

Fourth of July

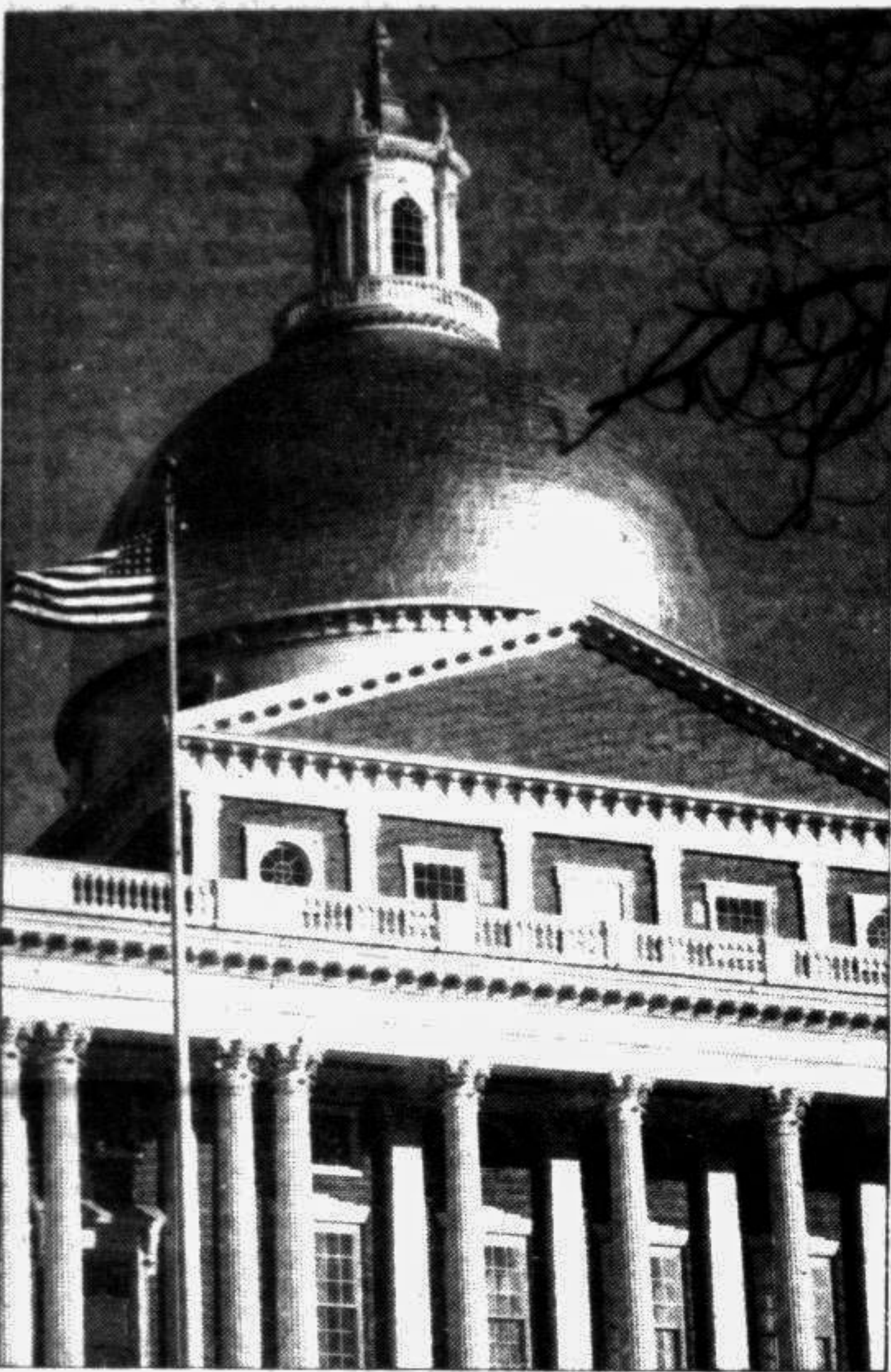


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How the Peace Was Won

Out of War, a Republic Is Born



Historic landmark: Massachusetts State House

JOHN Adams, describing in his diary not only America's war for independence but the powerful Mother Country's subsequent eagerness to end the fight, compared England to an eagle that has swooped down on a farmyard and in error snatched up not a weak creature, such as a hare, but a cat (America): "In the air the cat seized him by the neck with her teeth and round the body with her fore and hind claws. The eagle finding himself scratched and pressed, bids the cat let go and fall down. 'No,' says the cat, 'I won't let go and fall. You shall stoop and set me down.'"

