

Spain, Portugal, & Morocco – 1985

[UPDATE: October, 2007—As I gradually go back over my old travelogues, I'll be leaving the original text intact but adding additional comments in boldfaced enclosed in brackets to expand on what was originally said. I'll also add some additional scanned photos to enhance the original travelogues.

This trip to Spain was the first **big** trip I took and the first time I did a significant amount of travel on my own. I visited a place that was just emerging from what today we'd call "Third World" status to join the mainstream of the western world. Spain in the '80s was vaulting out of the Franco era and into the future. It was amazing to go back to Spain almost twenty years later and see just how much the place had changed. There is nothing at all "backward" about 21st Century Spain; it's the industrial and technological powerhouse of the European Union. That was still very much in the future in 1985, though, and the country I visited then had nearly as much in common with Mexico and Peru (countries that are unquestionably Third World) as it did with the rest of Europe.

I went to Spain in 1985 because at the time I was a Spanish teacher. Not long after that I switched to teaching in my major, mathematics. So I may not really have used a lot of what I learned on this trip. It was still fascinating, though, and I think all travel helps us better understand the world as a whole.]

It gets a bit embarrassing to say you've been either planning, going on, or just back from vacation all summer long. But eight countries, three continents, and three months after school got out last May I must say I've seen a lot more of the world than I had beforehand. [... And twenty-two years later I know **far** more about the world than I knew then—and I'm not really that embarrassed about taking multiple vacations in a year, since I've done so several times since then. That is, after all, why I'm perpetually broke.]

I had been planning all last year to go to Spain this summer. I had set money aside **[some of the money I'd inherited when my father passed away]** and was looking forward to one pleasant trip to that country. Somehow, though, the summer turned out to be a bit livelier than just that. My brother Paul, who teaches a course in Soviet history, decided to go on a very inexpensive tour to the Soviet Union, and I broke into savings to go along. For a while I considered combining Russia and Spain into the same trip, but it turned out that to do that would mean forfeiting pre-paid airfare that was included in the Soviet tour. Between that and paying for transportation to get from Russia to Spain, it ended up being less expensive to make two different trips instead of one. (If that sounds confusing and silly, it is—but then air fares generally are among the more confusing and silly things on earth.) **[Moreover, I can't imagine having flown out of a Soviet airport independently. Soviet customs formalities were confusing and intimidating enough to do as part of a group and with a guide who walked us through things. If I'd tried it on my own, I'd likely still be somewhere in the Gulag.]**

You may have already read my "novella" on the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, I doubt this will be any shorter; but for those who might be interested, here are a few thoughts about Spain, Portugal, Morocco, and Gibraltar.

SATURDAY, 20 JULY == MAQUOKETA, CHICAGO, NEW YORK, & THE ATLANTIC

I've seen more of John and Janet this summer than in the past several years. They have been more than kind in offering to transport me from their house to O'Hare Airport, a far more inexpensive place to fly out of than any airport around Algona.

We left fairly early this morning for the four-hour drive across Illinois **[a drive that has gotten at least an hour shorter with better roads and higher speed limits]**. Fortunately the weather was quite pleasant, and we arrived at O'Hare in plenty of time. I got checked in fairly quickly and was given boarding passes both for the flight to New York and for the connection to Madrid. John and Janet went to the gate with me and saw me board roughly on time, around 1pm.

The plane I flew on was a Lockheed L1011, Lockheed's answer to a 747. It was a large plane, but VERY crowded. I passed much of the time going to New York writing notes for the Russia letter like this. For some reason the flight attendants ran out of lunches to serve. I was in the next to the last row in my cabin, with a row of people who spoke only Spanish behind me. It looked as if our two rows were not going to have any food, but eventually our flight attendant found some extra first class meals on board. (I really can't say first class food is much different from any other airplane food—this centered around a rather plain ham sandwich.) I finished eating about the time we got into New York.

Fortunately my flight to Madrid was also on TWA, so I didn't have the problem of changing terminals at JFK Airport. Unfortunately TWA didn't really seem to have its act together today. Right after getting off the flight from Chicago, I went to Gate 32, where my plane to Madrid was supposed to take off. It was still two hours until the plane was scheduled to leave, but there was already a 747 waiting at the gate, "Madrid" was posted at the desk by the gate, and several young Spaniards were sitting in the lounge.

For no reason I've figured out yet, while we were waiting another sign was posted below "Madrid" at our gate. Now the sign made it appear that this plane was heading both to Madrid and Frankfurt. Suddenly a mass of German-speaking people appeared and started heading toward the gate, ushered on by an important looking person. Then the 747 at the gate drove away, presumably taking off for Frankfurt.

Shortly after that person had ushered the Germans through the gate, he said (in English only) that the plane FROM Madrid that was to become our flight to Spain had run out of fuel and had to land in Boston. Therefore it would be at least two hours late arriving in New York, and it was unclear when we would be taking off. He then walked away and left a group of rather confused people at Gate 32.

A few minutes later the "Madrid" sign at our gate disappeared and a sign for "Athens" was put up. Needless to say, after the terrorism in Greece earlier this year, Athens was the last place any of us wanted to go. **[These days so many Americans think terrorism in the world began in 2001; but, of course, it was nothing new—even in our own country—when the World Trade Center was bombed.]** We all got more and more confused.

The word started spreading among the Spaniards that the plane to Madrid had been changed to another gate. Overhearing the conversation in Spanish, I went over to a TV and noticed that indeed the flight was suddenly taking off "ON TIME" at Gate 11. Needless to say, neither I nor anyone else had the slightest idea where Gate 11 was.

After about fifteen minutes of waiting in this confusion, a woman came on the loudspeaker confirming that there had been a gate change. Apparently they had swapped gates for the planes to Athens and Madrid. (Presumably there weren't enough people to warrant a 747 to Athens, so we got the 747 that was originally scheduled for that flight.) The mob of people that had assembled at our gate started moving, and I simply joined the mob.

It turned out that to get to Gate 11 we had to walk out of our concourse, down a long tunnel, past the security check for our concourse, through the main TWA reception area, through another security check (where my Soviet watch set off the metal detector), down another long tunnel, and to the very end of another concourse. There was still a sign for "Athens" at this gate, and while we were there several Athens passengers—including the flight crew for Athens—tried to board. In short, the confusion here was significantly greater than at the other gate.

I managed to push my way into the departure lounge. There was no place to sit, but I found a spot to lean against a pillar. While there I happened to notice that all the passengers in the general vicinity had some sort of a stamp on their boarding passes. I had been told in Chicago that since I already had my boarding pass, I didn't need to check in again for the flight for Madrid. Sadly, I believed what they had said in Chicago.

It turns out that at TWA in New York they deal with tickets differently than at other airports or on other airlines. On most flights you present your flight coupon (your ticket) to a flight attendant as you enter the tunnel from the gate to your plane. The only purpose of a boarding pass is to indicate which seat you will be sitting in. Unfortunately at TWA in New York things work differently. Here you need to go up to a desk at the gate and present your flight coupon and boarding pass to the person there. That person then takes the coupon and stamps and initials your boarding pass. Only this stamped boarding pass works to board the plane at TWA in New York; a ticket won't do the job.

All this was rapidly becoming very clear to me as I noticed that EVERY other passenger in the lounge had a stamped boarding pass. I pushed my way to the back side of the desk where I heard the man there shouting out that everyone needed a stamp. From there I proceeded to the back of a very long line and stared at the clock for forty-five minutes as the line crept forward. (By the way, I wanted to buy travelers cheques from the airport machine, but in the confusion, I never got a chance.)

[It seems a bit quaint to even think about boarding passes these days, since virtually no airline has used them for a decade. E-tickets—and the computer age in general—really have simplified the airport experience.]

Needless to say the TV that said we were to take off on time had lied. By the time everyone had gotten those silly little stamps and had crowded into a tiny lounge it was an hour after the scheduled departure time. By the time we were in the air, it was 8:00pm, an hour and forty-five minutes after we were supposed to leave. (I guess it's still better than it would have been if we had waited for the original plane, though.)

The plane was much less crowded than the one to New York or the one we had flown to Ireland on. I was sitting in an aisle seat in the center section. There was a Spanish girl sitting in the other aisle seat, but no one in the center two seats and no one in the row in front of us. Rather oddly there were several women with bags saying "Globus Gateway" (the tour company that operated the tour I was on part of the time in Spain) sitting at the side of the plane, crowded three to a row. I don't know if I was in the blocked seating for the tour or not, but I'm glad I wasn't jammed in that close.

The flight to Spain was quite comfortable, and really much more enjoyable than the Aer Lingus flights Paul and I were on earlier. Dinner was "lasagne verdi", or lasagne made with green spinach noodles--strange, but really rather good. I was able to get quite a bit of rest on the flight, and the Spanish girl put up the arm rests and laid down across the other three seats in the middle section, sleeping VERY soundly. I can't say I slept as well as she did, but I was much more awake on landing in Madrid than I was by the time Paul and I finally made it to Moscow.

SUNDAY, 21 JUNE == MADRID

Shortly before landing we were served what TWA called a "breakfast snack". That amounted to one very small tart, juice, and coffee. That was rather unsatisfying, but not atypical of the breakfasts that were to come.

We landed in Madrid on time. (I hate to think how fast we must have flown to make up an hour and forty minutes) at 7:30 Sunday morning, half past midnight in the Midwest. We filed off the plane and then waited and waited and waited at Spanish immigration. The Spaniards are neither as thorough nor as inefficient as the Soviets when it comes to customs, but it still takes forever for a 747 to go through—especially early Sunday morning. There is space for twenty officers to handle immigration at Madrid's Barajas airport. Out of all that space there were only two officers available to handle our flight. Fortunately they were routinely stamping passports, and the line moved fairly quickly. Unfortunately I had been in the back cabin of the plane, so I was almost the last person in line.

While waiting I met two rather interesting people. They were Americans, a man from Florida and a woman from Boston, who were executives working for American companies with offices in Spain. The woman explained that she wasn't sure how much longer she would be "stationed" in Madrid. Her company (General Electric) was in the process of training Spaniards to handle the managerial positions for the Spanish division. As they got sufficient Spaniards to do the work, they were sending the "expatriates" (her word) home. Both of the people agreed that they really enjoyed living in Spain, but the woman (who was pregnant) said she really didn't want to raise a child there.

Eventually a young military man stamped my passport for the first of many times (unlike Russia, Spain is BIG on stamping passports), and I was officially in Spain. On leaving the immigration kiosk I saw a middle-aged woman in a caftan waving a "Globe Gateway" sign and went over to join the group.

For those who read the Russia letter, I should point out that Barajas (bah-RAH-hahs) Airport is almost the opposite of Sheremetievo in Moscow. While Sheremetievo was dark and gloomy, Barajas is bright and friendly. While the luggage took (almost literally) forever to show up in Moscow, it was ready when we got through immigration in Madrid. While military officers run customs at both airports, the Spanish Guardia is friendly and talkative, while the Soviet police were purposely cold and frightening. There was one thing we would never have seen in Moscow, too—above the luggage claim area were ads for McDonalds (nine locations in Madrid). **[Actually, just a couple years after I wrote this, McDonalds opened in Moscow. At the time Madrid and Barcelona were the only places with McD's locations in Spain; today they're in all the provincial cities and those nine Madrid locations have multiplied to closer to a hundred.]**

For some reason I still haven't figured out, while we went through immigration, our group did not have to deal with customs in any way. Porters hauled our luggage through the customs gates, and we walked behind without anyone saying a word. (If only Moscow could have been so simple.) **[I've since had similar experiences in other countries. Customs often seems a sort of lottery, where only those who "win" are subjected to a real search.]**

The guide, Dienne (a Dutch woman who lives on the Costa del Sol in southern Spain) told us the bus would leave in twenty minutes. I took advantage of this time to rush to the airport bank (which surprised me in being open so early Sunday morning) and changing money. The exchange rate was around 165 pesetas to the dollar, minus a 525 peseta minimum commission. I was glad to be able to change money so soon, and especially not to have to deal with the hotel, which was giving an exchange rate of 150 pesetas to the dollar (again minus commission).

Spanish money is rather interesting. The banknotes come in denominations of 200 (orange), 500 (blue), 1000 (green), 2000 (red), and 5000 (purple) pesetas. There is also a brown Pt.100 note, but it is not printed these days. Like most European currency, the bills get larger in physical size as they grow in value. For this reason the 2000 and 5000 peseta notes are far too large to fit in an American wallet. (Paul and Margaret tell me that the "new" Spanish money is MUCH smaller than the "old" Spanish money that was in use when they were in Spain. Apparently in those days the Pt.1000 note was enormous. I guess as the value of the currency went down, its size went down too.)

There are four coins that are in common use in Spain. The "duro", worth five pesetas, looks like an American nickel but is used like an American penny. There are also silver-colored coins worth Pt.25 and Pt.50. The basis of all currency in Spain these days, though, is the Pt.100 coin, a gold-colored coin about the size of a quarter with fleurs de lis around the side. I heard some people calling these "reyes" (kings), presumably because it is the only coin available exclusively with a picture of King Juan Carlos on the front. All the other coins may have either the king or the former dictator Francisco Franco.

Interestingly, the coins Spain minted in 1982 are entirely different from those minted in every other year. That year Spain hosted the World Cup soccer finals, and there is an entire series of coins featuring soccer balls on their backs honoring that event. It seemed to me like something the Soviet Union would have done.

When I got on the bus our guide was explaining that she felt Spain was an extremely unsafe country, and she warned people to be very careful with purses, cameras, and the like. I had read earlier that there had been a lot of pickpocketings and purse snatchings in Spain recently, but this guide made it sound like the least safe place on earth. It wasn't exactly the happiest welcome to Spain I might have had.

[It's since been documented that Spain in the '80s was in fact one of the least safe places on earth, as far as petty crime was concerned. Skyrocketing crime was partially related to the rapid change in the economy and partially due to a flood of (often unwelcome) immigration from north Africa and eastern Europe. Spain still has one of the highest crime rates in Europe, with pickpockets and purse snatchers nearly as common in modern Madrid as they were in Dickensian London. Violent crime is rare, though, and if normal precautions are taken, the petty crime is also fairly easily avoided.]

It was clear from the beginning that this tour was going to be VERY different from the Soviet tour. First of all, unlike in Russia, we had a full bus—forty-three people on board, compared to under twenty in Russia. (While that did make getting on and off the bus a lengthy process, it really wasn't too bad.) The mixture of people was also quite different. In Russia we had only teachers and their families, which meant the group was heavy on younger people and those with a lot of education. Globus-Gateway attracts your standard tourist, which means the Spain group was heavy on middle-aged, blue collar couples and on widows. There was also a large number of Mexican Americans and Cuban Americans, and five French Canadians. I was the only person on the tour who was not from a large city, and one of very few who wasn't from one coast or the other. I didn't like this group of people at first, but it turned out to be an interesting and close-knit group. than the teachers on the Soviet tour.

By luck more than anything else I became the only passenger on the bus to sit alone. There were others traveling alone on the tour, but they ended up sitting together. Rather than feeling in any way lonely because of this, I was very pleased to have twice as much space as anyone else on the bus. In front of me was a very pleasant Mexican American couple, and behind me were two charming old ladies who had never before in their lives left "the city" (New York). (Picture "Cagney and Lacey" thirty years later, and you've pictured these ladies.)

It was about a twenty minute ride from the airport to our hotel, mostly on freeways which were almost empty on Sunday morning. Our driver, a Portuguese man named Constantino, seemed quite pleasant. The hotel was called the Residencia Agumar ("residencia" means you can't have any meal except breakfast there), a rather ugly twelve-floor cement block building in a residential neighborhood in Madrid's southeast quadrant. It was still mid-morning, and our rooms would not be available until at least noon, so the guide decided to call a meeting of those in the group. The meeting was unimportant, but I sat next to and got to know a very interesting Cuban-American family.

The Cubans decided that, since we couldn't go to our rooms, we might as well go out exploring. On Sunday morning Madrid is home to the "Rastro", a large open-air market where virtually everything is for sale. They asked if I would like to join them on a trip to the Rastro.

Newcomers in Madrid invariably travel by taxi, as Madrid has some of the cheapest taxis on earth. However there were four Cubans in this family (grandma, mom, girl, and boy), and with a driver and me that made six people that needed to fit into a taxi. Spain's taxis tend to be nice new cars, but they are (like all cars in Europe) sub-compacts. Somehow we did manage to squeeze all of us into a car significantly smaller than my Omni, and fortunately the ride was a short one (total cost = Pt.200, or about 25 cents per person).

The Rastro was an interesting, and quite educational, experience. Most interesting, but also rather embarrassing, was what was most prominently displayed among the wares for sale. In what is probably the most Catholic country on earth, virtually everyone appeared to be selling contraceptives. I can't picture the Pope being particularly happy with all the men who were very openly buying these forbidden wares on Sunday morning. I tried to overlook the massive displays, and the Cuban mother later told me she was thankful her ten-year-old son hadn't asked what they were.



The Rastro flea market – Embajadores district, Madrid

Virtually everything else is for sale in the Rastro, too. Furniture, food, toys, religious artifacts, clothes, paintings, motorcycles, computers, tacky souvenirs, records, old car engines, jewelry, books and magazines, and cosmetics—they're all available. (Supposedly there are also some illegal things for sale in the Rastro, but we never encountered them.) Most of the items were used, but the food, cosmetics, toys, etc. are new. Many antiques are found among the furniture and artwork. This is the only place in Madrid where bargaining is common, and it goes on fiercely. It's really rather amusing to watch the Spaniards try to get the best deal in a place like this.

We wandered through the Rastro for about two hours. The Cubans decided to return to the hotel, but this time the taxi driver would not allow five passengers in his car. Not being part of the family, I volunteered to return on my own.

Rather oddly I was still not particularly tired, and I decided that rather than return to the hotel right away I would explore a bit more on my own. I took a taxi to the Museo del Prado, Spain's finest art museum. Both Madrid's Prado and the Hermitage in Leningrad are described as among the greatest museums in the world. Having seen both this summer, I can easily say the Prado ranks ahead of

the Hermitage. Both are huge, and both have excellent collections housed in architecturally significant buildings. The Prado, though, takes care of its collection. It keeps the paintings out of natural light, air conditions the building, and has much tighter security. I can well imagine people will still be enjoying the Prado long after the Hermitage's collection has deteriorated to nothing.

[It's really strange looking back on things that the tour itself didn't go to the Prado. About all we did in Madrid was drive past things, though. There wasn't much that attempted to be educational or cultural.]

The Prado is an immense and most enjoyable museum; no amount of time would be enough to spend there. I spent about three hours and was only able to hurry through the main halls. The museum is quite well organized, so you can see the important works quite easily. There really is very little in the Prado that is not important, though—the Spanish royal family knew what it was buying.

After walking through the museum I started walking around the neighborhood around the Prado. I really had no idea where I was walking (I had left my map of Madrid with my luggage at the hotel), but there are taxis everywhere in Madrid and I figured I could always find one to get home.

The Museo del Prado faces on the Paseo del Prado ("Prado" means "pasture"), a long and extremely wide boulevard with a beautiful park running down the center its entire length. I rested in the park a while and then crossed the street toward downtown Madrid.

Just a couple of blocks west of the museum is the "Cortes", a very imposing building that is as close as anything comes to being the capitol of Spain. The building looks like a collegiate library or auditorium (a small, really very dumpy building with a Southern-style pillared porch and little cement lions at the side), but it is the meeting place of the Spanish parliament. It was here that a few years ago the police and military attempted a coup and held the parliament at gunpoint on the floor. Fortunately, the king was able to restore order quickly.

The Cortes is on a narrow old street which was most pleasant to stroll along. I was happily surprised when this little street emptied out at the Puerta del Sol, Spain's most famous square. Historically the Puerta del Sol (Gate of the Sun) has been considered the center of Madrid, and it is almost exactly at the geographic center of Spain. The huge oval-shaped business park is "kilometer zero", where every highway in the country is considered to start.

The Puerta del Sol really is unlike anything in America. It's like a combination of Chicago's Michigan Avenue and the town square in my hometown of Mount Pleasant, Iowa. Looking at the buildings I would never have guessed I was in a city of four million people. There are no skyscrapers here—just brick buildings from the 1800s, from three to ten floors tall. At street level there are mostly small shops, and on the upper floors there are offices and apartments. The buildings could fit very easily into Burlington or Iowa City, and much of Cedar Rapids would dwarf them. From the mass of people here though, even on a Sunday, it is clear this isn't Burlington or Cedar Rapids; I got the feeling half of Madrid was window shopping this afternoon.

[I've since found that the older part of many cities looks a lot like central Madrid. Even much of New York is fairly similar, and there are places even in very modern cities like Chicago and Los Angeles that look like the Puerta del Sol. In 1985 I hadn't been to any of those places yet, though. I'd never been south of the river in Chicago, and at the time New York was all about skyscrapers to me. Madrid, by comparison, looked very different.]

Having been mostly on my feet since morning without anything to eat, I was getting rather hungry by now. To my surprise the first thing I encountered on the Puerta del Sol was a Wendy's (or rather "Wendy"—they don't have the "apostrophe - s" in Spanish). It was mid-afternoon now, and the place was quite crowded—with Spaniards. Other than the fact that it occupies the first floor and two basements of a downtown building (no all-night drive-through), this Wendy's could be in any American city--the menu featured the same burgers, potatoes, and salads I've eaten in Fort Dodge and Mason City. (In fact, Wendy's imports most of its food; McDonalds and Burger King, which I patronized later, don't.) I had a taco salad, a rather bizarre thing to be eating in Spain—probably the ultimate in American food; as well as a Frosty and a large orange drink. The total bill was Pt.300, MUCH cheaper than it would have been in America.

[Interestingly, Wendy's has gone out of business in Spain. Burger King is still there, as are Pizza Hut, KFC, and several other American chains. McDonalds has pretty much taken over the country, but for some reason, though, Wendy's is no more. The Puerta del Sol location is now a Subway.]

While I didn't eat a lot of full meals at the fast food restaurants, as I got to know Madrid more and more, I found that these places (which are in virtually every neighborhood) were the best spots to have a drink or snack in the city. They are cheap, they are air-conditioned, they have relatively clean toilets, and you can order LARGE soft drinks there. It really floored me, though, that almost every customer at the fast food joints was a Madrileño. I guess I expected to see more people doing as I did, but everyone I saw in the places was Spanish. Interestingly, McDonalds and the like cater to the same people in Spain that they do in America—mostly students and young families. (There is one allowance to the local culture, though. Every fast food outlet in Spain serves beer.)

[That previous paragraph was written by the Spanish teacher in me, attempting to justify that I hadn't eaten all my meals in sidewalk cafes. Decades later, I really don't feel the need to apologize for eating at Wendy's or McDonald's. I grew up with fast food and I like fast food, and I really don't see much problem with eating it overseas. A lot of what they served in those quaint little cafes looked pretty disgusting to me. Fast food, on the other hand, was familiar, satisfying, and cheap. There's a reason why so many locals ate there and a reason why the global chains have continued to grow.]

Since I mentioned the toilets, let me elaborate just a bit. Public restrooms are scarce in Spain; the only ones I know of outside businesses are underneath the Puerta del Sol. What restrooms do exist are usually about the quality of the bathrooms in bus depots in America. There is seldom any toilet paper, and if there is, it is either waxed paper or newsprint. Old ladies monitor most bathrooms. I'm still not entirely sure why they are there; they don't seem to clean or ensure any degree of safety. Their main purpose seems to be collecting tips. Perhaps now you can see why the nice facilities at McDonalds or Wendy's appealed to me.

After this "lunch" (at 4pm--not as absurd a time to have lunch in Spain as it sounds), I taxied back to the hotel. I was really very tired by this time, and I went quickly to my room and had a long nap.

The "siesta" refreshed me, and around eight o'clock I was ready to go out exploring again. One of Spain's great traditions is the "paseo" (or evening stroll), and I made an incredibly long paseo this evening.

I started out walking east from the motel, along Paseo Reina Cristina, a six-lane street that carries the highway to Valencia. This street did not seem particularly interesting, so I turned south-eastward into a residential neighborhood. Here it seemed that virtually everyone in the neighborhood was outdoors. Some were out walking children; others were walking dogs; others just stood around talking to each other. I exchanged greetings with everyone I passed, and everyone was very friendly.

I found out later that this neighborhood was really quite typical of Madrid **[and all of Spain, really]**. It was made up almost entirely of red brick buildings about eight floors tall. The street-level floor of every building always housed some sort of business--generally small shops, a restaurant, or a bank. The upper floors are apartments (called "pesos", or floors). The street-level floor with business is generally called "planta baja" or "lower floor". If the business happens to occupy two floors, the second floor is usually given a name like "entreplanta" or "mezanino" to indicate that it has business on it. The "first floor" in a Spanish building is the first floor of apartments--usually what we would call either the second or third floor.

One of the first impressions anyone would have in Spain is that the country has to have more banks than anywhere else on earth **[though Canada would come close, and we're getting more and more here in the States]**. There are about twenty major banks in Spain, and each of them has a branch in every neighborhood in Madrid (and in every town in Spain). It really is not uncommon to see two banks per block in parts of Madrid—even on relatively minor streets.

Most banks in Spain (as in Canada) are named after the places where their home offices are. The most important banks are invariably named after cities in the Basque region of northern Spain (Bilbao, Vizcaya, Navarre). It is, of course, the Basques who are responsible for most of the terrorism in Spain these days, but these people have also traditionally been the financial wizards of the country.

