

The Cathedral has a gold-gilted baroque interior; stupendous but "lighter" than the Italian baroque cathedrals. This is partly because the walls are white, and because sunlight streams in through the windows. None of the Mexican churches have the dark mysteriousness of Italian churches. Nor do you find the list of regulations about clothes and behavior; rather you find very short skirts, trousers on women and casual, informal behavior in church.

MEXICO: Playa azul, Las pinas – The Pacific Coast.

Coming across the mountains which separate Morelia and Uruapan from the coast, we found an increase of about 20^{o} F between Uruapan and Nueva Italia, a distance of about 20 miles. At Nueva Italia and form then on it was mild and comfortable to sleep out at night.

On the coast, mud-brick houses give way to thatched houses of dry palm leaves. At Las Pinas, a long, sandy beach was backed by stately coconut palms in a plantation. When we were thirsty, we could pick coconuts and drink the juice on a deserted beach.

The horizon out to sea was always clear, but along the beach the view became hazy from dust in the air. Viewed through this, the palm trees took on a strange and wild appearance.

The sea is not tranquil as is the countryside near Lagos. It is turbulent to the mind, especially toward dusk, raising so many indefinable issues. For Conrad, the sea was the metaphor for the unconscious

mind, the backcloth against which his characters acted out their lives, analyzed themselves, or were filled with strange primeval passions. For me, the sea represents my mind and the vastness of the universe. Only the surface ripples and waves are visible, not what happens below, that which causes what is visible. To have the sea before your eyes is like being presented with your life´s quest, the task of understanding yourself and the universe. Hence the sea arouses not only turbulence, but a nostalgia for what is only felt through intimidation – what has not yet been experienced.

If you watch an area of choppy sea, you notice the complexity of Nature in even such a fraction of the Universe, ever in motion, moving against itself and changing its contours. When the waves splash against the rocks, you see that the mystery of Nature is that it follows its own laws blindly and regularly. The force of the wave brings water high up into the rocks, replenishing the water in the rock pools. In the lull between the waves, the excess water immediately returns to its source, the sea, through the force of gravity, by any channel or crack in the rock. The movement is infinitely variable, different each time, yet it always follows the line of least resistance, obeys a law. It falls back until a new wave forces it up again. The consciousness of a viewing human being cannot help wondering: why does it start to fall back if within two seconds it is always to be pushed up again?

The sunset on the coast is a very delicate pink, by contrast to the powerful blood-reds, oranges and yellows inland. Dusk is sudden and an intense experience, especially when there are no electric lights to soften its impact.

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On the coast, we were eating much fish and coconuts. Yet for must of the people, including our hosts at Las Pinas, the staple diet was still beans and eggs, as inland. I marvel at the usefulness of chickens – so little trouble to keep, and always giving a supply of protein. No wonder everyone keeps them, even in the towns. Fish is a speciality even on the coast. It is eaten regularly only if a man in the household is a fisherman.

All the houses have rope hammocks, which blend perfectly with both the leisurely, gentle life-style and the palm-thatched houses.

MEXICO CITY

In Tristes Tropiques Levi-Strauss describes how he, like many anthropologists, is faced with a conflict. On the one hand he is critical and radical with respect to his own society (the West); on the other hand, he studies other societies with the desire to understand and respect them without judgement. This he realizes is inconsistent, since criticism of facets of his own society should lead him to judge and disapprove of those same facets when found in other societies, thus making objectivity in study impossible. Alternatively, if he is to be objective and not judge other societies, he should be consistent and treat his own society the same way. I find the same conflict when I am travelling, for whereas I am deeply critical of my society, when in non-Western societies I want

only to understand and respect their ways and attitudes; I want not to criticize, but rather I strive not to offend.

Thinking out his problem has helped me to resolve tentatively a deeper conflict that has beset me now for several years. Right from the beginning of my political consciousness I felt a desperate conflict. My understanding of the nature of the social structure, its forms of economic and cultural domination and repression led me to feel the absolute necessity of radical and structural change. At the same time, I always believed that individuals should and could believe different things, and live their lives as they wanted, and that all should strive to coexist in creative difference. This made me antagonistic to the delineation of a "good" society. I detested the structure and uniformity of political movements, although theoretically a consistent policy and solidarity in opposition seemed essential for radial change, for I saw that this meat the replacement of one conformist structure for another. Also, I found political activists deeply pessimistic, negative and grey – not at all representing the spontaneous zest for life or joyful liberation that I felt revolution should be all about.

The resolution, I am beginning to feel, lies in a powerful acceptance of the Universe on a higher metaphysical plane. This is a realization of something beyond good and evil, a Buddhist Unity. It is connected with the idea of an absolute truth on a transcendent plane which cannot be directly translated to the concrete world; that is, that no philosophical system nor mode of existence is the complete revealed truth. All such systems contain contradictions, whilst contradictory systems may both contain important elements of truth. The world, by its very nature, is beset with paradoxes which are resolved only on a higher, almost mystical plane. This higher Truth must guide action in existence but only as a powerful light beyond the immediate conflicts; it can never dictate what is right in all possible situations. Thus, man is left in an existential situation of choice.

The resolution of the conflict lies in the development of this higher consciousness of acceptance simultaneously with facing the challenges of paradox and conflict in the world. The paradox with respect to political action involves the distinction between tolerance, which is a strength and a virtue, and acquiescence (which is cowardice and a vice). Knowledge of a higher Truth makes acquiescence to a corrupt political system wrong. Therefore, I must oppose it in myself in whatever way is an expression of myself, and not according to a set of rules of what should be achieved, arrived at through intellectual labyrinths, unconnected with an understanding and expression of my self. Political radicalism must entail an active, individual resistance and creativeness, not a group structure; and this must be simultaneous with a healthy tolerance of the system opposed.

I do find some hope for this in the tendency of the New Left to avoid unifying policies, and to forge continual reanalysis and discussion. There must be no more drawing up of plants for the future, but rather political action should be seen as an open-ended creative movement of man, in which there is never full knowledge of exactly what should be (which means stagnation and ossification) but merely the continual drive for freedom in whatever form it may take. Most importantly, different individuals must do this in whichever ways are right for themselves.

The way I see political issues now involves the realization that society is not all bad in the present, while the future will (or should be) all good. Good and bad co-exist in a dialectical relationship. Often in history a movement for what has seemed entirely good has given rise to evil later, and vice

versa. As an example of the inextricable co-existence of good and bad facets of a single complex phenomenon, one might observe the historical phenomenon termed the "Protestant Ethic". On the one hand, this worldview is related to, has given rise to, or is involved with a massive alienation of man – a solitary, conscience-stricken inner self hopelessly split from mechanical, impersonal social self. On the other hand, it has fostered a dynamic tendency for self-analysis and the search for truth. It is responsible for a repressive bureaucratic consciousness but also for a deep and pervasive egalitarianism. And Catholicism, although intrinsically authoritarian and hierarchichal, has maintained a sense of and a respect for the individual soul.

Thus the paradox of the co-existence of good and evil in the concrete world is an eternal condition. Yet the higher understanding, the acceptance of good and evil, the absolute Truth, must make one fight for the good in concrete existence.

Now, as I observe and enjoy societies other than my own, my attitude must be one of acceptance, since criticism is dogmatic and arrogant. But my own society is dialectically related to me; it has helped to form me, and all that I do is as a part of it - and therefore contributes to its transformation. Thus, the critique of, and the desire to change it is intrinsic to my self-expression, my creative life.

With respect to my self, the relationship is the same. I must try to change and improve myself. But again, I see the need for a Buddhist-like acceptance of the good and the bad within myself, on a higher plane. I have always been hostile to the Christian ideal of a "good man". He is formed by a purging of evil (followed by a projection of this evil onto the world). The Christian virtue is equated with a wishy-washy purity, inhibitive and repressive. Christ himself, I believe, was actually more a Buddhist than a Christian. His teachings are full of deliberate contradictions and paradoxes; he was a true dialectician. His harmony is on a different plane. The world for him is complex, exciting and not to be dealt with by a book of rules. Sometimes he preaches tolerance, at other times refusal to compromise. Sometimes he talks of peace, at other times of radical opposition to evil. He understands and values love and hate.

I believe now that without this self-acceptance true fulfillment and completeness of the self is impossible. Without it a person moves either toward a belated self-righteousness, or else is plunged into despondency whenever he perceives evil and failings in himself.

Travelling allows my consciousness to develop a pervasive acceptance and understanding of the world as it is. I feel myself more than at other times flow with the universe, and begin to find a unity between myself and the world. At times, I truly begin to see the unity within the paradoxes, to love the world for both its good and evil. It is also, I hope, helping me to draw up my strength for future involvement in concrete efforts draw up my strength for future involvement in concrete efforts and battles, in which a firm sense of ultimate acceptance and absolute truth may give direction, but never exact, dogmatic prescriptions.

*** **January 25, 1972**

Levi-Strauss´ considerations on attempted objectivity in anthropology being in conflict with a critical attitude to one´s own society raises another question. For me, it is impartiality, non-judgment and acceptance of foreign societies which is desirable. It is not a question of scientific objectivity, for I do not believe that is possible in the social sciences. The study of man takes place

within a particular total conceptual framework. In the physical sciences the situation is different, for the categories dealt with arise from the nature of the phenomena studied. In social studies, the categories and the varying emphases placed on them arise from the preconceptions of the group or the individual investigating. An analogy would be life on a planet with no atmosphere, the people living in domes each with a different gaseous composition. A person would have the choice of various atmospheres (analogous to different conceptual frameworks) but could not decide to live outside the domes in a "non-partisan" environment, for there would only be a vacuum. This vacuum is analogous to the notion of so-called objectivity in the social sciences. The actual world-view that passes as objective (positivist-empirical sociology, behaviourism, quantitative statistical social measurement, etc) is in fact one particular orientation among many.

Max Weber made a great mistake in thinking his method was objective. He accepted that personal interests directed the sociologist in his choice of study and the aspects of the subject that he was most concerned with. He accepted that the climate of the cultural milieu or "zeitgeist" would affect the relative importance assigned to particular aspects of the subject studied. But he then thought that because the subsequent dealings with the selected factors could be impartial, that the method was objective.

In fact, such results are partial truths, and this is all that can be expected. Different orientations from different philosophical, epochal and individual perspectives can all give different partial truths, there is no overriding, single objective truth. Once again the absolute Truth is on a transcendental plane, which cannot be revealed in the concrete without paradox.

Weber was himself tormented to the point of neurosis by the conflict between his desired objectivity and his powerful emotional beliefs. If only he could have realized that his subject should have been inextricably involved with his self, his life, and his social beliefs. He should have followed what he knew was right, still realizing it was only a partial truth, related to his place and time and his psychic make-up.

Marx is the man who thought most about the relativity of thought and truth in terms of class consciousness, ideology and historical relativity. Unfortunately his considerations upon the nature of a pure consciousness – one free from contradiction (also explored by Lukács in terms of his notion of a pure social realism in literature) – led him to believe it was possible in concrete human individuals in society, rather than as a speculative notion on an abstract plane, that could then serve as a light to guide the movement of human societies towards the perfection it would not reach. In other words, the harmonious resolution (synthesis) of contradictions was for him a concrete possibility instead of a reality only on a higher plane of consciousness.

MEXICO CITY **January 26, 1972**

The city seemed like a mixture of three kinds of metropolis. The chaotic, sprawling lay-out, especially on the outskirts had the feeling of a Chigago; modern highways and flyovers next to ramshackle buildings, noisy traffic (causing pollution worse than in any American city) and a

general throwing together of myriad styles. Another characteristic is that of a large, modern non-Western city, like Teheran, Istanbul or Cairo. This is difficult to define, but it has something to do with the street-side stalls which sell every conceivable thing, edible and non-edible, useful and useless. It is also related to the fact that many of the people have something very non-urban about them in appearance and manner, which suggests they are country folk dragged into the city. And then there are the crazy drivers (with cranky vehicles) who seem not to care if they hit pedestrian or bus. (this contrasts strongly with the way people are on the pavements – very un-pushy and far less bustling than in New York or London). And then there is a partial atmosphere reminiscent of a Southern European capital - Madrid or Rome, derived from the architecture, the expansive boulevards and the abundant plazas with monuments.

And yet there is something else quite unique about Mexico City. Exhaustingly crowded, a continual hubbub, yet it is strangely gentle, charming, and elegant.

PLAYA AZUL TO ACAPULCO **January 24, 1972**

We travelled from Playa Azul to Acapulco along a very bumpy dirt road whose only traffic is concerned with the construction of the new road linking Acapulco with Guadalajara. It was only possible to attempt this after the dam had been built near Melchor Ocampo, providing a crossing over the river.