Americans: the Declaration of Independence (July 4, 1776); the surrender of General Burgoyne's British army at the Battle of Saratoga (October 17, 1777); the further defeat of a British army, when General Cornwallis acknowledged defeat at Yorktown (October 19, 1781). The fourth event in a closely related sequence is far less familiar. That was the Treaty concluded in Paris on September 3, 1783. Signed by England and the 13 former American mainland colonies, simultaneously with separate Anglo-French and Anglo-Spanish treaties of peace, it brought to a close a farflung conflict very like a world war. But it also confirmed the boundaries and the very existence of the "United States of America."

The exact date of a particular turning point in history can always be disputed. Fighting between the British and the American "rebels" had, for instance, started a year before the Declaration of Independence was issued. In the same way, the American commissioners — Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, John Adams — who signed the Treaty of Paris in September 1783, had agreed, along with Henry Laurens, upon the essential terms with their British counterparts — Richard Oswald and others — as far back as November 30, 1782. They had all been in Europe on diplomatic errands — Franklin ever since 1776. Months of close bargaining preceded the agreement of November 1782.

On September 3, 1783, John Adams' metaphorical American cat was at last entitled to purr. Adams, Franklin and Jay had won what Samuel Flagg Bemis, the dean of American diplomatic history, regards as "the greatest victory in the annals of American diplomacy." The American commissioners had secured title to vast stretches of the continent, west to the Mississippi, south to Spanish Florida, and as far north as the line of lakes and rivers that, near enough, mark the present-day Canadian-American border.

All four American commissioners had been members of Congress; Jay and Laurens, indeed, had served as presidents of the Continental Congress. But this made them almost too conscious of the feuds and weaknesses of that body. They became convinced that Congress, including the acting foreign minister, Robert Livingston, was subservient to French requests. They were alarmed by an instruction from home (dated June 15, 1781) that they were to "make the most candid and confidential communications upon all subjects to the ministers of our generous ally (France) ... and ultimately to govern yourself by their advice and opinion."

Worse still, the commissioners were suspicious of one another in the earlier stages of their relationship. Franklin, a self-made man, had spent most of his life in Philadelphia or in

London. Laurens was a rich merchant from South Carolina. Jay was a refined and well-to-do New Yorker, trained in law. Adams was a lawyer too, by profession, but a Massachusetts "Yankee," a type often disliked in the other colonies.

When Adams and Jay joined Franklin in Paris during 1782 — Jay in June and Adams in October — they both initially thought he had fallen too much under the spell of Louis XVI's skillful foreign minister, Charles Gravier, Comte de Vergennes. In Adams' case, his judgments of Franklin were tinged with an intense moralistic jealousy. Years later Adams would expostulate in a letter to Benjamin Rush: "The history of our Revolution will be one continued lie ... The essence ... will be that Dr. Franklin's electrical rod smote the earth and out sprang General Washington. That Franklin electrified him with his rod — and thence forward these two conducted all the policy, negotiations, legislatures, and war."

It was soon clear that Franklin had laid the groundwork with the British negotiators, in his artfully artless fashion. He had suggested to Richard Oswald, as a basis for discussion, four "necessary" American demands and certain other "advisable" ones. The "necessary" preconditions were: the withdrawal of British troops and the granting of complete independence; a satisfactory settlement of frontiers; the limiting of the Canadian border at least to what it has been before the Quebec Act of 1774; and freedom to fish on the bank of Newfoundland and elsewhere, as well for fish as whales.

