

# Competing Cities and the 'City of God'

By KAREL HUJER

(Dr. Hujer is professor of physics and astronomy at the University of Chattanooga.)

Since the dawn of advancing civilization there have always been two cities, originally city states, competing for supremacy. At the University of Pennsylvania Museum a brick with cuneiform record dating from 3000 B.C. depicts the struggle between aggressive Kish and democratic Urk in ancient Sumer. A more familiar rivalry existed between Sparta and Athens which brought on the pyrrhic Peloponnesian wars. Democratic Athens was then defeated, first by Sparta, later by expanding Rome, which finally overtook all Greece and established the Pax Romana.

Rome, in turn, faced a relentless struggle with Carthage, nourishing the devouring hatred of the Punic wars which dragged on for an entire century. Even with Hannibal, the Carthaginian chief, already at the gates of Rome, the elder Cato still offered his repetitious oratory in the Roman senate: "And I reiterate, Carthage must be destroyed."

## More Humane

As was always the case, one of the two cities represented a more humane, liberal attitude if it experienced some amount of security. Sparta was a totalitarian, military autocracy whereas Athens represented the democracy of Plato's Republic, the variety which included slavery and enormous individualistic "intelligent" self-interest. This precipitated its eventual downfall with all Greece becoming an easy prey of rising Rome.

Carthage was similar to Sparta, and it was from Carthaginians that Romans inherited the cruel punishment of crucifixion. Yet, although an overall vast slave empire, Rome represented the smaller evil for it became the instrument of propagation of the ancient Greek civilization.

In European history we have had maritime London and continental Paris as contenders while Berlin, the third city, intently observed. Paris with its growing empire built a famous astronomical observatory in 1675. So did London at the same time, but not for the love of science. It undertook to organize an efficient navy which needed for its protection the reliable determination of geographic longitude. This demanded an observatory for Britana was, for a period, destined to "rule the waves."

With progressing civilization and accelerated transportation, the distance between the competing

cities has enlarged. Today we have Washington and Moscow while the third city, Peking, looks on, all three cities within their much expanded empires. But expansion now goes into the third dimension — the conquest of space — and instead of a surface navy, both Washington and Moscow presently compete in penetrating space with rockets and satellites.

## Science and Politics

Once more science is linked with politics. Civic aspects, however, are humanly more important than material achievements. Moscow and its empire represents tyrannical autocracy while Washington offers an almost lawless, licentious freedom where arsonists are permitted to burn our very capital. Such is our freedom today. Yet, ever since the ancient Assyrian code of Hamurabi, arsonists were treated as the worst of criminals.

In Russia, the casual Moscow visitor today received a good impression of orderliness. With mixed feelings I observed a Moscow policeman courteously leading an old woman across Kropotkin Street, aware that thousands have perished in numerous labor camps, helpless victims of this brutal regime. Vorkuta labor camp near the arctic region is one of the very few that has reached world news. Then a policeman reprimanding a drunkard in Alexandrovski Park seemed a public face-saving illusion, where people seek an escape in vodka from the exhausting burden of mass labor which is so badly underpaid. Red Square, which connotes "beautiful" in Russian, through the centuries has witnessed the red flow of blood during public execution of "kramolniki," insurgents, guilty or innocent. The magnitude of blood hidden behind the red porphyry of the Lenin mausoleum is another riddle like the Egyptian pyramids.

In Moscow stands the superb Bolshoi Theatre, inherited from Tsarist days, now zealously maintained. It also has an outstandingly beautiful subway and innumerable parks with rich flower beds and water fountains, a reminder of the fountains of Rome. In fact, an American sociologist commented that Moscow has much of public wealth, yet alarming private poverty.

Statistics also revealed that for each Muscovite there was an average of not quite five square yards of floor space per apartment. On the other hand, our rich American capital can claim no opera building, and cannot display the cleanliness of Moscow where street cleaning is taken over by the multitude of husky Russian womanhood who dare not strike. These are members of 20 million surplus women, a ghastly aftermath of revolution and of two wars.

America does have its splendid speedways, a rarity in Russia, but the sociologist continued: "Our speedways are intended for private cars and our roadside billboards for commercial indoctrination. Russia has few private cars and permits no private advertising. Besides, with commodities so scarce, they don't require it."

## Subdued Warpath

This past half century Washington and Moscow are on the subdued warpath of fluctuating gradualness, interrupted during World War II by some five years of precarious alliance against Hitler. Since the Iron Curtain fell, both cities claim the annihilating power of their nuclear stockpiles. Particularly this final third of the century starts with heated turbulence as today's contenders face each other on the war-torn, distant Vietnam battlefields. As a noble experiment, our goodwill democracy has also welcomed the United Nations headquarters into

its land, where it provides an excellent Trojan horse right to the very gates of Washington. Then communist literature is permitted to flow freely into our land of patient democracy, this open society, while American newspapers are nowhere to be found on the Moscow market, that closed society. The tradition of diplomatic courtesy which the hard-riding communists ridicule as "bourgeois decadence," is neatly used by them as a one-way traffic in a constantly retreating democracy. All the while Peking, with its divergent communist line, ardently encourages the struggle of both white western powers as Rome once closely watched Athens and Sparta.

It is Washington, catering to private luxuries, that symbolizes the destiny of Rome after the expensive victory in Punic wars. Both cities carry vestiges of Greco-Roman background: Moscow built on seven hills like Rome, with its tradition as holy Russia, first as a Third Rome, now as the "holy" seat of the Third International. And Washington: At least there is Capitol Hill by name.

Communist Moscow celebrated the ninetieth birthday of Lenin by using Lenin slogans. An ominous feature of Lenin's character was portrayed in an anonymous letter to Tolstoi ascribed to Lenin: "I cannot agree with you that human relations are corrected only by love. This can be said only by people well educated and well fed. But what should be said by man who all his life has suffered under the yoke of oppressors? Therefore, Lev Nikolayevich, just before you die I tell you that the world will be choked in blood. It will beat and kill not only the exploiting masters but also their children so as to expect no evil from them. I regret that you will not live to the time to convince yourself of your mistake."

## Demagogue Voice

This is the portentous voice of a demagogue of our age. Since ancient days man's behavior has undergone little change. Nevertheless, in the great ill-differentiated mass of people there emerge individual lights, tiny flames of affection, divine sparks nourished by tears and sorrow. So while the fewest of men feel ties with the great human family, we sense that man's true relationship to man is steadily expanding. And therein lies the hope of not two contending cities but an unflinching confidence in one ultimate Augustinian "City of God." Never since the dawn of civilization has this need been more imperative.

## Food Stamp Help

From the Louisville Courier-Journal

House approval of an expanded food stamp program is an encouraging departure from a general, punish-them-because-they're-poor attitude which has been a prevailing force through much of the current session of Congress. Rep. Leonor K. Sullivan of St. Louis had success as her best argument as she worked to see the plan extended to hundreds of additional cities and counties. It has proved one of the most effective means of easing the pain of poverty while the more difficult task of finding ways to end poverty continues.

The House, by a significant margin, opposed its own, conservative Agriculture Committee. The margin of victory should give Senators needed encouragement to go along with the progressive step.

Public reaction to reports of malnutrition, even starvation in this food-rich nation, helped Mrs. Sullivan to gain the support she has sought for several years.

The food stamp plan can improve further in future years but the success in gaining a four-year extension and removing the spending limit is a major victory.