The trip took us through wild country, and villages noticeably out of contact with the "wider world". Often we would drive through rivers and would see a woman washing clothes with a wooden board and rolling pin under a half-constructed viaduct, the bulldozers rumbling around her. We thought about how much the new road would affect people´s lives; externally many would benefit economically from selling commodities to travelers, and more would be affected indirectly from the opening up of the area. However, the basic life-styles would not change so greatly, as can be judged from other places where electricity and roads have long been present.

We faced the full import of this schizophrenic condition on the outskirts of Acapulco. Next to the horribly loud road heading north to the capital, in full view of the modern apartment buildings overlooking the bay (this view of the modern apartment buildings overlooking the bay of monte Carlo) was a collection of huts where the people kept chickens, pigs and had to walk to get their water. Did they realize the schizophrenia they were a part of? It seems that consciously they could not, for those that opted for the modern side of the fence would be street-hawkers on the make with the rich tourists. Anyone who opted with awareness for the old life would surely of to live in the tranquility of the countryside, since staying in Acapulco would bring no advantage, but rather only noise, confusion and the proximity of others financially better off. I could only conclude that those people were not conscious of the situation or of the existence of a choice; but were staying there out of inertia, unconcerned and un-envious of the modern life, yet not greatly nostalgic for the old one.

The Aztec cosmology is truly an organized paranoia. The excitement I felt at seeing the Aztec art and sculpture was mingled with a chilling eeriness. The faces and body position portray terror, brutality and insanity. They seem like artifacts of a distraught collective psyche; I was immediately reminded of the theory Freud propounded in *Totem and Taboo,* that the so-called primitive mind is akin to a neurotic, full of compulsions and obsessions, living in a universe peopled with the projections of his dream-terrors.

It is true that the Mexican *altiplano* was a far more hostile environment than were the other "cradles of early civilizations". Earthquakes, volcanoes, windiness and sporadic rain could easily lead to a view of the universe as predominantly hostile and to a god-tormented psycho-social reality. Yet the Aztecs show this more than the other civilizations of Meso-America; the Olmecs, Totonacs, Zapotecs and Mayas all have happy faces and dignified statues as well as the hateful paranoid ones. What was it that infused these people with something so powerful, that drove them to such a religion at the same time as an unprecedented warlikeness?

I felt great pain when looking at reconstructions and models of Tenochtitlan, which was destroyed by the Spanish. Such an act must have meant great psychological weakness on their part; seeing such an enchanted city (by their own description) and such a sophisticated art and culture must have wracked them with a severe self-doubt.

As I stood on top of the pyramid to the sun at Teotihuacan and viewed the great plateau, windswept and dusty, I was filled with an immeasurable awe, I think greater than that which I experienced in front of the colossal gold altar of the cathedral built on the ruins of the Aztec temple by the Spaniards. Yet both peoples had drama and pride, and a sense of something great in themselves and beyond themselves to which they built eternal edifices.

And both were great in brutality. On the one hand, the sacrifices of palpitating human hearts to Huitzilopochti, on the other, *auto da fes* and public executions – the second carried out on the same site as the first. The one had fearful gods, the other put paintings on their cathedral walls of people burning in hell, looking hopelessly upward at saints floating in ethereal skies; and suspended gory, bloody crucifixes over their altars.

In view of the cultural heritage of the Mexicans, it is not surprising that there exists some remnant of this morbidity today. The Mexican preoccupation with death has become something of a cliché since D.H. Lawrence´s *Mornings in Mexico*, but what is interesting to me is whether this stems primarily form the Aztec or the Catholic tradition. In Mexico there are an incredible number of gruesome magazines with pictures of peoples's heads smashed in by car accidents, anecdotes and stories or rape, murder and so on. And these seem to be read as widely and unashamedly as any newspaper. In the murals of Orozco, Diego Rivera and their contemporaries, there is an unescapably Aztec-like sense of the hostility of the universe, death and horror. And in Orozco there is the same obsession with skeletons and ugly, tortured faces.

When I looked at the remains of the Ancient Egyptians, I knew that their civilization had gone through its own cycle of growth, zenith and decline. Also, I knew that it was connected by an uninterrupted thread to the present; the Egyptians influenced the Cretans who influenced the Greeks and so on through to the Romans to the present. They intereacted with the civilizations of Mesopotamia, which had contact with those of the Ganges and also influenced Europe. Some historians also think the Egyptian culture spread through most of Africa, specially affecting the Bantu civilizations. Hence, to see Ancient Egypt is to better understand the basis of a historico-cultural pyramid at the top of which I stand. The present-day world, by simply being extant, is doing honour to it.

But the American civilization was cut dead in its own cycle. That is a tragedy unique in the history of man. Of course, other individual cultures have been conquered and decimated, such as the Etruscans and probably others with potential genius. Of course too, the *geist* of the Indian is carried forth in some way in Latin American culture. Yet at no other time was a whole complex of humanity in such a vast geographical area of the world nipped in the bud.

I wondered how it might have been if history had taken a different course. About 1,000 B.C. the Olmecs and Mayas were developing mathematics and astronomy. On the other side of the Atlantic, the Phoenicians were devising an alphabet. If, after this, the American development had been faster, by about 50 B.C. they might have had boats good enough to cross the Atlantic. If they had arrived in Europe just before the Romans reached their zenith, they might have conquered them and nipped their development just at the point the Spanish interrupted the Aztecs. Then the Aztecs would have taken claim to the growing Roman Empire as the Spanish did theirs in reality. Europe would have been ruled from Tenochtitlan and the hearts of Saxons, Huns, Slavs, Goths and Romans would have been sacrificed to the gods of the Aztec pantheon. The Industrial Revolution would have been American Indian and later the New World – Europe – would have fought Wars of Independence against the colonial Indians. They would have rebelled against Aztec culture in Paris, Maya culture in London, Toltec culture in Spain. Finally, invigorated from overthrowing their masters and having learnt from the epoch of domination, the United States of Europe would have become the greatest industrial power on earth while the Old World underwent its decline.

MEXICO: Oaxaca, Monte Alban

Oaxaca has an enchanted market. You walk through it, and buy for very little delicious coconut cakes, drinks of coconut and milk, fresh juices, fresh fruit of every possible kind, exotic tasty dishes, musical pipes made of black pottery (Coyotepec Indian), brightly-coloured woven clothes and so much more….

The colonial buildings around the centre are of a soft, lime-green colour. The town is as exciting as a city, as intimate as a village, and the mountains and field as are always in sight.

Monte Alban, the temple-city near here is situated on a high mountain which was leveled off before the construction. All around, 1,500 feet below, is a glorious golden valley, and this is surrounded by

more vast mountains. The sky toward dusk was dark and awe-inspiring; the mountain-top seemed clothed in a heavy silence. How could they have resisted building a temple city here, and how could they not have reserved it for religious ceremony and the abode of the priests! The people it served lived in the huge valley all around. The architecture is a progression of Olmec, Maya, Zapotec, Mixtec and Aztec styles, for the city was in use for over 3,000 years. The simple, abstract designs of the Olmecs can be seen on the lowest levels of the temples. Here also one can walk hunch-backed, with flickering match to guide the way, through tunnels within the stone buildings.

The Mixtec gold jewelry from tomb 7, opened up by Professor Caso, can be seen in the Oaxaca museum. This is so gentle and refined, that the traditional distinction between art and craft seems to disappear. Especially wonderful is the gold breastplate of the god of death. Metal-working (including gold) only came to Mexico in the 13-14th centuries BC from South America. How fast they developed an exquisite expertise and refinement! It is dreadful that the Spanish melted down so much gold-work into ingots to pay for an army to maintain a crumbling European empire.

Oaxaca has Mezcal, a very slightly hallucinogenic alcoholic drink, which brings on a wonderfully soft, gentle high….

OAXACA **February 4, 1972**

In *La Iglesia de la Soledad* is a statue of the Virgin Mary inside a distasteful glass container. The face is expressionless but she is wearing a sumptuous black velvet cape studded with jewels and a gold crown. She is supposed to represent the real arrival of the Virgin at Oaxaca in the 16th century; according to the legend, she was found in a chest carried into the town by a merchant´s donkey (which apparently died under the strain). In the museum adjoining the church are paintings on wooden blocks of various citizens receiving her spiritually for the first time. These visions suggest individual and group hallucinations.

The hallucinogenic quality of Christianity was also brought home to us by some paintings in another smaller church in Oaxaca. One showed the cross, with only the top part of the body of Christ. Below him, in the position his heart would fill if the rest of his body were shown, was a red heart (very large and out of proportion) encircled by a crown of thorns and with flames and golden rays coming out of the top of it. Above Christ´s head was a huge eye suspended in the air.

Christian spiritualism can be seen as resulting from a dualism between pure spirit and the concrete bodily world. The abnegation of the physical results in the sublimation of sensuality into pure spirituality. This is evidenced in the sumptuousness of the heavenly sphere and the blatant eroticism in the Christian (specially Catholic) love of God, Christ, the Virgin and the Saints. The dualism also results in a split between the concrete and the symbolic, which allows free reign for the symbolic world – a condition akin to that found in individual schizophrenia, and leading naturally to hallucinations. (This contrast with the "Buddhist" interpretation of Christ in the newly discovered *Gospel According to Saint Thomas*: "When you make the two one, and when you make the inner as the other and the outer as the inner… then shall you enter the Kingdom." This is the view of R.D.

Laing, Marx (praxis = integration), and Buddhism, as opposed to that of Platonic and Christian schizophrenic dualism).

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Mexican Catholicism has a high degree of morbidity as far as images are concerned. The figures of Christ always have an unnecessary amount of blood dripping from every possible part of the body. Is this a worshipping of projected misery? Other figures are also rather gory, such as one we saw in Oaxaca of a saint with blood streaming from his eyes. I am tempted to connect this with the Aztec dancing figures which on close inspection, turn out to be wearing the skins of recently sacrificed humans.

Mexican Catholicism has the same characteristics as the old Indian religions – belief in the need for placation and attempted manipulation of the Gods. In many churches there are side chapels dedicated to particular saints. All over the walls you read plaques and messages thanking the saint for his benevolent intervention in a successful operation or a near-fatal accident. And by the sides of winding mountain roads are numerous crosses and shrines to help the driver make his journey in safety. Most lorry drivers have a crucifix or an image of the Virgin in the cab.

OAXACA TO CHIAPAS

Driving south form Oaxaca takes you through and out of the stupendous mountains and into the coastal plain of Tehuantepec. The vegetation is once again tropical. This natural wildness was enhanced for us by very powerful gales, almost too strong to walk in. Here in this low-lying land, on one of the narrowest portions of the American continent, the difference in air pressure between Pacific and Atlantic seems to be balanced out.

We went up again into the highlands of northern Chiapas. Here it was damp, cold and misty, the clouds chopping off the view of mountain peaks. The atmosphere was mysterious, the countryside starker than in Oaxaca state. Much of it is flat plateau, punctuated with isolated mountain tops each with their own story to tell, and not interfering with one another.

Driving into Chiapas seemed like going into the “back and beyond”, because of the landscape, the weather and the fact that we left the Pan-American highway which stays south and enters Guatemala at Tapachula. Reaching Tuxtla Gutierrez was therefore a strange jolt, since it is a modern sophisticated town, wealthy and organized – quite different from the simple enchanting market atmosphere of Oaxaca or Guadalajara.

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I must not forget to mention the Zapotec Indians of Tehuantepec, whose women wear the most gorgeous blouses and skirts of hand-embroidered gold, yellow and red velvets, in wonderful intricate patterns. This skill in embroidery (the best we have seen in Mexico) reminds me of the

designs on the Zapotec temple at Mitla, which have been described by Aldous Huxley as "petrified weaving".

At Mitla, the Indians are living right around the temple in all their creative colourfulness. At nearby Yagul, the temple ruins are surrounded by the silence of the mountains and valleys.

TO THE FOREST OF THE LACANDONES

I had read a brief paragraph about Indians who had remained unintegrated into the Mexican nation ever since the Conquest, and who lived deep in the jungles of Chiapas. An informative truck-driver who took us from Tuxtla Gutierrez to Comitan suggested we should go to Las Margaritas and from thence take horses into the jungle. The route the suggested turned out to be inaccurate, but he initiated the first step which led to the next and so on; the whole trip was a sequence of movements which led us to new information, we never had a complete picture ahead of time as to what we could do and what to expect.