Among Franklin's "advisable" suggestions was that the British turn over the whole of Upper and Lower Canada to the Americans. The British themselves, as the Americans quickly grasped, were determined at the outset to suppress a rebellion. But as the war grew into a global struggle, influential voices in London began to urge that the war could not be won in America. Common sense therefore dictated to the British, with overwhelming weight after the Yorktown disaster, that they cut their losses in North America and try by military and naval prowess to achieve dominance over European foes.

The Earl of Shelburne King George III's chief minister, was organizing peace proposals. His first notion, in line with persistent British hopes, was that somehow the Americans would accept a partial independence, perhaps in the form of a federation, but Shelburne was a politician of unusual foresight and detachment.

A reading of Adam Smith, and other advanced economists, had converted him to the proposition that old-style mercantile empires (with the colonies in thrall, both as markets and producers of raw materials) would be irrelevant to the new age of international trade. Natural economic preferences were what mattered. North America, he believed, could still be brought within the British trading orbit, provided the two sides were mature enough to reach a grudge — free consensus in their peace treaty.

He saw Britain providing capital and goods for settlers pouring westward toward the Mississippi. Consequently he was disposed to accept the Mississippi as a western border, and all the Northwest Territory, and to negotiate with Franklin and Jay as commissioners not of the Colonies but of the "13 US," an ingenious yet slightly enigmatic designation interpreted as virtual commitment to independence by Britain.

Shelburne's plan, as historian J. Steven Watson has

'Singular Joy of a Free People'

President George Bush on Fourth of July

ON July 4, 1776, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, our nation's founders boldly declared America's independence and affirmed the truth "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." They did so knowing that they risked nothing less than their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor. On this occasion, we celebrate that profound act of faith and courage and give thanks for the rich legacy of freedom that this country has enjoyed ever since.

That legacy has enabled us to enjoy unparalleled levels of security and prosperity, and it



Mount Vernon, Virginia: Where George Washington lived.

has inspired millions of people around the world in their own struggles for liberty and self-government. Thus, every picnic and parade, every backyard barbecue and public display of fireworks that makes the Fourth of July a favorite summer holiday carries deeper symbolism and meaning. Each resonates with the singular joy of a free people.

This year we are particularly grateful for the blessings of liberty because we have been reminded of the price that many brave and selfless individuals have been willing to pay to secure them. Just months ago, when forces led by a brutal tyrant invaded a small, defenseless country — raping, pillaging, and threatening not only the stability of an entire region but also vital interests

of all freedom-loving peoples — thousands of courageous Americans answered the call of duty. Our celebration of Independence Day, 1991, is dedicated in a special way to them — to the regulars, reservists, National Guardsmen, and members of the US Merchant Marine who helped to liberate Kuwait.

Of course, as we honor our Persian Gulf veterans, we also remember in prayer each of their comrades who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our country. We salute with great pride and gratitude the military personnel who offered vital support for our mission from bases here at home and around the world, and we pay due tribute to all those who have served in the US Armed Forces.

The Americans who fought tyranny and lawlessness in the Persian Gulf have upheld, once again, the principles that were first affirmed on these shores 215 years ago when our nation's founders elected "between submission or the sword." On this Independence Day — a day marked by triumphant homecomings and by the promise of a safer, more peaceful world — it is fitting that we recall the words that Thomas Jefferson wrote shortly before his death on July 4, 1826: "All eyes are opened, or opening, to the rights of man.... These are grounds of hope for others. For ourselves, let the annual return of this day forever refresh our recollections of these rights, and an undiminished devotion to them."



Bush: Unparalleled prosperity

noted, was "far reaching, imaginative — and misunderstood." Resistance to his generosity soon arose in London and a second negotiator, Henry Strachey, was sent over in late October to stiffen Oswald's position, just at the time when John Adams reached Paris from Holland. But by November 1, 1782, the trio were amazingly close to striking a deal with their British enemies, more or less secretly from France. Once the basic agreement had been made, the work went swiftly, though threats and wrangling sometimes grew heated and exasperating. The basic threat the British used was that if the Americans didn't agree, the whole package would have to be presented, piecemeal and unsigned, to Parliament, which was known to be far less generous than Shelburne. The Americans could, and did, threaten to withdraw from bargaining and cast their lot irrevocably with France.