After walking a while longer I happened upon Plaza del Conde de Casal, which happened to be the address of the hotel I was to stay in after I left the tour. I was pleased to find where the hotel was, and I was surprised to find that it was relatively close to the other place (probably fifteen blocks). This neighborhood was much more suburban **[true, though in the 21st Century it's considered very central]**. The apartments were all fairly new, and they tended to be ten to fifteen floors tall. Still, the first floor of every building was reserved for shops.

I walked back to the original hotel and then decided to set out in the opposite direction—a direction that proved even more interesting. Just a block west of the Hotel Agumar is the Madrid headquarters for the "Guardia Civil" (Civil Guard), Spain's national police force. It is best described as a huge fortress, yet it blends in well with the apartments that surround it. It is double-fenced, and both inside the gates and outside on the sidewalk it is guarded by young men in crash helmets carrying machine guns. The main building of the complex is a grand structure, five floors of red brick with a huge pillared porch and massive gold-colored doors. Above the porch in immense gold letters is the inscription "TODO POR LA PATRIA" (Everything for the Fatherland). Our guide told us the Guardia's power had been severely reduced since they tried the coup, but the headquarters show how powerful the organization was and the machine guns show there is obviously still some power there.

Across from the Guardia's headquarters is a most interesting gas station. An exit ramp has been built off Paseo Reina Cristina for cars to drive into the gas station, fill up quickly, and get back onto the busy street. The station itself is the largest I saw in Spain--eight pumps. Gas prices were around Pt.100 per liter, a little less than \$2.50/gallon **[which at the time would have been quite pricey; today the same price comes across as cheap]**. Most people buy either "normal" or "super" gas (self-explanatory), but "sin plomo" (unleaded) is now available in some places for imported (i.e.: American) cars.

Just down from the gas station is Atocha Station, Madrid's oldest railroad station. It's basically an old barn, but surprisingly attractive and elegant, at least from the outside. I turned northward at Atocha Station onto the six-lane Avenida Alfonso XII (named after King Juan Carlos' great-grandfather). To my right was the Retiro, Madrid's largest and most famous park. The trees of the Retiro were pleasant to look at, but the immediate view at the edge of the park was nothing much. Spaniards are horrible at littering **[something that seems to have gotten better, likely as Europe as a whole has gotten "greener"]**, and all along the fence at the west edge of the Retiro there is a wall of cans, bottles, and papers. Under the Franco dictatorship people were employed to pick up the litter, but the socialists in power today can't seem to find the money for such make-work programs.

I kept walking northward about a mile to the Plaza de la Independencia (I don't know who Spain considers itself independent of), home of what I later learned is one of Madrid's most famous monuments, the 200-year-old gate called the Puerta de Acala. The gate is a huge stone structure with three arches, in the middle of a traffic circle.



Nuestra Señora de las Comunicaciones – the main post office

"wedding cake" architecture. There are countless entrances, each one leading to a different department which takes care of some postal activity. It was sunset (about 10pm) as I passed the structure, and it was highlighted by floodlights against the darkening sky. The building is a bit overwhelming at first, but in general I was quite impressed. I've certainly seen nothing like it anywhere else.

I turned northwestward here and walked down the Gran Vía, the "Broadway" (literal translation) of Madrid. Franco called this eight-lane street "Avenida Jose Antonio", after what in Russia they would call a "revolutionary hero". Apparently the Madrilenos never really called it that, though, and two years ago the street officially went back to its original name. Some guidebooks write about ugly and uninteresting buildings along the Gran Vía, but I found it to be a lovely street. Virtually all its buildings date to the 1920s and '30s, the same era as New York's great skyscrapers. The architecture is similar to those, too, but on a much smaller scale. The buildings tend to be of grey brown/grey stone with interesting towers and spires and very ornate entrances. Madrid's most fashionable clothing, book, and jewelry stores are located on Gran Vía, as are many airline offices, cinemas, VERY expensive restaurants, and even a McDonalds (complete with Oriental rugs, velvet chairs, stained glass windows, art prints in the restroom, and—rather oddly—a McDonaldland on the "entrepanta"). **[Today, of course, every downtown McDonalds looks like this. There weren't a lot of urban McDonalds in 1985, though, and the one on Gran Vía was definitely nicer than any I'd been to before.]**

I hadn't realized it, but it really was dinner time; Madrileños usually eat dinner between 9:30 and 11pm. McDonalds was packed, mostly with families with young children. Invariably the children would be drinking soft drinks, Mom would have a shake, and Dad would have a beer. I had a fish sandwich and a soft drink and, since it was really getting late, decided to head back quickly.

All together my paseo was over seven miles. I've walked that distance before (as one time some of you know when I walked the length of Waterloo), but always before it had been with some sense of planning. This kept building and getting longer and longer. Needless to say, I had some blisters on my feet in the morning. **[This was definitely the first of my marathon vacation strolls. I've since made much longer urban hikes in much less important places. ... And it's pretty rare for me to get blisters these days.]**

MONDAY, 22 JULY == MADRID

We got up fairly early this morning, only to be greeted by a "continental breakfast"—a meal I find it difficult to believe that anyone on any continent really consumes. It consisted of three VERY hard rolls **[mostly "bolillos"—bo-LEE-yose—which are like hockey pucks even when they are fresh]**, including a croissant that was literally unbreakable. Each person had a tiny packet of unsalted butter and a huge crock of orange marmalade to put on the rolls. Other than that there was only one cup of "cafe con leche", strong coffee mixed half and half with weak milk. The breakfast could, of course, be supplemented with such things as juice or water or more recently baked rolls, but such extras were at ridiculous extra cost (Pt.250 for a glass of juice). Perhaps I was spoiled by the huge breakfasts in Russia. Even if the eggs and sausage weren't very edible, there was a substantial amount of food most days. This breakfast would have been infinitely better if only the rolls had been fresh; as it was, it was simply a rip-off for tourists. (REAL Spaniards tend not to eat big breakfasts, but they wouldn't touch that continental crud. Coffee is always a vital part of the Spanish breakfast, as are stale doughnuts **[spelled "donuts" and pronounced DOE-noots]** and/or "churros"—deep-fried strings of dough. **[While the churros are traditional, disgusting cake doughnuts really are the standard Spanish breakfast.]**

Today was the first real day of the group tour, and it featured a city tour of Madrid. Our escort was an old lady on crutches who Dienne told us was the head of Madrid's "Turismo" office. (Turismo is Spain's answer to the USSR's Intourist—the government travel

I turned left here onto Calle del Alcala, an eight-lane, tree-lined street that carries the highway to Zaragoza and Barcelona. I was hungry again and saw a sign to the Puerta del Sol. I figured I could always go back and eat at that Wendy's again. What I didn't realize was that the Puerta del Sol was at least another mile away (I had already walked over four miles this evening). There were little bars everywhere, but I was not up to ordering that kind of a meal yet.

A few blocks west of the Alcala Gate is another of Madrid's famous squares, the Plaza de Cibeles. At this plaza the city's two most important streets, Alcala and Gran Vía, come together. The plaza is an enormous traffic circle with a fountain in the middle. The main attraction of it, though, is Madrid's main post office. That post office lets you know you're not in small-town Iowa. Most Madrilenos call it the "Palacio de Comunicaciones" or "Nuestra Señora de las Comunicaciones", implying that it looks like a palace or a cathedral. Actually it would put a lot of palaces and cathedrals to shame. To say the place is grandiose is a vast understatement. It is a monstrous collection of spires and pillars, all carved in limestone and far taller than the eight-floor office buildings around it. It was described by our guide as

bureau with outlets in every city.) She was pleasant and intelligent, but she rather strangely seemed to proudly point out every underground parking garage in Madrid—it seems as if virtually every traffic circle in the city has an immense parking area under it. **[I think these were all brand new at the time, basically the first step in Spain's transition to a modern country.]**

Driving around it became clear there was a reason for all that parking. Madrid, like Moscow, is a city full of grand boulevards and ornamental traffic circles ("plazas"), and on Monday morning there was bumper-to-bumper traffic on every major street as we drove around. The majority of the cars were relatively new, and virtually all of them were sub-compacts. The largest number of cars are Seats (say-AHTZ), a Spanish-made car originally made by Fiat (the company is now independent) and identical to the Soviet "Lada". There are also a sizable number of hatchbacks, including the Ford Escort—apparently one of Spain's most popular cars. In addition to the cars there is a huge number of motorcycles and mopeds, both licensed as "ciclomotores" in Spain. These are definitely a major form of transportation in Spain, especially among the young. Adding to all the traffic are the countless buses and taxis. It really is quite a mess, but somehow it does seem to move. (On a positive note, though—it is illegal to use a horn in Madrid, a law that most everyone seems to obey, keeping the noise level down. Spaniards couldn't contain themselves entirely, though, and they tend to make an interesting variety of crude gestures instead.)

The city tour included many residential neighborhoods—all of which, rich and poor, were made up of five to ten-floor apartment buildings with businesses at ground level. We also saw several beautiful parks and traffic circles, a variety of rather ugly government buildings, and the stadium where Spain hosted the 1982 World Cup Soccer Finals (somehow hosting an event three years ago doesn't strike me as particularly important—Spain didn't win). We drove up Calle Serrano (home of many museums, stores, and foreign embassies), Paseo de la Castellana (home of the Spanish movie and recording industries), through the Colonia Salamanca (traditionally Madrid's most elegant neighborhood—now home of the city's Saudi community, part of what our guide called "the second Moorish invasion"), and eastward to Ventas Bullring (a huge red brick and tile stadium, smaller but more impressive than the soccer stadium).

The tour also included a visit to Madrid's Royal Palace (Palacio Real), something our guide told us was a big deal since the king has official receptions there on Mondays when he is in town. (It's not as big a deal as it sounds—the king was vacationing in Mallorca for three months.) The strangest thing about this huge and incredibly ornamental building is that it is still in use. While Juan Carlos doesn't live there, he does hold official receptions in it. Moreover many distinguished guests (including, we were told, the Reagans) stay here when they visit Spain. I really can't picture this palace being a particularly comfortable place to spend the night—it's barnlike and sparsely furnished, and while the decor is intricate, the colors tend to fight. I would love to see where the king REALLY lives—I'd imagine a somewhat more modest place. **[... And I'd be wrong. He is, of course, royalty, and from pictures I've seen the residential palace west of Madrid appears every bit as pretentious as this place.]**

After seeing the Royal Palace, we stopped at an elegant (i.e.: expensive) gift shop. The place obviously caters to group tours. As we entered a girl passed out yellow cards giving the current exchange rate for U.S. dollars. As we left another group entered, and the girl passed our blue cards to them, giving the exchange rate for French francs.

On the way back to the hotel, the bus stopped at the Puerta del Sol so that those of us who wanted to stay downtown could do so. I got off and spent the afternoon on my own.

I had broken down and purchased a Spanish sword at the expensive gift shop, and earlier I had paid for some travel books, postcards, taxi rides, and food. My first priority on my own, then, was to find a bank and change some more money. Remember the remark I made earlier about how there are banks everywhere in Madrid. By some unfortunate coincidence, that's true everywhere EXCEPT the Puerta del Sol (basically it's true for RESIDENTIAL neighborhoods, not downtown). I wandered around for quite some time until I finally saw a branch of the Banco Hispano-Americano. (I figured a bank with Spain and America in the name ought to be able to handle my exchange.)

Spanish banks handle transactions in a rather interesting manner. Unlike North American banks, where any teller can handle most transactions, the banks in Spain are more departmentalized. A Spaniard who wishes to make a savings withdrawal, for instance, must first fill out a form, then take it to a special "savings" (ahorros) desk to be approved, then take the approved form to the cashier (the "caja") to get his money. A similar process, involving different special desks, applies to any transaction. For exchanges I had to go to the back of the bank, where a man took my passport, filled out a very long form including my entire life story (as told by the passport), carefully examined my travelers' cheques, and then took all these things to another person for approval. After the form had been approved, he gave me a copy of the form he had filled out to take to the cashier. As I was waiting in line at the cashier's window, the exchange man personally handed to the cashier my travelers' cheques and the other copies of the form he had filled out. The cashier stamped every document and then counted my money to me. The whole process took about half an hour. From the experience I can see why many of the younger Madrileños prefer to use the automatic tellers that are found outside virtually every bank branch.

What I most wanted to see on my own was the Plaza Mayor, Madrid's ancient main square, just west of the Puerta del Sol. I never found the Plaza Mayor, but the afternoon was far from wasted. While searching for the Plaza Mayor I ran across "Old Madrid", a lovely collection of old stone apartments (3-4 stories) separated by one-lane streets in no particular pattern. The neighborhood really isn't ancient or even particularly historic, not in the way many Spanish cities are. It is, however, Madrid's oldest section, and it is quite interesting. The street signs in this neighborhood (tacked on the side of buildings, as all over Spain) show pictures of the things the streets are named after, in ceramic tile. For example, Calle de Segovia (the only street in the area that could be called major) shows a picture of the aqueduct for which the city of Segovia is famous. According to the guidebooks the pictures date to the early days of Madrid when most of the population was illiterate. Today most people can read, of course, but the ceramic signs add a lovely touch to the old neighborhood.

I intended to simply wander around Old Madrid for a while, but somehow I found myself far west of that area. I was south of the Campo del Moro, again quite near the Royal Palace, but next to an obviously very poor residential area. Out of curiosity I chose a random side street and wandered in.

The neighborhood, probably the poorest I saw in Madrid, reminded me a lot of Moscow. It was probably built in the 1960s, and (like Moscow) it had not been well cared for. As in Moscow, the neighborhood was all apartments—no playgrounds, churches, etc. It appeared most of the men here work in a nearby industrial park; most of the women appeared to be homemakers. A lot of people, though, seemed to be unemployed. There were quite a few beggars, and many people (especially the youth and the very old) seemed to just wander around with nothing to do. Perhaps because of this there were a lot of communist posters around demanding jobs, calling for general strikes among those who were employed, and criticizing the current government. (The criticism, of course, was a major difference from Moscow--the current government, while socialist, has very little time for the Soviet Union.)

The businesses on the ground floor of the buildings in this neighborhood were different from what I had seen in other areas, too. There were still a lot of banks, but almost none of the little bars and restaurants I had seen elsewhere. The neighborhood seemed to have more than its share of small self-service food stores (locally called supermarkets) and pharmacies, though.



Posters on a Madrid building advertising the World Youth Rally in Moscow



Sidewalk ice cream vendor in Madrid

All through the area laundry hung from lines stretched between the front windows of the apartments. It's fairly typical to hang out laundry all over Europe, but in most of Madrid it hangs above the courtyards to the back of the apartments. In this neighborhood there were no such courtyards to hide it. Interesting, too, the roof of every building was a sea of TV antennas.

I felt rather out of place wandering through this neighborhood, especially carrying around the sword I had bought and looking so obviously like a tourist in what was so obviously not a touristed part of town. Everyone was very friendly (and even more talkative than in other areas), but I did get a number of strange looks. The siesta period had come, and after seeing what the area was like, I retraced my steps and went back into Old Madrid.

Half by accident and half on purpose I got lost again while wandering around the old quarter. This time I found myself in the "Embajadores" region, an area one guidebook translates as "the low neighborhoods". This area, south of downtown and in the general vicinity of the Rastro, is often described as Madrid's most "typical" neighborhood. That English word is rather a misnomer--the neighborhood is about as ATYPICAL of how most Madrileños live as you can get. "Typical" is a bad translation of the Spanish "típico", a word intended to show that Embajadores is the only neighborhood where people still live what could be described as a "traditional" Madrid lifestyle. Like the old quarter, there are mostly narrow streets wandering without pattern. The buildings here, though, probably date only to the 1800s--most being rather

uninspired cement block structures. The area is not wealthy, but it seemed significantly better off than the area I had left (and there wasn't a single communist poster). This was the only part of Madrid where I saw a significant number of "viudas" (widows) in traditional costume. (It's traditional for Spanish widows never to re-marry and to wear only black dresses—a tradition that seems largely optional in Madrid.) There were also a number of withered old men who would best be described by words like "quaint".

The businesses here were again very different from in other neighborhoods. For example, NOTHING was self-service. There were separate shops selling different types of food—fish, meat, poultry, fruit, vegetables, bread, beverages, and even baby food were in separate stores. In the doorway of each shop (even during siesta) men were shouting out what they had for sale ("Hay lechuga" = roughly "We've got lettuce here"). On the sidewalks musicians, artists, shoe shiners, lottery ticket vendors, and sellers of ice cream, newspapers, and candy all compete for people's small change. There aren't any beggars here, but EVERYONE seems to have something to sell. There were no real restaurants, but there seemed to be more bars than people in this neighborhood. Spanish bars, it should be said, are really more like American cafes than our bars. People can and do order drinks, but it's quite possible and common to order full meals, and the bars are THE place to have a long, leisurely lunch. They are not particularly cheap by Spanish standards (Pt. 500 is usually the cheapest full lunch), but paying for your meal allows you to sit and relax—literally for hours.

I got truly lost in this neighborhood and simply wandered around without really knowing where I was going. (All this time, of course, I was carrying around the sword and a bag full of travel books.) I figured if I never got anywhere I could always take a taxi back to the hotel. It was around 5pm (five hours after I had left the group and two hours after I had started wandering around Embajadores) when I recognized a familiar landmark—Atocha Railroad Station, only a few blocks from my hotel.

Seeing where I was, I suddenly was much less tired than I had been. I had a LATE (even by Spanish standards) sandwich lunch at a little bar (Pt. 300) and went into another Wendy's to have a LARGE soft drink and enjoy the air conditioning. Then I decided to walk around some more, this time on a more planned route. I walked down the Paseo del Prado, the broad boulevard in front of the Prado I had seen the day before. I again turned at the Prado, walked west past the Cortes, and back to the Puerta del Sol (rather a long way around).

I shouldn't have done so, but while downtown I looked at a public thermometer. Not believing it, I looked at two others. The temperatures were different, but suffice to say it was in the upper 40s Celsius, well above 110 degrees Fahrenheit. I had felt hot, but suddenly I felt much hotter. (In fairness to Madrid, the place was having a severe heat wave; it's usually in the 90s in Madrid in summer.) To escape the heat I decided to do some shopping (or at least browsing) in the air-conditioned shops downtown.

The first place I went was to the flagship store of "El Corte Ingles" (it means either "the English court" or "the English cut"—don't ask me why), Spain's leading department store. Unlike GUM and the other Soviet stores, El Corte Ingles really is a department store—and the downtown one is immense. The building includes Planta Baja, Entreplanta, and more sales floors numbered 1-8, two "Soltanos" (basements), and four levels of underground parking. All of these floors cover about half a city block. For all its space, though, El Corte Ingles really doesn't have any greater selection than a typical K-Mart or Target store in the States (though its quality is more that of Penney's). Shopping at El Corte Ingles is supposedly self service, but there are clerks hovering everywhere. The moment anyone picks up an item, they are instantly there to tell the shopper exactly how wonderful that item is and (mainly) to insure the shopper actually buys it, instead of just looking at it.

I bought a shirt at El Corte Ingles and decided to put it on a charge card. I found out that charging things at a Spanish department store can be a complicated process. First the clerk rang up the purchase at a departmental cash register (again like Penney's—right down to the electronic pens that are supposed to scan the prices, but never work). **[I'd forgotten about that stupid piece of technology. I remember throughout the '80s when stores were constantly updating their scanners. Today, of course, we just take it for granted that anything other than frozen foods will scan easily.]** He then used the cash register receipt to fill out some form (not a charge slip). He pinned that form to the shirt and led me to an obscure corner of the floor where a special desk handled credit card purchases, where he put down the shirt and left. Another clerk then took my credit card, checked one of those books of bad cards, ran some sort of a computer check, and finally filled out a charge slip. (Having charged airplane tickets with the same credit card, I had my doubts about those checks he was making and was relieved when he finally filled out the slip.) Rather than running the slip through one of those credit card machines, after signing the card he punched my card number into a second computer terminal. The charge was apparently instantly recorded (and it showed up on my next bill). Finally he gave me my receipt and sent me to another counter where a woman put the shirt in a bag. The system reminded me of the horror stories people told about shopping in Russia. Luckily I vaguely expected it, having had a similar experience last year while trying to charge something in Quebec. The whole process, rather like the bank, took half an hour.

I also browsed through Madrid's other huge department store, Galerías Preciados. **[Galerías was bought out by El Corte Inglés in the 1990s, and the two flagship stores have merged into an enormous superstore on Puerta del Sol.]** The name comes closest to meaning "expensive galleries" but apparently it's really named after the street where it's located. "Expensive" would be a good name for it though, and I didn't buy anything there. I also browsed through several bookstores.

Spanish stores never close before eight, and many are open until nine or ten. It was after nine when I started heading back to the hotel. Fortunately after sunset the temperature plummeted—down to around 25 degrees Celsius, somewhere in the 70s Fahrenheit. The whole city seemed to be out on paseo as I walked home, and I was again happy to greet everyone I passed.

Perhaps this is a good place to mention Madrid's sidewalks. They are generally very wide, and usually are handicap equipped. Most notable, though, they are ALWAYS paved with grey-red tiles. The tiles come in a variety of patterns, and it's quite common to see different patterns together where repairs have been done. I assume Spain has a thriving ceramic industry—just keeping these sidewalks in repair would keep several factories going.

Strangely two different people came up to me while I was walking back to the hotel to ask for directions. I don't really know why I would look like I knew where I was going more than they did (especially toting around all my purchases), and I had great difficulty understanding what they were asking—I wish I could have been more helpful than I was.

I had no dinner that night, and I got to sleep quickly. I hate to think how far I walked, but it really was a fun (and educational) day.

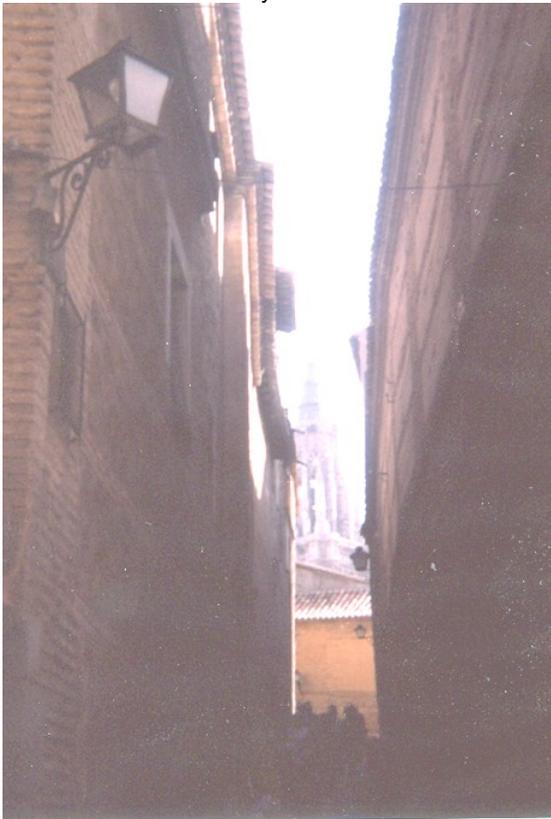
TUESDAY, 23 JULY == TOLEDO, LA MANCHA, SIERA MORENA, & GRANADA

This was the first day of real traveling, and a very long day at that. We got very familiar with the bus and with the Spanish schedule of eating.

I skipped breakfast and slept a little later. We left early though, boarding the bus before 8am. It turned out that this was good, as we beat the other crowds of tourists to Toledo.

The morning drive from Madrid to Toledo was through an area that is not quite suburban and not quite independent city. **[Today it's considered part of Madrid; the metro goes there.]** The whole area between these two cities is developed, and it's not quite continuous city. It reminds me of the furthest ring of suburbs around Chicago. Again all the housing is apartments (brand new red brick buildings here), and it appears furniture manufacture is the biggest industry. **[Today it's electronics and cars.]** The land is very flat, very dry, and it doesn't appear to be farmed much (or really very farmable). In Madrid province the road to Toledo is a busy four to six-lane highway with periodic stop lights. Once you enter Toledo province, though, it suddenly becomes two lanes, still as busy, and a huge traffic jam forms. Toledo is only 70km (about 40 miles) from Madrid, but the bus trip took an hour and a half.

Toledo is really quite a fascinating place. The outskirts of the city look a lot like Madrid (i.e.: modern high rise apartments). No one would visit Toledo for its outskirts, though. The city itself is an ancient one, incorporated as a city in the year 192 A.D. It was the capital of Castilla (and later Spain) from the 50s to the 1600s, and it is still the home of Spain's most important archbishop. During the Moorish occupation, Toledo was a place where Moslems, Jews, and Christians all lived together peacefully. Moreover Toledo's buildings show the same kind of scars from the Spanish Civil War that Kiev's show from World War II. In short Toledo is an EXTREMELY historic city.



LEFT: A narrow "street", too narrow for cars in Toledo, looking toward the cathedral
RIGHT: Traffic jam in an ancient square, Toledo

Our group was led on a guided walking tour of Toledo. We saw a number of monuments, including the city's spectacular cathedral, but it was most interesting to simply walk through the streets. Most are very narrow; the widest are just wide enough for a small car to pass (and it certainly looks strange to see cars buzzing through these ancient streets). Many streets are barely wide enough for two people to walk side by side, and a lot have rather steep stairs. All of the city's streets are made of rock (not gravel or cobblestone, but big rocks cemented together). Toledo's buildings are generally built of a tan-colored stone, and most are two or three

floors high. Unlike in Madrid, many buildings are only residential, with no businesses on the lower floor. There are, of course, businesses, but they tend to be grouped in sections--rather like in America.