We took a bus to Las Margaritas. There we were unable to hire horses but we found the road continued to various villages that were nearer the jungle. So we took a bus to Palmira along a very bumpy, stony road which restricted the driver to second gear. The way was lush, green and hilly, and we could see the peaks of high mountains ahead. Palmira was no more than a couple of houses on a coffee ranch. The man of one of these took us in. He gave us the names of villages and ranch-houses that we would walk through to get to San Quintin, which lay in the jungle. He said it would be a four-day walk, and suggested where to stop off for each night. His information was somewhat inaccurate, especially with regard to the relative distances between places; and four days was horribly optimistic for the time required. Yet he helped us a great deal, especially considering that he had never been that far along the trail himself.

We started early in the morning with the bare necessities wrapped up in our sleeping bags tied to our backs. We very soon came upon the difficulty which turned out to be the scourge of the enterprise – taking the wrong path, just as it had been years before on my walk to Nuristan in Afghanistan. Early in the journey we came across people to check the "road" with, but later we would sometimes walk half a day along the wrong one without meeting anyone. Sometimes we would be told to take a left after some distance. Then we would come across three paths going in three directions. Or we would take what we thought was a left, then come to another junction and not know whether this was our left turn, or simply an irrelevant path leading only to a maize field (in which we would collapse in exhaustion and despair!). Sometimes a path turning off the main one went to a single house or a field and should have been ignored, but for us there was no way of knowing.

When we asked about distances we also had difficulties. Sometimes we would be given distances in the old league (one league = 4 km.) but more usually in terms of hours´ walk. We learnt to multiply these estimates by 1½ - 2 times. The Mexicans walk fast – the "Indian hop" they call it. It is really a kind of pidgeon-toeing, the walker leaning forward (often with backpack strapped around his

forehead) and only just keeping balance with each fast step. He does not hesitate at awkward points in the path, but keeps upright by shifting rapidly form one unsure foothold to another.

The first night we spent at a *colonia* – a group of ranch-houses called Villa Hermosa. This was in a small damp valley supporting two families whose livelihood was coffee. All the way along the trail, until we were near the lower, warmer jungle region, the cash crop was coffee, which is taken by mules and horses along the slushy paths we trod, all the way to Comitan to be sold.

The further we got from Palmira, the last point that can be reached by motor vehicle, the fewer marks of "civilization" could be found. It was interesting to note how far along certain items would be present, brought by mule, and which dropped out earliest. At Villa Hermosa our host had cans of sardines, sugar and various non-local items. Later *colonias* would have almost nothing from outside, being completely self-sufficient. Never did we find a *pueblo* or *colonia* without at least one radio, however. Cigarettes were not present for the middle part of the journey, but the men smoked locally-grown tobacco wrapped in leaves. Nearer San Quintin they were attainable again from the cargos brought in by plane.

Each day´s walk entailed, more or less, climbing one mountain and arriving in the next valley to find houses. The existence of the people is very powerfully linked to and dependent on the Earth. All that is needed for settlement is a mountain stream; the people clear some land, built a house with the wood, put some cows, pigs or chickens on the land, and later if there is more land that can be cleared, grow maize or coffee.

Almost as soon as we left Palmira we started to hear about an American called Enrique who was supposed to live in San Quintin. First of all, this disturbed our notion of going into the wilds. But as we picked up more snippets of information about him, a fascination grew. We heard he was old with grey hair and beard. Some said he composed music, others maintained he wrote books. We found out that he ate only fruit and vegetables, the people being particularly surprised at his not partaking of maize or tortillas (which they eat almost exclusively!). Then it appeared he did not live in San Quintin (which in our minds had taken on a Samarkand-like mythical character) but entirely alone in the jungle. He used to walk our route, but in recent years had occasionally used the plane (the plane was something else we only heard about after setting off, annoying us as we thought that too would detract from the wildness of the area. Little did we know how later we would depend on it!). So Enrique gradually became a legend for us, and we resolved to visit him.

The second day we covered a good distance by about 4:30 pm. We were at a hamlet called Chayabe, and an old man told us we could arrive at Laguna, in a very nearby valley, after only one more hour´s walk. We set off, mistakenly. After a little while, the path became a mud-bath, sometimes knee-deep. At first we delicately picked our way from one grassy clump or stone to another thinking the wet patch would surely end very soon. But it didn´t, and presently darkness fell and the rain accompanied it. We ploughed on, always thinking a house would appear. But there was nothing, and our calls were lost in the rain-drenched mountains. In the dark, we kept falling in the mud and losing our way, so we were forced to find an area of earth slightly less damp than the rest and sleep. More memories of my trip to Nuristan in Afghanistan four years before came into my mind where the same thing had happened, and we had got lost through faulty information. Yet this

time were better off – we had with us bananas, avocados and tortillas and a can of sardines which was to be smashed open on a rock in an emergency.

In spite of mosquitoes and intermittent rain, we survived the night surrounded by dark mountains whose turns echoed the screams of coyotes. In the morning we donned our mud-clogged clothes. There was a huge beautiful red flower near where we had slept, but we felt too dismal to drink it in. I was sure we would come upon Laguna soon, and that we had been given bad information rather than that we were lost. Sure enough, after an hour or more of negotiation of the mud, I ascended a hillock and at the instant my senses received the data, I yelled "house!" (which was to happen on other occasions) and Marlene brightened up the valley with a "yippee" or some such sound of glee.

The people at Laguna (two houses) were wonderful, offering us a hospitality somehow biblical in its sincerity and gravity. We drank sweetened *posoli* (maize in water) and ate well.

The third night, we arrived at San Geronimo, a single house on the top of a hill, which in the sunshine of the late afternoon was sublime. The people were extremely kind again – relations of the old man of the Laguna household who had said we should stay with them as they were "buena gente".

The next day offered a better path, and we had to climb a great deal; also it was hotter. We made it to Margaritas, a larger village with the brown palm houses spread out on a grassy carpet. Our hosts here gave us a coffee-tray to sleep in, which caused much amusement among the villagers. On the fifth day, we walked a couple of hours to Realidad, and here the people told us to take a left-turn some way out of the village. There was ambiguity and we did not take the right one. Our path went into jungle and fizzled out at a clearing where trees had been felled, but we found no people. We went back and tried several other turnings, but there was no way of knowing which way to interpret the directions. We tried every psychological avenue – "if they meant this, then we should go here", etc., but not wanting to spend another night out, we went back to Realidad. The people were sympathetic, but not disturbed at the idea that their information had been unclear. Marlene amused everyone in making an important point politely; she said we needed much food for which we would pay much (we were exhausted and starving, though in reality did not have very much money); I needed seven eggs and she four, for I was big and she had done much work.

The next day, someone was supposed to show us the path as he was going that way to work, but somehow he set off without us knowing and again we had to leave without a guide. This time we took the one path we had not tried the day before, a very insignificant-looking one, and this turned out to be correct. We crossed a big river which we took to be the Rio Eusebio (from the map we copied from a forestry official whom we met the first day just after leaving Palmira). Soon we arrived at San Antonio Hidalgo. Here we ate and began to feel very weary, I was also developing a blister on my toe. We set off, but again there was confusion with the path so we lost time. Also, we began to feel ill. Just before dusk we arrived at a very green valley with a river, cattle and the ominous black stumps of burnt trees. There was one house, but no people. One room in the house was a maize-store, the other had a fireplace, pots some beans, salt and coffee. We had with us dry *posoli* and some sugar, so we ate and drank well – alone in the valley with a fire in our house. The next morning, I was definitely ill (probably with ´flu). Some people arrived who turned out to be from the house in Hidalgo where we had eaten the day before; they were not at all surprised to see

us. They did not own the house but had come to grind the maize, which they do by scraping each cob with an old stock hardened by fire. Later, the owner arrived. Phlegmatic and easy-going, he minded us not at all. When we told him we had eaten his beans but would pay him, he said he could simply eat the remaining tortillas instead.

We did not leave that day, as I was too ill to walk far. I slept all that day and the next night – about 30 hours in all, and recovered. On the eighth day since leaving Palmira, we made it to Nueva Providencia (only one hour from San Quintin) thinking we had only reached Santa Rosa. In fact, we passed the latter without noticing it, as it was a little set back from the main path! Very excited, we ascertained that Enrique´s house was about three hours in a different direction from San Quintin. Two boys on horses agreed to show us the way for 5 pesos, and as we walked too slowly we ended up riding one horse while they rode the other. They took us to the obscure turn-off, and said it was no more than a few minutes to the house. Actually, we walked for over half an hour (becoming anxious once again, and cursing our guides!) and then only came to a village. Here the people took our packs and led us to Enrique. It was still a couple more miles, and we were beginning to feel Enrique was indeed legendary. Through a jungle path, over a narrow log, across a creek around a corner and there it was! a thatched open house set in the trees, as if it had always been there. Immediately we saw him, sitting in a hammock, long white hair down his back. With her back to us was a woman and sitting sideways a young fellow with long hair whom I took to be American. My immediate impression was that Enrique was an old-style "freak" and I anticipated incense and a water-pipe of hasheesh. I felt an instantaneous disappointment (although I thought such a person would be fun); subconsciously, I had been hoping for a person with something profound to offer. We shook hands, sat down and very soon the impression changed. He said we had arrived in the middle of a "revolution" which was part of "the world struggle", and my next idea of him was that of an old-style communist, who used the well-weathered expressions, and again I was disappointed that anyone would drag all that into the jungle.

Later that evening, he told us some of his life story, and from the way he very readily gave intimate information of his life some of it in a self-flattering manner, and from the way he lorded it over the two women who spoke little, we both felt he was a little insensitive and domineering.

However, all the first impressions were dispelled. The girl he seemed to boss around was his step-daughter, which altered the connotations, and he had a weak heart so he could not more around too agilely himself. Some of the early impression remained later, but basically we were mistaken; with a few gladly-made allowences, he turned out to be someone to respect and admire. He was religious, unfortunately with a Judaic-Christian moral stamp, sometimes seeming preoccupied with the ritual and outer trappings more than an inner wholeness. We decided he was limited in his spirituality; his strong need for a faith made him grasp at the other-than-spiritual aspects of religion. They kept the Quaker silence before meals, were Christian Scientist about medicine, and read from the bible each night.

But Enrique had had a dream all his life, which he had followed as if it were his quest for the Holy Grail. He had looked for a place in the jungle far from civilization, where he could grow fruit and vegetables to live from, and live communally with others in search of personal religion; and where he could help others not through sacrifice but by being and expressing himself. He had gone to England in his youth to study at the only college for cooperative farming then existent, in

Manchester. He had gone to Denmark to see the Danish cooperative system. He went to Paraguay to live in the jungle with a religious German sect which had escaped the Nazis. He sailed in a boat which he resuscitated with one other man in San Francisco, across the Pacific to the South Sea islands, looking for an island where he could start the life he wanted. Unfortunately he found them all full of plantations, and the uninhabited ones had no streams, which he needed coming as he did from Vermont, a country of hills and streams. I felt a closeness with his personal need for the right kind of country for his soul. He had never stopped searching until he found what he was looking for; Paraguay he had left because the people were not vegetarian and because he argued with the priests! He had always kept away from orthodox churches and any particular sect. His first wife had left him and taken their child at a particularly difficult time when he had only ten dollars left.

Finally, he came upon Chiapas in a book, and read about the Lacandone Indians, who lived in the jungle, wore long hair and long robes (just like I had). That was it. He went and built the house, later met Jan and Becca (who was only four years old) and married again.

When he first came here, his house was very deep in the jungle. He had traced the Lacandones after several arduous unsuccessful expeditions. At that time, tapirs had walked up the creek by the house, monkeys came to their table, macaws had nested right by them. Only the Lacandones were anywhere near, whom he got to know; and they came to trust him.

Gradually more people (mestizos) have moved into the area, burning the forest to grow maize and graze cattle. Large areas of jungle have been destroyed. San Quintin is only ten years old, the savannah plain around it is new. As the people wear out the land with their monoculture, they move on and destroy new virgin forest. One of Enrique`s and Jan´s big battles has been to persuade people that they can never regain the jungle, and that their practice is very inefficient. Enrique and Jan grow about 50 kinds of fruit and vegetable, which allows the jungle to stay the way it is, allows recycling of the soil, and provides the most productive sources of protein, vitamins, etc. They have imported all kinds of tropical plants to see which do best here. They eat very well – a great change it was to the unvarying diet of beans, eggs and tortillas during our journey – and the people all around have the food offered generously by Enrique. He was never sold the products of his land, but has given them away, partly in the hope that people will be convinced of the value of growing them.

