

Other Scenes

John Wilcock

1968

Other Scenesman, John Wilcock, has begun one of his frequent around the world trips. This report is filed from Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia. We will publish his impressions of his visits to other European and Asian cities as they are received.

Beethoven concert in the Rector's Palace, a centuries-old stone castle with inner patio open to the sky. Cheapest ticket 10 dinar (80 cents) with which I race up two impressive stone staircases to recline comfortably on a stone ledge overlooking the middle-aged German tourists sat stolidly in stiff-backed chairs 20 feet below.

Combination of good grass and ballsy Beethoven sets my mind racing. Were I to film a contemporary costume drama in this courtyard, I muse, where would I stand, half-concealed, to interrogate the swashbuckling intruder who had ridden dramatically into the patio below me? A loudspeaker mounted on the pillar to the northwest corner would enable me to crouch in some other point with a microphone...

Then my role-playing shifts to being the man in the courtyard. Where is that voice above me coming from? My eyes cover the possibilities without moving my head. Could I trick my interrogator into unconsciously betraying his position by the special viewpoint he must bring to answering my questions?

The piano solo brings me back to reality leaving but one question: why do a combination of palaces and pot always bring my mind to considerations of strategy?

As the orchestra breaks for the intermission and the audience begins to file from the patio I impulsively (unobtrusively) slip a handful of Art Steuer's Psychedelic Burlesque dollar bills over the balcony and watch those below scramble to catch and read them. They bear LBJ's ugly mug and the phrase "Only Love is Legal, Tender & Private".

To my surprise, hardly anybody looks up—which starts my mind racing again. We are all intimidated, aren't we, by the collective "they?" Anybody who looked up would see not one guilty face but a collection of anonymous faces gazing back. Paranoiasville! This is the principle of accepting intimidation—it works so well in courtrooms—which makes the newcomer to the party feel that only he doesn't know everybody else present. The collective "they" that becomes everybody but "I". Horrors.

After the concert, to the Jadran restaurant, another open courtyard (admission: 5 dinar) where a Czechoslovak rock group, in purple lame jackets, is stirring up a storm. At one side of the yard, two pretty blondes, probably Danes, are sitting alone while a series of local loverboys take their turn at engaging them in conversation. Some are brash, others relatively timid, but none seem to make much progress until the most swaggering of all youths so far sits down, grabs the taller blonde by the neck and kisses her firmly on the lips. She's so astonished that she doesn't even blush until seconds after the kiss has ended and by then she's regained her cool with admirable *savoir faire*. As I leave I watch them dancing closely, both apparently very happy.

The Labirinth nightclub (admission: 10 dinar) is set into the ancient city walls; its entrance hall and stairs arranged in such a way that newcomers might make a couple of false turns before finding their way in.

As I descend the stairs I detect a certain tenseness in the atmosphere which is explained when I see that blonde, teenybopper stripper—her pink buttocks separated by the tape of her G-string—is almost at the apogee of her act.

She lies purring on a carpet on the stone floor and, as I watch, removes the last wisp of chiffon from her body, gently strokes her pubic hair, stands up, bows and goes off to tumultuous, lustful applause.

I'm horny as hell, could almost have made it with her right there on the carpet, but 'don't feel up to trying to negotiate a meeting in private even though she resurfaces—two tables from where I fortuitously sit—half an hour later and gives me an encouraging smile. (A smile that says, "If you can afford me, I'm yours").

As I leave the nightclub, walking through narrow streets whose shiny marble paving blocks are wet from their nightly hosing-down, I see a girl ahead who looks like a hustler. She's wearing a two-piece red-and-white wool suit stretched tightly over her ass which she causes to wiggle exaggeratedly every few yards.

As she glances back—provocatively—I remember that I've seen her on the Labirinth's dance floor. She keeps walking straight ahead but she goes slowly and after a while I catch her up and ask her if she'd like me to walk her home.

"I'm nearly home," she says. "Where do you live?"

I gesture vaguely. It's a private room. Would you like to come back there?

"Twenty-thousand dinar," she says smiling.

I calculate hurriedly. That's the old dinar worth, in today's dinar, about sixteen bucks. Too much. I offer ten-thousand.

"In the street for that. Come with me."

We walk, arm in arm, through cobbled alleys, whispering under open windows, tiptoeing up the steps of the old city wall. She's Stella, a nice kid about 23, with a good body and some warmth. At first I can't get an erection and she smiles. "Is it possible?" Yes, I reply. I have a girl of my own.

"Oh, then your mind is with girl. You find it hard because you have complexes."

She is patient and finally I come, elbows scraped on the stone dust below me, dust on my balls. We lie for a few moments smoking one of her cigarettes and study the purple sky. "For 500 years people have made love here on this wall," Stella says pensively.

We hug, dress and go our separate ways home.

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