The strangest thing about Toledo was that people actually lived there. Virtually all these ancient stone buildings are inhabited by normal people. Everywhere we walked we saw people going about their daily business—from buying the day's bread to doing laundry. About 60,00 people live in the Toledo urban area, and (I found out later) nearly half of them live in the ancient city. **[Today the suburban population has mushroomed, but the central city is still occupied and still seems very historic.]**

It was difficult to believe that so many people could live in a place that had so little business or industry. Here's what our local guide had to say on the matter: The majority of Toledo's people—well over half—are employed in agriculture (they live in the city and work on farms, farms we would see later). The next most important employer is the tourist industry, and third is arts and handicrafts (rather related to the tourist industry, if you ask me). There is virtually no industry in the modern sense in Toledo.



“View of Toledo” similar to El Greco’s

The visit to Toledo concluded with a trip to a scenic overlook in the mountains south of the city. From here it is said the view hasn't changed since the artist El Greco painted his "View and Map of Toledo" over 400 years ago. It has, of course—there are, after all, all the new apartments in the suburbs. In general, though, the old city still looks very ancient, and it is a lovely place to visit.

It was past noon when we left Toledo and headed southward into La Mancha (literally "the spot" or "the blemish"), one of Spain's leading agricultural regions. This is the area where Cervantes wrote of Don Quixote's exploits with the windmills. My first reaction to seeing La Mancha was that it was the perfect example of Spain's national colors—everything there is red and yellow. The only place I have seen before like it is northeast California, the area just west of Reno. Perhaps an lowan should not visit farming areas overseas, but there is little about La Mancha that would make anyone think it could produce food. The only soil in this vast region of central Spain is hard, red clay. The place is semi-desert, with the only significant rain falling in winter. The only native vegetation appears to be a thin yellowish grass that looks very dead. Amazingly, though, they seem to farm the land here very intensively.

The traditional crop of the region is the olive. For those who, like me, didn't really know, olives grow on small grey-green bush-like trees. According to our guide most of the olive trees currently growing in Spain were planted in the 1940s and 50s, replacing centuries-old trees that were destroyed in the civil war. Olives apparently must be carefully cared for soon after they are planted, but they soon develop a very complex root system that takes care of their water needs, even in such a dry climate. Once they are established, the plants need very little attention. The farm workers have the most to do when the olives are ready to be picked, as this is done by a combination of men and machines.

It appears that every crop besides olives needs irrigation in La Mancha. Spain has practiced irrigation since the time of the Moors, and apparently the tiny rivers are able to provide enough water for this. Both Dienke and our local guide in Toledo said Spain hadn't had any of the problems with irrigation (dying rivers and salification of the soil) that California has had. Sunflowers seem to be the second most common crop, followed by wheat. In a few places where there is especially heavy irrigation, they grow such crops as tomatoes and lettuce.

We did not see any livestock during the entire day, except for a couple of horses and burros that some farmers were using for transportation (you see these animals right next to tractors in Spain, both in use). I would guess, though, that the stock would not be outside in such hot weather. Our guide tells us that Spain is especially famous throughout Europe for its beef and chickens.

Everyone on the bus was getting extremely hungry by the time we stopped for lunch at 2:30. We made our stop in the town of Puerto Lapice (meaning of name unclear--perhaps "Port of the Pencils"???), a little village supposedly along the route taken by Don Quixote across Spain. At the inn where we stopped for lunch there is an intriguing little statue of the great [and mythical] knight.

Our lunch stop was an hour, but it took only a few minutes for me to down a ham and cheese "bocadillo" (basically a sandwich served on a very hard hot dog bun). I took advantage of the extra time to explore this fascinating little community. Puerto Lapice is a very small collection of two-story plaster row houses--some whitewashed, others painted in every imaginable color. Some of the buildings have businesses on the first floor with (presumably) the owner's apartment above; others have apartments on both floors. All the buildings seem to have lovely patios either in back or to the side. These are not at all like the hunks of cement Americans call patios. They are really more like courtyards or formal gardens.

Among other "typical" features, Puerto Lapice still has traditional Spanish doorways. That is, in summer there is no door in the doorway. Instead either a blanket or a collection of beads hangs in the entrance of most buildings. This kind of doorway is designed to keep the buildings as cool as possible. It allows air to enter, but keeps the hot rays of the sun out. Between this and the thick walls, these buildings are remarkably cool, even in 110 degree weather.

Today it is only tiny towns like Puerto Lapice where these doors are still in use; in cities of any size no one would be so trusting as to leave an open doorway at night.



Typical dirt street in Puerto Lápice

[This looks remarkably like rural towns I'd see in Peru two decades later.]

Most of the afternoon we drove through La Mancha. At the southern edge of this region (and the southern border of Castilla) is the Sierra Morena, or Dark Mountain Range. These are really very rugged mountains, a very obvious natural border. South of the Sierra Morena is the old kingdom of Andalucia (pronounced with five syllables Ahn-dah-loo-SEE-ah), which our guide was constantly reminding us was "what EVERYONE thinks of as Spain—flashy eyes, swishy skirts, and romance". It would probably be fair to say that Andalucia is a more traditional region than Castilla, but the things the guide spoke of exist mostly for the benefit of tourists.

We made a mid-afternoon (late afternoon by American standards) refreshment stop in Jaen (hi-ANE), a small city not far south of the Sierra Morena. Most of Jaen's income comes from converting that hard red clay we had seen so much of into bricks to build those red brick apartments in Madrid and other cities. There are several huge brick factories here.

I saw a typical sight in Jaen that I would see all over Spain, but especially in Andalucia. While most people on our tour were having drinks, a deformed man staggered over and stood beside our bus. He held a sign explaining (in Spanish only) his handicaps in rather sickening detail and asking for money that he might have something to eat. Spain today (especially in the South and around Barcelona) has a huge number of such beggars. In the South they are often gypsies swindling extra cash, but they are as often handicapped, elderly, or simply unemployed people. According to the newspapers, around 20% of Spaniards are unemployed; in some regions the figures run as high as 30%. (We've never had more than 10% unemployment in America in recent years.) According to Dienke, the Spanish government does have assistance for the unemployed, as well as for the elderly and handicapped. However this generally amounts to less than \$100 a week, barely enough to survive even with Spanish prices. People seem to have two options to make ends meet. Large numbers of Spanish men work in factories in Germany and Holland and send money back to their families (not unlike the Latin Americans who work in the USA); others resort to begging. While several of the beggars play music or otherwise "work" to earn their money, the vast majority are like this man in Jaen. They simply carry around signs describing how awful life is for them, never saying a word.

Spaniards aren't particularly generous in giving to beggars. It has been traditional since the days when the peseta was worth something to give beggars a duro (5 pesetas—today less than a nickel), and that is still all Spaniards ever give the people. Frequently too Spaniards will simply walk quickly past the beggars. Perhaps for this reason many of the beggars follow tour groups, the members of which are often inclined to hand over significantly more money. I generally dealt with these people as a Spaniard would. I always

gave a duro to musicians and other people who did something to earn their money, and I would also hand over a duro to people who genuinely looked in serious need. I ignored gypsies, and I also ignored the sizable number of beggars who looked amazingly well fed (as, for instance, this man in Jaen). I couldn't have given even a duro to every beggar I saw—I'd have literally gone broke.

By the way, I believe the beggar in Jaen collected money from five different people on our bus. I saw one person give him a Pt. 100 coin, and one other person gave a banknote of some sort. You see why it would be attractive for these people to follow the tour groups.

While I'm writing of negative topics, the other big problem in southern Spain is petty crime. Every source I came across said southern Spain is the most dangerous area in Europe for purse snatchings and pickpocketings. The thieves tend to be from two groups. Some are gypsies who steal for a living. Others are high-school or college age kids who are robbing to buy drugs (the Spanish government says half of all crime in Spain can be traced to drugs). The most common crime is purse snatching, which is invariably done by a pair of boys speeding by on a moped. By the time a woman realized what is happening the moped, the boys, and the purse are long gone. One woman in our group had her purse stolen in Sevilla, a bit later on the tour. According to Dienke this is the fourth straight tour she has escorted on which there has been a purse snatching.

It's important to note, though, that Spain really is no more crime ridden than any American city. Women can prevent problems by hanging purses around their neck and grasping them between their arm and torso. ALL the Spanish women did this, and so did the New Yorkers on the tour. Men shouldn't leave wallets in their back pocket, where they just invite thieves. I found most Spanish men carried their wallets in their shirt pockets, often buttoned shut. Just keeping the money out of reach makes you an unlikely target—it would take too long and make too much of a production of things to rob you.

... But on to better things. After a long, hot ride, we got into the city of Granada at around 7:30pm. Our hotel (the Hotel Carmen) was right downtown, and I had a short but pleasant walk through the city center. We had a skimpy dinner at 9:30 (soup, casserole, and mass-produced "flan"—or custard), and I was off to bed early.

WEDNESDAY, 24 JULY == GRANADA TO MALAGA

Breakfast in Granada was the same extremely hard rolls, but at least there was a variety of flavors of jam. I learned to order my coffee "solo", which means very strong (like espresso) coffee without milk. I've never cared for milk in coffee, and I can't say I like it any better in Spanish coffee.

The schedule called for a city tour of Granada, but the tour amounted to the streets between our hotel and the ONE major tourist attraction in Granada, the Alhambra. (There was absolutely nothing on those streets of touristic interest—downtown Granada basically looks a lot like downtown Madrid, but with shorter buildings and without all the beautiful traffic circles.) **[While the place is a big college town, it really is one of the duller cities on earth.]**



A fountain at the Alhambra – Granada

The Alhambra is perhaps Spain's best-known building—or group of buildings. The name apparently means "red fortress", and it is indeed a group of buildings that were originally red (now faded to a rosy tan) built by the Moors as a fortress. This served as the capitol and last stronghold of the Arabs in Spain. The Alhambra really can't be properly described. It is a true architectural masterpiece—featuring lovely garden patios with delicately carved stone arches and walls, many of which include long passages in Arabic from the Koran. Together with the Alhambra is the much simpler palace of King Carlos V and the Generalife gardens, a summer retreat for the Moorish kings. The whole complex is really beyond words; suffice to say it is very beautiful.

We had lunch comparatively early (1:30pm) in the little town of Santa Fe, just west of Granada. I sat with an elderly couple from Florida who were travelling around the world to celebrate their retirement. Spain was their third trip this year. Their names were Walter and Addie, and they really were sweet, very Southern people.

The bus ride today was comparatively short, and we saw much different scenery than yesterday's. Most of the ride was through the Genil River valley, west of Granada. The region is heavily irrigated and has farms that look positively Midwestern. They even grow corn here—and lots of

it. (Dienke tells us, though, that the corn is grown strictly for feed. Spaniards do eat sweet corn, and more of it than most Europeans. The corn Spaniards eat though is invariably imported from the United States—in a can.)

As we drove along Spain's highways we frequently were stopped by "obras" (literally "works", or road construction). Every highway in Spain seems to be under repair—really a good thing, but a minor inconvenience to the traveller. In charge of construction is the "Ministerio de Obras Publicas y Urbanismo" (the Ministry of Public Works and Urbanism—whatever "urbanism" may be) [**we'd probably call it "urban planning" here**], always abbreviated "MOPU" (that's right—pronounced MOW-poo). At every construction site, MOPU has a large billboard with a picture of a highway and the word "MOPU" in huge letters. At the bottom of the billboard is a tiny map of the area to be repaired. All these repairs are part of a ten-year plan MOPU has to "create jobs and improve highways" (in that order). Interestingly, a lot of road construction in Spain is still done by hand—that is, with picks and shovels. There must be a lot of jobs created by the program. [**My has that changed. Nothing would be done by hand in 21st Century Spain.**]

Our destination today was Malaga, the big city of Spain's "Costa del Sol", the country's most famous playground for the rich. We got into town early, and I had a lot of time to wander around and explore the city. I expected Malaga to be quite a resort town, but I was very pleasantly surprised. All in all, Malaga was one of my favorite cities in Spain.

There are, in a sense, two Malagas. The tourist area runs the entire length of Avenida Generalismo Franco (rather oddly, it's still called that in Malaga) and continues westward to the REAL resorts of Torremolinos and Marbella. This part of Malaga acts as a service center for the tourists. It has the stores (like Corte Ingles and Galerías Preciados), rather than the expensive souvenir stands and elite boutiques further west. The Avenida Franco is always busy, day and night, and it is always crawling with tourists.

By walking just a block off the Avenida Franco in either direction, though, I saw an entirely different city. Malaga was an established city long before there were tourists. It was a major port in ancient times, and the port still employs many times the people who work in the tourist trade. (Manufacturing, especially food processing, is the second largest employer; tourism ranks a poor third.) What that means is that the vast majority of Malaganos are hard-working, middle-class Spaniards.

Except for the tourist area, Malaga looks very different from Madrid. Rather than the new high-rises that most Madrileños live in, Malaga has older buildings that more closely resemble the row houses in Puerto Lapice. They are apartments, but they are made of plaster, they tend to be only three or four floors high, and on minor streets they occasionally won't have any business on the first floor. Virtually all the buildings are painted flat yellow—most of them repainted often enough to look respectable. The only huge boulevard in Malaga is the Avenida Franco, but the side streets are more than narrow paths—they are wide enough for two lanes of traffic, although there are seldom sidewalks. In Malaga most streets are of red brick, long ago turned grey. The only places in Malaga I saw severe litter were along the Avenida Franco and all around an underpass where a street passes underneath that avenue.

Malaganos seem to spend large portions of their lives outside. In several places where I walked I saw children playing soccer, old men playing cards, and women chatting with each other—all right out in the middle of the street. Whenever a car came along (which wasn't really too often on the side streets), people would simply move to the side. The only places I've seen anything like this are in New York's Harlem and in Camden, New Jersey, the poorest slum in the Philadelphia area. I suppose what I was walking through in Malaga was a slum, but it certainly didn't have the feel of Harlem or Camden. The buildings were not nice, but they weren't dreadfully run-down either. There were no beggars here, and no one seemed in any way destitute. Moreover, EVERYONE I saw in Malaga was very friendly. Some people said more than just greetings to me, and I seemed able to understand a bit more here than elsewhere. (Maybe the Andalusian accent helped; maybe my ears were just becoming more accustomed to hearing Spanish.) One man mentioned that very few people other than Malaganos ever wandered away from the Avenida Franco. Perhaps that's why people were so friendly toward me.

I saw more graffiti on the streets of Malaga than elsewhere in Spain. Most was from the communists, generally summed up in one building painting that said "Elect a free and communist Andalusia!" (A most interesting combination of politics in that slogan.)

Like the poor neighborhood in Madrid I walked through, this part of Malaga had lots of self-service grocery stores. I decided to patronize one of these and fix my own dinner rather than finding a restaurant. The most interesting thing I saw for sale was milk. Spaniards almost never buy the "fresh" milk that Americans do. Instead Spanish milk is irradiated to kill bacteria (like the boxed juices we're starting to see here) [**actually that's not true—boxed juices are canned, not irradiated; the "can", though, is made of foil, plastic, and glue rather than hard metal**] and sold right on the grocery shelves, without refrigeration. It is sold in either disposable half-liter or liter plastic bottles or in plastic bags of between one and four liters. The cost is about Pt.50 per liter (\$1.15 a gallon). According to the package, Spaniards are supposed to put the bagged milk into pitchers and refrigerate it before serving. I'm sure it would have tasted better refrigerated; the milk I bought was quite unsatisfying warm. [**I have no idea what possessed me to buy milk. I NEVER drink milk at home, so why it would occur to me to drink it overseas, I have no clue. Most likely it was just the novelty of irradiated groceries, something that even today hasn't really caught on in America.**]

I went back to the hotel to eat some of my groceries. Then I went back out for a walk again. I really enjoyed wandering around Malaga, and it was quite late when I got to bed this evening.

THURSDAY, 25 JULY == COSTA DEL SOL, MIJAS, GIBRALTAR, & ALGECIRAS

Our travel brochure described this as "a leisurely day on Spain's sun coast". I can think of lots of words that would describe the day better than "leisurely"—"jam-packed" for one.

We were off before nine, joining a sea of traffic headed west out of Malaga. Today was Santiago (the Feast of St. James), a national holiday in Spain. Since Malaga has no beach, everyone in the city seemed to be heading westward to the resorts. There is a four-lane highway along the south coast of Spain, and today in addition to the two lanes normally headed west, MOPU had converted one of the lanes on the opposite side of the median into a westbound lane to help handle the traffic.

For about an hour we drove through solid resort, the Torremolinos/Marbella area. About ten years ago a series of ten-floor condominiums was built all along the beach in these resorts, hiding the beach in many places. These are the places where the chic meet in Spain, an area full of expensive hotels and condos, casinos, nightclubs, and so-called "sophisticated" (red light) districts. The area is also supposed to be the main center for drugs in Spain.

There is a huge Arab population (mostly Saudi and Kuwaiti) along the Costa del Sol, and its influence is everywhere. (In fact I recently heard on TV that a Saudi billionaire who happens to be the richest person in the world lives in Marbella.) There are banks everywhere with names like "Bank for Hispano-Arab Commerce" or "External Bank of Bahrain". Many stores and restaurants have Arabic signs in their windows, and occasionally women walk by wearing the traditional Arab body covering. (The Arab men are about the only people in Spain who wear business suits in the summer heat.) MOPU has even made concessions to the Arabs by making all important information signs on the Costa del Sol bilingual.

No Spaniard I talked to liked the fact that so many Arabs were moving to Spain. The Madrid guide called it "the second Moorish invasion", and most of our other guides made similar statements. There is anti-Arab graffiti in the large cities, and many Arabs and/or their cars have been blown up by the Basque terrorists. There seems to be a feeling that the Arabs are making their presence felt in Spain, but aren't spending much money to benefit the Spanish economy. Among the Arabs, the Africans seem to be liked much more than the Middle Easterners—perhaps Spain is trying for a good neighbor policy.

After a while the bus turned northward away from the coast. We headed up a little switchback road to the town of Mijas, a place our guide Dienke described as "a typical little Andalusian village--you'll love it". I'm always skeptical of such blanket statements and reserved judgment on what I would love. Just as we got to the top of the mountain, she said, "of course it's a tourist trap--that's half the fun!"

I have no doubt that Mijas used to be a quiet little village tucked away in the mountains, living a very traditional lifestyle. Needless to say, that is no longer true. The city limits now include most of the mountains around Torremolinos, and about 50,000 people. Most of them live in expensive private homes with pools. City regulations require that these be built of plaster and whitewashed regularly so they look somewhat like traditional Andalusian homes.

Central Mijas, which is where we actually went, is mostly original buildings, but the main streets (which is where we were supposed to go) are full of souvenir shops and expensive restaurants—all of which were open on this holiday, of course. Fortunately I was able to wander clear up to the top of the mountain, where there actually is a "typical"-looking residential area, away from the tourist trap.

The north-south streets in Mijas are the ones that go up the mountain. For this reason, all the north-south streets have stairs, some steeper than others. One of the strangest sights I saw in Spain was a car parked on the steps of one of these streets. Each step on this particular street was long enough to hold a tiny car, and each step was about as high as the curb on an American street. Obviously the driver guns the engine and bounces up each step (it was parked going uphill). Motorcycles are bouncing up and down the steps all the time.

In many ways Mijas looked like a larger and hillier Puerto Lápice. It was entirely two-floor plaster row houses, all whitewashed and most with wrought iron fences. As in Puerto Lápice, not all the buildings had businesses, but many did. The streets here are of rock, like Toledo's. I think it must be illegal to have plastic signs in Mijas, because it's the only town I saw in Spain that didn't have plastic signs on all the stores. Probably because of all the tourists, the people aren't particularly friendly. I can't really say I enjoyed Mijas, but I did get some interesting pictures of the place. **[Actually, I did rather enjoy Mijas. I've since learned that LOTS of places are tourist traps, and really Mijas pulled it off better than a lot of others. For all the visitors it gets, it's surprisingly uncrowded, and it gave a pleasantly sanitized view of a traditional Spanish village.]**



Stair step street in Mijas

I had a lot of snacks instead of lunch in Mijas. One of these was some almonds I bought from a street vendor. These almonds, coated with a sugary substance like beer nuts, are for sale all over Spain—and they are good! Street vendors generally roast and coat their almonds as they run out, so the supply is always fresh. They are really quite expensive (never less than Pt. 150 a bag), but it is a tasty treat.

We drove past more condominiums until we finally were out of the resort area. We were still following the Costa del Sol, but fortunately the resort is still centered at the heart of this string of beaches. At mid-afternoon we turned off the main road to go to the city of La Linea de la Concepcion, bordering on the British colony of Gibraltar.

La Linea is very obviously a very poor city. Dienne told us this was largely because its residents used to work in Gibraltar. When Franco closed the border to Gibraltar, they were all out of jobs. Apparently even fifteen years later many are unemployed or have low-paying jobs. La Linea's homes look very Soviet—all built in the 50s and 60s, and all in various states of disrepair. **[From my more recent travels, I'd also say they look A LOT like much of London.]** To add to this flavor, there were signs all over advertising the fact that "Circo Ruso" (the Russian Circus) was in town, complete with the same clown Paul and I had seen in Moscow. The people were more animated than the Soviets, though—I never thought of Russia as particularly quiet when I was there, but compared to anywhere in Spain, it is dead.



The Gibraltar border at La Linea

blemishes. These are enormous pools designed to catch water during the winter rains. Since there are no rivers or groundwater in Gibraltar (and Franco cut off supplies of river water from Spain), the pools catch water in the wet season and store it for summer use.

The city of Gibraltar is an odd-looking place. It has 19th Century cement buildings modeled on downtown London, but its streets are barely one lane wide—with no sidewalks. I guess this is because of the limited space allowed for construction.

On the rock there is a small colony of monkeys. There is a legend that if the monkeys ever die out on Gibraltar, the possession of the rock will change. It is said that during World War II, Churchill imported a new colony of monkeys from Africa to insure that those on Gibraltar did not die out.

The people of Gibraltar, while technically British subjects, are almost entirely Spanish. Virtually everyone speaks Spanish as his first language, although it is required that English be studied in school. Most Gibraltaris have relatives in La Linea, and until recently the only way they could visit them was by way of Morocco—a full day's trip. The border closing is part of an ongoing dispute between Spain and the United Kingdom, really going all the way back to the time of the defeat of the Armada (which, by the way, is still the name of Spain's Navy). Gibraltar is not an island; the rock is connected to La Linea by a tiny isthmus that forms Gibraltar's airport. Because it is technically mainland, Spain has always considered it to be part of Spain. Britain, of course, considers its colony to be entirely under the Queen's rule. However back in the early 1970s, when Britain was granting independence to its other colonies, it held a referendum on whether Gibraltaris wanted to remain under British rule or return to Spain. Over 4,000 voted to remain with Britain; seventeen voted to return to Spain. The referendum was the proverbial straw that broke the back of Franco's camel; he immediately closed the border. The only reason Spain re-opened it now is that it was forced to as a condition of joining the European Economic Community (common market).

Opening the border doesn't mean Spain is especially friendly toward Gibraltar, though. While getting out of Spain and into Gibraltar was a routine affair (Dienne told the police officers how many people there were, and our passports were stamped without comment), it was a bit more difficult to get back into Spain. The Guardia officers made a point of carefully looking at everyone's

The only reason for a tourist to go to La Linea these days is to go to Gibraltar. The Spanish border with Gibraltar was re-opened to tourist traffic only last April, and our group took advantage of the fact and added Gibraltar to our list of countries visited. After being stamped out of Spain by the Guardia and into Gibraltar by a British "bobby", we were given a tour by taxi of this strange little country.

The Rock of Gibraltar is quite impressive, but the colony of Gibraltar is really very dumpy--different from, but not any nicer than La Linea. Most of the rock is a military base, and thus it has a lot of Quonset huts and other very temporary, military-looking buildings. Under the rock there are literally hundreds of secret tunnels, a major storehouse for NATO weapons. The only highway in Gibraltar goes through the only one of these tunnels that is public. Aside from the military, the biggest industry in Gibraltar is an oil refinery which creates a lot of air pollution for the area. Many people also work in the port.

All over the rock there are huge cement

passport before stamping it, and anyone who had purchased anything at all significant in Gibraltar had to open his parcels to let the police take a look at things. La Linea had by far the toughest customs we (as a group) had anywhere on the trip.

And while we're on the topic of customs—a big story in the Spanish newspapers about this time was the fact that the Guardia officers at Barajas Airport in Madrid had gone on strike to protest the lax security there. There were apparently severe delays while a skeletal staff brought in from elsewhere processed passengers.

It was about an hour more onto Algeciras, our stop for the night. Algeciras is one of two major ports in southwestern Spain (the ancient city of Cadiz is the other). From Algeciras passenger ships to ports all over Europe and Africa depart, including the boat we would take to Tangier, Morocco. Besides being a major port, Algeciras is a popular winter resort for Spaniards.

We stayed at the Hotel Reina Cristina, a lovely five-star hotel where countless famous people have stayed. Whenever Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia happen to be in Algeciras they stay here, presumably in a more elaborate room than any of us had. The hotel was well away from town, in a beautiful garden setting with palm trees and strange tropical flowers. The rooms were nice, but really not anything more than a very standard American hotel would offer. Having a TV and double beds in every room was the only thing that really set this hotel apart from the others we stayed in.