The Lacandones are the descendants of the ancient Maya. About a thousand years ago, the Maya in Chiapas numbered about three million; as they were dependent on a Neolithic monoculture (maize) they wore out the land, and were driven out by famine. That is the reason, according to Enrique, for their moving to the Yucatan (described as the “mysterious” desertion of their temple-cities here, in most books on the subject). The Lacandones represent those who remained in the jungles of Chiapas. There are two groups, the one here and the other near Bonampak on the Guatemala border, which have been separated for over 500 years. This other group apparently descends from the priests who remained with the temples and show signs of this. They had more contact with other peoples, while the group here was isolated. The Spanish never conquered them; one major campaign failed because the Lacandones retreated into the jungle, moving their villages so that the *conquistadores* could not find them. The Lacandones, and one group of Indians in the jungles of Belize, are the only ones never to have been conquered, nor yet to have been brought into the national law, economy or culture, in the whole of Central America. The Lacandone village near San

Quintin, however, has contact with the Mexicans, but this is very recent and few can speak any Spanish.

Enrique helped the Lacandones in the early days. He brought them machetti knives, seeds, helped them with their agriculture – though he says they grew sensible things – bananas, cacao and a vegetable similar to spinach. And he tried to discourage them from hunting monkeys, then with bow and arrow, now with guns. The more primitive dependence on maize and the pig, according to Harry (his name in English, though I always thought of him as Enrique!) stems from the serfdom of the hacienda system imposed by the Spanish, since the lords told the peons what to grow; so they lost their previous wider agricultural knowledge.

Enrique also created some faith in the white man. Their only previous experience was in the '40´s, when criminals were brought into the area to find *chicle* trees which supply the basis of chewing-gum. Some of them found a Lacandone village, killed the men and raped the women – the typical procedure with Indians ever since the Conquest.

One day we went to the Lacandone village. Through dense jungle, we suddently came on a small clearing with three houses. The houses are very simple – 4 corner stakes and a thatched roof, no walls. By the village flowed a quiet green majestic river. Moored to the banks were *coyuco* boats – long canoes dug out of a single cedar tree, the same kind the Maya used to navigate the Gulf of Mexico as well as the rivers.

The people in the village took almost no notice of us, carrying on with their business. As it grew dark, they sat with their flowing robes like priests; each posture seemingly spiritual. They spoke very little and seemed to allow very little obvious expression on their faces. I could image how such people quietly resisted the Spanish, infuriating them with their unresponsiveness and refusal to submit. And I remembered how Enrique described how the Spanish were unable to make slaves out of them, how the Indians would lie down in a ditch, would be beaten to death in silence rather than be slaves; so that in Cuba they were exterminated before the Spanish learnt the lesson and avoided the mistake by using Negroes in Mexico or creating serfdom instead. And as I thought of it, I wanted to pull my hair and scream and grab the earth, less through hatred of the Spanish than through admiration of the Indian who would die before being enslaved.

The atmosphere of that night was somewhat spoilt the next morning when the man of the house we had slept in asked for money for the night. It seems that this attitude has been instilled by a "progressive" woman "patron" of the Lacandones. She has followed Enrique´s suggestion to try and turn the *Laguna de Lacandones* region into Mexico´s first National Park – the issue is being fought out in Mexico City at the moment. She has added to the idea by suggesting that tourists could visit a "model" Lacandone village, bringing an income for the Lacandones – a horrible, humiliating idea, to my mind.

The dilemma that Enrique, Jan and Becca were in on our arrival is a complicated business. A corrupt lawyer from outside the region "sold" a vast area of land for a large sum of money to a Chiapas rancher. That land includes Enrique´s land (about 100 hectareas), about 100 hectares belonging to a pure-blooded Indian ex-peon, given to him by Enrique, and the communally held land of several *colonias* nearby who legally own it following a stipulated number of years of

"sitting" on it. In reality, the rancher has bought the right to kick off the land whoever happens to be on it, the lawyer being able to hush it up and deal with the legal problems. The ranchers involved are the barons who still regard themselves as the law, and entirely disregard the results of the 1917 revolution, which made the *latifundario* (serf) illegal, and restricted the maximum size of individual land holdings. They walked in and told the ex-peon he no longer owned the land, but that he could stay there and ask permission to grow maize, and work for the rancher in return for the permission – not for remuneration, i.e. to become a serf again. The man is timid like the rest, and were it not for Enrique, he and the others would have left. Walterio (a Mexican from Mexico City who has come to live in the jungle, and was with Enrique when we arrived) has done official business on behalf of Enrique, by going to Tuxtla, the state capital, to bring it to the state government´s notice. They have recognized that the rancher´s papers of ownership are false, and are fortunately on Enrique´s side. But the ranchers ("barons" Enrique calls them) are tough-guys; they wear pistols and have apparently killed over land before, and since they have threatened the ex-peon not to go to the government again, and Enrique is a pacifist and does not want to risk anyone´s life, he thinks they should leave.

If he goes, he will try to fix up Thomas (the ex-peon) with land, and will try at least to secure his own land as an experimental station for tropical crops. Otherwise twelve years of painstaking work will be destroyed , since the rancher will fell the trees, burn the land and bring in cattle.

This is the sort of thing that has been going on for centuries. We felt they should carry on with the fight, but Enrique is no coward; he is a pacifist and will do anything short of use of violence or physical defence. It is possible that the barons will fail, however, firstly because the government knows about it and is against it, though Enrique does not want to go to them and ask for soldiers. Secondly, the Forestry commission is stamping down on the felling of trees.

Nevertheless, Enrique and co. do not like the atmosphere any more, nor the spread of people so close to them (even the good ones), so they are going, to try the jungles of Surinam. They won´t be forgotten here for a long time.

Our trip was terminated by a nasty skin infection we both got. Marlene had it especially badly in her foot and could not walk comfortably. Luckily, after waiting wretchedly in San Quintin several days, we got a ride to San Cristobal in the only plane that came while we were there. We had treatment and rested up in Comitan.

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The jungle has snakes, humming-birds that sound like insects, large slow-moving flies, and in limestone caves we found bats.

As you walk through the jungle you are usually facing the ground to see where to make the next step; but if you stop and look up you see lianas and climbers going right up to the canopy above, spirals and swirls of large leaves encircling your head; ever-changing sprinkles of light let in by the canopy leaves cast patches of lightness and shadow that look like the surface of rippling water.

In Peten, we saw palm-leaves up to 15 feet long, which twisted gently and elegantly in the breeze.

GUATEMALA **March 11, 1972**

The first, most noticeable difference between Mexico and Guatemala concerns the Indians. It is easy to believe that they constitute 60 per cent of Guatemala´s population. All the way from the border to the capital and especially around Lake Atitlan and Antigua, we saw Indians in their fantastic traditional costumes. Each village has a distinctive outfit, and a distinctive style used in every kind of garment and cloth. The Indians have always lived as village-communities; here one can see each village as a single collective consciousness or collective creativity.

The Guatemalan Indians (of the Northwest of the country) are very pleasant and friendly, by contrast to those of Chiapas whom we found either rather dour, or occasionally a little unfriendly (such as the group from San Cristobal who wanted to charge me 50 pesos if I took a photo of them).

In Guatemala City, we spent a day with some upper-middle class people. Their attitudes were very interesting to observe. They had both developed a philosophy composed of nihilism and happy-go-lucky hedonism. It was easy to see how they came to the first standpoint. As Latin American upper-class intellectuals, they are for more alienated from their total society than are American or European intellectuals. They are culturally much more distant from the masses of their society, and have lived and been brought up in the U.S. and Europe. They look to the U.S. for fashions, rock music and ´groove culture´ and to Europe for cultural and intellectual inspiration. Paris, May ´68 was the focus of their political-intellectual thought, and it was also the germ of their present pessimism.

Their feeling of impotence with respect to society was displayed philosophically in the forms of "one can´t change anything", "it doesn´t matter anyway" and "everyone chooses what he wishes to revolve his life around, whether a peasant or an artist". They had gone a full cycle in political involvement and had ended in frustration. For example, they realized their ancestors had humiliated and exploited the Indian. Yet they themselves could not help being either wealthy or accustomed to a certain state of affluence. They were not Indians or common-people and could not kid themselves they were (as American and European intellectuals often manage to). There was nothing they could do about the Indians which would not entail more interference, and forcing them into looking at the world through a European political conceptual framework.

Their frustration was conveyed not in an intense guilt-ridden mode as with Anglo-Saxon students and radicals, but in a characteristic Latin lightness and effervescence. They waved their arms about enthusiastically even when airing their nihilistic views. Likewise, they had gone through a self-purging of their own upbringing (with the help of marihuana), questioning and throwing out much of their parents´ culture`s views on sex, behaviour, religion, etc., etc. Yet the process had none of the frantic Lutheran intensity of similar young Protestansts of the U.S., England, Holland or Germany. This too was conducted with a wave of the hand. As Latins (like the French or Italians) they do not need a thousand decibels of Hendrix rock music to blast the old ideas out of their heads; it is a simpler gayer process.

They also showed tendencies towards the sort of anti-Americanism that I despise. This stems not from political grievance, over either the structure of American society or foreign domination. Rather, it is an outmoded European aristocracy´s snobbishness, fed also by an envy of those characteristics for which the Americans should be admired.

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Guatemala City´s museum of Maya relics is phenomenal. Particularly striking was a carved wooden panel from a temple at Tikal – a beautiful delicate combination of representational and abstract art. The model reconstruction of Tikal was even more like a supersonic moon-city than that of Tenochtitlan. One pot showed an erect figure, stretched out in a position of Dionysian ecstasy and frenzy. Generally, the Maya art is a deeply psychic hallucinogenic genre, portrayed in sophisticated, soft lines and curves, shoving remarkable variety and exploration.

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Antigua is set in a valley with the mountains and the volcano clearly visible all around it. The remains on exhibit in the museums plunged me deep into the feelings of power, exuberance and religious fervor which characterized the colonial period. The ruins of the convent of Santa Clara (destroyed like the Cathedral by the earthquake in the 18th century) still convey the atmosphere of quietness, piety and an extremely powerful, almost frightening withdrawal from the outside world. Not even the volcano is visible from the cloistered courtyard.

Guatemala has an unavoidably large proportion of American enterprise, evidenced among other ways by the advertisements and billboards bordering the road out of the city. The city has a large proportion of completely white Spanish descendants, not found in Mexico; and a large number of expensive, well kept-up cars in the city (Mercedes, Cadillacs) confirm the presence of this still-powerful white elite.

The county has had an unbelievable number of revolutions and changes of government. Their major revolution was in 1944 (much later than in Mexico, though independence from Spain came at about the same time). The second president of the revolution was Arbenz, who was overthrown by Arbas in 1954, since the former´s government was supposedly infiltrated by the Communist Party. This was believed to have involved the C.I.A. and the United Fruit Co, of the U.S.A., since Arbenz intended to expropriate and divide up all land-holdings above a certain size. His other controversial policy, also supposedly C.P.– inspired, was the formation of a Workers` Militia as a competitor to the regular army. Ever since the Arbenz overthrow the country has been in a political crisis.

The present president has been in power one and one half years, has apparently killed about 20,000 people inhabitants of a whole village who gave food to the guerrillas. The guerrillas are apparently all but wiped out, but the legend is continued by the government to create fear, and to justify any further slaughter which they may desire. Heavily-armed soldiers are numerous in the city, and the conspicuous lack of long haired males seems a part of the repressive regime. No-one is allowed into the country with long hair. The president of the country receives the highest official salary of any country´s presidency – and undergoes the highest risk of assassination.

*** **March 12, 1972**

The Museum of Popular Art in Guatemala City shows examples of contemporary Indian arts and crafts. Looking at these raised a number of complicated questions in my mind about cultural fusion. Ideally, I would like to undertake a deep psychological analysis of Maya art, then trace the changes in Indian art from the time of the Conquest on, showing the relationship of these changes to psychological influences and adjustment.

Firstly, it is obvious from the post-Conquest Christian art that the high culture of the Maya was completely destroyed. The distinctive Maya characteristics which continued were those of the common people, so there is the problem of relating facets of one class of a single society with another. It is evident that high Maya art was confined to an elite of the priests, rulers and artists, so that little of this remained once the Spanish removed the elite from power and changed the religion.

