

our civilization are secure. It is at best arguable that it will remain possible to govern and organize societies by the liberal and democratic techniques evolved in recent centuries, as, on the one hand, the control of increasingly complex societies requires larger bureaucracies but, on the other, communications make people more sceptical of politics and politicians. At the galloping rate at which we are consuming natural resources, our own grandchildren could emerge into a world as impoverished as if there had been a third world war.

The OECD report *Science, Growth and Society*, states bluntly: "We are less than two generations away from the time when the human population must reach a new equilibrium in the distribution of its members and in relation to its environment. This will modify the age composition of populations and call for profound changes in life style, in values and in the structure of institutions."

There is an old cowboy song — one of the genuine ones from the last century — describing the pioneer leaving the upward slope of the Sierras for the perils of the Conti-

mental Divide, which contains the haunting phrase: "From here on up the hills don't get any higher, but the valleys get deeper and deeper." The great prizes that technology and organization have won for us, the peaks, may lie behind us; but a false step, a series of careless decisions, may take us plunging down into the valleys. I am the last person to belittle scientific progress but, as the OECD report states:

Science has received social support over the last 15 years, primarily because of its role as a source of technology, but in the future it will be equally important in providing a wider intellectual base for the control and orientation of technology — a more subtle and more complicated role.

Very possibly a future historian of our civilization — a Gibbon, a Macaulay or a Sainte-Beuve — may ignore all the political developments of 1971 on which I have concentrated and mention just one occurrence of that year: the fact that the legislature of the most technologically-advanced nation the world has ever known refused to vote funds to build a supersonic transport.

1973

Mirror for Soviet life-style

Tashkent

John Watkins explored the views of students on a trip to storied Tashkent in September of 1954:

The flight to Tashkent took a little over 11 hours. In the Hotel Tashkent, I was given a large two-room suite on the second floor, furnished with a grand piano, a large black leather divan, an imposing desk, a table and several chairs, potted ferns, a three-foot-high porcelain vase with a picture of Venus and Cupid, and a large bronze statue of St. George and the Dragon. After dinner in the hotel restaurant, I went for a walk.

Nor far from the hotel was a typical Soviet Park of Rest and Culture for which there was an admission charge of 50 kopecks. It had the standard equipment — open-air theatres and movies, a paved dancing square, places for open-air concerts, shooting booths, outdoor restaurants, a basketball court, billiard rooms, chess rooms.

I soon got into conversation with some students from

the Railway Institute who were climbing over the high iron fence in preference to paying the entrance fee. They thought at first that I must be a delegate to the Medical Conference, but when they heard that I was a diplomat from Canada they seemed to be even more eager to talk. They had all had two years of either English or German but had not absorbed much more than we do at home in the same length of time and had, of course, had no practice in speaking. They had completed the standard ten-year course and were now in the first year at the Railway Institute. When I asked if they would like a glass of beer or lemonade, they said that they would prefer just to talk and spread out a newspaper on a bench. They asked many questions about Canada, the United States and Europe, but obviously they regarded the prospect of ever seeing anything outside the Soviet Union as very remote. Two girls of about the same age on a nearby bench joined in the conversation, and one of them showed that she could speak and understand French quite well. None of them seemed in the least uneasy about talking to a foreigner and paid no attention to a militiaman who gave us, it seemed to me, a rather searching look as he sauntered by.

The students asked if they could walk back to the hotel with me and persuaded me to go on a little farther and see the new Operal House, called after the great Uzbek poet Navai. It had been built by Japanese prisoners of war, they

The appreciation of John Watkins and the selection of excerpts from his reports were handled by Marshall Crowe, then President of the Canadian Development Corporation and Arthur Blanchette the then head of the Historical Division of the Department of External Affairs. The views expressed were those of the authors.