That night we had a very nice dinner buffet in an outdoor restaurant at the hotel. Walter and Addie were celebrating their 42nd wedding anniversary, and they bought some delicious Spanish champagne for the group—almost exactly like Soviet champagne, surprisingly sweet and very tasty. **[Actually, since joining the EU Spain can no longer call its sparkling wine “champagne”, a term that is limited to wine produced in a small region of France. Spanish sparkling wine is now called “cava”.]** We toasted their years of happiness and had a very pleasant evening.

FRIDAY, 26 JULY == THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA AND TANGIER, MOROCCO

Today was certainly a different experience, a chance to see an entirely different lifestyle. You can see the Atlas Mountains in Africa from Algeciras or Gibraltar, and it's almost impossible to realize that not only are those mountains on a different continent—in almost every way they are in another world. We took a boat ride into that world.

We had our hard rolls very early this morning; Dienke wanted us to be at the docks at least an hour and a half early, and our boat left at nine. In the end we ended up sitting around bored for an hour and a half, but at least we weren't late.

When the gate to "Tanger" (pronounced "TAHN-hair" in Spanish and apparently in Arabic) finally opened, we had to wait for over half an hour for a line of Moroccans, most of whom seemed to be carrying twice their weight in luggage. (Each person on our tour had only a flight bag.) These Moroccans, both men and women, work in service jobs in France. Since most French take month-long vacations in August, the Moroccans were going home to spend the month with their families. Dienke tells us that nearly a third of all Moroccan adults work outside the country. Another third work at permanent jobs in Morocco, and the final third are unemployed—doing odd jobs, selling trinkets, or begging.



The rock of Gibraltar, as seen from the Algeciras—Tangier ferry

After the Guardia finally stamped us out of Spain, it was still another hour until the boat took off.

(Perhaps boats don't "take off", but I'm not sure just what the word should be.) The boat was owned by the Moroccan national boat company, and called the Mohammad V--after a Moroccan king, not the Moslem prophet. (Before the trip John and Janet had mentioned to me that EVERYTHING in Morocco was named after this king; they were right.) There are two Spanish ships and the Moroccan one making the voyage to Tangier; Dienke was hoping we wouldn't get the Spanish "Our Lady of Africa", which is apparently not a nice boat. Ours was comfortable, and our group was in a special section for Western tourists, complete with a private bar (Moslems, of course, would not have need of a bar.) My one souvenir from the boat is a French and Arabic Pepsi bottle to go with the Russian one I got earlier.

As we left I had a beautiful view of Algeciras, a sea of white apartment high-rises that could easily be Leningrad. I also saw views of Gibraltar that were much nicer than those we had inside the colony itself.

It is about two hours by boat from Algeciras to Tangier. On days when the hydrofoils are operating, they make the journey in just one hour. Unfortunately they don't go out when the seas are rough, which is most days—including this one. The seas were really very rough on the Strait of Gibraltar. The boat would rise slowly upward on a wave and then fall downward with a thud and a jerk. Even though I had felt fine all through Spain, I became ill on the boat to Tangier. **[Boats in general are definitely not my thing. I very rarely get sick to my stomach, but when I've traveled by boat I've been sick as often as not. Largely because of that, the idea of going on a cruise isn't even a remotely pleasant thought to me.]**

Arriving in Tangier, you would not know you were in Africa. From the dock the city looks a lot like Malaga—fairly low white and yellow buildings crawling up a hillside. There are new highrises at the outskirts, and palm trees line a four-lane highway that runs along the beach. There are high mountains in the distance, making the whole setting beautiful.

[The previous paragraph is really rather silly, since I'm not really sure just what I thought Africa should look like. While my description makes it seem European, even the European sections have a Third World feeling to them. Modern Tangier looks a lot like pictures I've seen of various Third World cities, which is to say it's a cheap imitation of Los Angeles or Miami (or Spain's Costa del Sol). I suppose I was thinking all of Africa should be jungle with nomads living as they might have a thousand years ago. The modern world is, of course, urban, and Tangier is no exception.]

Moroccan customs was a joke. We had filled out immigration cards earlier, and Dienne saw to it (by bribing the police officer with cigarettes) that our passports were stamped without problems on the boat. We waited until all the Moroccans and their luggage had gotten off the boat before leaving ourselves. Another police officer came to meet us, Dienne also gave him cigarettes, and we were waved on to our Moroccan bus.



Arabic license plate on car parked by an ancient wall -- Tangier

visited so far, the medina most reminded me of Toledo. Like Toledo, Tangier's medina is truly ancient—with numerous buildings over 500 years old (but of yellow and white plaster, like Malaga, rather than Toledo's tan stone). Its streets are very narrow, and many of them have steps. The architecture is generally quite plain, but it shows the same Arab influence that is all over Spain—especially in the south—and many doorways have the same cloth or bead doors I saw in small-town Spain.

There the similarity with Spain ends, though. For even in old Toledo people lead a modern European lifestyle. The Tangerines' lifestyle is not exactly traditional, but it certainly isn't European. While Morocco is among Africa's wealthiest nations, it is a Third World country. I didn't see ugly, horrible poverty here (as I did later in Portugal), but there is nothing about Tangier that is in any way wealthy. There are three styles of dress in Tangier. About a third of the people, more women than men, wear traditional Arab costumes—meaning a loose-fitting head to toe garment, white for men and grey for women. A handful of people (very few) wear European-style

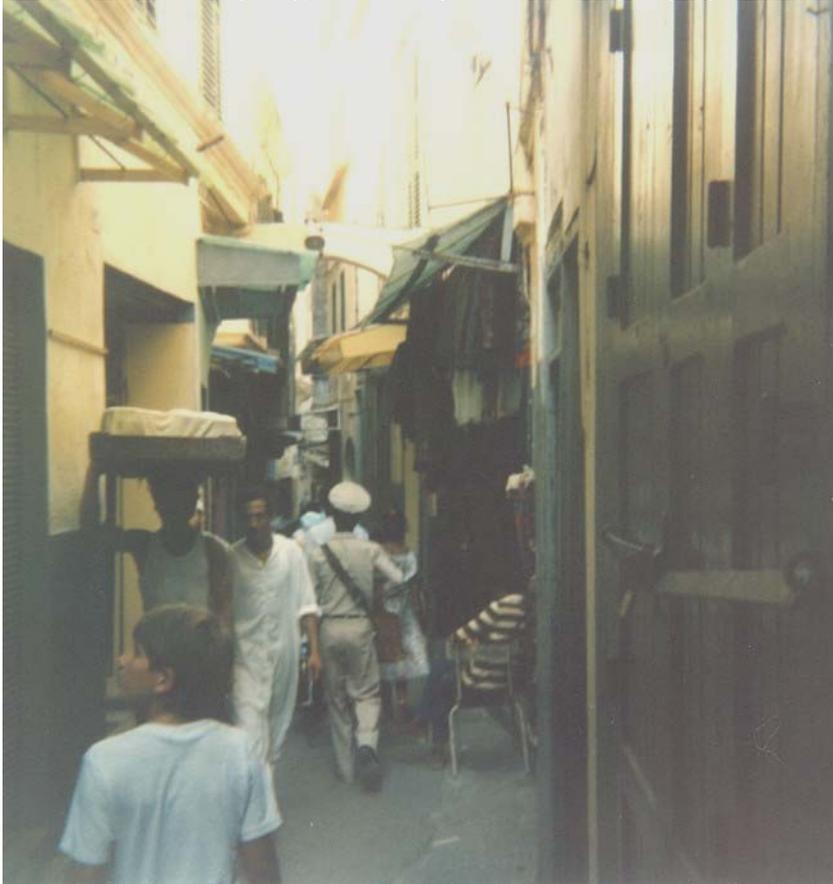
Tangier is a rather strange place linguistically. While Arabic and French are the official languages of Morocco, most Tangerines (no joke—that's the word for the inhabitants) I met seemed to speak Spanish natively, French if they spoke a second language, and Arabic only in religious settings. Most signs are printed with two sides—French on one and Arabic on the other. In Tangier the French side invariably faces out, and there are often handwritten signs in Spanish in shops and restaurants. I think there may be so much Spanish because all of northern Morocco was under Spanish control for many years (two coastal cities still belong to Spain). At any rate, English is NOT a language they speak in Tangier.

We had a few hours to rest or go out exploring on our own this afternoon. I really didn't feel comfortable going out walking around in Tangier (especially with people everywhere running after the tourists trying to sell them things), so I did some laundry instead. I washed a lot of clothes in the bathroom sink and hung them all over the room to dry. It was nearly 100 degrees and very dry in Tangier, so they dried quite quickly.

In the late afternoon we had a guided tour of the city, which was a very different experience. First we saw the wealthy European area, a nice but not lavish residential neighborhood with wide streets and ranch style homes that would be middle class in America. **[Actually, it's probably closer to one of those "old money" neighborhoods you find out East that is wealthy, but not at all ostentatious.]** We then drove to a rural area near the city where we had the opportunity to ride on camels and buy junky souvenirs. (I passed on both.) There is very extensive agriculture around Tangier—growing many types of vegetables. The area looks green, so apparently the rain there is less seasonal than in Spain.

The high light of the city tour was walking through the medina. A medina is a residential area where Arabs live. Every Arab city has its medina, and walking through it is truly entering another world. Outwardly the medina was not really strange. Of all the places I had

business suits or dresses. The vast majority wear what might be described as "poverty clothes". You see this clothing (checked sports shirts or plain T-shirts, solid pants, and print dresses—all VERY heavily mended) in photos from Mexico, Ethiopia, and Vietnam—it seems to be the universal outfit of the Third World. To most of these people everyone on our tour (and all the Soviets who people on that tour said dressed poorly) would surely look like the richest people on earth.



Pedestrian street in the souk (business quarter) of old Tangier

Throughout the Medina children run around unsupervised. Dienne told us that often both parents in a family will work in Europe, leaving the oldest girl to care for the family. Chances are the girl will work herself—most Moroccan children work, often as young as age ten. Those who don't have factory, store, or service jobs will try to sell trinkets or pick pockets to earn money. (Our LOCAL guide told us that pickpocketing is considered a job by most Moroccans.) The children running around the Medina looked like a living ad for the child sponsorship organizations. I could picture Sally Struthers running around hugging them. Rather sadly, though, these people tend to be better off than those the charities work with—many of those children do have jobs, and Morocco has more than enough food. It's sad to think how many millions of people in the world would consider the Tangerines fortunate.

We stopped at a cafe for a cup of traditional mint tea (free) and pastries (overpriced). Then we walked into the business area of Tangier. This area—streets less than a meter wide that the sun literally does not shine on, with masses of people everywhere—seemed to me like the bazaars you hear about in Asia. Everywhere we walked people were selling native foods, used clothing, cheap furniture, and handicrafts. Always the wares overflowed into the streets, making even less room for people to pass. Every building had a different smell (e.g.: mid-eastern food cooking, sewage, and marijuana smoke) radiating from it, and everyone seemed to speak at once—mostly in Spanish.

The stores we walked past were for the Moroccans. Rather like in Russia, our city tour ended at a special store designed for tourists. "Bazaar Fez" is a four-floor emporium where credit cards are accepted and perfect English is spoken. (One of my guidebooks noted that at these stores if you have money the shopkeepers will speak any language you want them to. It's true—they spoke perfect French to the Canadians and perfect Spanish to the Cubans, and I heard German tourist and Arabic to a Middle Eastern tourist.) The place is crawling with sweet-talking employees intent on getting every tourist to buy as much as possible. ... Bargaining (still THE way to buy things in Morocco) was officially forbidden—officially. I bought a tiny Oriental-style rug there. I paid half the original asking price, supposedly a good buy, but I think everyone who bargains feels he got ripped off. I do know the rug cost less than it would have in the Soviet Union or in the USA. [... **And it's still in remarkably good shape after spending more than two decades on my floor.**]

It seems EVERYONE in Morocco is out to make a buck, much more so than in Spain. [**This is a universal concept in the Third World, and one I've come to hate whenever I've traveled to poor countries.**] There was a swarm of beggars and trinket sellers at our bus as we boarded to head back to the hotel. When the ladies from New York wouldn't buy anything outside, one actually followed them on to the bus. He was expelled, but as we neared the hotel, our local guide made a point of reminding us all that he had five children to feed. Our tour literature said that tips to local guides were included in the tour price, so I was rude and made a point of NOT tipping him. It's not like my not tipping mattered—from what I saw he earned at least twenty dollars from others on the tour, plus whatever the tour company paid him. That's not bad wages for about two hours work.

The most annoying part of the city tour was provided not by the Moroccans, but rather by the Cuban children on our tour. As if our group didn't look conspicuous enough trotting around Tangier, these brats started singing and doing "jive" hand-claps (I think that's what you'd call them) to a McDonald's commercial—the one that seems to list the entire McD's menu. I didn't know people actually did that stuff other than on TV—certainly I didn't think people would embarrass themselves in public. I couldn't help but think that Morocco was included in our tour so we could see what might be called "strange foreign customs", and here it was the Moroccans who got to see something really strange.

Dinner was to be included this evening. One of our optional activities, though, was to pay \$10 extra for the opportunity of eating in the Moroccan Room at the hotel. Dienne built this up as an experience not to be missed; she oversold it. The setting was uncomfortable. We knelt around unstable low tables. This probably is a traditional Moroccan way of eating, but it's not comfortable for American tourists. The dinner itself was unpleasant and skimpy. There was a thick, rather tasteless soup we were to eat by dipping bread into (no spoons), a strange dish made of a bland rice-like grain and green tomatoes, and heavily seasoned and greasy chicken.

There wasn't even one piece of chicken per person. When one of the people at my table pointed out that she didn't have a piece, the waiter looked around at the other tables to see who wasn't eating theirs. He then took the plate from the woman at our table, took a piece of chicken off someone else's plate, and brought it back to our table. There was a liter of wine to serve eight people at each table (no water), and no dessert was served. Perhaps I'm being an "ugly American" in not enjoying the local cuisine, but I was quite unsatisfied with this meal.

[I've since eaten a variety of Middle Eastern/north African cuisines at a variety of restaurants in North America and Europe, and my reaction each time has been pretty similar to this meal. The meat is always excellent, but skimpy. (It's usually best to order kabobs, where several small cubes add up to more meat than a single piece.) The side dishes are invariably dreadful. It seems to be obligatory to puree everything in Arab cuisine, so it's like you're eating strangely-spiced baby food.]

There was also entertainment to go with the show—billed as belly dancers and acrobats. The dancers were essentially strippers who didn't take off as much as they would in the States. They didn't really dance (or move) at all. They did, however, seek out tips from every man in the place, and they got very upset with the men who didn't tip (like me). I'm sorry, but I didn't go to Morocco to see a sleazy act I could have seen in Waterloo **[a place that was well known for its sleazy strippers when I was at UNI]**. The acrobats were a tiny bit better, but they too were out to pick up tips. I really would like to know where that extra \$10 went—it certainly didn't pay for the bad food, and the entertainers seemed to be self-supporting. It really was quite a disappointment.

SATURDAY, 27 JULY == TANGIER TO SEVILLA

Because of that marvelous dinner, it was very late when we got to sleep last night. We had another ferry to catch, so it was again very early when we got up this morning. I had hoped to be able to sleep on the boat, but the Cuban girls insisted on doing that stupid commercial again—and again and again and again. (I am part of the fast food generation, but somehow I've never felt the need to be a walking advertisement.) I was secretly hoping there would be a McDonalds in Sevilla so they could get it out of their system.

Grandma Cuba didn't seem to care much for it either. She decided that if the girls had to do some kind of hand clap song, they might as well do it in Spanish. (Grandma seemed to care far more than Mom that "the culture" be preserved.) She hauled out the old "double-r" rhyme that is in every Spanish book:

Erre, con erre, cigarros;
Erre, con erre, barril;
Rapido corren los carros
Por la linea del ferrocarril.

It's quite meaningless ("Cigars" and "keg" are spelled with double-r; the train cars run quickly along the railway), but it helps one practice the r-r-r-rolled "rr" sound. The girls, who spoke Spanish very badly, found it "dumb" and went back to McDonalds quickly. Grandma wasn't about to give up, though; she sat the girls down and made them go through the Spanish rhyme over and over again on the boat ride. It got as repetitive to listen to as the commercial, but the whole background of it was rather interesting.

I had some short chats with Grandma Cuba (I don't know the last name) on the trip. She speaks primarily Spanish and was rather surprised that anyone in the Midwest spoke the language. While Cubans have a peculiar accent, I found her easier to understand than the Spaniards. **[Amen. No one is harder to understand in Spanish than Spaniards.]** She and her late husband somehow escaped from Cuba with their daughter in 1963. They moved to Gainesville (which apparently has quite a large Cuban population), where her husband did odd jobs. Her daughter went to college, became a Spanish teacher, and married a "very American" man. Now Grandma is upset that the kids are far too American—they don't seem to care about the Cuban culture. (I don't know if Grandma realized how many different groups of immigrants could have told that same story.)

Grandma Cuba is quite an interesting lady. Like virtually all older Hispanic women, she is "muy catolica" (very religious, with the emphasis on the VERY), right down to hauling out a rosary as we drove through some tiny mountain roads in Portugal. She is plump, dresses only in dark colors (but not necessarily black, like traditional Spanish widows), and is basically supported by her family. Like virtually all Cuban-Americans, she is as pro-military and anti-Communist as she is religious; Reagan is second only to Christ himself in her life (seriously). I didn't bother mentioning to her that I had just gotten back from the Soviet Union.

We got back to Algeciras mid-morning, and again we were the last people off the boat. Spanish customs at Algeciras is generally very severe. As a condition of joining the Common Market, Spain promised to closely check to make sure the Moroccans who entered Europe had valid French work permits. Spain itself is concerned about drug traffic from Morocco, and most luggage entering at Algeciras is either sniffed or opened. Several people (all Moroccan men) were body-searched while we waited. Severe as customs may have been for others, though, for us it was easy. Dienne didn't bribe the Spaniards, but she did mention that we were a group of Americans and Canadians. That was assurance enough to the Spaniards that we were honest, and we were routinely stamped on through—not a single question.

The bus ride took us by the Costa de la Luz (Coast of Light) to Cadiz, then northward on a beautiful new freeway to Sevilla. It really was good to be back in Spain.

All the guide books describe Sevilla and Barcelona as the two most "romantic" and "enchanted" cities in Spain. My initial impressions of the first of these cities were quite the opposite. Moreover, the more I saw, the less impressed I was. All in all Sevilla (locally "say-BEE-yah"; they'd say any place named "suh-VILLE" must be in France) seemed to be about the dullest place I visited.

Our hotel in Sevilla, the Porta Coeli, was in the suburban "Eduardo Dato" neighborhood. This neighborhood was mostly expensive ten-floor apartments. (I say expensive because all had beautifully landscaped and irrigated grounds) that for the most part lacked the street-level business I had seen in other cities **[part of what made this a dull area]**. The hotel was 5-star, and another place where the king stays when he is in town. (I seriously doubt Juan Carlos gets to these places all that often—he was in Mallorca for three months.)

We got to Sevilla mid-afternoon, and I took a walk through a rather uninteresting neighborhood—made more uninteresting by the fact that NO ONE goes outside on a Saturday afternoon in Sevilla when the temperature is in the 40s (over 100 F). The sidewalks were entirely deserted, and all the apartment windows had metal grates pulled down to block out the sun. It really creates a barren atmosphere. I happened on a huge Corte Ingles store, but it too was primarily deserted—a handful of tourists and virtually no Spaniards. What I was seeing, I think, is the fact that Sevillanos really do still sleep during siesta, at least on Saturday. In contrast, there was no time of day or day of the week when I saw any part of Madrid so dead. I left the neighborhood by the hotel and walked to a more central part of town. (Under Franco, the largest street in most Spanish cities was re-named "Avenida Jose Antonio"; the place I walked to used to be Sevilla's Jose Antonio.) This was a business area, and more interesting to walk through. There were still no people around, though. In fact, here the people who were out were less than desirable—drunks, beggars, and kids speeding by on motorbikes (the kind who look like they'd snatch purses for laughs). I walked down this street to a store called "Almacenes Perez", where the street turned more residential. I remember this store because of a sign for "liquidaciones milagrosas" (a miraculous sale) in its window, and for other reasons I'll get into later. Seeing nothing of great interest and getting rather tired, I headed back to the hotel.

I turned on the TV and was proud of myself for being able to follow the story of M*A*S*H in Spanish. (Having seen it before in English helps, of course.) Then a movie came on, and before I knew it I was asleep. The group was scheduled to have an included dinner this evening at 8:00, and then to leave for a flamenco show at 9:30. It was exactly 9:30 when I woke up again. Everywhere else we went Dienne had made a point of "taking roll" before we left. Here though she assumed everyone was there, and the bus left for the flamenco without me. Had I been thinking more clearly, I could have found out where the show was and taken a taxi there. I wasn't thinking clearly, though, and I basically lamented the fact that I was missing one of those things everyone comes to Spain for. Then I went back to sleep.

SUNDAY, 28 JULY == SEVILLA

This morning was our city tour of Sevilla. Of the buildings we saw the most impressive was the cathedral (Spain's largest), where our group was led through with a guide telling us about everything—right in the middle of mass. Another interesting sight was the Plaza de España, a park built for the 1929 world's fair that features a castle with fifty porches—one honoring each of Spain's fifty provinces. **[I'd later become very familiar with a copy of this landmark that is at the foot of Canal Street in New Orleans, a remnant of that city's world's fair.]** These porches were decorated with painted ceramic tiles showing a map of each province, its coat of arms, and very detailed pictures of whatever the province is famous for (fishing, wine-making, olives, steel, etc.). Some of the tiles have weathered in over fifty years of exposure to the elements, but most are still in nice condition. The tour also visited Sevilla's castle, where the guide seemed to imply that the ceilings were all that we should be interested in looking at. While we were at the castle Addie, the woman who had celebrated her anniversary in Algeciras, missed a step and had a serious fall. She limped through the rest of the tour, obviously in pain.

The part of Sevilla that earns it the praise in so many guidebooks is the Barrio Santa Cruz (Holy Cross Neighborhood, an interesting name for the place the Jews lived before the Inquisition), which today is a beautiful, ancient, picturesque, quaint, authentic, typical, old-fashioned tourist trap. The buildings themselves are still as they have been for over a thousand years—low, whitewashed row houses similar to those in Malaga, but obviously older. Hanging plants and blue ceramic decoration make it a lovely area to walk through.

Unfortunately the neighborhood isn't real. Our guide as much as admitted that no one really lives in Sta. Cruz; the fact there is no business catering to local people proves that point. There IS business in Sta. Cruz, though—the only stores in Sevilla that are open Sunday morning. You can't walk anywhere without seeing at least three souvenir shops—most pseudo-elegant, but some unashamedly tacky. The wares included supposedly local ceramics and woodwork. Most are honestly local, but some actually say they are made in Asia. You can also get bullfight posters printed with your own name (and you really never see bullfight posters these days, anyhow), "authentic" Spanish fans (made of lace—a Spaniard would never use something that didn't move the air **[though I did buy one—they know who they're selling to]**), stickers duplicating those "I love New York" ones with the heart, saying "I love Spain" (in English), and what can only be described as "tacky Catholic gifts" (little mass-produced virgins, crucifixes, rosaries, and the like that look so ugly they are almost sacrilegious). Everything is grossly overpriced, and I'm ashamed to admit I actually did buy something at one of the stores.

There was an excellent rock group playing for donations in a little plaza amid the souvenir shops. I finished my shopping somewhat more quickly than the rest of the tour, and enjoyed what was almost a private concert. (I gave significantly more than a duro to them.)

As we left the Barrio Santa Cruz, a group of gypsy salespeople had assembled at the gate. Suddenly we saw them running in all directions. It turned out a police car had pulled up in the general vicinity. The gypsies, obviously illegal merchants (even ice cream

vendors display “ITE” tax numbers in Spain), were quite literally running from the law. The cop went running after them, but I don’t think he caught anyone.

I made another of those marathon walks in the afternoon—well, not quite marathon, about ten miles all together. I started out by walking back to what used to be Jose Antonio. (I don’t know what it’s called now—unlike in Madrid, street signs are few and far between in Sevilla.) Having turned right before to reach Almacenes Perez, I decided to turn left this time. I passed several nice fountains, the Plaza de España I described earlier, and a few other monuments before reaching the Guadalquivir River at the edge of the city proper. There seemed to be something going on across the river, so I walked over a bridge.

Concepcion (as in immaculate), across the river from Sevilla, is technically a different city—also supposedly ancient. Today, though, these two places are under one metropolitan government, rather like they have in Toronto or what New York was designed to be a hundred years ago. Away from the river Concepcion is far from ancient. Most of the area today is a brand new middle class suburb—three hundred thousand people in identical high rises (similar to, but much better kept than the Soviet suburbs). It was here I made most of my walk.

What I had seen across the river was people setting up for a genuine fiesta. Our local guide had told us vaguely about this, and I was pleased to have stumbled upon it. “Fiesta” is a word that is most often given the unfortunate English translation of “party”. It is related to the English “feast” and “festival”, and it is closer in meaning to either of those than to “party”. Each Spanish city and village celebrates the feast day of its patron saint with a festival. The one in Concepcion centered around a big fair where people could eat, stroll, gamble, buy things, sit and chat, eat some more, and gamble some more. There were many special events planned as well. The most advertised of these was the first annual all-Andalucia break dance competition (“concurso de break dance”), which was to be held that evening. In contrast to the break dancers, there was also an outdoor organ concert scheduled. (Actually they may have break danced to organ music; the organ seems to be the second most popular instrument in Spain, and at our hotel in Algeciras a fat woman was playing rock songs on the organ—for those of you who see Cedar Rapids TV, it reminded me of those horrible ads for Carma Lou’s House of Music.) I didn’t see these events, or much of the real fiesta, but I did absorb the atmosphere of setting up for it all.