The aspect of the indigenous artistic character that survived most noticeably is the skillful use of bright, simple colours in combination. This is the only thing in common between the old decorated Maya pottery and the paintings in the Popular Arts Museum. The Indians were and are highly atuned to colour, in contrast and balance. These paintings have a sophistication and a childlikeness simultaneously, found elsewhere only in Gauguin and perhaps Modigliani. Most interesting are the biblical paintings, for example, of the Magi on camels gracefully walking past the Egyptian pyramids. There is a strangeness, a mystical quality quite different from any Oriental styles, or from any European imitations of Oriental styles. The simple brightness and eternal feeling in it bring one to the Middle East without there being a trace of Middle Eastern culture in it. The kings look more like Indians than Chinese or Arabs.

Other paintings had an other-worldly, phantastic quality, similar to Chinese garden pictures with exotic flowers and birds, and yet again there was nothing Chinese about it. It was nearer Gauguin than anything else (and in some ways like Rousseau).

We saw some dolls dressed in the costumes for the "Dance of the Conquistadores". This was most interesting, for here you have Spanish costume and appearance as seen through Indian eyes. They portrayed the Spanish coloured gowns with Indian materials - brightly coloured and covered in sequins. And the Spanish hats had quetzal feathers, making them look ultimately more Indian than Spanish. Some masks of European faces presented extraordinary caricatures. This phenomenon is like Tchaikovsky attempting to use a "Chinese" genre of music in the "Dance of the Sugar-Plum Fairy", or Verdi´s attempt to create an Egyptian atmosphere in "Aida". The allusions are more evident to a westerner than to a Chinaman or Egyptian, who would probably find the music typically European!

There were some religious figures made out of clay. A group composing the Mystery from Antigua had a Christ in a cradle, the representation of his halo looking exceedingly like a Maya head-dress. Generally, these clay figures were lifeless, with a frozen doll-like quality; this stiffness resembled the very old Indian figurines of the Cuicuilco or pre-Maya culture, and completely lacked the balance, movement and excitement of Maya high culture.

Most of the "art" of the Christian-Indian amalgam is shoddy and tinselly, very disappointing when contrasted with the art of these people´s ancestors. Superior is their work with embroidery and

materials, presumably because this would have been well-diffused into all strata of Maya society rather than being confined to an elite which was eliminated by the Conquest.

Peten province, Guatemala & Copan, Honduras

The pyramids and temples of Tikal are huge, imposing buildings, in contrast to the smaller, more peaceful temple at Copan. The latter has a wonderful arch, constructed by making successive blocks project further toward the centre until they meet at the top. The steles from Tikal are very intricate designs and symbols in bass relief, whereas those from Copan are three-dimensional statues of gods. What is fascinating about the latter is that the backgrounds to the figures are composed of symbolic phenomena - faces, animals and designs. Faces will appear out of legs or leaves, not on a flat surface but carved deep into the stone, with many hollowed-out areas. The original colours of the Copan steles are still evident – bright reds, greens and yellows. Apparently the temples at Tikal were all painted red before – the sight of a completely red temple-city deep in the green sweltering jungle is fantastic to imagine. At the time, Copan was inhabited by the Maya (approx. 400 AD – 800 AD) the terrain was apparently jungle too, but now it is dry with light vegetation.

At both places there is the most exquisitely beautiful pottery, and also bones decorated and carved with very refined designs, and scenes of human activities. One small bone at Tikal showed a boat with eight beings in it – the most extraordinary collection of individuals imaginable, half imaginary animal and half human. The carvings at Copan of humans had bolder, more symmetrical forms than those we saw at Guatemala City and Tikal. Distinctive were the symbols of authority in several statues, with the men clasping their chests. Also at Copan was the tortoise-god of water, with a most horrific face and claws. Water must have been a great problem although there is a small river at Copan. At Tikal, the Maya had to collect rain-water in man-made reservoirs. How they survived there before they reached a stage of civilization that could organize such constructions is a mystery.

Other statues at Copan showed remarkable contrasts – there was a stone bat, with spread wings and revealing a very accurate anatomy of the fingers and the thumb which forms the webbed wing; its face contained more evil than I have ever seen in a statue. On the other hand, there were faces full of kindliness and Buddha-like serenity. Many figures were seated in the lotus-position. We also saw for the first time very heavy stone structures shaped like iron magnets that were put around the neck before praying. And, of course, we saw the stone utensils used for grinding maize (made of volcanic rock), which look exactly like the modern ones we saw for sale in the market of Jocotan the day before.

We walked in the jungle near Tikal and saw monkeys in the trees - once several were in a tree right over our heads. On one occasion, Marlene saw a jaguar run across the road. The Maya were evidently impressed with the jaguar (as evidenced by carvings) just as the Egyptians were impressed by the lion and the Hindus by the tiger. The largest member of the cat family is always the king of the jungle (or savannah) for man. We were told by a half-Mayan archeological worker that the largest temple at Tikal is mistakenly called the temple to the Jaguar. He maintained that the

jaguar was simply the emblem for the city of Tikal, as the lion is for England, and the maple-leaf for Canada, and that the jaguar-motifs found in the temple had a secular significance.

The little village of Tikal is a nasty place. The people are not indigenous to Peten, but have come like vultures to make money from the tourists. Around the air-strip are hotels and restaurants charging exorbitant prices for bad service, and this spoils the sanctity of such great edifices to Man´s greatness. It has been made a big tourist attraction, which has not happened to Copan yet, although we saw surveyors on a spot of land right by the latter´s ruins, preparing for a motel to be built. It is sad that economic development means the destruction of something sacred. On the practical level, it raises the question as to who has the right to prevent or allow private individuals to build hotels, etc. Who is to judge whether a new building is an eyesore in a glorious haven, or the one good idea in otherwise drab surroundings?

Most of Peten is dense jungle, which is slowly being eaten into. Now there is a road right through it, connecting Guatemala to Belize. More people (mestizos) are coming, and are burning the jungle to grow maize. Apparently, the government is selling large areas of land specifically to Americans and Canadians, in the hope that the area will become highly productive through foreign investment. The Indians who live on the land in jungle clearings (and live externally to the national economy) will be ignored or kicked out.

We stayed in a little village called Yshbobo south of Tikal. The indigenous people are Kekchi Indian (these and the Maya constitute the indigenous people of Peten) but some mestizos have moved there recently. One day, after walking in the jungle, Marlene and I came back separately. Marlene got lost and went to a Kekchi household for help. They showed her to the road but were obviously confused by her behavior (she was showing anxiety!), and since only one man could speak a little Spanih, communication was difficult. The next day they came to the house we were staying in and told our hosts that we were insane and bad people; even after lengthy explanation they were not altogether convinced, and wanted to fetch the army from a military post 20-30 miles away.

This is similar to a story we heard in Chiapas. About 15 years ago, a young American artist had wandered into the country north of San Cristobal to find an Indian village. He arrived in the afternoon while the men were working in the fields. Finding children there, he started to play with them and in his enthusiasm acted like a dog, getting on his hands and feet and barking. When the men returned, the women informed them of the arrival of a man who was possessed of the spirit of a dog, and who had been harming the children. Presumably through fear, the men put the poor artist to death.

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Often in Latin America we have been sitting somewhere, waiting for a ride or enjoying the countryside, and people have come up to us and simply sat with us. If one were to think in a European way, one might feel nervous if a conversation did not seem to be forthcoming, but with these people it its not necessary always to talk. They do not necessarily expect you to stay anything. We often remark on how the people are just Being. When we have stayed with simple people in small villages, we have found the daily routine wonderfully relaxing. The reason is that the external

activities of making tortillas, feeding the pigs etc., never upset the "beingness" of the people. That is constant, and the other things just float over them. They are exactly the same in the morning, in the middle of the day and after dark. The time of day and what they happen to be doing do not jolt their inner calmness, and we have felt this and benefitted from these people enormously.

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It is interesting to look at the jungle in terms of the advantages and disadvantages it holds as an environment for the emergence of civilization. In the modern day, it is thought of as impenetrable, hostile, infested with disease and dangerous animals, difficult for communications. But for primitive man it holds great advantages. Usually it has rivers, and even in Peten which has few, the rainfall is high. There is ample material for building houses and implements. Most important, tropical jungle has the most luxuriant vegetation of any geographical type. For someone who knows the jungle, it is impossible to starve. There are berries, fruits, certain leaves and even the wood of some trees that can be eaten; this is not to mention the animal life. Once I looked into the dense jungle from a maize field that had been cleared out of it, and I compared the profusion of organic life on the one hand, living on every level above the ground, with the single level of maize in the field, relatively so thin, showing brown soil between each plant. The jungle is rich, and I am sure Enrique was correct in advocating the use of the jungle as an ecological environment, by growing the right kinds of trees simultaneously with bushes and soil or sub-soil vegetables.

And the jungle is cool. Where the sun is so hot that exposure to it would leave everyone lethargic, the jungle provides continuous shade. Lastly, the jungle abounds in herbs, incences etc., which are important for the development of "sophistication" in cultures; also, it is rich in medicinal herbs, etc., which are genuinely effective cures in many cases. The Maya had and still have prescriptions for every kind of infection and illness.

From Central America to Colombia – Medellin **April 4 1972**

It was on a hot afternoon in Flores that we walked into a wonderful sight. A very small boy was lying by the side of the road with his arms entwined in those of a friend about the same size as him. The friend was a spider monkey. We stopped and looked at them; soon the boy sat up and the monkey came over to Marlene who had sat down. After pulling at her bag, he very deliberately and seriously lifted up her bright red skirt and had a long look at what was revealed. The boy looked on nonchalantly. Then the monkey started to climb on some criss-cross bars on the outside of a window. The boy began to climb too; once when the monkey got in his way, he gave it a firm but still playful punch which nearly made the poor thing lose its balance. The reprisal came fast; approaching from over the top of the bars, the monkey gave the boy a hearty push. His retreat was superbly rapid, it was absolutely as if he knew the boy was peeved. The latter started to make after it, but thought better of it when the monkey was clearly out of striking distance.

The boy then fell back into his calm nonchalance, while the monkey climbed around him unself-consciously. "Su amigo?" we asked the boy, pointing at the monkey. He nodded.

On the other side of the road was an ice-cream vendor sitting in the shade soporifically. Marlene was suddenly struck with an idea. She went over to him and asked for two ice-creams. The monkey had skipped across the road after her, so she merely pointed at it to explain to the vendor that one was for the money. He nodded quite casually, and handed the goods to the skinny fellow. Marlene gave the other to the boy, and they ate their ice-creams together, the boy slightly less messily than his friend, who dropped it on the ground from time to time, and did not seem to notice it dripping on his foot.

The whole thing happened matter-of-factly with no quizzical smiles from anybody. When the ice-creams had been devoured, we said goodbye and went away.

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The mountains of Honduras are of a softer, rounder form than elsewhere in Central America. Toward dusk this softness is continued into the sky, which is tinted with the palest pink and blue imaginable. Such was the background for Lake Yojoa, when we drove past it one afternoon at twilight. The water was shimmery and almost white, it seemed as if it must have had the texture of silk.

Little wonder that the Maya people had a legend about a white goddess, Nikte-ha, who was born in a bed of lilies in this lake. She was the daughter of the god of water, and was not to be touched by any mortal. There was one prince who cold not resist her. His punishment for touching that which is exquisite beauty, for trying to possess that which is beyond possession, was death by drowning.

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The trip from San José to the top of the nearby volcano, Irazu, in Costa Rica, took us through the same climatic changes that we would have experienced had we journeyed from San José to Greenland. We drove through the sub-tropical vegetation of the valley San José is in, with its fairly dense, dark green foliage, interspersed with trees of brilliant yellow, pink or red blossoms. As we ascended, it grew cooler; the trees and bushes were characteristic of a temperate climate. We saw men working in the potato fields, and the countryside looked remarkably like Ireland, were it not for the wide-rimmed hats covering rugged earth-brown faces, and the painted wagons drawn by oxen.

Further up, cultivation ceased, and wisps of mist played in between moss-covered trees. Perpetually damp here, mosses grew everywhere, even on the wooden posts by the side of the road; and dew-drops emitted a dulled twinkle in the lazy sunlight. Soon even these trees disappeared, giving over to a complete tundra landscape – the plants no higher than six inches to a foot.

Occasionally a bright-coloured flower would appear like a lost star in the chilly barrenness.

At the rim of the crater we peered into the strangest view of our lives. A desolate inorganic terrain stretched in front of us, up to where it was engulfed in thick mist. The volcanic dust crunched silently underfoot; so light were the particles that each footstep gave rise to what looked like a puff of smoke. The hillocks in the crater had been carved by the wind into shapes like miniature Saharan sand-dunes, with soft curling lines and curves. Suddenly we would come up to a ridge and look down into an inverted cone, mysterious and seductive. We looked along a ridge and saw curls of

mist flick over its edge. In the complete silence, with not even the sound of wind, I felt a shudder of excitement at the realization that this was a lifeless world – no birds, no flowers, not even a leaf or scrap of wood. Only the bare elements were there, as the mist formed droplets in our faces and hair.