Also thanks to Shelburne's policy, the boundary disputes were not as difficult as they might have been. Franklin had once tried to obtain Canada. There had even been a time, too, when England seemed ready to yield to the Americans all the land up to a line across what is now the middle of Ontario, but in practice, common sense prevailed. On the Atlantic coast the British gave up the Penobscot River as the start of a new Canadian border (though they had put a fort at Castine, Maine, on purpose to guard it). The compromise line started on the St. Croix, plunged north, then down the old border to the head of the Connecticut River and west, on the 45th parallel.

A westward continuation of that line would have placed the Canadian border now on one side, now on the other of a natural water frontier. To avoid future trouble, at the St. Lawrence River they ran the border "along the middle of said water" and so on through the string of Great Lakes, as it is today, launching it westward, finally, from Lake

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Give New York a Break

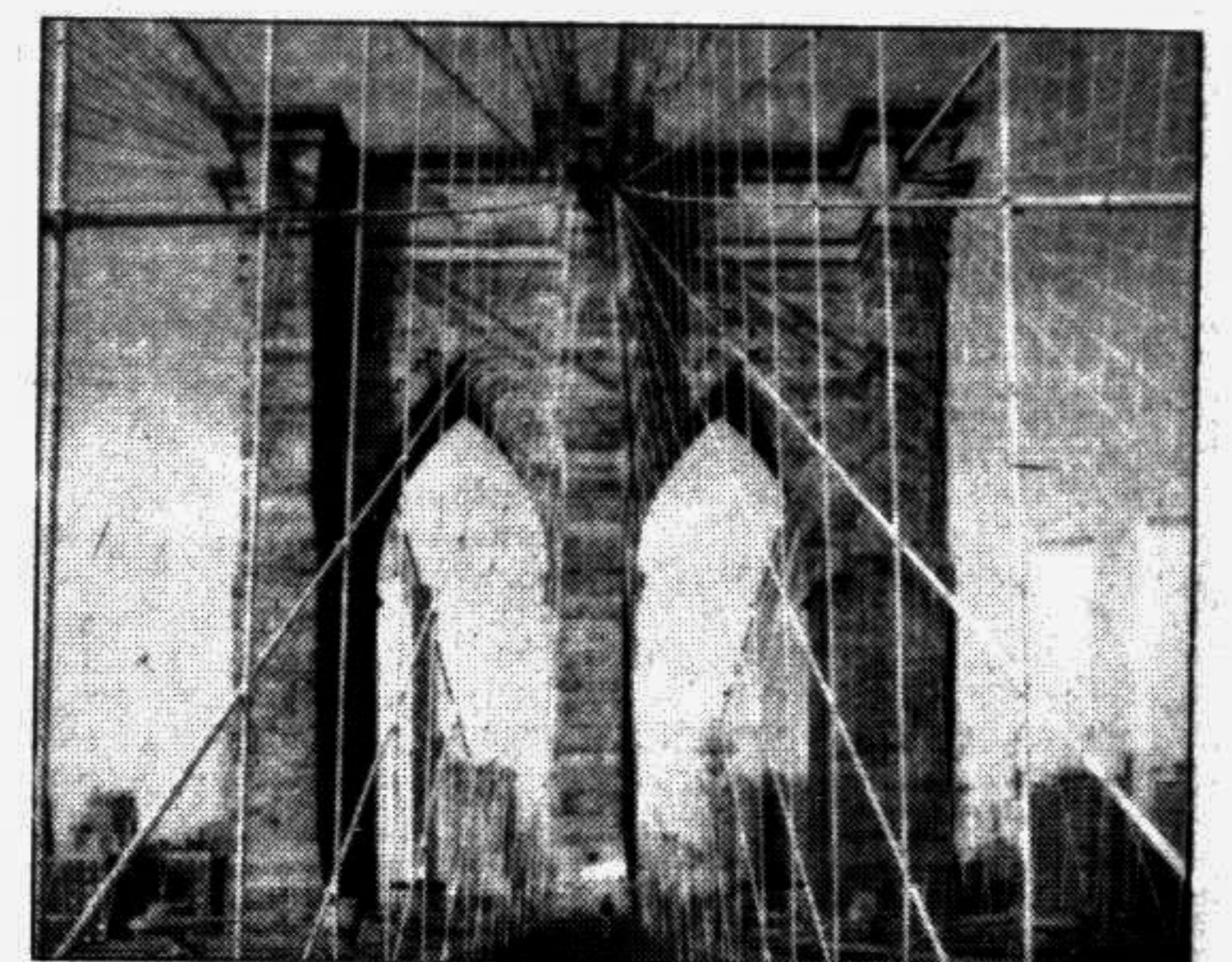
by S. Bari

"YOU be careful in New York," was the one comment I heard from everybody as I left Europe for the Big Apple. For the rest of the world, New York is a jungle, crime capital of the universe, danger lurking in every subway train. Armed with intimidating accounts of murders and muggings, I set about preparing myself, when a second set of warnings was issued by friends and family in various parts of the US. When an uncle gave me long-winded instructions on how to get from JFK to his place, I told him I would ask at the airport. "Oh no," he laughed, "don't expect any help from New Yorkers."

With this encouraging piece of advice, I flew from Paris straight to the great concrete world of Manhattan. After the baggage had at long last appeared on the conveyor belt, I set off to discover the bus. A very large lady drewled out destinations and soon procured me a seat. The driver joked and chatted with sullen and tired passengers.

I spent quite a long time in New York, mostly on my own. My first time on the subway, I couldn't even find the station. Hestantly, I asked a policeman. He turned out to be friendly. Likewise, a friendly salesperson accosted me in many a shop. Friendly waiters served me food, while (shock of shocks) taxidrivers smiled as they asked for astronomical tips. At first, I was taken aback; after a while, I began to wonder if I was in the right place. Where were the snarling, sarcastic New Yorkers I was supposed to see? I'd been had: it was all tourist propaganda.