One thing anyone who visits actual neighborhoods in Europe must come to accept is that health standards are very different in Europe than in America—not really better or worse, but very different. Nowhere is this more clear than in the area of refrigeration. American cities grew up with refrigeration, while European cities were doing fine for centuries without it. Even though refrigeration is quite available in Spain today (EVERY apartment has a refrigerator—often outside on the balcony), it is basically considered a luxury rather than a necessity. Along the street where they were preparing for the fiesta, for example, several make-shift restaurants stored meat outside in the extreme heat, flies swarming and birds “relieving themselves” all around it. Of course they wash the meat before it is cooked, and of course the cooking would kill anything awful that got into it because of the heat, but it still looks awful from an American point of view to see the meat just sitting out like that. (When I was a restaurant cook we sometimes broke the health rules, but we’d have been shut down in a minute for that.) It’s not just these make-shift restaurants either. While supermarkets cool everything, most of the traditional markets refrigerate only pork and fish. Many bars have sandwich meat on display next to the doughnuts, under glass but not cooled.

[This was one of the big things that had changed when I returned to Spain in 2002. Not only were there far fewer of the “erías” that sold specific types of groceries (and far more supermarkets and “hipermercados”), but even the small stores seemed more modern. Even in an open market meat would be on ice or in a cooler, and as often as not it would be wrapped in plastic. My bet is the health regulations are now uniform throughout the European Union, and the squeaky clean Scandinavians set the standard.]

I don’t want to give the idea that Spain is unhealthy, though. Dienne told us and almanacs confirm that Spaniards (like all Europeans) have a longer life expectancy than Americans. Medical care is good, and there are modern hospitals all over Spain. Americans may be sickened by methods of food storage in Europe, but Europeans would be equally sickened by the fact that in America many people don’t feel compelled to wash their hands each time they use the toilet.

After seeing the fiesta area, I walked around the streets of Concepcion—much like the suburban areas of Madrid. I don’t know when I have seen so many automatic tellers—quite literally I was never out of sight of a bank branch, and each had at least one such machine.

On the way back from Concepcion I followed signs for “Centro Ciudad” (downtown), probably the worst mistake I made. Downtown Sevilla is made up mostly of new buildings, but they have been built along ancient one-lane streets without sidewalks. Not only does this look quite odd; it means pedestrians must fight traffic to walk anywhere. Fortunately there wasn’t a lot of traffic on a Sunday afternoon. I did not really know where I was going, but I assumed if I kept walking past important department stores (Galerias Preciados, el Corte Ingles, etc.) I should end up on a major street I could locate on my city map.

It would be an understatement to simply say I was wrong. Not only did I not end up on a major street, I ended up in Sevilla’s “South Bronx”—the worst slum I had seen yet in Spain. **[This is an amusing comparison given that today the South Bronx is one of the most rapidly gentrifying areas in one of America’s wealthiest cities. At the time of this trip, though, it was THE example of urban decay.]** The entire neighborhood consisted of five or six-floor apartments of cracked plaster, all decorated with peeling paint in a sickly yellow color. The area didn’t look ancient, but I would guess it pre-dates Franco, going back maybe to the ‘20s. Litter was thrown everywhere, and even on Sunday laundry was strung between the windows (elsewhere I never saw laundry on Sunday). There was no street-level business in this neighborhood, and very few street-level windows. This gave a very imposing, unfriendly appearance to the neighborhood. (I had read how the no-windows style of architecture in skyscrapers creates this unfriendly feeling at street level; after this neighborhood I can believe it.) Outdated posters were plastered on most walls, and litter seemed to be

everywhere. Like the downtown area, there were very narrow streets with no sidewalks, and here I was the only person walking. The only traffic I saw were kids speeding by on motorbikes.

Whenever I walked around in Spain, I always carried Pt.2000 with me in case I should get lost and need to take a taxi home. Well now I WAS lost, but I was in the one neighborhood in Spain where taxis didn't seem to go. I wasn't exactly scared, but I didn't feel comfortable in the way I had in Madrid and Malaga. I figured if I kept on walking, turning onto more important streets as I came to them, I should eventually get somewhere. Unfortunately no street in this neighborhood seemed any more important than any other, and with every building painted in that ugly yellow color, it was like being lost in a urine-colored forest. I could have been walking in circles for all I knew. I kept on walking though, and when I was just about ready to knock on someone's door and ask to use a phone, I saw a landmark.

That "landmark" (hardly a world-famous monument) was Almacenes Perez, the pathetic little department store I had been past earlier. Fortunately for me, Perez had only one location, and I knew where I was—still over two miles from the hotel, but on streets I knew.

When I got back to the hotel, Dienne stopped me in the lobby. She was horribly apologetic for leaving me at the hotel the night before and asked if I would like to go to the flamenco show on my own, at no additional cost except a taxi to get there. (I wasn't about to argue, considering I'd have never been awake enough to have gone the night before—even if she had taken roll.) I changed into "theatre clothes", ate a quick dinner, and ran to catch a cab.



Almacenes Perez

It was in this taxi that I had the only experience of not being understood when speaking Spanish. I knew that in central Spain certain words are pronounced in a different way from the Mexican pronunciation taught in America. (For example, a double-l "ll" is pronounced like a "y" in Mexico and somewhat like "l-y" in Madrid.) The name of the place where the flamenco show was held was the "Patio Sevillano", with that double-l. I figured when in Spain, I should do as the Spaniards do, and I made a point of over-correcting my speech to reflect the Castilian pronunciation. What I stupidly forgot is that in southern Spain they speak basically the same way as in Mexico—that is, NOT the Castilian way. After confusing the driver horribly, I finally wrote the name of the place down.

That helped, but not much. It turned out that part of the problem was that the driver had never heard of the place—in any pronunciation. He had to stop another taxi (with a much older driver) to ask directions. All this time the meter was running, but, of course, not really adding up to much.

Whatever communication problems I had in the taxi were more than cancelled out by a long conversation (friendly argument) I had with the owners of the flamenco place to convince them that I should get in free. (I got the feeling they knew perfectly well who I was and what the circumstances were—they were just in a mood to argue about it.) Since I wasn't with a tourist group (virtually everyone in the place was), I sat in the back with the tiny number of Spaniards in the audience. One drink is served free at a flamenco show, and I joined most of the Spaniards in ordering a "Cuba libre" (rum and coke—it means "free Cuba", and I hear they were called that even before Castro). Interesting, while the first drink is free, additional drinks **[even non-alcoholic ones]** start at Pt. 500 (\$3). Needless to say, NO ONE ordered an extra drink.

In the Soviet Union, a flamenco show would have been billed as "Andalus folk dance", and it is the traditional interpretive dance of southern Spain. Those pictures you see of women in fluffy skirts clicking castanets ... while men in tight pants play the guitar are of flamenco. In this particular show there were also women playing the guitar and men dancing, but that is apparently less common. The dance is a combination of many of the traditions that are part of Spanish history, with a heavy influence from the gypsies. The dancers were quite professional, and I really enjoyed the show.

A little more on the Spaniards' daily schedule: The show ended around 11:30 (not all that late by Spanish standards), and I followed the people I had sat near into a bar for a snack. (I must point out again here that bars in Spain are really as much for eating as for drinking; only a few older men in the place had any alcohol.) It was roughly midnight when I got done there, and as I left I passed several young parents pushing baby strollers down the sidewalk. For the first time in Sevilla I saw people outside everywhere—at midnight.

I decided I was close enough to walk back to the hotel, rather than paying for a taxi. Believe it or not, I ended up getting lost in exactly that same slum neighborhood I had seen in the afternoon. There were more people outside at night, too, but not people I would

care to know. Everyone I saw in the neighborhood at night seemed to be a teen-ager or an old man, and many seemed quite drunk. I couldn't make out what the kids were yelling as they whizzed by on their motorbikes, but I'm sure I'd rather not know. Neither did I care for a very drunk old man who asked me directions to somewhere. (Realizing I didn't know how to get there, he just asked for the time.) It amazed me what a difference there was between this neighborhood and the area where the flamenco place was. It didn't help matters that I had heard at the hotel that two ladies on our tour had been robbed this afternoon. This time I really was scared walking through the sea of sickly yellow, and I kept hoping I would see Almacenes Perez around the next corner.

Eventually I did get back to Perez and that "miraculous sale" in his widow—I think it was quite a miracle that I saw that miraculous sale, and I thank God I did. I really would love to know what route I took—the streets really seemed insignificant, but they obviously do lead somewhere. Again I was back in familiar territory, and people were still walking their dogs and strolling their children—now at almost 1am. I walked back to the hotel feeling a bit more secure.

[Probably more than anything else I've done, my experiences walking in Sevilla have made me more confident in venturing out on my own in other cities around the world. When I travel today, I try to get very detailed street maps of anywhere I think I might walk, and in the internet age I'll do searches to find out what businesses are located nearby. I'm still quite willing to walk almost anywhere, though—often in neighborhoods the guidebooks advise should be avoided.]

MONDAY, 29 JULY == SEVILLA, SPAIN TO LISBOA, PORTUGAL

On our bus ride this morning we again drove through the Sierra Morena, this time leaving Andalucia. We were stopped for over an hour in a line of traffic we eventually found was formed by a semi that had jack-knifed on a tight hairpin curve. (Spanish highways aren't bad, but the mountain roads weren't made for semis.) Crossing the mountains we entered the ancient kingdom of Extremadura. **[Today all of Spain is linked by a network of expressways, but most of them date only to 1992, when the country hosted a world's fair and the Olympics.]**

Extremadura has traditionally been the poor step-sister of Spanish regions. It is very remote, dry, and rugged, and traditionally its people have been dirt poor. The name includes the Spanish words for "extreme" and "strong" or "hard"; intentionally or not, it's a good description of the land and the traditional life of its people. However, this land is also the home of the conquistadors, people like Cortes and Pizarro, the men who conquered the Americas and became some of Spain's richest people.

According to Dienke, Extremadura was among the regions most severely hit by the Spanish Civil War. Partially for this reason, Franco decided to turn the place into a showpiece of what Spain could accomplish. He had a massive irrigation system built with forced labor, and then he re-located thousands of poor farmers from Castilla. (Didn't I say earlier that fascist dictators seem to use the same methods as communist ones?) At any rate, Extremadura was supposed to be the agricultural wonderland of Spain.

For the most part the project was surprisingly successful. Most valleys we passed had what looked like rather prosperous farms, and none of the area looked especially poor. Interestingly, Extremadura was the only area in Spain where I saw farmhouses (made of whitewashed cement blocks). Normally Spaniards live in villages and only work on farms; a few Extremadurans appear to live on the land.

The only large city (100,000 people) in Extremadura is Badajoz (bah-dah-HOES), on the Portuguese border. It is an interesting place that looks like three entirely different cities that happen to border on one another. The first is a truly ancient area, all of tan stone. The second is made up of those same low plaster apartments I'd seen in so many places (they looked more like Malaga than that horrible neighborhood in Sevilla). The third, and by far the largest, is endless red brick high-rises. Wide (8-lane) avenues separate the different parts, and there is no transition zone at all from one to another. Badajoz is apparently known for food processing and chemicals, which seems to make it the Cedar Rapids of Spain—complete with the smells.

Rather strangely, the Guardia didn't stamp our passports leaving Spain for Portugal. The Portuguese police, though, made a point of stamping everyone's passports at the BACK of the book. The formalities were not difficult, though, and soon we were in another country.

—And quite a different country! The Portuguese region we were in was also called Estremadura, but it was obvious from the minute we crossed the border that this place was not Spain.

First, of course, is the language. Portuguese is similar enough to Spanish to make it very frustrating when it can't be understood. I could decipher most signs, but it was work to figure them out—in Spain I basically read without thinking. The only comment I would make about spoken Portuguese is that it sounds A LOT like Russian—similar to French, but full of "sh" sounds. The only time I ever understood ANYTHING in Portuguese was watching TV, where the pictures do the interpreting.

The Portuguese also seem much more traditional in their dress than the Spaniards. There are far more of the "viuditas" (little old widows, dressed in black) in Portugal than in Spain, and there are also many men who wear traditional dress (tight black pants, a ruffled shirt, and rather funny hats that looked like berets with little buttons on top of them). The kids also dressed in more traditional clothes—very few jeans and lots of ruffled shirts. A few people in the small towns of Spain dress this way, but I really think people would have a good laugh if a man wore one of those odd hats **[called a "boina" in Spain]** in Madrid. In Portugal, however, I saw the same kind of clothes in cities as in small towns. **[It would be fascinating to return to Portugal and see how much it has changed. My bet is that joining the E.U. has modernized Portugal even more than it did Spain.]**

In the place where we stopped for lunch (a town of about 15,000) there were signs telling us the water was not safe to drink. Bottled water was served free with the meal. It turns out that part of this town's water comes from an ancient Roman aqueduct—that part is perfectly safe. The rest is heavily contaminated ground water, and there is no treatment plant to purify it. I saw Spaniards drinking tap water everywhere, even in the smallest towns. Regardless of what Dienke said, I would never have questioned the water in a Spanish town as large as this one.

Perhaps the most obvious difference from Spain, though, is the way people live. Everyone in Spain (I mean EVERYONE) lives in an apartment. Except for a handful of farmhouses in Extremadura, I saw absolutely no individual homes in Spain. Even in the tiniest towns the homes are rowhouses, not separated—it's been that way for thousands of years, and no one would think of living differently. In Portugal you see row houses rather than apartments in the big cities. In small towns people live in individual houses, a fact that means the small towns sprawl so much it is often difficult to tell one little town from the next.

In Spain (like in America) it is the cities that are wealthiest, and the rural areas where the economic problems are the most severe. Portugal is generally poor, but it is the rural areas that tend to be the best off. In these places people grow their own food and thus don't have the expenses that the city-dwellers do. (You see absolutely no farm equipment in Portugal.) The cities, especially Lisboa, had the worst poverty I've seen anywhere (more later).

On the way to Lisboa, we went through the world's largest cork-growing region. I'm not sure I really knew until this summer that cork came from trees—certainly I didn't know it was the bark of a tree. Along the road there are cork trees in various stages of their growing cycle, a rather interesting sight.

I hadn't noticed until we got into Portugal, but Constantino had a wooden rosary hanging from either side of the front of the bus. I think those beads must have been there to bless our bus on the Portuguese roads. I've been on some strange roads in the American west and in northern Canada, but even the Yukon didn't prepare me for Portugal. Dienke told us the present Portuguese roads follow exactly the same routes as the ancient Roman roads. The Roman roads, of course, were designed for travel on foot—not in a bus or a semi. The "highways" are barely two lanes wide, always with either a cliff or a drop-off to the side (never a guard rail). They were originally paved in brick, and then asphalted. Today in many places the asphalt has been worn down so the brick is exposed. Unlike in Spain there are no pavement markings and few signs. On the best sections the speed limit is 80 km/h (50mph). In many places there are long stretches of hairpin curves where the speed is 20km/h (so slow you wouldn't think of it in miles). Needless to say, Portugal is a very scenic country. There was only one exception to the bad highway trend. For the last fifty kilometers of the trip (i.e.: in metropolitan Lisboa) we drove on a four-lane tollway—at a full 100 km/h (60mph).

Lisboa (locally pronounced "leash-BOH-ah"--how we ever got "LIZ-bun" out of it I don't know) was a place I was not prepared to see. I was not surprised to see the beggars in Spain, and I expected an African city like Tangier to be poor, but I never imagined what awful poverty there could be in Europe. There are several classes in Lisboa, but two stand out from the rest—the VERY rich (a select few people who make the most obscene display of wealth I've seen anywhere—literally living in private castles) and the VERY poor (who live in either row houses too run down to describe adequately or in actual shacks built of whatever is available and set up wherever there happens to be room). The general living conditions were at least as bad as in the medina in Tangier, and the overall appearance of the city is MUCH uglier. I had heard about this kind of housing in Mexico City, Lagos, and other super-huge Third World cities, but somehow Portugal has never been on my list of Third World nations.

Portugal does vie with Greece, though, for the honor of Europe's poorest country. Apparently it has always been a land of the very rich and the very poor. About ten years ago the very poor in southern Portugal revolted, in what was falsely called the bloodless revolution. A communist government took power, promising sweeping reforms and immediate prosperity.

The first of these reforms was to grant independence to former colonies such as Angola, Mozambique, and Cape Verde. This had two negative effects. First of all, Portugal lost a lot of exclusive trade with these countries. More disastrously, though, over a million residents of the colonies moved to Portugal—swelling the population by ten percent. (For the most part everyone in Spain is white; because of the immigrants, Lisboa has about the same mixture of blacks, whites, and Asians as an American city.) All these immigrants assumed things would be better in Portugal than they were in the colonies. Sadly, as bad as things are in Lisboa, they were probably right.

About this same time, thousands of farmers were going bankrupt in Portugal and moving to the cities en masse. (Sound familiar?) There weren't enough jobs in the cities to support the original residents, let alone all the farmers and immigrants. The result is modern Lisboa (and Coimbra and Porto and ...).

Absolutely nothing I have seen in the United States can compare to this kind of poverty. In fact the only pictures I have ever seen of such conditions were in all the articles the magazines did on Mexico City about a year ago [**when that city officially became the world's largest**]. Mexico City had grown for largely the same reason, poverty-stricken farmers hoping for something better. Seeing this, it's easier to see how rich America really is—even in the midst of an economic downturn. I can see better why so many immigrants still want to come to America; even our poorest people are better off than so much of the world.

I think the hardest thing for me to accept in Lisbon was that the rich and poor lived literally side by side. All over the city there were beautiful homes and posh office buildings surrounded by shacks. I think if the poor were isolated in a special neighborhood it would be easier to ignore them, but this contrast can't be ignored. If Third World cities really do have the same contrast (and they apparently do), it's easy to see why there are so many revolutions. No one living in such awful poverty could stand to be ruled by people who display such absurd wealth.

[Lisbon's really is like nothing I've seen before or since. While I've seen poverty as bad or worse in Mexico and Peru, Latin American cities also have good neighborhoods and it's easy to figure out what's good and what's bad. I got the feeling that Lisbon had no zoning, nor any historical settlement pattern. Because of that even the "good" parts look like slums. The shacks are probably the thing that stood out most in Lisbon, and they're what made the place seem worse than the Third World. People in Mexico City and Lima don't live in shacks. In fact, the only other place I've seen a significant amount of shacks was in the Mississippi delta south of Memphis—and they're all gone today.]

The communists, by the way, were voted out when they couldn't live up to their promises. Most of the main businesses are still nationalized, though. Today Portugal's government changes frequently—three times a year. Inflation is so high that it's considered good if prices don't double in a year. The currency is worth next to nothing, and sinking fast. A year ago 100 Spanish pesetas bought about 50 Portuguese escudos. While I was in Portugal, 100 pesetas bought about 103 escudos, and when I left Spain less than two weeks later 100 pesetas bought 115 escudos. They say that by next year there may be as many as 500 escudos to 100 pesetas.

[Portugal's economy started stabilizing shortly after I wrote this. The escudo eventually `bottomed out at around 150 to the dollar, about the same as the peseta. Today Portugal is a euro country, and its unemployment rate is actually lower than most places in Europe.]

With so many currency devaluations, the printed money can't keep up with the prices. Virtually no coins are used in Portugal; even though they aren't precious metals, they are worth more than their face value. There are banknotes as low as 20 escudos (a little over a dime when I was there—probably less now), and the highest note is 1000 escudos (not much more than \$5). Spain has a Pt. 5000 note, and their inflation isn't nearly so bad. It brings to mind the stories you hear of Germany before Hitler, where people were using wheelbarrows of money to buy their food—not that bad yet, but who knows what a few years might bring. (By the way, as closely as I can tell, the monetary unit is locally called the "uh-SHKOOT-uh", with the fist and last syllables barely pronounced.)

[The lack of coins was one of the strangest things I encountered in Portugal. It's especially strange given that the trend pretty much everywhere in the world since the mid '80s has been toward high-value coins (like the Canadian "loonie" and "two-nie" or the new British five-pound (\$10) coin) that are thought to last longer than bills and be cheaper in the long run for governments to produce.]

I was embarrassed by our hotel—by far the most elegant we stayed in on the trip. Each room had a double bed (most unusual in Europe), color TV with movies, and a private balcony. But, like everywhere in Lisbon, there were shacks next door and pathetic row houses down the street. Strangely, though, there wasn't the usual line of beggars and merchants outside our hotel to greet us as we arrived and departed. I'm not sure why this is, but my guess would be that the Portuguese communists, like the Soviets, outlawed begging. (The Soviets, though, really wouldn't need to beg. These Portuguese made most of the beggars I saw in Spain look rich.)

I would love to have seen where Constantino, our driver lived. His family would be fortunate in that he had a job, but unfortunate because his job was largely outside the country (he often was away from Lisbon for months at a time). Constantino dressed well, but I think that may be a job requirement. I imagine wages and tips combine to make him well paid by Portuguese standards, but he certainly is nowhere close to the rich people. I know I tipped him well at the end of the trip (the equivalent of \$20 in escudos—the books suggest \$10 to \$15 for a two-week trip), but I wonder how much of a family he has to support.

—But enough of poverty. While that is my main impression of Lisboa and one of the most important images I have from the whole trip, it's not what we were supposed to see on the tour.

This evening we went to a Fado dinner—a supposedly traditional Portuguese dinner (I doubt it—we started out with French-fried fish, but the main course was very American fried chicken) with folksingers and dancers for entertainment. I think the performers were college students doing summer work. They weren't bad, but they weren't as good as the flamenco dancers--and neither could compete in the same league as the Soviet dancers.

Back at the hotel I watched *An Officer and a Gentleman* on the movie channel on TV. It's interesting to note that while foreign movies and TV are ALWAYS dubbed into Spanish, in Portugal they are subtitled. Let me quote Dienne on the topic: "The Portuguese will tell you it's so their children can speak foreign languages without an accent—that's poppycock (her word). It's the same as in Holland—there's just not enough Portuguese to make it affordable to do the dubbing." It was nice to be able to see a movie in English, though. **[You can see definitely see this today in the DVD era. Audio tracks are almost always available for Spanish and French, but if other languages are available, it's only as captioning.]**

TUESDAY, 30 JULY == LISBOA

We had a breakfast buffet in Lisboa, the only decent breakfast on the trip. It was still a continental breakfast—just rolls and liquid—but there was a wide variety of rolls to choose from, and they were soft. There were several flavors of jelly, as well as salted margarine. Moreover coffee, juice (actually "Tang[®]"), and bottled water were all included at no extra cost. There was really no need for the bottled water (the Lisboa hotel was the only one we saw with an ice machine—obviously the water is supposed to be potable), but the juice was a welcome addition. The advertised price was about the same as elsewhere (roughly \$2), making Lisboa the only place I didn't feel breakfast was an incredible rip-off.

This morning we had our city tour of Lisboa—ruins, monuments, and a monastery that really aren't different enough to describe in detail. Interestingly, though, Lisboa is similar to Tangier in more ways than just poverty—Lisboa also has a medina, albeit

populated by Portuguese and Angolans these days. This remnant of Moorish Lisboa was the only area to survive an 18th century earthquake that apparently leveled most of southern Portugal. Originally built to house the Arabs, it has the same narrow pedestrian streets and low apartments I'd seen in Tangier. They really look more Moorish than those in Tangier, though. The neighborhood is not wealthy, but it is about as close as Lisboa comes to middle class—definitely better off than Tangier's medina.

The Portuguese have covered most buildings with decorative ceramic tile, and usually even these are centuries old. Interestingly, the Portuguese told us the tiles were introduced by the Arabs; the Spaniards in Sevilla told us they were borrowed from the Delft ceramics of Holland. The tiles seem absolutely identical in both places, and I'm more tempted to believe the Spaniards—most of the tiles (which are traditionally blue and white) look exactly like the Delft my parents brought back from Holland a few years ago, and virtually all of the designs are VERY Christian.

Another interesting monument is Lisboa's bullring, which is entirely enclosed and topped with onion domes, like a Russian church. The Portuguese want everyone to know, by the way, that in Portuguese bullfighting the bull does not die. It is, however, severely punctured by various types of blades—the Spaniards would tell you death is preferable to a life of misery.

At noon I took a walk through the neighborhood around our hotel. I was again amazed by the mixture of beautiful offices and high-rise apartments with shacks literally in their back yard. It made me think of the lovely hotel where Paul and I stayed in Leningrad—the place guests of the tsars stayed before the revolution. It really is scary to think what this kind of difference between rich and poor can lead to.

There is one thing about Lisboa I haven't mentioned yet, and something that definitely can't be ignored—the graffiti. If you've seen pictures of the New York subway cars, you've seen almost every wall of every building in Lisbon. The Spanish cities have some graffiti (always communist), but nothing more than you see in a small town like Algona. The only place I remember seeing as much graffiti as Lisbon was at Grant's tomb in Harlem. Reagan visited Portugal last spring, and I'm sure he was the inspiration for much of the graffiti—NONE of which in any way supports America. Much of the graffiti tells America and NATO exactly what they can do with their bombs, using words I could tell were “not nice” without really knowing Portuguese. There is also a lot of pro-Soviet graffiti—also much different from Spain. While the communists are popular in Spain these days, they are NOT pro-Soviet communists (a concept that takes a little getting used to).