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The small towns of Central America, on the main roads at any rate, completely lack the aesthetic charm of Mexican *pueblos*. Almost without exception, the villages in Honduras and Nicaragua (that are situated on the Inter-American highway) and some of those in Guatemala, are shoddy scrap-heaps made up of gasoline stations, dumped vehicles, and corrugated iron shacks. Even the wooden shacks are distinctly unattractive. It made me feel that Mexico, being an older and more settled culture, has a sensibility less vulnerable to the onslaught of the combustion engine and corrugated iron.

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Tegucigalpa can only be described by one word – crazy! Nowhere else have I ever seen portable restaurants serving (good) food at benches and tables actually in the roads, so that you can sip chicken soup and sweet strong coffee while the monster-like buses pour black smoke into your face and shatter your ear-drums. The streets run higgledy-piggledy, with the oddest assortments of architectural styles plonked next to one another. Sometimes the houses are battered wrecks, sometimes they have quaint shapes like one that was triangular and filled the space between a fork in the road. At other times, they are imposing and beautiful; each category however provides plenty to wonder at.

San José is cleaner and more organized. It seemed the "best" North American imitation up to that point, in the sense that the flashing lights of advertisements, etc., did not jar ridiculously with everything else going on around. Rather things were neat and the "Americanism" seemed to have been adjusted and used according to Costa Rican taste.

I had not yet seen Medellin, for that is verily a city of the New World. Much quieter and dignified than the capitals of Guatemala or Mexico; it has lofty sky-scrapers and a panorama at night challenging that of Boston (but not yet New York!). I could conceivably live there for a while, which is the first time I have so felt in a city this size in Latin America.

Barranquilla, on the other hand, was like an unbroken U.S. ghetto. Large badly kept-up houses and messy streets seemed in keeping with a sea-port. So did the dark bars and night-clubs and the warnings about pick-pockets. Yet if it looked as sorry as a ghetto, it did not feel so. In the bar I went to people were having fun, smiling and enjoying the incredibly loud music. The music, by the way, was something very unexpected – the Carribean coast of Colombia has a large number of black people, and this music was a mixture of Calypso rhythms and the weirdest jazz. Wherever black Africans went or were taken, they injected something indefinable into music and life-style. Spontaneity, rhythm, and an involvement of either intense happiness (as in calypsos) or intense sadness (as in blues) – these various facets make up that thing, perhaps best called "soul". I could recognize it that night in Barranquilla even though I was unacquainted with the style, and it moved me along with it from right inside myself.

Huge green valleys, peaks that pierce a sky that is nearly always white, grey or silver, torrential mountain rivers that are one minute sparkling and clear, the next muddy brown after a sudden deluge, but which change (chameleon-like) back to transparency within hours of the downfall; this is the Andes, a magnificent but rather sad setting for four and a half centuries of mingling and conflict between Spaniard and Indian.

Popayan is grand but pretty too. Rows of joined houses are the same whiteness as the grandiose cathedral and churches, blending delicately with the cloudy sky. Some of the houses have carved wooden doors, some have wrought-iron gates, while others have the crests of old Spanish families over the doors. The most striking work of art that I saw here was a large wood-carved side altar in the church of San Francisco. Otherwise the altars were decorated in gold-leaf or gold paint, not very differently from others in Latin America.

The colonial art museums had the usual collection of dowdy embroidered cloaks, second–rate madonnas and lifeless statues. The art of the two centuries following the Conquest certainly fell into a sorry state; imitations of a style that without the original spark became over-ornate, and in the case of the crucifixes, thoroughly morbid. With the passion gone, one is left with the institutionalized celebration of a holy murder. There were two interesting items, however; one was a bright painting of Christ bidding Lazarus to rise from his bed, the movements of which were impelling. The other was a crib scene painted by the indigenous people of the region shortly after the Conquest. Simple in line, colour and content, this had an aura of pathetic holiness.

As usual, I was more interested in the pre-Colombian items. The people of Inza (called in the museum the "Tierradentro") made deformed heads presumably equivalent to the deformations they brought about on human infants by pressing on the soft skull with wooden boards. The Tumaco made extraordinary asymmetrically disfigured heads; for instance, one ear would be normal, the other extended in a weird shape. One edge of the mouth would be flat, the other edge turned-up.

The Quimbayo people made large sitting figures with the body and head completely flat, the eyes and mouth represented by thin flat slits. There were also some cylindrical seals from these people, probably for marking property and thereby transferring "mana". After being dipped in some coloured liquid, they were rolled on a surface where the pattern would appear. The Patia and Caluna people made "anthropomorphic vases" – shaped as heads, or just a pair of legs terminating at the waist which was the rim of the vase.

Near Silvia is the village of the Guambian Indians. The land they work now has been only recently given to them by the Colombian government. Their village is about 11,000 feet up and it rains most days of the year. Obviously mud-brick houses of the usual variety or wooden huts would be unsatisfactory in this climate, so they make houses of mud-brick which are then white-washed heavily. They look as if they are made of stone, and the whole village is pretty and looks quite affluent.

I was in Silvia for the Sunday of the presidential elections. In the morning, everyone was dressed in his Sunday-best, the white and mestizo people in black suits and ties, the Guambian Indians in clean blue "dresses" (male and female), blue or black cloaks (called *gabardinas*) and black hats rather like bowlers. They milled around the central plaza quietly, whilst armed soldiers, brought in from the barracks at Popayan, stood near the election tables to keep order if necessary. But in this town, surrounded by the Andean hills and overlooked by a lovely church with a pink façade on one hill-top, I certainly could not see any signs of the renowned Colombian political fervour.

Later I walked up the Río Piendamo, above the rushing noise of which I could only just hear the bird calls. I walked to where I was surrounded by hills. Frequently it would rain, and only once for about five minutes did I see a light blue sky between the clouds. While sheltering from the rain, I stood under a tree and watched the water drip form leaf to leaf and finally form drops on the ends of twigs. Beautiful flowers on bushes were drenched in rain, through which the mountain tops were barely visible.

In a break in the rain, I would walk on again in silence broken only by birds – then I would hear the gushing sound of a hidden gulley, water splashing its way through breaks in the grass-covered earth

Finally I walked back, until around the edge of a hill appeared a house that I had taken as a landmark when I left the road. Soon a telegraph pole appeared too, and the charm was broken I had to stiffen myself again to go back into "the world".

QUITO, ECUADOR **March 23, 1972**

It occurred to me in the last few days that with a Latin American city you are watching a process having a great many similarities with the England of about 130 years ago. In the early stages of the Industrial Revolution, people flock to the towns, creating an oversubscribed labour-market and bad housing. Although there has been response to slums, to such city planning and building projects as there are, are of course behind the need and inadequate. Rural habits of hygiene have not had time to adapt to the small town in some cases, let alone the city. *Lark Rise*, by Flora Thompson, describes the English rural common people as late as 1870-80. Their "privy" was a hole in the ground. And the horror of the more sensitive English individuals of the upper and middle classes (such as Dickens, Engels or Blake) gives an idea of the cities in the 19th century. An industrial economy just starting cannot (or has not yet been able to) give adequate wages and public services quick enough to prevent the rural migrants sinking into a deplorable living condition. There is a drop because much more is required in a city than in the country materially and because of the time needed for psychological adjustment. We have met large numbers of drunks in the cities, but none in the country. A more pleasant aspect in a city like this is its delightfulness; I saw an image of 19th century London in a cobbled street in Pasto: wagons and carts drawn by oxen and horses, stalls along the sides of straw-covered streets. In Quito I saw an entertaining pedlar of the sort that existed in Olde England and was a leading character in Fellini´s film "La Strada". This man was enraging a rattlesnake and doing other tricks. A small boy was getting things out of a big black bag. The man talked at the top of his voice about his feats and popped a hat in front of the people watching.

This evening I walked past an official of a bank who was telling a peasant family that they could not sell baskets of alfalfa outside it. They had been told every day for four days that they could not do it there. The peasants were pleading and the official kept on explaining, then he would put his fingers in his ears and shake his head, or walk off spinning a whistle around his fingers. He was doing it kindly I thought; I was sorry for him and the peasants. I was the clash of two epochs in a microcosm.

As in the English 19th century, people still go to church here. I went to a Vespers and watched the people come and go in Quito´s cathedral. Sometimes people walked in very hurriedly and sometimes very casually. They would go past the fantastic gold and wood side-altars, cross themselves quickly and nod at the prophet or saint depicted in the centre painting. The breakdown of institutional or ritual religion in North-West Europe, and to a lesser extent North America in the 20th century, is of course the major factor involved in their social alienation (not denying that religion itself may be seen as a form of alienation). The emotions directed by a church can be put into so much greater things, but never have the masses been at a point where they can do this; hence, the communal involvement, security, belief in a sacred structure of the universe, and the feeling of spiritual beauty are all just cut and hung loose.

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The Spanish priests at the time of the Conquest were really very like the priestly cast in Ancient Egypt. They sanctified the royal conquests (on a chapel at Quito I saw a picture of San Vicente blessing the royal family of Spain), helped in the psychological part of human conquest, justified the state´s acts with a divine significance, undertook the scholastic education of a small elite, and bound together tradition and law by their interpretation of ancient writings. One picture in the same chapel had angels and monks carrying old scrolls and tomes, rather like the Egyptian scribes depicted on tomb walls.

Other interesting paintings in this chapel were of San Vincent preaching to the Jews and in another to the Persians. In both cases the hearers were braking down in the recognition of their evilness, and praying to God for mercy. The Rabbis were looking at Hebrew scrolls in horror or throwing them away in dramatic renunciation.

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At Sibundoy, I went for enchanted walks through the land where the Sibundoges live. Some mestizo peasants who were very kind and invited me for coffee and a meal told me they were “very good people, just been civilized by the fathers”. I thought of the hideous process of breaking in a Neolithic community, with its very rich and entrenched culture, into a semi-Europeanized society with its Christianized morality. But looking at a Sibondoge man, in a rather Roman-looking tunic, and carrying a large machetti, I felt there was plenty of untamed wildness there, that the priests had not been able to take out so quickly.

On a bus from Pasto to Sibundoy, we went very high into flat mountain tops. Here there was no cultivation, so signs of man, and the things growing felt wild. Frantic trees shoved and squirmed to exist. I had the most incredible sense of the untamed force to survive amongst the tremendous obstacles to life. With complete lack of order, one kind of plant spilled into another, and each turn

in the mountains offered a new vista. There were no hedges and neat lines, just crazed life bursting through. Then it seemed as if men, with their curling dirt-track and their bus heaving and creaking slowly over the huge landscape, were like batches of maggots emerging from inside a melon, and wandering over its surface. Man was struggling too, just to survive on this inorganic sphere, which so unconcernedly can swallow up living things in earthquakes or mountain slides. Like ants, men had created little dwelling places in the valleys, and were able to seep life out of the land. And like ants, they would crawl from one safe valley to another.

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The mountains offer so much variety. Areas differ in the shapes of the slopes, and the size of typical physical features. Over this surface, each layer of vegetation comes and spreads a new blanket, varying in exact response to the changes in the basis. Lastly, man comes. The possibilities of his existence are dictated by the accumulated opportunities or obstacles built up by the processes before him.

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The tombs at San André were probably a communal burying ground of a Neolithic settlement. There were no signs of differentiated graves for different classes. This was a culture not yet arrived at the stage of temple-city development, where the elite of priests, rulers and specialists monopolized on precautions for immortality. The art-work was primitive too, and coarsely carved faces were on the walls to scare away spirits. Regular patterns of red and black lines showed some aesthetic leanings within rigid stereotyped designs. Probably these were magically involved in the whole enterprise. There was a hole between two tombs for the souls to move to and fro and meet friends or relatives in the afterlife. This hole was about the size I would have guessed a soul would be if asked, an oval about I foot by 2 feet!

At San Agustín the statues were of a larger community more advanced artistically and probably having a chief or corn-king. The latter was possibly also a god, since the recurring figure of a man with canines like a sabre-toothed tiger was always depicted with the protection of two fierce warriors, holding stone clubs high. If a god, his beneficence had to be maintained by letting him know that these mortals were protecting him.