What was happening was that I was on the wrong relativity scale. I was comparing New Yorkers to Parisians, or the Swiss, not with other Americans. Later, after a stay in Texas and months of listening to "Hi,



New York, New York: Brooklyn Bridge.

honey," whenever I walked into a shop, I understood that New York does not drip sugar like the rest of the country, nor do its citizens feel the need to smile more than necessary. These two factors have earned the city its reputation. As for the Swiss, one would rather eat English chocolate than smile more than once a day. Comparatively, New York did not strike me as anything extraordinarily rude.

Though I generally clutched my purse under my arm and eyed suspiciously any man with his hands in his pockets, I had the usual moments of carelessness. My wallet once slipped out of my bag as I took out my sunglasses. As I strode on, oblivious to disaster, a teenager came running up to me: "Hey, you dropped this." Pretty good for downtown Manhattan, where he could have disappeared into the crowds and lived it up with my fortune of five dollars and seven cents.

Walking back home through Chinatown is not the most carefree experience I have ever had, but the chills down my spine proved to be baseless

all the time I was in New York. Downplaying the crime situation is not my point. But it is necessary to dispel the mists of fear and dislike that shroud the rest of the world's perceptions of New York. Some 34 million foreigners visit the USA every year. Nearly all of them cite personal safety as their primary worry. Television shows and movies portray New York City as a very rotten apple, and this image is beamed around the globe. Certainly, there are parts that make you wish you had stayed home, but must we therefore give up strolling down Fifth Avenue and drooling over the unaffordable window displays, or standing in line for hours trying unsuccessfully to get tickets to a Broadway show?

New York suffers from double bad publicity. Americans call it snooty and unfriendly. What they need is a good dose of Europe, the home of true snoot. Europeans and Asians are paranoid about the evil on the streets. But crime on our streets is something we live with every day. New York deserves a break: people do smile, and you can spend a day there without getting mugged.

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