The afternoon was rather wasted. At an additional charge we went for a visit to a beach full of chic resorts near Lisboa: Sintra, Cascais, and Estoril. It's the type of place *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous* would enjoy visiting—the complete opposite of the shacks and row houses (everything here is privately owned and tightly guarded, so the shacks don't appear). Apparently this is the current hot spot for the royal children of Europe to meet. I can't say I saw any of them personally, but then I supposed they are in somewhat more secluded areas than we visited.

WEDNESDAY, 31 JULY == LISBOA, PORTUGAL TO SALAMANCA, SPAIN

This was a long, but enjoyable day with a tragic ending. Good or bad, I don't know, but this will be the most memorable day of the trip.

The morning bus trip was from Lisboa to Fatima, an obscure town where several children are said to have seen Mary in a tree that longer exists, apparently the most recent such appearance. The place is now a shrine; its basilica is a site of pilgrimage for many Catholics. It was interesting as a Protestant to hear the place described by Dienke, who was also very obviously Protestant and who made it clear she didn't believe a word of the legend. While I don't disagree with her, it seemed she could have been a bit less opinionated with a tour of mixed religions. It was one of the highlights of the Cuban grandmother's life to visit this place, and I really think she was offended by Dienke's attitude.

Quite frankly, though, I was offended by the atmosphere at Fatima. Far from being a solemn religious place, I got the feeling I was amid the moneychangers at the temple—hundreds of people had the tackiest religious souvenirs to sell, at enormous profit (e.g.: little Virgin Mary barometers that change color with the weather or superballs with a 3-D image of Christ inside—we're talking really tacky here). They stayed away from the basilica itself, but anywhere else in town they were everywhere. I was really sickened by it, though I've heard from people who have been to Israel that it's worse there. I just can't picture God smiling on people who profit from religion—it's like infringing on a sacred copyright. **[It's also VERY Catholic. Pretty much every Catholic church worth visiting the world over seems to be overrun with religious commercialism.]**

The basilica itself is truly a palace, and the only church I had seen yet that charged admission—well actually they don't call it admission. There's an old priest there who makes sure you cough up the “suggested free will offering” of about \$5, designated for upkeep on the building. I figured it was silly to go inside at that price; I'd much rather donate \$5 to missions than support upkeep on a church building. **[I've since found that LOTS of churches charge admission, and a lot of them don't even “suggest”—they demand. I probably should have gone inside Fatima, which I gather is a truly gorgeous church. What's surprising is that admission wasn't included (or even optional) in the tour price.]**

Shortly after leaving Fatima we passed through Coimbra, Portugal's ancient university town—which Dienke told us today enjoys the dubious distinction of Europe's highest unemployment rate. Apparently more than half of the men of Coimbra can't find jobs in Portugal and must do migrant farm work in France or Germany. It's a city of run-down row houses, much like many American cities.

Rather oddly most of the rural area around Coimbra looked like about the most prosperous area I saw in Portugal. The crops (mostly salad vegetables) looked good, and there were relatively new houses everywhere, and most families seemed to have cars.

It was a LONG drive (with two more stops en route) to the Spanish border. We had to wait for a free officer to be officially permitted to leave Portugal, but there was no hassle at all. No one even stamped the passports this time. Once again it was good to be back to familiar things--and in a country where I spoke the language.

A high mountain range that I don't know the name of forms the border between Portugal and the Spanish kingdom of Leon (lay-OWN, now united with Old Castilla), and the change in landforms is almost as abrupt as the border. While it is drier than Iowa, Portugal looks like a rain forest compared to Leon. Trees and green underbrush cover the mountains in Portugal, while in Leon the land is basically flat and yellow, almost universally used for grazing. I imagine the clouds drop their rain on the west slope of these mountains, leaving Leon extremely dry. Since there are no nearby rivers, the area cannot be easily irrigated for crops.

Leon is an ancient kingdom, and its towns look properly old. We stopped briefly in Ciudad Rodrigo, built as a stone fortress to defend Leon against the threat of invasion from those nasty Portuguese. Most of the city is still contained within thick stone walls, although the place has fully modern electricity and sewer systems—and (we're back in Spain again) potable water.

It was still a long ride on to Salamanca. It's 562km (about 350 miles) from Lisboa to Salamanca, and I figured we averaged about 55km/h (35mph)—that's just on the highways, not counting the time we stopped at Fatima or for lunch. All together the trip today was over thirteen hours, by far the longest on the tour. We finally got to Salamanca a little after 9pm.

Maybe it's just that I was in a daze after the long ride, but Salamanca looked almost enchanted as we arrived. I really think it's the most beautiful place I saw all summer. The city was founded roughly a thousand years before Christ, and many of its historic buildings date to the Middle Ages. There are thousand-year-old buildings that today contain quite modern apartments. The entire city is built out of tan stone (even the new suburban apartments match the color scheme), and at sunset it seemed that the city could be made of gold.



An old man in a boina in a café in Ciudad Rodrigo

Our hotel was a charming old place right downtown. Dinner was included this evening, but I chose to go out walking while there was still a hint of light. It was a wise choice for, as it turned out, it was the only chance I would have to see this lovely city.

Salamanca has been a university town since the 13th Century. While its university is no longer considered the finest in Spain, it is still probably the most famous. As is true in college towns everywhere, there is a very different mixture of people than in other places—a mixture I rather enjoy. Salamanca is an interesting combination of very traditional Spanish values and a very liberal student influence. It's like a Spanish version of Iowa City. Only in Barcelona did I see this same contrast.

Most of downtown Salamanca is a pedestrian mall, and it is a pleasure to walk around in. At the center of everything is the Plaza Mayor, an arched building from the 1700s that surrounds all four sides of Salamanca's main square. The square is filled with outdoor cafes, artists, street performers, and hundreds of people just walking around. Away from both traffic and main shopping streets, the Plaza Mayor makes a pleasant, relaxed meeting place.

I absorbed as much of Salamanca as I could in the short time I had to see it. Everything I saw I liked—it's a place I could be comfortable living in. **[My brother Paul did live here when he studied in Spain, and he seemed to like the place a lot.]** I have always liked the atmosphere of college towns, and the people here were without exception most friendly. They tend to be younger on the average than in most Spanish cities, but you don't see the idle youth on motorbikes that are a problem elsewhere. (From what I read later, though, Salamanca does have more than its share of terrorists.)

Shortly after eleven I walked back to the hotel, showered, and had just stretched out on my bed to read *El Pais* when the pleasant mood of the evening changed abruptly. I suddenly heard some muffled shouts. At first I assumed it was people outside. (Salamanca is NOT a quiet city.) Among the shouts, though, I made out "heart attack" in English and knew something was really wrong. Walter, the man who had celebrated his anniversary in Algeciras, had suffered a massive heart attack in his room. He had a history of heart trouble, but somehow he had gotten clearance from his doctor to take this trip. He had just taken a shower and was packing his

suitcase when he collapsed. His wife Addie tried calling the reception desk, but no one there spoke English. She then just yelled at the top of her lungs.

I think everyone on the floor took about the same length of time to react to her shouts as I did. Several people from our tour showed up at Walter's room at roughly the same time. A Czech immigrant and I got Walter solidly on the floor and started mouth-to-mouth. I took a CPR course in college, but I would not have felt competent at it in this situation. **[I remembered watching *Emergency* as a child and dreaming of being a paramedic; I think it's wise I settled on another profession.]** Fortunately the wife of the California couple I hated was a nurse and knew her CPR. She got things temporarily under control. Meanwhile I went downstairs to explain to reception what was up and have them call an ambulance.

Two of the French Canadians on the tour were doctors. They showed up before long, and a Spanish doctor who happened to be staying at the hotel appeared out of nowhere too. Walter, of course, spoke only English, but he had people slapping him and yelling at him to respond in French and Spanish. All this time Addie kept on wailing.

The Czechs and I had gotten to know Walter and Addie better than anyone else on the tour, so the three of us tried unsuccessfully to calm Addie down somewhat. Eventually Dienke showed up and got Addie back to her senses. I hadn't had a good impression of Dienke up to that point, but she really did a good job this evening.

For no reason I can figure out, the ambulance took about forty-five minutes to arrive. I think everyone around was certain Walter was dead on the spot. They hauled him off to the hospital anyway, though. We all returned to our rooms, but I don't think anyone really slept.

THURSDAY, 1 AUGUST == SALAMANCA TO MADRID



LEFT: David Burrow standing by the ancient walls of Ávila
RIGHT: A typical downtown street in Ávila

When I went down to breakfast this morning I found Addie sitting alone in the lobby, quietly saying prayers. She explained that Walter "had been brought back", but that he was now in critical condition and in a coma. He would need serious surgery to have any chance of recovery. Then, even with a good recovery, it could be months before he could travel safely back to the States.

It's awful, but all I could think of to talk about with Addie were practical details. She seemed to appreciate this, though. She mentioned that for no particular reason they had taken out special insurance for this trip, the first time they had ever done so.

Unfortunately, the hospital required a deposit of Pt.50,000 (\$300), which wiped out the travelers' cheques in Addie's name. There was a Spanish bank that had relations with their Florida bank, though, and she had been told money could be wired. Dienneke was trying to change their plane tickets back to Florida, but they were an unusual discount fare that TWA didn't want to switch. She also had notified the U.S. Embassy to arrange things if Walter did die. The hotel had agreed to let Addie stay on and take meals as long as necessary, to be billed later. The couple had no children or other living relatives, so there was no need to notify anyone in the States. Things were working out, Addie said, but she felt terribly lonely.

The tour had to go back to Madrid. Most people had plane tickets that couldn't be changed, and Dienneke had to pick up another group of tourists. It seemed cruel to leave Addie in Salamanca. She spoke absolutely no Spanish, and the only person she had met who spoke any English was the hotel owner. It's bad enough to have a critically ill spouse, but to have this happen overseas is unthinkable. We all tried to say something to console Addie, but there's no way anyone can be cheerful under such circumstances.

Everyone was silent as we drove from Salamanca to Avila. The countryside, rugged farms trying to exist on the sun-baked red clay, seemed suitably dismal for the situation. As we neared Avila Dienneke tried to explain the history of that city, but her voice made a strange hollow echo through the bus.

Avila is famous for two reasons—it has beautifully preserved ancient walls, and it is the home of the famous mystic nun, St. Teresa of Jesus. It is a beautiful city, but much more touristed than Salamanca. It's not a tourist trap (like Mijas), but it's hard to find a place where there aren't lots of tourists around.

We drove on and had lunch at San Lorenzo del Escorial, a former little town now in Madrid's northwest suburbs (about an hour from downtown by tollway). Here Dienneke called the hotel in Salamanca to find out about Walter. He had opened his eyes, but it was unclear whether or not he was conscious. The plane tickets had been made "open", and the hotel manager had found an American student who could accompany Addie and serve as her interpreter. Regardless of Walter's condition, it was reassuring to know that Addie was better off than when we had left her.

At lunch I met a group of Australians on their first day in Spain while touring Europe. They were famished and stuffing themselves with food, just having their first encounter with Spanish mealtimes. They had been to almost every country in Europe already (having started in June), and were visiting only Madrid and Sevilla in Spain. Then they were traveling on to Lisboa and flying home from there. Of all the places they had visited, they said they liked Holland best, Britain second. France and Italy were their least favorite countries.

El Escorial (for which the town we ate in is named) is a monastery, former palace, and burial place of Spanish royalty. It is a very simple, rather ugly, huge compound that looks rather like the state prison in Fort Madison. It is stark for a palace, but quite elaborate for a monastery. All in all, my main impression of the place is that it was very big.



Valle de los Caídos

A much nicer monument in the same general area is "Valle (de) los Caídos", the Valley (really mountain) of the Fallen. This is a monument Franco had built with forced labor to honor those who died in the Spanish Civil War. Dienneke and many on the tour found it scandalous that forced labor could have been used for such a thing, but having seen all the monuments in the USSR (we were never told how they were built, but I don't think we had to be) I can say the Spanish laborers have a nicer monument for their effort.

Outside Valle los Caídos consists of a 150m (500ft) grey stone cross rising from a beautiful pine-covered mountain area. (Franco may have been a dictator, but he was religious.) In front of the cross is a lovely courtyard and a low monastery, all in matching stone. All that stone came from a man-made cave blasted into the mountain beneath the cross.

This cave serves as a basilica and mass grave. The church is half a kilometer long, all blasted into the mountain. Inside the walls of the basilica are the remains of many of the war dead. There is space for everyone who died as a result of the war—well over a million people. So far fewer than 200,000 are actually buried there, most of them people who fought on Franco's side. At first Franco refused to let the Republicans (his opposition) be buried in the Valle, and later the Republicans refused to have anything to do with "Franco's monument". A few years ago, though, Juan Carlos made an appeal for people on both sides to consider burial in the Valle, and every month new remains are moved from cemeteries around Spain to this mountain. Franco himself is buried in the floor of the impressive church right underneath the cross. Beside him lies the revolutionary hero Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera, for whom Franco had most main streets in Spain named.

The artwork in the basilica is beautiful. Being in a mountain there are no windows, of course. Instead there are ornate tapestries both honoring the dead and in religious themes. Directly under the cross is a domed area covered with an intricate mosaic, mostly of metals. The eight side chapels and the main church are lavishly furnished in expensive woods and real gold. The complex was built in the 1950s, and the tasteful modern style reminds me of the United Nations building in New York. While it's not historic, I enjoyed the artwork here more than in any of the cathedrals we visited.

It was a short drive back to Madrid and to the Hotel Agumar, where the tour had started out. Most of the group had paid \$40 to go to a gala farewell dinner. Having disliked the Soviet version of that, I felt I had better things to do with \$40. I walked downtown again and ate at a fast food place; then I went back to the hotel to consolidate my luggage. Three different people stopped to ask me the time or for directions, and by now I was able to help them out. Everything in Madrid seemed familiar and friendly—it was good to be back in a place I really knew.

FRIDAY, 2 AUGUST == MADRID

We found out this morning that Walter had died. He had gone through one surgery and developed some kidney problem, which was the immediate cause of death. It's sad that he died, but I think it really was for the best. It seemed clear he was not really going to get better, and at least this way Addie wouldn't have such a burden.

The rest of the tour members left for the airport around 9am. Constantino was driving from Madrid all the way back to Lisboa today, so Dienneke suggested an early departure. I said a quick good-bye to everyone and then was truly on my own.

The only time I really felt lonely traveling by myself was right at the beginning. I went back to my hotel room to finish packing when it struck me that here was no one else with me at all. I'm not sure I'd have noticed this so much if Walter hadn't died, but I realized that I really had next to no money with me (not anywhere close to the deposit Addie had to pay at the hospital), and I wasn't sure if my insurance worked in Spain. Getting rather depressed thinking about all this, I decided it was time to leave the hotel.

[It's kind of strange to look back on this paragraph years later, after traveling countless times on my own. Whenever I tell anyone other than immediate family that I'm taking a trip, the first question is usually "Who are you going with?" If I tell them I'm traveling alone, they usually feel a need for sympathetic remarks. At the very least they'll say, "Oh, won't you be lonely?" I generally assure them I'll be fine—which is entirely true. I've gotten to where I really enjoy traveling alone. In fact I sometimes feel a bit of a lack of privacy when I have a traveling companion. It was all new and strange in 1985, though; this was the trip where I learned to travel by myself.]

I checked out and had a porter hail a cab to take me (and the ton of luggage I had acquired) to the hotel where I would be staying on my own, the Claridge (clod-REE-hay). It was probably less than a mile away, but I really didn't feel like lugging all my bags around even that far. I had a very friendly taxi driver, whom I understood easily. We chatted mostly about the weather. He says it's always 10 degrees (i.e.: 20 degrees Fahrenheit) hotter in his cab than outside in summer. He also mentioned that it can be very rainy in winter in Madrid, and that it often gets below freezing at night. It virtually never snows, though. He had been a taxi driver for about ten years and says it's one of the best jobs in Spain. He says it's a highly-respected job, and there have been days when he has cleared Pt.20,000 (about \$125) in profit. My total fare was Pt.180 (and Pt.20 tip), so he couldn't have profited much from just me.

The Claridge is an older hotel (I'd guess '20s or '30s), significantly older than the high-rise apartments in its neighborhood. **[Actually, it was probably somewhat newer, since there would have been no reason to build a hotel so far out in the '20s or '30s. The place had art deco architecture, which likely made it look older than it actually was.]** I was staying there mainly because it was the cheapest thing Janet could book—about \$13/night, significantly cheaper than the Agumar. (The cabbie thought the Claridge was ritzier, and it does look it; I'd guess they have several grades of rooms.) My room was not luxurious in any way, but there was nothing wrong with it at all. Except for its age, it reminded me a lot of the Soviet hotels. It is a tall building, and I was on the ninth floor. The elevators weren't working, and I was more than happy to tip a porter for carrying my luggage. A maid had to show me how to open the room door (with three locks), but she refused a tip for that small service.

I left the hotel and quickly went out exploring, discovering that by far the best form of transportation in Madrid is the Metro. The metro (subway) is one of the most extensive in the world—supposedly ranking third after New York and London. There are fourteen different lines, serving every corner of the city and most of the suburbs. Line 6 (the brown line) stopped beneath Plaza del Conde de Casal, right outside my hotel. With a price of Pt.40 (less than a quarter) to go anywhere, the Metro was the obvious choice for getting around.

[This was the first time I'd ever taken public transportation on my own, anywhere in the world. The fact that I could successfully negotiate a complex system in a foreign language made me much more willing (and in fact eager) to explore the transit systems of cities closer to home.]

I wasn't quite sure what to do to take the Metro, but it was easy to figure out. Unlike in the USSR, all of Madrid's metro stations have many entrances—often as many as eight in one station, blocks apart. **[That's not strictly true. A lot of the newer stations do just have one entrance, but most older ones do have many.]** These entrances turn into long tunnels, which eventually all feed together at the main entrance to the station. Here there are always automatic ticket machines (which NO ONE uses) and a middle-aged lady in a cage (where EVERYONE buys tickets). The lady has change ready for a Pt.100 coin, and she punches a button to release a ticket. From there you go down a series of escalators to reach the tracks. The direction signs are very clear.



Typical metro entrance – Plaza del Conde de Casal
(The apartment buildings in the background are
VERY typical of southeast Madrid.)

(though they don't really have much in the way of character), and the city has since built scores of grandiose underground palaces as part of its 21st Century metro expansion project.]

There are two vastly different kinds of Metro lines in Madrid. Lines 1-5 and "R" could be left from the Romans. They were actually built in the 1930s and still use the original cars. **[Actually, they're a bit older, dating from just after World War I. I'd thought the metro was a Franco-era public service project (and much of it was), but the original part predates fascism.]** The stations are always shaped like an upside-down "U" and feature peeling plaster and dim lighting. There is no graffiti and the trains are unquestionably safe, but they are rickety and the stations are badly decayed. All along these lines the entrances have signs announcing that they are part of a program to remodel 150 old entryways. The renovation consisted of putting new tile up in those long hallways that lead to the station itself.

The new lines (numbered 6 and above) are nice. The lines are either from the 1950s or newer, and the stations are far more pleasant. They always have marble walls and usually have displays of artwork in the hallways. They looked like the simplest of Moscow's stations, but still quite nice compared to the old ones. The vast majority of stations are on the new lines, but they are mostly suburban, meaning the majority of traffic is on the old lines.

[This description is kind of amusing, because travel books will tell you the '60s era stations are by far the worst; "stark" and "utilitarian" are the words they typically use for them. The truly old stations are considered historic

The Metro is always busy, and at rush hours (including during siesta) it is quite crowded. Still there isn't the horrible pushing or crowding you hear about in Mexico and Japan. EVERYONE seems to ride the subway, from obviously wealthy executives to factory workers to students. It is a bit heavy on the poorer people, I suppose, but it's a quite respectable form of transportation for everyone. It's really fun to watch the people on the Metro, an experience you just don't get traveling any other way.

I decided that while on my own I really should see the wonders of Madrid that I hadn't yet seen. Every guidebook I looked at said that the anthropological museum was a "must see", so I made that my first stop of the day. It turned out to be an unmemorable collection of artifacts housed in glass cases. **[While I love reading guidebooks, this would be the first of numerous experiences I'd have in my travels where guidebooks and I differed in our estimates of the value of different attractions.]** They had such marvelously complete labels as "spoon" without giving a date or a place or an artistic style. I suppose all that is supposed to be inferred from the surroundings, but it was most unclear to me. I certainly didn't have to remember a lot of Spanish to understand the signs. It wasn't a useless visit, but I can't say I spent overly long there.

An interesting sub-section of this museum, although still not a place to linger, is a reproduction of an ancient Iberian cave (i.e.: like early man lived in), complete with the lovely cave paintings for which both Spain and France are famous. It's a nice reminder of just how long Spain's history is.

The Anthropological Museum is on Calle Serrano, a few blocks north of the Alcala Gate I mentioned at the beginning. Nearby is the American Embassy, one of the few buildings in Madrid that doesn't fit with its neighborhood. While most of this area is 19th Century, apparently called "Classic Revival" (like Washington's older buildings, or much of Iowa City), the American Embassy is 1950s and very modern. Moreover it is the only building I saw in Madrid with a solid fence, meaning you can't see anything going on beyond the gate. Both the Spanish Guardia and American soldiers guarded it with machine guns. I'd have expected this at the American Embassy in Moscow, but it seemed a bit much for our country's offices in a place like Spain. **[I've gathered from what I've seen and read since that this is pretty much what is found at EVERY U.S. embassy around the world.]**

I walked back to the Alcala Gate and southward past Retiro Park, now a very familiar neighborhood. I stopped at El Casón [literally the “big house”] del Buen Retiro, the annex of the Prado. Half of the Casón houses a collection of 19th Century art, until recently the most modern owned by the Prado. The other half is devoted to one painting, the famous “Guernica” (the locals pronounce it MANY different ways) by Picasso. This massive canvas covers an entire wall with a black-and-white rendition of the horrors of the Spanish Civil War, in the semi-abstract style Picasso is famous for. Halls to the side of this painting show color studies (mostly in greens and pinks) the artist did prior to painting the work. It’s interesting that he found shades of grey most effective for the terrible scene he was depicting. It really is a moving work of art. **[The Guernica is just about my favorite painting, both because of its anti-war subject matter and because it is just a moving and beautiful work of art. I like some of Picasso’s work, and I think some of the rest is hideous. The Guernica, though, is truly a masterpiece.]**

Picasso lived in France most of his life, never returning to Spain after the Civil War. He willed the “Guernica” to the Spanish people, on the condition that it should return to Spain only when the country was once again a democracy. Today the painting is one of the most proudly-displayed paintings in the Prado.

There is a museum of bullfighting at Ventas Bullring in Madrid, which I had planned to visit. I took the Metro to Ventas station and walked all around the ring, but never found anything that looked like an open entrance. What I did see was a ticket window that happened to be open. Moving a bit closer I saw that they were selling tickets for a fight this evening. (Friday fights are very unusual.) I had no idea what the fight involved, but I quickly decided to buy a ticket for Pt.300 (general admission—the cheapest of four available prices).

In the late afternoon I finally saw Madrid’s Plaza Mayor, the place I was trying to find when I got lost in Old Madrid earlier. Quite detached from the modern downtown, Madrid’s Plaza Mayor seems desolate. It is nowhere near the social center that the Plaza Mayor in Salamanca is. It is, however, a most historic place. A rather unpleasant example of this is that the arched, enclosed square was for centuries the scene of public executions.

The bullfight didn’t begin until 8:30pm—very late, but making for a pleasantly cool show. I walked from the hotel there (about a mile and a half) and arrived about ten minutes early. Having no idea where to go for my “general admission” ticket, I decided to just wander up a random stairway to the seats. One of two ushers there tried to feed me a line that I must go to an entirely different part of the stadium, but the other stopped him with the retort “que va”—a phrase I have taught my students (which the books translate as a laughing “go on”), but never really believed anyone used.

Actually the first man wasn’t entirely wrong in sending me elsewhere. It turned out that I wasn’t anywhere wrong, but I really wasn’t where I wanted to be either. I was in what would normally be called “sol” (the cheap seats, so named because they’re usually in the sun). Since it was sunset this area was no less comfortable than “sombra” (shade), where virtually everybody else was. It happened that the only people in my section were employees of the bullring and their families, all of whom had free tickets. Still that made an interesting group with whom to watch the fight.

This particular fight involved novice fighters and young bulls, meaning it wasn’t a “real” bullfight in the strict sense. The main difference was that there were no “picadores”, fighters on horseback who use a sword to lower the bull’s head. Also because it wasn’t “professional”, the crowd was very thin. It consisted mostly of families who were taking their kids for a Friday night outing. There were also a few other tourists, recognizable even across an arena by their cameras. One of the ushers in my section couldn’t understand why people (including me) would take pictures of a novice fight. He didn’t seem to understand that for a foreigner ANY bullfight is an experience to be remembered.



Bullfight at Ventas Bullring

There was one vendor selling ice cream and beverages at the bullring. I can remember his cry: “Hay cerveza, Coca-Cola” (EYE thair-BAY-thah, KOH-kah-KOH-lah), in a long, wailing voice, as if he were in severe agony. The books would literally translate what he said as “There is beer and Coke,” hardly the way we’d think of advertising things in America, but that word “hay” seems to carry implications of “I’ve got it—so buy it.”