Exciting and unique to me in Stone or Bronze Age art was the use of nature as a starting block or canvas. The actual rocks in a natural waterfall were carved into figures of people, toads and demons. One rock on dry land was left mostly untouched. A single portion of it was carved into the face and forearms of a huge frog or toad, continuing the shape suggested by the rock.

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When I walked out of the Quito cathedral, a man came up to me and, a little aggressively I think, asked me if I was Catholic or Protestant, and whether I liked the cathedral. Then he said that they (the people of Ecuator) were Catholics and it was their church. When I said yes and nodded, showing him I appreciate these things, he warmed to me. When he left, he wanted to give me two Sucres. Obviously, I had without realizing it shown a respect for something important to him in a

way that was necessary for him to be convinced of it. I noticed in the cathedral during Vespers that I was not regarded strangely if I stood still or sat, but that I would be if I just strolled around.

On two occasions, a little boy has run up to me in the street and offered me some money (from his mother perhaps, somewhere out of sight). They must have thought I was in difficulties and they tactfully wanted to help.

Travelling, especially if you are going fast, shoots you into new human situations one after another. You just begin to get a feeling of one, then you are into another. Each one could be fascinating for months, and many more in any country are missed altogether. It is like constantly taking a snippet of information, like flipping through an encyclopedia.

Now I am coming to feel this, it is time for me to stop travelling, I thought today of how different these months would have been if we had just stayed at Socorro and Jesus´s village in Mexico.

IQUITOS, THE AMAZON AND THE JUNGLE **May 9, 1972**

In the three or four hour flight from Chiclayo to Iquitos, I crossed over the coastal desert, which is barren rock and sand right up to the sea and often devoid of vegetation. Then I was over the Andes and could see that huge landscape from above, from where it looked as solemn and overbearing as on the ground. There was a portion of the eastern foothills that was jungle-covered, then we were flying right over lowland jungle. When I looked straight downwards, I could see a moving reflection of the sun in between the trees; they grow out of deep water. The rivers form huge loops, bends and cut-off lagoons, and this landscape continues forever. Iquitos, from the air, was no more than a dot in this vastness; I never forgot that as long as I was in the town.

Iquitos is an island. The jungle all around is an inundated swamp, a hybrid that is neither land nor water. It cannot be walked over, nor can one get very far from the river by canoe. It must be the most impassable terrain in the world. In Iquitos, you know you cannot go very far except by plane or boat; if you walk out of the town, you soon come to water. Houses try to spread beyond the dry island, being built high up on stilts. Belen is a town of several thousand people which is built high up on stilts. Belen is a town of several thousand people which is built entirely in the river, floating on log-rafts. It is a remarkably organized, clean metropolis in water; the water smells quite fresh and the “streets” are straight. Women can be seen washing clothes from a canoe or cooking on a fire inches above the water.

There is a paradoxical feeling about the town. There is the feeling of isolation, at the same time as a feeling of being very much in contact with the whole world. Ocean-going ships come here and return to New York non-stop. By the docks are shipping companies dealing with cargos destined for remote countries. Very fancy import shops sell materials, furniture and perfumes in an ostentatious manner. The number of such shops attests a relatively large affluent class here. Often these shops have placards outside on which is written: “just arrived”, with a list of treasured items unloaded from a recent boat.

Half an hour´s paddling in a canoe from one of the many ports will take you into wild, untouched (and untouchable) jungle. Ants crawl frantically over the vegetation – very quickly the canoe will be full of them if you leave the paddle near plants or trees. Sometimes a large area of vegetation will look like dry land, until a motor boat passes whose ripples set the whole carpet moving with the surface of the water.

Movement is slow, silent and dignified on this vast river. Its smaller tributaries are as wide as the Thames in London. The tempo of existence is set by this, which is a difficult adjustment to make.

Never have I seen skies so large and with such colours! At different times of the day there are large areas of translucent blue, green, magenta, pink, purple, silver or white. At sunset particularly, the world is double – the still river reflects everything above it.

*** **May 27,1972**

In Iquitos, I took Hyawaska, an hallucinogenic extract of a plant root that is used by the Indian tribes of Loreto. I went several times to the house of a witch-doctor, an old Indian woman who gave it to a group of people at midnight. It is not considered safe to take in the heat of the day. At exactly midnight, the rituals began. Everyone present was silent while the woman mixed potions, made humming sounds and soft motions with her hands. Then she summoned each person one by one to come and sit in front of her. She gave each a carefully measured portion of the Hyawaska, then hummed gently and blew smoke over each person´s head, down his back and behind her own back. She dabbed perfumes of herbs over the forehead. Among the bottles of herbs there was a jar of Old Spice aftershave lotion. This and her ritual use of cigarette smoke was a wonderful example of a tribal village tradition becoming modified in a town, upon contact with "civilization". Among the signs she used was the Catholic crossing of the breast.

She bade each one of us sit quietly and allow the drug to make us calm, and meditate. Once it was working on everybody, she would come over to certain individuals, hum and blow smoke around them. At another time, she beckoned me over to sit by her. Very softly she said to me in Spanish: "Be calm, don´t talk (I had been talking a little with someone near me), let your heart rest. Feel God within you and within everyone and everything else. Let the God within you expand and meet the God in all else, till it becomes one."

The woman´s humming and movements were as soft and gentle as the effect the drug was having (clear and high – not at all "chemical"), and were in complete accordance with the direction we were to move in the spirit. The rituals seemed after a while not as something quaint and interesting, but as something profound and warming, intimate and close.

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Iquitos is full of crazy people. There was an American who had so many unfortunate experiences in Peru that he had lost equilibrium, and took to insulting Peru to everyone and thereby landing up in endless squabbles. There were those who were waiting for Copisa, a one-aircraft airline that flew monkeys, parrots and people to Miami. Normally it flew once a week, but at that time it had not flown for a month because it had failed to pass an inspection and was awaiting parts to arrive from Chigaco. The people who had tickets were told each day it would fly tomorrow, and were gradually

succumbing to the strain. Most of them had little or no money, as they had planned on this cheap escape from South America to get them to their home country just in time. Finally, the thing went bankrupt after losing 5 weeks of fares, and it even seemed that the people would get no refund. Interviews with governors, prefects and military officials eventually provoked anguished telegrams to Lima from where the money blessedly appeared.

There was a little Italian with long hair who ate one egg a day, had no money and no possessions. There was a Costa Rican who approached an American I knew in the street with a diamond he wanted to sell. My friend said he knew nothing about diamonds and therefore would not know if it were genuine or if it were, how much it was worth. Whereupon the Costa Rican, with an amazement tainted with contempt, shouted, "And how many years at school did you do? In Costa Rica children who have had four years of school know where France, Germany and England are, and you, after all your education, know nothing about diamonds!"

And there was a Peruvian schoolteacher whose classes I took one morning, who taught English and loved to use English slang. He would avidly get us to write down any colloquial expressions whether ghetto American, hip lingo, London cockney or whatever, which he would then use to death, literally dragging their usage in by the hair. Once when I met him in the street with a girl, he pointed to her and said, "I am putting the make on this chick".

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I flew to Leticia in a seaplane, a military flight providing cheap transportation for civilians in the jungle regions of Peru. I flew very low and I saw the jungle and the river even closer that before.

Leticia is a neat and tidy little place. The people are most friendly and relatively affluent – it has very nice little shops. Communications are excellent too, considering the nearest significant place in the same country is Bogotà, a thousand miles away. Popular music and announcements are given out from a loud-speaker at the top of the church spire. It is a military post (there is great concern for the invisible lines in the jungle at this junction of Peru, Colombia andBrazil), and the people get their income largely form contraband.

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A beautiful boat-ride took me to Benjamin Constant. The boat went among Indian canoes and houses on stilts, and everyone on the "recreo" (bus-boat) was hppy in the warm sun and cooling breeze.

Benjamin Constant was smaller, altogether funkier, older and more isolated than Leticia. When I went to the governor to show my passport (this is Brazil) we could hardly talk above the thumping and singing of a poor individual in a dismal dungeon next to the office. At first, I thought he was some criminal being treated in a disgusting way (his cell had no light, and smelt like a pigsty), but then I found out he was nuts. He has flipped out on a petroleum-topography boat on which he had been working, and had been tied down after smashing all the plates on board. He was being kept temporarily in this cell until other accommodation could be found. In fact, no criminal had inhabited the cell for years.

Benjamin was a beautiful calm, happy place. A wooden wharf continued into a street on dry land bordered with wooden houses, shops and restaurants on stilts. A couple of streets ran perpendicular to the main one; these were mostly submerged while I was there and little boys took you up and down in canoes. I spent hours situating around just watching the people peaceably doing nothing or working, sometimes chatting with them. On the wharf, I would see a boat come in with a day´s catch just before dusk, and people with rolled-up trousers would walk along precariously balanced planks to get to the boat and buy some fish. All around the boat, little boys would swim and splash and show off of the girls standing on the wharf, who would scream with laughter at each idiocy. Behind, on the horizon, would reign a sublime, indescribable sunset.

There was a travelling circus in town. No animals, but they had tight–rope walking, acrobatics, fire-breathing, clowns and a dwarf. The group was Colombian, and they lived (about 15 of them) in a very small boat moored at the wharf. That was a sight! The thing was spread-eagled with drying clothes; chickens strutted and a very lively monkey pranced around on the roof. Pots and pans hung or lay everywhere, and at all times of the day someone was frying plantains, while the rest, especially the dwarf, fooled around and teased one another.

I spent a couple of nights in a deserted hut right in the jungle a couple of hour´s walk from Benjamin. Here was blissful quietness but for the strange cries of birds, and the singing of insects. When I walked past a house very often the people would ask me in for a cup of coffee, their faces beaming with smiles. Their friendliness was overflowing, I was dazed. The emotions I felt in this place gave me an almost painful, wondrous feeling, like a lump in the throat.

From Benjamin, I took a boat to Manaus. If I had thought the people in Iquitos were crazy, I did not know what was in store for me on this boat. After several delays and false departures that turned out only to be trips to the other side of the river or back followed by a few more hours` wait, the boat left. It had a barge tied to its side which was full of wood and a broken-down tractor; other cargo included empty oil drums, bananas, coca-cola bottles and two giant turtles, one of which was banished to a latrine which made the latter extremely difficult to use since the animal filled all the ground space. I felt sorry for this poor turtle, since the place stank either of what would be expected in a lavatory, or else of a pungent disinfectant that it was doused in once a day.

Among the passengers was a group of soldiers returning from their border post. These were very rowdy oafs who made mealtimes an ordeal. The cook brought to the table one big plate of rice, one of beans and one of gristly meat each mealtime (supper was without the beans), and once this had been devoured no amount of pleading would procure more. The fellow diners grabbed at what there was in such a way that after one hungry day I had to agree to behave like a pig or else starve. When I complained of not getting a share of food these characters laughed; for the rest of the trip, my hunger was a stock joke. However, before the journey was over, I came to like every single one of those motherfuckers.

Sometimes the boat would stop for no apparent reason. If this was at or after dusk, the boat would be descended on by a blanket of mosquitoes. One night after stopping at Te Fe, we were informed that the boat would not leave till the next morning, supposedly because there was something wrong with the propeller; but I think it was because the crew was drunk and everyone felt like going to a dance in the town. A strange Belgian doctor on the boat got some of us into the dance free. The girls

were very beautiful and everyone was very drunk and happy. Two good companions on the boat were Argentinians - they had not a penny but had been travelling for months. With their fast tongues and wit they got free boat rides, air flights, meals and even free board in hotels.

For seven days and nights the boat ploughed along this enormous river, sometimes a mile wide; at other times it took us through narrow straits between islands. For seven days and nights the scenery was water, jungle and sky, yet it was different and unique every moment. In the heat of the day, the water would sparkle and the trees would glisten. While it was raining, the water would be pock-marked, the trees would be dripping and the sky a dull grey. In the early morning, the banks would be shrouded in mist; at night they would be monotonous, somber silhouettes. During the day, the sky might be a delicious blue and white, then, from a distance, a grey sheet would approach the boat, the water troubled. Once-two-three crash! The storm would be upon us like the vengeance of Heaven. Within minutes, we would re-emerge from the dismal grey into translucent, shimmering sunlight. When this happened at night we would get soaked asleep on the deck. Shelter was not forthcoming except for those with cabins, since the sides were open and the rain tore in almost at right-angles.

Often we would see huge dolphins lunging above the water surface. Birds would squawk as they flew in front of the boat. Then at sunset! I might turn my head or raise my eyes and feel I was beholding the presence of God Almighty Himself.

