feet and keep moving a little during the intermission, she said, or her muscles would stiffen. Her dressing-room was just a small curtained-off space at the side of the stage and her dresses, shoes and jewellery were arranged for speedy changes. Her dresser, an elderly woman who accompanies her everywhere, must be a model of efficiency, for the speed with which she makes a complete change of costume is one of the most astonishing features of her programs . . .

Stalinabad

During the same trip, John Watkins visited Stalinabad. The following discussion with a group of students took place at the university:

Instead of bas-reliefs along the upper part of the front of the school building, they had a row of busts of famous poets, including the tenth-century Persian poet Firdausi, whom the Tadjiks consider their own, because the language is the same, the Uzbek Navai, and the Ukrainian Shevchenko. If I had been from Palermo, Ontario (a statue of the poet Shevchenko donated by the Soviet Union stands in the village of Palermo), I should no doubt have recognized Shevchenko's face immediately but, as I was trying to remember, one of a group of students, who had been looking at me with frank curiosity, got up the courage to come over and speak. He understood that I was from Canada, he began politely. I was — but how did he know? He and his friends had heard me talking to the director and they were wondering if I would like to see the university. If I would, they would be happy to show me around. I accepted with pleasure.

The student who spoke first was an Uzbek named Ahmed. As we walked along he introduced his friends. I have forgotten their names, but there were a Tadjik, a Pamir, a Russian, a Ukrainian and a Jew in the group, and they were specializing in various fields. The Uzbek remarked on the many nationalities in the group and said that this was typical not only of the university but of the city. The university, like all the other large buildings in Stalinabad, was only a few years old but it was already overcrowded . . .

It was getting dark and the lights were on in the building. There was nothing very remarkable about the interior, which was plain, solid and practical, with little effort at ornamentation.

In one of the classrooms of the Department of Marxism-Leninism, a lecture was going on. Some of the group who had come with me had disappeared but other students had joined us and were asking all sorts of questions in such loud voices that I was afraid that we might disturb the class and moved on.

Didn't Canada belong to the aggressive Atlantic Pact, one aggressive young man wanted to know. It was a defensive not an aggressive alliance, I replied. Defensive against what, they wanted to know. Against any country that might be strong enough to attack, I replied. Then it must be against the Soviet Union, they deduced not illogically. But surely it must be obvious that the Soviet Union stood for peace and had no intention of attacking any other country. I said that since the *coup* in Czechoslovakia in which a Communist minority had taken over the government, many other European countries were afraid of their own Communist parties attempting something similar and they did not want Communist revolutions any more than they wanted war.

It was at about this point that I became afraid that the professor of Marxism-Leninism might think he had opposition outside his door and suggested that we might be disturbing the class. The other students left, but Ahmed, the Uzbek, had still so many questions to ask that he walked the streets with me for a couple of hours. He was very young, only 18, and in his first year in economics. Often he spoke so rapidly that I had to slow him down and he jumped from one subject to another so quickly that it is hard to give much idea on his conversation. He was tall and thin with a round face, large dark eyes and unruly black hair. He was plainly but well dressed in a dark turtle-neck sweater and suede sports jacket. Although he had been born in Stalinabad, his parents were both Uzbek and he was, he said, of almost pure Arab blood. His people were evidently well enough off that he had never had much to do but study, and no matter how excited he got about the subject under discussion he was always extremely polite.

Ahmed's ambition had always been to enter the diplomatic service and he had thought of going directly into the diplomatic training-school in Moscow — if he could get in. The competition was very keen. Then he had decided that it would be better to take a degree in economics first, so that if he did not succeed in getting into the diplomatic service, or if he got in and found that he did not like travelling and living abroad as much as he had expected, he would have his economic training to fall back on. In any case, he planned to go to Moscow for postgraduate studies when he had finished the five-year course in Stalinabad. He was determined that he would not marry before 26 or 28, no matter how strong the family pressure might be.

At 16, he had been madly in love with a beautiful Tadjik girl, who had turned the heads of many of his contemporaries; she had also been in love with him and not, I gathered, stand-offish. But she had wanted to get married and he had not, so he had broken it off and she was now happily married to somebody else, thank goodness. The families had given him a bad time of it for a while, and his own parents were now looking for another suitable match. It was considered very bad in that part of the country not to raise a family as soon as possible, but he wanted to finish his studies first.

Communism as religion

Could people read the works of Marx and Lenin in Canada, he wanted to know. They could if they wanted to, I told him. Was Marx studied in the universities? Yes, you could hardly give a course in nineteenth-century political and economic thought without Marx, I replied. But I cannot understand how they can let the students read Marx if they are afraid of Communism, he exclaimed. I said that that was part of what we called our liberal tradition — that people read what they like and made up their own minds about it. Did they teach Marx in the primary and secondary schools? No, they did not; if a man were a Catholic or a Presbyterian, he taught his children Catholicism or Presbyterianism from the age of three or so. That was a question of religion, and it seemed to me that in the Soviet Union Communism was a kind of religion, which people taught their children to believe in from their earliest years. A religion, he exclaimed. But in a religion there is always God. Well, you have what you think is the one and only truth and that is your substitute for God, I replied. This idea was obviously novel and disturbing and he was not prepared to counter it.