A bullfight is something that must be seen rather than described. It’s a colorful, graceful show. It is said that bullfighting is really an art rather than a sport, and it does bear much more relation to the folk dance shows we saw in the USSR than it does to a soccer game (the REAL sport in Spain).

I should mention that I really didn't find the fight in any way sickening or unpleasant to watch. Dienne had warned the group that the novice fights were often "the worst kind of butchery", but I really was not repulsed at all. There is blood, of course, but there is blood in many boxing matches and hockey games, and frankly I'm significantly less sickened by the blood of farm animals than by that of people. The artistic manner of the show and the great tradition it represents make it quite appealing, too. I suppose I can see how those who personify animals can be upset by the fights, but I'm much more concerned about killing people than killing bulls.

[Some of my liberal friends from college went on to become animal rights activists. That's something I'll never be. While I don't feel we should be unnecessarily cruel to animals, to me people are far more important than wildlife.]

I stopped by a Wendy's fairly near the hotel on my way back. It was full of high school and college-age people who were obviously on dates. It appears that in Madrid the fast food restaurants are quite popular places to go for drinks and make an evening out. No one seemed to be in a hurry to leave, and from the empty beer glasses that had accumulated at some tables, it's not uncommon to spend hours at Wendy's the same way that kids in Cedar Falls spend hours in the bars on College Hill. An important difference, though, is that Spaniards drink VERY slowly—much more than Americans, they are there for the conversation rather than to get drunk. People drink at most any age, but intoxication is very much frowned upon. I don't recall ever seeing a drunk person in Madrid.

[Honestly, that paragraph is overstated—probably seen through the rose-colored glasses of a Spanish teacher who wanted to idealize Spanish-speaking people. Drunkenness was certainly not unknown in the country in 1985, and it was obviously even more of a problem when I returned to a wealthier, more liberal Spain in 2002. At the time I wrote the paragraph I was a young teacher appalled that many of the kids I taught drank heavily—something neither I nor much of anyone I knew did when I was in high school. In retrospect, the kids in Madrid weren't really all that different than those in Iowa—and I probably wouldn't have wanted to see them much later at night.]

I found out back at the hotel the reason my room was cheap. It faced a major highway, and the traffic noise continued all night. I finally got to sleep, but it wasn't quite the refreshing rest I might have hoped for.

SATURDAY, 3 AUGUST == MADRID

Today I toured Madrid by Metro. This is a fascinating experience, because in the Metro one can go underground and re-emerge in entirely different neighborhoods. Having had more than my fill of museums and monuments, I decided to see just how different those neighborhoods could be. **[I've since done this in numerous cities, and it's one of my favorite things to do when I travel. While it's nice to visit the famous attractions downtown, exploring a city by transit shows you where the people actually live.]**

The first place I went was the Puerta de Toledo (Toledo Gate), a single concrete arch which is basically Madrid's Arc de Triomphe. The arch is in the Embajadores neighborhood where I had gotten lost earlier. Knowing the Metro makes it much harder to get lost in Madrid, as there are station entrances every few blocks (about every kilometer) on every major street..

I then took the Metro one stop northward to "Lavapies" ("footwasher") station, where I started wandering around. The most interesting site here was the "Mercado" (locally pronounced "mare-COW"), a shopping mall of meat, fish, and produce where Spanish homemakers do their shopping daily.

Next I went to the neighborhood called Ciudad Universitaria, northwest of the city. The university itself is hidden behind brick walls and high trees, but the neighborhood could be in any American college town—student apartments and shops catering to the young.

One of the most interesting neighborhoods was the suburban area called Aluche, far southwest of the city. I remember Paul remarking in Moscow that you know you're out of town when the Metro runs above ground—the Aluche station is one of five I saw above ground in Madrid, all on a line called "Suburbano". Aluche was one of the few places I saw in Spain that was entirely residential. Except for ten or so banks, maybe twenty pharmacies, and one supermarket, it had no business. (Keep in mind there are 100,000+ people in this area.) The apartments were the same red-brick ones I'd seen all over Spain, but they were much more closely packed than elsewhere. There were no parks or churches among the buildings, as there were in every other neighborhood I had seen. There were also almost no people outside.

Perhaps the way in which this area was most different from other neighborhoods, though, was that there were communist posters up everywhere. Many told of how unfairly the Galerías stores treated their employees; others criticized those who had worked during the general strike day the previous month. The one that was perhaps the most ominous said, "Unemployment is death to the employed." Hammers and sickles were spray-painted all over the buildings, and many people displayed the logo in their apartment windows.

I should mention, though, that Spanish Communists are generally VERY anti-Soviet. (For instance, I saw one sign showing the USA and the USSR as two fat pigs, with an "=" sign between them. Another was basically the same sign, but the pigs were replaced by guns.) Many "communists" aren't even socialist in the sense of wanting to nationalize things. Instead their politics seem closest to the kind of thing Bruce Springsteen sings about—working people are being treated badly, lots of people are poor and out of work, living conditions are not good, and things in general should be better than they are. I can't disagree with any of those observations—in Spain or America—but it's talk I expect to hear from Democrats, not communists.

Another intriguing area was the far southeast area, not far from my hotel. This area used to be a small town, and it still has blocks of the same plaster two-floor row houses I'd seen in Puerto Lapice. The high-rise apartments sprawled outward to the point that the whole area is now part of Madrid. In this strange neighborhood of high and low buildings is one of Madrid's soccer stadiums, (I guess there are three.) where some sort of religious festival was taking place. From what I heard on the loudspeaker and saw of the people outside, it was like those "born-again" things you see on TV. I find that hard to believe, though, because I really can't picture many Spaniards going for that kind of thing.

I won't bore you with the details of all the other neighborhoods I saw (at least one on each of the fourteen Metro lines). I will mention, though, that while every neighborhood is different, the basic standard of living is much more equal throughout Madrid than in most cities I've seen. The apartments are really a great equalizer—you don't have luxurious suburban homes and trashy downtown row houses like so many American cities, and you certainly don't have the contrasts of Lisboa. There are some quite wealthy people and there are a few beggars, but overall Madrid is almost like a Soviet city in its equality. Except for the unemployment, it struck me that in many ways Madrid really is what Moscow tries hard to be—a pleasant, modern city of relatively equal working-class people.

SUNDAY, 4 AUGUST == MADRID TO BARCELONA

I wanted to see as much of Spain as I could in the short time I was there. For that reason I had planned all along a side trip to Barcelona, a day away from Madrid by train. All through the journey I had thought of Barcelona as the end of the trip, and it was hard to believe it was already time to go there. More than two weeks had already raced by quickly.

I left my room around nine o'clock, dragging with me more luggage than I had ever imagined acquiring. I decided to leave most of my bags in Madrid, as I was returning to the same hotel for the last night before flying back to New York. I had a long, rather amusing argument with a porter who I think would have been more willing to take the bags if I had tipped him BEFORE he put the bags in the luggage room. At any rate they did get stored, and all I had to manage on the train was a small athletic bag.

The doorman wanted to hail a taxi for me, but my funds were running VERY short by this time (and Walter's death made me think all the more of how little money I had in case of emergency). During my Metro tour of the city I scouted out the train station I was departing from and discovered the Metro stopped right beneath it. Forty pesetas and twenty minutes later I was at the Metro stop beneath Chamartin train station.

Chamartin Station is Madrid's newest, largest, and (supposedly) nicest rail depot. It has tracks to handle thirty arrivals and departures at a time. It is the rail equivalent of Moscow's international airport—dark and imposing, built of a material that absorbs sound and gives a hollow feeling. The station is no place for anyone who doesn't speak Spanish. There are few picture signs and no signs in languages other than Spanish. Observing other people with questions at information, it appeared the staff is multilingual, but they make an effort to be as unpleasant as possible to those speaking other languages (especially French). Then again the woman I observed was unpleasant to foreigners generally.

Janet had arranged my tickets before I left. They were issued by French National Railways, but apparently all the European rail lines honor each other's tickets. My ticket was printed with a specific train number, noted the destination as Barcelona with stops en route at Zaragoza and Tarragona. The departure time was to be 10:45. There was no notation of the type of train, but I had been told it was to be the "Talgo", Spain's best express train.

I checked the massive computer display of departures but didn't see anything leaving for Barcelona at any time even close to 10:45. The two best bets were a "rapido" (mis-named slow trains) leaving for Barcelona at 11:15, and a Talgo with a destination of "CEBERE/BARN" leaving at 10:45. I showed a woman at the information desk my ticket and asked (in Spanish) what track the train would be leaving from. She gave me a look that suggested I shouldn't waste her precious time with such silly questions. She kept saying "media hora" over and over again, repeating it slowly as if I didn't understand. The words mean "half hour", and I assumed she meant that the information would be known in half an hour. I entertained myself in the meantime by watching her rudely talking to French and Americans speaking their own native languages. She made an all-out verbal assault (in Spanish) on an American student who pronounced the name of "Valencia" with an "S" sound for the letter "C", where Castellians say "TH". —Not that she didn't understand perfectly well what he had said, she just seemed to enjoy being unpleasant.

Half an hour later nothing had changed on the computer board and again I walked up to the "charming" information lady. Before I got there she said "media hora" once again, this time quite nastily. (It turned out she meant the information would be announced half an hour prior to departure.) The woman seemed confident that the "CEBERE/BARN" train was the one I was interested in, and she acted as if I was the stupidest person on earth not to know that. (It turns out "BARN" is a rather common abbreviation for "Barcelona"—I looked in an atlas while writing this and discovered that Cebre is a little town just across the French border northeast of Barcelona. It's interesting, too, that she corrected my pronunciation of "Barcelona". I had said it with the "TH" for the letter "C", what I thought was correct in Castilla. He seemed not to understand at first and then said "¡Ah ... bar-SAY-lona!" Apparently that's how it's pronounced in Catalan, the language of that city.)

Around 10:30 (note that this is significantly less than half an hour prior to departure) a track number appeared on the board next to the "CEBERE/BARN" train. I quickly walked to the appropriate gate where someone asked if this was the train for Tarragona. I figured if they were going to Tarragona the train was at least heading in the correct direction. It wasn't until I arrived in Barcelona, though, that I was absolutely certain I was on the correct train. **[This is honestly kind of scary, and it's one of the worst things about train travel—both abroad and in America. Unlike with airplanes, it's fairly easy to board an incorrect train at most large stations, and the various rail companies don't seem terribly concerned about telling passengers where the trains are going.]**

An escalator led to the outdoor tracks. It was 10:40 when the Talgo actually pulled in, and it left right on time at 10:45—not very long allowed for boarding in such a confused station. I was in car #21, which means the first car in second class. The seats were set up like on a commercial bus or a small airplane, four seats across with an aisle down the center. It was slightly more spacious than a plane, but not exactly luxurious. **[Amtrak has MUCH more room in its coaches.]** At the back of the car was a tiny airplane-style restroom. The car was nearly full, mostly of Portuguese tourists, but no one was seated next to me at first. (Almost all seating on the Talgo is reserved.)

I has never taken a ride on a long-distance train before (except a tourist train in Colorado), and the first hour of this trip was exciting. After that it got very monotonous. **[While I've grown to generally like train travel, that statement would still be true today.]** Eight and a half hours is a long time in any moving vehicle. Airplanes attempt to entertain passengers on long flights, but the only entertainment on the train was piped organ music including such memorable songs as "New York, New York" (that's right—on the organ). This was one part of the trip when it would have been nicer to have been traveling with someone else. Time goes much more quickly when there is someone to talk with. (The seat next to me was occupied only for about an hour, between two little towns.)

[Having now traveled quite a bit on Amtrak, I've come to wonder why they don't have entertainment on trains—particularly these days, when headphones would make it fairly unobtrusive to those (like my sister) who wouldn't care for it. Almost every train trip is at least as lengthy as a trans-Atlantic flight, and I'd think they could make money by selling access to an entertainment system (and probably also by selling ads). They show children's videos in the lounge on Amtrak, but they've never gone for airplane-style entertainment.]

The train travels across the ancient kingdom of Aragon, most of which seems to be an area even the Spaniards don't try to farm. It looks a lot like the American West, especially western Colorado or Utah. There was a feeling of remoteness I didn't sense anywhere else in Spain. Toward the end of the trip the train passes through a series of tunnels (it takes about half an hour to go through the whole system) under the mountains that divide Aragon and Catalunya (or Cataluña), the semi-independent region of northeast Spain. Catalunya has a moist, costal climate and is the only place I saw in Spain that was truly green. It was refreshing to see real trees and green grass growing on the hillsides—without irrigation.

The final hour of the journey, from Tarragona to Barcelona, passes through a major resort called the Costa Dorada (Gold Coast). It's a continuous row of condominiums the entire distance between the two cities. Beyond the condos, in the towns themselves, no one would be able to see there was an ocean nearby. The area is older and not as nice as the Costa del Sol, but from what I've read it is apparently the beach of choice for Europeans. **[It looks almost identical to most of the Florida coast.]**

I almost missed the station I was to leave at. All through the journey a taped voice had announced each stop in many languages. Near the time we should have gotten to Barcelona, the tape said "Next stop—Sants", which I figured was yet another of the resort cities along the Costa Dorada. Suddenly the train entered a massive underground complex, like an overgrown subway station. I happened to notice a sign that said "Barcelona—Sants Estacio" just as the train was pulling to a stop. I grabbed my bag quickly and had just gotten out the door when the train took off again. (All the stops were that short.)

[To this day I'm not entirely sure Sants was where I was supposed to get off. My bet is that it's actually a secondary suburban station (Amtrak has brief stops at similar stations just outside almost every American city), and that the train may have made a much longer stop at the REAL Barcelona station farther on. Sants was a large station, though, and it was in (though on the edge of) Barcelona.]

I had no idea where my hotel was in relation to the station. Janet had said it was central (it turns out that nothing is really central in Barcelona), but it seemed the station was rather suburban. I hated to spend a lot of money on a taxi, but there was no way I was going to find a hotel on my own.

As it turned out the hotel couldn't have been much more convenient to the station. The taxi fare was Pt.200, including a Pt.60 supplement because I had gotten on at a train station. It was about 20 blocks to the hotel, easy walking distance **[well, for me anyway]**. It ended up that Sants-Estacio was to be the Metro station I used in Barcelona.

The hotel Janet had booked in Barcelona was luxurious. It was a modern, elegant, five-star place (in the league of a Marriot or Sheraton), and as an individual guest I got significantly better treatment than the five-star places had given the tour group. The staff couldn't have been nicer, and no one seemed to be searching for a tip at all. Somehow Janet had booked the place at a MUCH cheaper price than that which was posted on the room door. The door prices started at Pt.9000 a night and went up to Pt.20,000 with various services. I was paying around Pt.6500 a night. **[That rate—just over \$40 a night—really is unbelievable, even by the standards of the mid '80s. This really was a VERY nice hotel, one of the nicest places I've ever stayed in my life. Its equivalent in America would have cost close to \$100 even then, and would likely push \$200 today. There's no way I've have afforded to stay at such a place back home; nor could I afford to stay there in Spain these days. At the time, though, I think Spain was just backward enough that its prices were closer to the Third World than the West.]**

I settled down and watched TV for a while, but I soon decided I wasn't tired enough to just waste the evening in the hotel room. So I embarked on what was to become another of those marathon walks.

Before I left I located the hotel in Madrid on a city map, but I hadn't been able to find where I was in Barcelona. I assumed (and was about to prove right) that I was far out of the city center. Still, Janet had said the hotel was right downtown and the area around looked commercial enough. I figured it couldn't hurt to take a walk and get my bearings.

I knew the heart of Barcelona was the Place Catalunya, sort of the "Puerta del Sol" of northeast Spain. I figured if I found a major street and followed the signs I would eventually get there, rather as I had stumbled on downtown Madrid. I also figured (incorrectly) that it couldn't be any further away than was downtown Madrid. Finally I figured (also incorrectly) that if I got tired I could always find a Metro station and return by train.

Finding a major street was the easy part. The hotel was just half a block off a tree-lined twelve-lane boulevard. (I found out later this was Avenida Diagonal, the main throughway in the city.) I followed this for a few blocks and then saw (as I had hoped) a traffic circle with a sign for Place Catalunya and assorted other destinations. I turned onto a slightly lesser street (Avenida de la Infanta Carlota) and followed a sign with the triple destination of "Place Catalunya", "Sants-Estacio" (where I had first entered Barcelona), and "Aeroporto". I found it difficult to believe that downtown could be in the same direction as the airport, but I figured it was best to keep following signs.

Avenida Infanta Carlota was a little over a mile long and ended at Sants-Estacio. I saw a metro station there and if I had been smart I would have entered. I saw another sign for Place Catalunya (now pointing the opposite direction from the airport), though, so I kept on walking. While I had already come a great distance, it was at least obvious how to get back to the hotel.

I walked over fifty blocks from the traffic circle (honest—I just checked it out on a map) along a series of massive boulevards. The smallest (Pasaje de Santa Maria) was eight lanes, one way. Needless to say, there wasn't a lot of real business (or people) on those "streets". I remember at least seven Chinese restaurants, though, and a two-block complex that houses the Barcelona branch of the phone company (in Spanish "Telefonica"; in Catalan just "Telefon"). The whole area was really very much downtown, yet I never made it to Place Catalunya. (I found out the next day that I had gotten within ten blocks of Place Catalunya when I gave up and turned around.) I found no Metro entrances anywhere, so I just turned around and walked those fifty-plus blocks back to the hotel. (It makes me tired to figure it out, but in Cedar Falls there were 12 blocks to a mile; the blocks in Barcelona are slightly smaller, but not that much smaller—it was about 150 blocks in all, a few more than I'd care to do tonight.)

For all that walking, I can't say I came to know or like Barcelona in the way I did Madrid the first evening I was there. If anything I was unimpressed with the city. It seems to be much more a "city" than Madrid—Madrid really is like a collection of overgrown small towns. The outward appearance of Barcelona reminded me a lot of Moscow—it was huge, sprawling, dirty, and not particularly inviting. **[Barcelona is just about the ugliest city I've seen anywhere.]** The sidewalks were coated with a sticky black substance, and the air had a weird smell to it (like a cross between smog and sewage). Being tired surely influenced my initial impression, but I really can't say I was overwhelmed by Barcelona any of the time I was there. Aside from being a big port, Barcelona is the Chicago of Spain—the second city and major manufacturing center. It's almost exactly the same size as Chicago, and the two cities really are a lot alike [though all in all I like Chicago MUCH better]. Barcelona has an enormous number of cultural attractions, but they are hidden (especially on a Sunday night) behind the negative characteristics of an enormous metropolis. (—and Chicago isn't nearly as polluted, either.)

Still not entirely sure where the hotel was, I decided to try again to find my bearings in daylight. I watched a bit more TV, including a high-tech sign-off featuring computer-generated pictures of King Juan Carlos and family and electronic music that I assumed must be Spain's national anthem.

MONDAY, 5 AUGUST == BARCELONA

I got up around eight and was out exploring at the height of rush hour. One of my guidebooks had a metro map that showed a station at "Plaza Sarria". My hotel was the Gran Hotel Sarria, located on Avenida Sarria, so I figured the square of that name must be at least vaguely nearby. I went back to Avenida Diagonal and saw a sign for "Place de Gran Sarria" (those Frenchish names are Catalan), which I assumed was what I was interested in. Turning in the direction of the sign, I was suddenly in an older residential neighborhood with relatively narrow streets that meandered in no particular direction. I never did find the square, but I eventually did find my way back to Avenida Diagonal, where I also located a Metro station. My legs weren't up to a repeat of last night, so I was only too happy to take the train.

It was clear from the start that Barcelona's metro was very different from Madrid's. To begin with, the stations were much more compact. This one had only one entrance, and most had no more than three. **[This actually makes Barcelona similar to most cities around the world.]** In Madrid it wasn't uncommon to have eight entrances in one station. Second, in Madrid everyone bought individual tickets and paid a person at the entrance. There were ticket machines, but virtually nobody used them. Barcelona was quite the opposite. There was a person selling tickets, but EVERYBODY was placing pre-paid tickets in an electronic turnstile I went to the person and tried to figure out what to buy. There was a sign (entirely in Catalan) explaining at least five different items, all called "Targete Multiviage" and lettered A, B, C, etc. I may not speak Catalan, but it didn't take much intelligence to recognize the Spanish words "tarjeta multiviage" (multi-trip card). Not knowing what language(s) the attendant might speak, I very hesitantly pronounced this phrase in Spanish (tar-HATE-ah-mool-tee-bee-AH-hay) and pointed. (I felt like the classic ugly American—I could have been waving a Berlitz book.) The man did speak perfect Spanish, but that really didn't help much. It turns there are so many "multivijajes" because there are two different metro systems in Barcelona, as well as trolleys, buses, trains, tramways, and funiculars. The various letters on the tickets indicate which of the different forms of transportation they may be used on. After a rather confused conversation I ended up with the cheapest ticket (Pt. 200 for 10 rides—I noticed this was the most common ticket among metro riders), which was good for both metro systems, the funiculars, the trolleys, and suburban trains operated by Spanish National Railways (RENFE). This really is a very good deal (much more savings than the "multivijajes" give in Madrid, which is why everyone in Barcelona uses them), but I had no idea what was going on at the time.

It's damning with faint praise, but Barcelona's subway is probably cleaner and safer than New York's (although I did experience a terrorist attack while in it—more later). **[The New York subway was a “poster child” for urban decay in the '80s, though it soon improved immensely. The NYC subway I rode in the '90s was far better than the Barcelona subway I rode on this trip.]** It's never going to challenge Moscow, though, and it really made me appreciate just how lovely Madrid's metro was. ALL of Barcelona's lines are old; the stations and trains are cramped and dirty. There are four lines on the more extensive of two competing metro systems, three smaller lines on the other system. The only place to get from one system to the other is at Place Catalunya. There are not nearly as many stations as in Madrid, so the Metro only gets you to large general parts of town, rather than to every little neighborhood.

All the signs in the Barcelona Metro are in Catalan only. I guess it's a language—it certainly isn't Spanish or French. Really it's both Spanish and French, whichever seems convenient at the moment. Having studied both languages, I had absolutely no problem reading Catalan. (For example, the Catalan word "sortida" is a half-and-half cross between the French "sortie" and the Spanish "salida", both of which mean "exit".) The main oddity I noticed is that the language uses far more than its share of the letter "X".

I took the Metro to Place Catalunya and started down the Ramblas [that's the Spanish spelling; actually it's "Rambles" in Catalan], a little chain of boulevards that one guidebook wrongfully describes as "Spain's most elegant street—the Champs Elysees of Barcelona". I haven't been to Paris, so I can't say what the Champs Elysees is like, but unless "elegant" has been re-defined to mean "seedy", the Ramblas just aren't elegant.

Near the Place Catalunya (the north end of the Ramblas) there are the local branches of the big department stores and a few "elegant" shops. After just a couple of blocks, though, the shops change. There was a proliferation of mens' clothing stores advertising bikini underwear in their windows. Further down the street a variety of "erotica" appeared in the windows, and litter was underfoot everywhere. Starting about halfway down the Ramblas I saw an incredible number of women who were, shall we say, standing around with nothing to do. I gave them a naive benefit of the doubt at first, but it didn't take long to figure out that in Barcelona the ladies of the evening work all day long.



Replica of Columbus' Santa Maria

I walked into Barcelona's "mercado" (much like the one in Madrid) and then ventured onto a side street that was unlike any place I had ever been before. The street itself was just wide enough for one car to pass when pedestrians crowded against the building walls. The buildings were around ten floors high, and virtually no light made it down to ground level. The place smelled like an outhouse; I'm sure I don't want to know why. The neighborhood was inhabited by a mob of cheap prostitutes, drug dealers, drug addicts, beggars, "punk" people (who may also fit some of the other categories), and bums—all very much in the open. There were also huge groups of foreign sailors and military personnel, who presumably provide business for the prostitutes and drug dealers. All these were mixed together with working-class people going about their daily business, oblivious to all the others. One of the biggest contrasts I saw on the trip was a group of old widows leaving mass who had to walk past two prostitutes as they came out of the church.

It was embarrassing to be a single man walking down this street. Three times I was offered the services of the ladies along the way (for as little as Pt.1000, or \$6.50). I pretended not to understand, which caused one of the women to yell a string of Catalan words I didn't understand, but which I'm sure neither a lady nor a gentleman should say. Sadly, this was far from the only area of Barcelona that was overrun with prostitutes (and the other groups of people described above). I don't mean to get carried away with the topic, but I honestly got the

impression that prostitution was a VERY common occupation for women in Barcelona. I guess I'm just a backwards Midwesterner, but while I can imagine that some women would be prostitutes, it's hard for me to believe that so many would do such a thing.

The Ramblas end at Place Colon, a traffic circle featuring a rather unimpressive monument to Christopher Columbus (Colon), looking out over the Mediterranean Sea. There is a replica of the Santa Maria anchored in the harbor here. The ship is tiny—it would fill about two classrooms. It's amazing to think that Columbus actually made it across the Atlantic in such a miniature ship.

A refreshing break from the prostitutes was Barceloneta, supposedly the old fisherman's quarter of Barcelona, built on a triangle of land that sticks out into the sea from the city's harbor. The residences here certainly wouldn't suggest an "old" fisherman's quarter (they're Franco-era apartments, newer than most of central Barcelona), but it is one of those neighborhoods that is full of "atmosphere". It's the only place in Barcelona where I heard sizeable numbers of people speaking Catalan, the only area that wasn't full of either tourists or sailors or both, and the only place where people seemed to lead a relatively normal lifestyle.