We would go sometimes a whole day without seeing signs of Man. At other times, there would be little groups of wooden huts on stilts or on an outcrop of dry land. The ports that we stopped at – Amataura, Fonte Boa, Te Fe and many others, were slow, sleepy affairs, composed of crumbling stone buildings and decadent old boats. When we drew in, the people from the town would come and sit around near the boat. Some of us would swim and fool around with the local lads, or chat to the pretty girls.

One afternoon, we were at a place called Anori during the two hours before nightfall - the most beautiful hours. As usual, the naked brown bodies of children were flapping about in the water. Silent canoes slipped in an out of the little harbour. On the shore, strewn with planks to walk on, and half-built boats, chickens and vultures mingled and strutted and pecked. The pipe-like voice of a woman called – and another woman laughed. Men with furrowed faces hawled in sacks from a boat, while streaks of pink, yellow and orange were ever-changing on the canvas above. Here was exquisite, total, unselfconscious beauty. Here was the happiness of a single laugh, the tragic beauty of a colossal, confounding continent. For what is America? It is a branch of humanity that has cupped its hands, filled them to the brim with the ecstasy and tragedy of the cosmos, and has drunk; has drunk very deep. And what have I gained from this America? I have drunk deep too.

MANAUS

In the centre of a plaza at Manaus, next to the Opera House, is a monument to the fourth centenary of the discovery of Brazil. It was presumably built during the rubber boom, since the style is a loud

and imposing neo-classicism, rather like that of Eros in Picadilly. The painting on the ceiling of the Opera House is of a Greek mythological scene with nymphs and so on, in the same vein.

Around the central statue of this monument, are four individual ones, dedicated very interestingly to Europa, Africa, Asia and America. I found it very striking in its clarity; the three continents of the Old World and the indigenous Americans are the four pivots to Brazil´s history and society. Perhaps sociologically Brazil represents the New World par excellence, since Brazilians have a culture entirely of their own, yet are a synthesis of the major old cultures. Admittedly the Asians in Brazil (Japanese, Indians, Lebanese, Syrians and others) have not intermarried much yet, nevertheless, there is the feeling of a single homogeneous nationality. In contrast to the schizophrenic split in the Andean countries (between Amerindians and others), there is little physical difference between the middle-class and poor here; they make up one society. No doubt in the North-E ast the poor are mostly black and the rich mostly white, but it is not exclusively true, and where there is such an ethnic split, it is not accompanied by a cultural split.

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Down by the dockside in Manaus, there was an old tramp sitting on a collapsed cardboard box. A boy was about to light his cigarette with a match. Just as the match got near, the boy jerked and nearly pushed it in the poor man´s face, then threw it away. The man picked up a nasty piece of sharp wood and made after his persecutor. He soon retreated and someone else lit his cigarette without bother. A little later, a rotten fruit arrived with speed from above; another boy was on a roof. Again the man shouted and jumped to his guard, this time using the cardboard box as a shield and brandishing the piece of wood. Other people looked on blandly.

I laughed, I didn't feel sorry for the man. He was not mortally wounded and probably enjoyed it in his own way. After all, he was responding to someone else as that person was to him. After a while I noticed a kind woman give him something to drink. He was all right, the world works in a funny way; it doesn´t have to be all rosy to be good, nor even fair. I was reminded of Camus´s story *L´Etranger*, and the mangy old man who beat his mangy old dog. He was one of the characters that illustrated the meaningfulness of life most strongly.

From Manaus to George town **June 9, 1972**

At Manaus, I was very lucky to get on a boat going up the Rio Branco, for there is no passenger service. I got a free ride on a military supply boat; actually it was two driving boats lashed together pushing a pontoon. It was a magnificent journey; on the boat were only the crew and three Guyanese fellows who got a free ride too.

For the first two days, we were on the Rio Negro. It is correctly named – I could not conceive before how water could be black, but indeed it is. When still, the river looks like ebony. When churned up by the propeller, it looks like crude oil – yellowy black. The Rio Branco does not look white however, it is a muddy brown.

More even than before was I staggered by the vastness of this jungle. The boat droned on and on, but around each bend in the river there was forever more jungle. At night I would sit at the front of the pontoon, where I could barely hear the engine. We were going up-river so we kept always near

the bank. The searchlight up on the bridge made me feel the boat was a huge but sleek animal, placidly forging its way at a never-changing speed. The boat stopped once (at the only port on the way) in five days, and then it was at night while I was asleep. The continual movement for five days and nights through unending jungle gave me a sense of the enormity of this planet that I had never experienced before.

A whole day had passed, and I had been looking, watching avidly for anything that appeared. I saw herons, carra-carra birds, piranha fish that jumped and another shark-like creature (the name of which I have forgotten) that jumped high but is apparently harmless unless one is struck by it. Once I saw a brightly-coloured toucan and once…. an alligator. It bubbled and surfaced for an instant very near, between us and the near bank. But for the whole day, not one house nor one humanly created dent in the jungle did I see. I watched much of the night too – there was nothing. The next day we came around a bend in the mid-afternoon sunshine: there was a single, solitary, tiny house, in a patch of dry land that had been cleared. An old man stood outside it, the boat slowed right down, and I watched intently as one of the crew called to him, got into the canoe and went onto the land. He talked to his friend for three minutes then returned to the boat which had moved a little further on in the meantime. I asked him how long the man had live there all on his own. "Oh, many years", was the reply.

In the last two days, there was gradually more and more dry land. There was actually a continuous bank after while, making what we were on a *river* instead of merely a winding portion of the swamp where trees did not grow and where the water moved! It gave me a sense of security – the inundated jungle is very and mysterious. Soon bluish mountains were visible (the Sierras do Macajai) to the northwest. By the time we reach Caracarai, the jungle was thinner and interspersed with patches of savanna.

From Caracarai to Boa Vista, we drove on a bumpy that trail took us through thick bush, interspersed with grassland. Between Boa Vitas and Lethem, it was continuous savanna – but with low, green grass, not the tall, yellow grass of African savanna. The horizon was visible all around except where tall palms followed the line of a creek. Cattle could be seen in small groups from time to time.

At the frontier, we crossed the narrow river Takutu to set foot in Guyana. This was the first time I have crossed a border in a canoe!

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At Lethem I met an Englishman who owned a provisions store and an abbatoir. He told me much about this region. Lethem was named after the D.C. who built a house here – it was the only oen then. Soon it grew to be the centre for the dozen or so cattle ranchers in the Rununi Providence. In those days, there was a cattle trail up to the coast, which took eight weeks and had to be done at exactly the right time – long enough after the rains for it to be passable, but before the vegetation that had sprung up during the rains had died off in the drought. Furthermore, once a couple of large herds had been along it, the vegetation was all eaten and that was it for another year. In the jungle regions, the rivers had to be at exactly the right state for it to be safe to cross. Here the trail was narrow, and if the river was too swift, it would sweep the cattle downstream where they would not

be able to climb out, the banks being flanked by an impenetrable wall of green. Nowadays the trail is not longer extant, for the government ceased subsidizing its annual weeding when it acquired some D.C.8s. Cattle are flown out and provisions flown in. So the arrival of the aeroplane has helped to close the interior rather than open it up.

The same situation exists with the rivers. These are fast-flowing, and full of rapids unlike the lower, easily navigable rivers of Brazil. To manage them is an art, and since the aeroplane people have not bothered to retain it. The old pilots are dying off fast.

In the days of the cattle trail, a Chinaman tried to make money by hawling provisions from George town with water-buffalo he imported. Usually horses were used. But these animals apparently refused to work in the heat of the day; they would make for the nearest pool and drag in their cartloads of rice and sugar. The Chinaman finally let them go near Lethem, after which they interbred with wild cattle, producing a very aggressive wild herd. Men have been known to be trapped four days at the top of a tree whilst these beasts lounge around on the ground, ready to attack the captive if he descends.

The area has always been dominated by a single fiery family, the Melvilles. The first one, a complete dissolute, got himself appointed Protector of Indians by a governor in Georgetown who was a drinking friend of his. He made the Indians pay their fines for offences committed in the form of cows, and thereby built himself up a large herd. He also licensed most of the land in his own name. He soon generated a batch of half-breeds, who eventually owned between them all the land in the province. The members of the family always have hated and still do hate one another; they used to have fights with guns or knives frequently in the bar at Lethem.

A few years ago, there was an extreme right-wing uprising against the government in Lethem. This was led by some of the Melvilles who wanted to separate from Guyana and keep the land to themselves, for the government was introducing land reforms. The Government of Venezuela supplied them with arms, supposedly supporting an anti-Communist “counter-revolution”. The rebellion was quashed, and the leaders fled to Venezuela with which Guyana is not on good terms now.

Near Lethem is a large Mukushi Indian Village, called St. Ignatius. The houses are very distinctive, made of mud-brick with a “scaffolding” of bamboo sticks. The people I met there were very gentle and kind. It was wonderful to be able to talk to pure Amerindians in English. They had learnt it from missionaries and spoke very clearly.

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The government of Guyana is trying desperately to develop the almost untouched interior, for nearly all the population is in the coastal region. What seems quite obvious is that pioneering cannot be encouraged from the outside very satisfactorily. It is no good getting people into the interior who want the same conditions as in the towns. Pioneers of the Wild West braved the elements, built their own houses, dug wells and constructed trails. Here the government builds a road through virgin jungle hoping people will follow; and builds houses with water and electricity supplies to coax settlers out. It seems that unless a society holds the tendencies for a “pioneering spirit”, such development will occur haltingly.

In Georgetown, (not in the interior), I felt there was definite social unrest and apathy. There is not much apparent resentment or humiliation, but an underlying unwholesomeness, which is surely a testimony to colonialism. The Guyanese have a hard psycho-social struggle ahead of them. Everyone seems to be grabbing for a dollar, and there is much distrust. Most bars have an iron grill separating the barmen from the drinkers, and all have notices saying, "No Credit Given". Some of these were quite amusing. For example: "No credit today, try tomorrow"; "Credit will be extended to anyone over 99 years of age who is accompanied by his grandfather".

Many restaurants and shops make you pay before giving the goods. You cannot walk ten yards without being asked for money; the unemployment rate is apparently 29 percent. Even prostitutes cannot find clientelle! In one office I read, "This is a non-profit organization. It isn´t intended to be so, but it is!"

From Lethem I flew with the Guyana Defense Force to Mahdia, since the road was impassable due to the rains. We flew over dramatic scenery – steep jungle-covered cliffs and crags. Mahdia is right in the jungle again. It is a gold and diamond town – the people who search for them are called "pork-knockers". Wooden shacks have signs: "Licensed to trade in gold and liquor". The people drink a lot, and talk about their last lucky find.

From Mahdia to Bartica, I went on the road that the government is very proud of – a narrow track through dense, unending jungle. Bartica has buildings that indicate a flourishing past. Now it is in decay, and considerable drunken hostility seems to have accompanied this. The timber and quarry industries are in decline, but more important is the fact that it used to be the place from which provisions were sent down the rivers Essequibo, Mazaruni and Cuyuni, by boat. Now, aeroplanes fly provisions from Georgetown – again encouraging centralization. People in the interior focus to such an extent on Georgetown that they refer to it as simply "town".

From Bartica to Parika I went on a boat. The river was lined with jungle, but for occasional plantations and ports with wooden buildings. From Parika to Georgetown, a train took me through coastal terrain. This is swampland, most of which was reclaimed by the early Dutch settlers. With canals crisss-crosssing the flat, green countryside, the weather overcast and rainy, this looked remarkably like Holland. Grand plantation-owners` houses were frequent and imposing amongst the smaller shacks on stilts.

In Georgetown, I was struck with the impression that even this is like a large trading-post – the country as a whole has very much a "settlement" quality about it. In Georgetown, there are so many warehouses, wharfs, banks, merchants´ establishments and so on. Yet the architecture is very beautiful, not only in the grand buildings (all wood) but in the common houses lining the straight little streets also. In some places, canals and bridges reminded me of Amsterdam, at other times houses with big bay windows are reminiscent of England.

Ethnically, Guyana is a most exciting mixture of Asiatic Indian, Negro, Amerindian, Dutch, British, Portuguese and Chinese. And the language shows it. It has an element of Hindi sing-song intonation, Negro West-Indian English, and an unmistakable flavor of north country or Scottish dialect. It is often most difficult to understand.

In Georgetown, I saw an incredible contraption made of junk metal. It had wheels and a cross up high. It had wheels and a cross up high. It was dumped somewhere and its function was a mystery to me. It had a sign on it saying: “Women stop whoring then men will stop stealing and killing. Be loyal.”