I then took the metro to the Temple of the Holy Family (Sagrada Familia), an eyesore of a cathedral that has been under construction throughout this century and is already starting to decay—long before it is anywhere near completed. I might have enjoyed

the place more, but everything there is designed to raise money for the construction. You pay to get in, you pay to visit a little museum about the place, and you pay yet again to see anything that's not in the courtyard of the building. Like Fatima, there are lots of horribly tacky souvenirs for sale at ridiculous prices. I'd have been happier with the place (and I would likely have given more money) if there had simply been a donations bowl at the exit. It just seems to me that religion ought not to be commercialized, and this seemed worse than Fatima, for here it was the church itself that sponsored the commercialization.

In the afternoon I took the funicular (basically a subway that travels at a severe angle) to Montjuich Park, which sprawls for over two miles on a hill above the city. Once again I walked further than I planned (almost the entire length of the park), but I finally came to Poble Espanyol, which might be described as a "theme park" of Spanish architecture. Poble Espanyol was built as part of a Depression-era world's fair. It is a miniature Spanish village, the buildings of which are authentically constructed in the architectural styles of each of Spain's provinces. (A better trained eye than mine can tell the difference in styles between the various provinces—about all I could see was a marked difference between north and south.) In the buildings people work at and sell handicrafts of the various provinces. I did not stay especially long there. While it is very interesting, it is the sort of place that would take a full day to see in depth. I got a quick overview, but I didn't have the time to see it in full.

I walked back through Montjuich to the funicular station and went down the mountain to a district known as Para-Lel (because of an avenue of that name that runs along a parallel of latitude). My guidebook had described the district as "the Times Square of Barcelona". Having seen seedy areas this morning, curiosity forced me to see what the guidebook likened to Times Square. **[... Another dated reference, now that New York's former red light district has morphed into a family-oriented tourist trap.]** What I saw was the worst single neighborhood I had seen anywhere in Spain. Except for Avenida de la Para-Lel itself, the whole neighborhood looked like it had been bombed. It was made up of low brick apartments, many of which had been bulldozed but not cleared away. The side streets were not paved, nor even graveled, and too narrow for anything but mopeds to use. The people looked poor, but not starving—there were no beggars in this neighborhood.

Avenida de la Para-Lel itself is what Barcelona officially promotes as its red light district. There are few actual streetwalkers, but lots of cabarets, erotic book stores, and the like, all with bright flashing signs and big crowds. Virtually everyone I saw was "punk" (except for two transvestites), and many of the things suggested by the signs in the area were positively perverse. I felt VERY uncomfortable in the area, and I quickly returned to the relative security of the metro.

That evening I stayed at the hotel and watched Spanish TV all evening. Probably the most interesting program featured "man-on-the-street" comments on issues of the day. I amazed myself by easily understanding what they had to say. The vast majority of people were most concerned about unemployment and low wages. One man was almost in tears as he described how he had worked in the mines in Galicia for thirty-five years, as had his family before him for generations. He was now earning such an absurdly low wage (He said some number of pesetas per week—I don't remember the number, but I know I couldn't make it seem reasonable even if he was paid that hourly) that he couldn't support his family. He was going to Germany to look for work. According to the newscaster, over 25,000 Galicians are working in Germany. Person after person told similar stories.

Perhaps to counter-balance that program, the following shows were pure entertainment. "The World Championship of Magic" was obviously recorded somewhere else and dubbed (badly) into very Mexican Spanish. It was in turn followed by a sequence of music videos, all but one in English (the other in a language I did not recognize). Then there were highlights of an American pro basketball game (why the NBA would be playing in August I didn't catch, and I still don't know), then some cartoons, and finally "Dallas" in Spanish. Between programs (never during them) there are blocks of commercials—ALWAYS with loud, catchy jingles and every bit as stupid as American ads. The evening finished with a quick news re-cap and that same electronic sign-off.

TUESDAY, 6 AUGUST == BARCELONA

It was a bit more exciting of a morning than I had planned!

I wandered around that maze of streets north of Avenida Diagonal and finally did run across Place de Gran Sarria, a quaint little square I could imagine to be in a little town in England. In fact it very much reminded me of pictures that my mother's penpal Chick sent of her village of Yarm, in Yorkshire. Old red brick rowhouses form most of the neighborhood, with stone commercial buildings right around the square. The square itself is a quarter of a city block with benches, playground equipment, and flocks of pigeons. I felt a strange sense of accomplishment at finally having found the place, and actually it was one of my favorite areas in Barcelona.

I went back past my hotel to Sants-Estacio and got in the metro to go downtown. For no reason I could figure out the train was stopped for over five minutes in a relatively minor station under the Ramblas. Metro riders are usually friendly, if a bit withdrawn, but now the train had a strange silence. Whispers started spreading among the passengers and I hoped I hadn't heard what I thought—the word "bomba" was hard to mistake. **[Actually "bomba" more often means "pump" in Spanish, and probably also in Catalan. In this context, though, it was a cognate to the English "bomb".]**

The train started up again and went on to Place Catalunya, where a loudspeaker message repeated itself over and over again in Catalan and Spanish. I didn't catch everything, but the basic idea was that the ETA (the Basque terrorist group) had called in a bomb threat saying there was a bomb somewhere along Line 3. Everyone must leave Line 3 immediately. The message finished with the equivalent of "Thank-you and have a nice day", hardly what one would expect to end such a message. Needless to say, I got as far away from Line 3 as I could as fast as I could. As I left the station at Place Catalunya, the police were using portable metal detectors to screen every passenger entering the metro. The line was backed up all the way to street level.

(To jump ahead momentarily, the threat was apparently a hoax. There was only a brief announcement about it on TV that night, and I never even saw a mention of it in the papers. In the early afternoon, when I again needed to use the Metro, the police were no longer screening passengers, but Line 3 was still closed. By late afternoon Line 3 was open again. I assumed it wouldn't be if there were a reason to assume a bomb might still be there, and I took Line 3 back to Sants-Estacio. Looking back it amazes me that I was able to ride the metro again that day—I guess I didn't want to walk all the way back to the hotel, and I certainly didn't have the money to hail a cab.)

[While London, Madrid, and Bombay all have experienced bombs in their transit systems, the threat from such an attack really is minimal. The vast expanse of a rail system means that any single bomb can't do all that much damage, and if you're a passenger, the probability it will hit your particular train is almost zero. I'd honestly be much more concerned about a poison gas attack like the one they had in Tokyo not long after the time of this trip. That could spread through the tunnels and endanger vast numbers of people. I can't say that really worries me much either, though. Both the press and the government seem to want people to live in fear, but it's just not healthy to go around feeling frightened all the time. We've got to live our lives, and we can't let terrorists dictate how we live them.]

After that excitement the day really turned out to be quite nice. In fact I enjoyed it far more than the one before. I began by strolling through the Barrio Gótico (or "Gothic Neighborhood"), the old quarter of the city. Here charming stone buildings built to last forever rise from narrow, winding streets. The area is really a tourist trap, but you don't have to notice that. The shops don't distract from the history and beauty of the buildings themselves, and there are enough local people walking around that you get the feeling "real" people do inhabit the place.

In the middle of the Barrio Gotico is Barcelona's cathedral, really much nicer than the Sagrada Familia structure, and finished several hundred years ago. The cathedral was one of the places it would have been nice to be with a tour. As I mentioned earlier, the tour walked right through cathedrals, ignoring whatever might have been going on inside them. (I suppose the idea is that there is power in numbers.) There were masses being said in three chapels at Barcelona Cathedral while I was there, and I just didn't feel comfortable interrupting people's worship by walking and gawking. Because of that I was just in the cathedral a short time. It seemed quite similar to all the others I had seen, though, so I wasn't particularly upset.

In front of the cathedral was a lovely little patio-like courtyard that was surprisingly free of people. I walked over there and happened upon a lovely museum that I figured would be an interesting place to spend a little while. I walked over there and happened upon a lovely museum that I figured would be an interesting place to spend a little while. It was clear from the moment I arrived that it was not Barcelona's most famous museum—I was quite obviously the first visitor of the day. I paid my Pt. 100 and started gazing at religious artifacts from the Medieval era. I assumed the museum covered the first floor of its building, and I paced my viewing to spend about half an hour there. The artifacts (altarpieces, statues, choir pews, etc.) were interesting, but not overwhelming.

It turned out the museum was, well—just a bit more than the first floor. In fact it had four floors and a basement. The three main floors were all filled with similar religious artifacts, getting newer as you went upstairs. The fourth floor was a collection of collections (postcards, cigar boxes, dolls, etc.) from the early 20th Century that had been donated by a rich old man. (What it had to do with the rest of the museum, I still don't understand for sure, but I think the building the museum was in MIGHT have originally been the man's home. Maybe the man was locally important, too—why knows?)

The basement was by far the most interesting part of the place, though. Hidden away in the basement of this rather obscure museum are some of the oldest and most historic artifacts in Barcelona. Included are ruins of the original city wall, built roughly 1000 years before Christ. A variety of pre-Christian artifacts (bowls, spoons, etc.) are housed here, as are some fascinating artifacts of the early church (i.e.: Roman times) in Barcelona. It's all very carefully organized and tastefully displayed. As much as is there, I'm amazed the museum isn't better publicized. The entire time I was there I saw only two other people besides employees.

That museum was far more interesting than the one I had actually come to the Barrio Gotico to see. Barcelona also is home to the only "official" Picasso museum in the world, and THAT museum is only too well publicized. It shouldn't be. I have always liked Picasso, along with many 20th Century painters. Sadly, though, the over-priced Barcelona museum doesn't house much of Picasso's best work. Instead it is full of garbage from his youth (or rather childhood--as early as seven years old) and his early career. There are such abominations as a man and woman he cut out of construction paper at school. Why no one threw that away, I'll never know. I certainly know I wouldn't want the world looking at the junk I made in art class back at Lincoln School. Most of the serious art comes from when Picasso lived in Barcelona and Malaga, a period in his life when he was trying to imitate the masters. He was far more successful while living in France, where he pioneered his own "modern" style. To make things worse, the museum was not organized in any coherent order--works from several different periods in the artist's life were grouped together frequently. Other people were oo-ing and ah-ing the place—I overheard one lady saying in French that there is no finer collection of Picasso anywhere. I'd dispute that. There may be no LARGER collection, but I really enjoyed the Picassos I'd seen in Washington and Leningrad (and especially the "Guernica" in Madrid) far more than these.

In the afternoon I visited the Tibiada neighborhood, at the foot of another mountain on the northern end of the city. Tibiada is an exclusive area—it looks like the pictures you see of Beverly Hills, complete with real mansions. I don't know who affords to live here, but their neighborhood made for a most pleasant walk. In the middle of this neighborhood I stumbled upon Barcelona's equivalent of the Museum of Science and Industry and ended up spending longer there than at any other museum in the city. The labels and recorded explanations were in Catalan only, but fortunately scientific terms are Greek in any language.

In the early evening I went back downtown and did a little shopping. Perhaps the most interesting purchase was a "Trivial Pursuit" set in Spanish. **[That's an item that I wonder to this day why I bought. The questions are written in VERY advanced**

Spanish, and it's trivia about Spain. I've never actually played the game, and I've only looked through the questions a handful of times.] At the Catalunya metro station as I started heading back to the hotel, I saw an image that I can still see clearly two months later as I'm writing this. As in most of Barcelona's Metro stations there were beggars. One of the ones here though was very different—she was an old lady, and older women NEVER beg in Spain. She looked truly destitute, and she was literally crying for money "para el pan (for bread/food/life)". I had literally no money on me, so—like everyone else in the station—I hurried on by. From a little way down the corridor I heard the woman literally screaming so it was clear above the noise of the station, what amounted to "Why doesn't anyone give me money for something to eat?" If agony has a sound, her voice was it. The only time I have ever heard such a cry before was on a *60 Minutes* story about the professional wailers in India. Perhaps this woman was a sort of professional, too, but she certainly managed to bring out the guilt in me (and from the look on people's faces, in others at the station). I still wonder what she had to eat that night.

Back at the hotel, I watched some more TV. In particular I remember a series of "Looney Tune" cartoons—some in Spanish, some in Catalan. I hadn't realized until then just how important language is to cartoons. You miss almost every gag when it's not in a language you understand. I also watched a strange game show that involved high-school age girls answering geography questions in an effort to win two cheap mopeds the announcer described as magnificent ("dos ciclomotores magnificos"). Apparently it worked something like the \$64,000 question—for answering one question a girl got Pt.500. (Can you imagine any American game show giving away three dollars?) Then the winnings (in cash and prizes) doubled with each question, until finally she won the mopeds. The girls elation at winning made *The Price is Right* seem tame.

WEDNESDAY, 7 AUGUST == BARCELONA TO MADRID

I got up relatively late today, organized my things, changed my last travelers' cheques at a nearby "caixe" (savings and loan), bought several newspapers to read on the train, checked out of the hotel, and walked over to Sants-Estacio. By now I was feeling more comfortable with Barcelona, but I can't say I was particularly upset to be leaving. [... **And it's not a place I have any real desire ever to go back to.**]

I haven't mentioned much yet about Barcelona or Catalunya in general, and I suppose I should. Catalunya has always been a very separate part of Spain. The mountains (with all those railroad tunnels) keep it physically separated from the rest of Spain, and the area has traditionally had its own language, literature, art, and culture. The guidebooks say Catalunya is "much more European" than the rest of Spain—whatever that may mean. **[Having since visited other places in Europe, I still have no clue what they mean by that line, which is still often said of Barcelona. To me the Puerta del Sol in Madrid is quintessential Europe. Barcelona looks and feels more like an American city—and a grungy old one (like Cleveland or Baltimore) at that.]**

During Franco's reign the Catalan language was outlawed and many other expressions of Catalan culture were discouraged. Franco was able to control this while he was alive, but after his death massive terrorism brought swift changes in the laws. Today Catalunya is a "semi-autonomous region", meaning it is and isn't part of Spain—it is a lot like the Canadian province of Quebec (the only American comparison, and it's not a good one, is Puerto Rico). The Catalan people are Spaniards—they pay Spanish taxes and elect representatives to the Cortes in Madrid. But they fly their own flag, make their own decisions on most regional matters, and label their cars with license identification ovals indicating the country they live in is Catalunya (CAT). The government of Catalunya makes a point of speaking ONLY Catalan (like the Quebec government speaks only French), which is why all the street signs, the metro, the museums, etc., are in Catalan. The people seem to make a point of speaking both Spanish and Catalan and if anything, it seemed to me that Spanish was the majority language on the street. Since Barcelona is a port city and since it is so close to France, Italy, and Germany, shopkeepers are invariably multilingual.

The regional autonomy brought an end to the Catalan terrorism in Spain. The national government also granted similar autonomy to Galicia, Valencia, and the Basque Country. (There are proposals to grant autonomy to Andalucia, too.) Everywhere except the Basque Country things have worked basically as they did in Catalunya. For the Basque terrorists (the ETA) pseudo-autonomy doesn't seem to be enough. Almost everyday there were news stories about police officers who had been blown up by the ETA. Usually these were confined to cities in the Basque Country, but (as my subway incident shows), it is a real problem everywhere.

I had three different seatmates on the way back to Madrid, two older women from Catalunya and a college student from Calatayud, a small town in Aragon. I didn't get into an involved conversation with any of them, but periodic chatting helped to make the return trip go a bit more quickly.

It was really good to be back in Madrid again. It was the third time I entered the city, and everything seemed very familiar. After checking in at the hotel and re-claiming my luggage (a very complicated process I made simpler by quite frankly bribing the porter), I went out and re-traced the walk I had made the first evening I was in Spain—it seemed like ages ago now. I added to this walk a stroll through Retiro Park itself. I had walked past it in all directions, but this was the first time I'd gone into the park itself--it's a nice place. I was tired, so I didn't stay out particularly long. I went back to the hotel, but I was too excited to sleep especially well.

THURSDAY, 8 AUGUST == MADRID, NEW YORK, CHICAGO, MOLINE, & MAQUOKETA

I took the metro downtown one last time this morning, hoping to find an open store where I could buy a ballpoint pen. Finding none I returned, re-packed my bags, and checked out one last time. I carried all my bags across the street to a taxi stand and was off

to the airport. One advantage to my hotel was its proximity to the airport; the taxi ride was only Pt.800—supposedly they can go as high as Pt.2000.

Dienke, the tour guide, had told those not leaving with the tour to be at the airport two and a half hours before their flight, as security was likely to take a long time. I needn't have hurried. Security was a joke. A porter-like person checked my luggage while I was waiting in line for a boarding pass. I could have had anything in those bags and no one would have known. The Guardia had ended their strike and were stamping people out of the country again, but their formalities took no time either. It's better to be early than late, but killing two hours in an airport is never that exciting—and Madrid airport is among the least exciting I have seen.

On the flight to New York I sat next to a fascinating woman. She was a New Yorker whose parents were born in Spain. She has spent the summer visiting an aunt who was terminally ill. Most of the time she was in a farming community in Galicia, but she had spent a few days in the cities of Vigo and La Coruna. We spent hours discussing the different experiences the two of us had in Spain.

As when I came back from the Soviet Union, customs at Kennedy airport was a joke. I was asked what the most expensive thing I had purchased was. Of the things I had with me, the Trivial Pursuit set was the most expensive—I didn't even mention the Moroccan rug, since it was shipped separately. (In the end I paid no duty on the rug; it just arrived in the mail one day with a stamp saying it had passed customs duty-free.) There were no other questions and no delay at all from the customs people.

The real delay came from the TWA people. (Curses and more curses to the TWA staff at JFK!) Just beyond customs passengers were supposed to re-check their luggage before heading for their connecting flights. TWA had one person checking luggage for everybody feeding out of eight customs lanes. Eventually I got to the front of a line and had my bags checked through to Moline. I then had to walk to another building, also used by TWA, for my flight to Chicago. (Why doesn't JFK connect its terminals, like they do at O'Hare?) **[The answer, of course, is that JFK at the time was much larger physically than O'Hare was. It would have been literally impossible to walk among all the terminals, even with moving sidewalks. Adding the AirTrain a few years back improved the airport a lot. ... And TWA doesn't even exist these days. Perhaps their nasty customer service caught up with them.]**

I had an interesting seat companion heading to Chicago, too. She was a middle-aged Black woman who was a guidance counselor in the northwest suburbs. (Their starting teachers make over \$20,000; she makes over \$50,000.) **[At the time \$20,000 was an amazing amount of money; I started at Garrigan with an \$11,000 salary and wouldn't have been making much more than that in 1985. Today our base salary has finally topped \$20,000, and the Chicago 'burbs most likely pay their starting teachers what the counselor made in the '80s.]** She had just returned from Athens and reported that since the hijacking there, security is extremely tight. Every piece of her luggage was opened, and every passenger on the plane was hand-searched. Apparently Greece was the last stop on a study tour that had taken her mainly to Egypt. Again we exchanged fascinating stories to pass the time.

I had to rush at O'Hare. The TWA flight was late arriving in Chicago, and I had to walk to another terminal (which at O'Hare means walking through a long underground corridor—not outdoors) to catch the Air Wisconsin flight to Moline. I arrived at my terminal there about ten minutes before they called the flight for boarding.

Flying Air Wisconsin (eastern lowans may be more familiar with its former name, Mississippi Valley Airlines **[today it's "United Express"]**) was one of those things which can only be described as "an experience". To start with our flight attendants were Gina and Cyndi, a.k.a. Blonde and Brunette, two little giggly cheerleaders who looked like they should be running a cash register in a mall somewhere. (You know the type—the brainless girls who look perfect but can never figure out what to punch into the machine when you give them exact change.) ... As Gina recited the safety speech I tried to imagine her in an emergency situation. I just couldn't picture her ruining her hair-do to save a passenger. (I know I'm being rude to these girls, but they really did seem incompetent. Fortunately other airlines have gone away from the idea of stewardess as sex object; indeed, most flight attendants met this summer were quite average looking men and women, and all except these seemed as if they would be quite competent in an emergency.) I had a window seat for the flight; the woman who sat on the aisle said nothing during the entire trip. The people behind made up for that, though. There were two girls who could have been the stewardesses' sisters who spent their time flirting with a Congressman from Illinois.

The flight was only a half hour, and the seat belt light was on almost half of that time. **[These days they wouldn't shut off the light at all on that short of a flight.]** Somehow the rah-rah girls managed to serve drinks in the time that remained. I was just finishing my 7-Up when I saw the Mississippi and knew I was back home. It was a beautiful sight.

John and Janet met me in Moline and took me back to their place for the night. We stayed up quite late talking about the trip. I'm not quite sure why, but I felt MUCH less tired coming back from Madrid than I did coming back from Leningrad. It's a shorter trip, but not that much shorter. I think not having the lay-over halfway through makes a difference.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Did you like Spain?

Yes—very much. I said [in another travelogue] that the USSR is not a place I would want to live. Spain isn't either, but it is a place I could enjoy making many extended visits to. It's not really a beautiful country (indeed much of the landscape is rather ugly), but it is a beautiful place to visit.

Which country did you like more, Spain or the USSR?

It's an unfair question. The Soviets treat tourists royally; the Spaniards treat tourists like tourists. The USSR was an exciting place to visit, and seeing it made a great educational experience. It was so much easier to see things in Spain (with both no restrictions and knowing the language) that I got to see much more, and I really feel I know that country much better. If the question comes down to which would I want to go back to, the answer would have to be Spain.

What did you like the most in Spain?

Of the places, Madrid. It's a city I don't think I'd ever get tired of. It's big without being crowded, pretty without being conceited about it, and friendly without going overboard. I felt the Madrileños treated me like a Madrileño, and I appreciated that.

If I answered that question with an idea or concept, it would be the freedom one sees in Spain. Spaniards haven't had a lot of freedom in their history, and they are flaunting it today. I wrote about there being a lot of freedom in the USSR, and I wasn't lying. What freedom there is there stands out, though, because so much of the society is so tightly regulated. In Spain the freedom is really total. In many ways they are getting a bit carried away with their freedoms—as with the open prostitution in Barcelona—but even that can be refreshing. It has been said that freedom itself is more important than what people do with it. King Juan Carlos really seems to believe that, and it's a pleasant change from so much of the world.

What did you like the least?

Of the places, Gibraltar. **[Of course, I wasn't really there long enough to fairly judge the place.]** Of the things I saw it would be the assorted religious sites that were so commercialized, especially Sagrada Familia in Barcelona and Our Lady of the Rosary at Fatima. Of the aspects of life, it would have to be the severe unemployment in all of the countries I saw on this trip. The unemployment probably bothered me the most of anything. Probably the best thing the Soviet system has going for it is that it employs all its people--by law. Apparently Franco created menial jobs to keep the Spaniards employed, but those jobs just don't exist today. It's those millions who are out of work that are the beggars, thieves, and terrorists. One problem leads to the others.

What are the Spanish people like?

I mean this in a positive way, but they are like I have seen Spaniards stereotyped—loud and lively. Spaniards will lightheartedly over-react to everything, and there's not the slightest thing that doesn't warrant some verbal comment—good, bad, or neutral. I think Spaniards believe life is intended to be fun, and they see to it that they enjoy everything they do. They tend to be proud and hard-working. ... For the most part they are friendly to those who are nice to them and very rude to those who treat them badly.

Are Spaniards rich or poor?

Spaniards are, generally, a bit poorer than most Americans but a bit wealthier than most Soviets. They are also overwhelmingly middle class. Barcelona is the only place in Spain where I really saw obviously rich and poor sections. One other thing—perhaps the biggest difference between Spain and America: EVERYBODY lives in apartments. Even in the tiniest villages families live in rowhouses which are essentially apartments. Individual homes are virtually non-existent in Spain, and I think a Spaniard would have a difficult time imagining that most Americans would even want to live in private houses.

I might add that Spain has a fairly large “yuppie” class, especially in Madrid and Barcelona. American Express pushes its card to Spaniards with the same ads it uses in America. Salaries on the whole are lower than in America, but most prices are also equivalently lower. In pesetas, of course, everyone sounds wealthy. American Express requires all of its cardholders to be millionaires—which means they must make about \$6250/year.

How was your Spanish?

My first temptation is to say “adequate”, but really it was very good. You find out on such a trip how much you know and how much you don't know of a language. I found I could understand virtually anything I could read. I could have also written anything I wanted to. Whenever I had reason to speak Spanish, I was in control of the conversation, and I had no problems making myself understood (although I sometimes wasted time thinking about how to say something CORRECTLY when correct grammar really didn't matter that much). The real problem was what my students also have the most trouble with—listening. When I knew what a conversation was about (for example, when the Cubans in the tour group asked a local guide a question in Spanish) I could usually get the main idea. I was also usually able to follow the main idea of what I heard on TV and radio. When I overheard conversations on the street, though, I had no idea whatsoever what was being said. I could catch words here and there, but they never seemed to fit together. All in all, though, I feel much more comfortable with my Spanish now than before I left.

What will you remember most from the trip?

Everything sort of blends together, but the night in Salamanca stands out. I remember what a beautiful city Salamanca was, how much I enjoyed my walk among the “golden” buildings. Sadly, I also remember the tragedy of Walter's heart attack. That combination of good and bad stands out above the rest.

... And a final note ...

There are no great revelations in this journal—Spain isn't quite as foreign a country as the USSR was. I am glad I saw the country though, and I'm especially glad I was able to get away from “tourist” Spain and see the country that hides behind the hotels and condos. It was a fun trip and in many ways it was as educational as the Soviet trip. One big difference, though—I'd be happy to go back to Madrid tomorrow. It'll be a while before I'm back in Moscow.