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Born in Massachusetts, he moved to Cleveland when his family decided to leave the East. "For my parents, Cleveland was as far west as anybody could travel," mused Condon. After a period at the Ohio State University School of Journalism and a wartime government job, he joined *The Plain Dealer* as a reporter. A prolific writer with a touch of Belloc, Chesterton, Saki and Vaughan, Condon's books include *Laughter from the Rafters*, *Stars in the Water*, *Yesterday's Cleveland*, *Yesterday's Columbus*, and *Cleveland: Prodigy of the Western Reserve*, as well as his much sought after *Cleveland: The Best Kept Secret*.

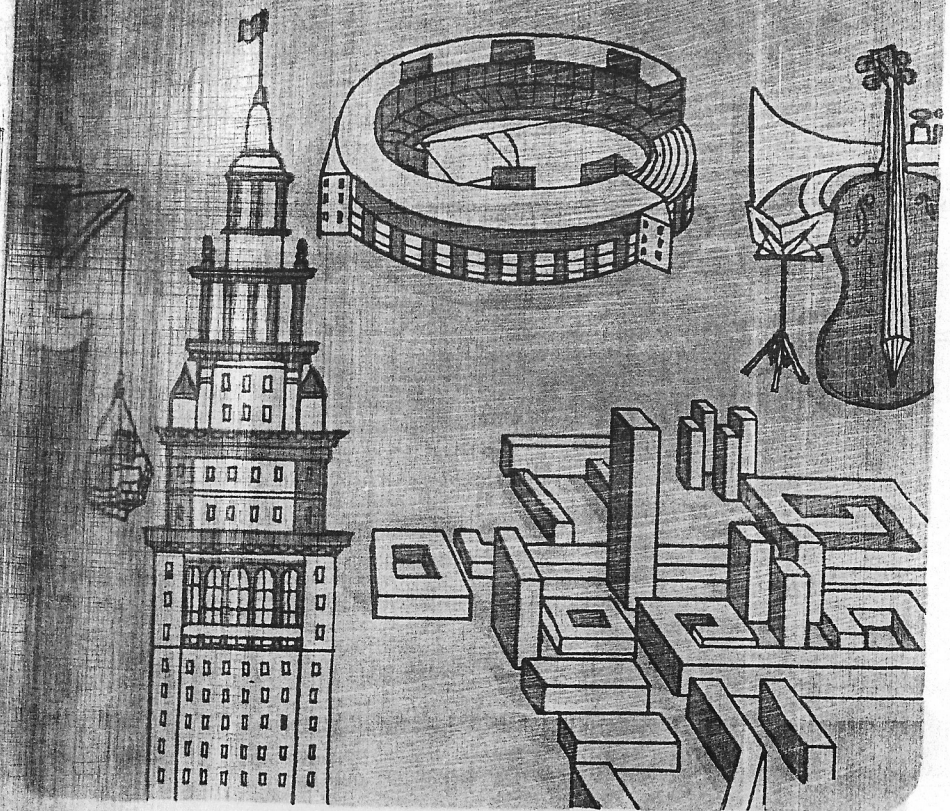
Among Condon's professional honors are the Ohioana Award for History, the Women's City Club of Cleveland Award for Literature, the Burke Award for Literature and more recently he received from the Professional Journalism Society its Sigma Delta Chi Award for Distinguished Service.

Married, the father of six children, Condon and his wife, Marjorie, an eminent Cleveland educator, live in the Cleveland suburb of Lakewood, hard by Lake Erie.

COVER BY AL NAGY
Printed in the U.S.A.

CLEVELAND

THE BEST KEPT SECRET



A beautiful portrait of a great city by George E. Condon

\$9.15

further, as far away as the place where the Cuyahoga River meanders into Lake Erie. Here, where the latter-day Moses struck his surveying rods, a city named in his honor quickly gushed forth, but this spectacular achievement never qualified as a miracle. A number of wise men—George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and a Moravian missionary named John Heckewelder, among them—had spoken favorably of this strategic site. It was more or less expected that one day a city would grow there. And it did.

The thing that nobody could predict accurately was what *kind* of city would spring out of the bulrushes along the Cuyahoga, and since it is now acknowledged to be one of the great cities of the world, it does appear to be high time for a close examination of this city called Cleveland, past and present. That's what this book is all about. It is, admittedly, a sympathetic scrutiny; one which has eyes for the people as much as the place, for how can you divorce one from the other? Wherever possible, I have tried to part the syntax to let some of their laughter slip through as a reminder that Cleveland is their creation. Historians who like to stifle the human side of humanity can accept this as a rebuke.

I have had much help; too much to separate and identify by source in its entirety. Still, I must acknowledge the many helpful contributions of my wife, Marjorie; the typing assistance and research help of my daughter, Theresa Ann Condon, and, in that same department, the invaluable work of Miss Madeline Grimoldi. And there are those old friends who spurred me into writing action when the instinct was strong to flee and take cover—Frank and Ginnie McCullough, Ronald and Katie Robbins. I thank them as I thank all who helped; indeed, as I thank all who, with bowsprits properly trimmed, choose to enter this port with me.

GEORGE E. CONDON

Cleveland, Ohio

I

The Muscovite's Delight

ANASTAS MIKOYAN, an Armenian who made good in politics by becoming President of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, once visited Cleveland, and it is said he was visibly moved by his first glimpse of the Lake Erie metropolis. Reporters who stood close to him as he looked at the downtown skyline swear that the old Communist's mustache twitched and his eyes were misty as he raised an arm in comradely approbation and said:

"Now you're talking! This is *my* kind of town!"

That may or may not be a completely accurate quotation because even the best encomiums have a way of losing something in the translation. But that, roughly, is what Mikoyan said, and it is obviously the way Mikoyan felt. And even if you subtract something for the fact that Armenians are highly emotional, this reaction is owed the proper appreciation that every hard-won compliment deserves, and more, some scholarly inquiry.

The fact is that Clevelanders themselves took Mr. Mikoyan's heavy flattery in stride. It was something they had come to expect because other earlier visitors from the U.S.S.R. upon visiting Cleveland for the first time had spoken out vigorously in approval of Ohio's largest city. The touring Communists almost unanimously have compared it with New York City and other effete communities to the east, entirely to the disadvantage of those cities.

It helps if you understand that Cleveland is—or was—one of the recommended stopping-off places in America for Russian tourists; a "must" attraction on the Intourist list of Places to See in the Imperialist West. There are some obvious factors which would make the city attractive to those visitors. It is a great industrial center and, plainly, the home of a lot of working men and women. It is also the home of Cyrus Eaton, one of the paradoxical celebrities of our time—the man who is perhaps the last survivor of the Age of Tycoons, a capitalist's capitalist, and, withal, the great and good friend of the Soviet Union.

However this puzzling mixture of identities resolves itself, there is no doubt that Cyrus Eaton commands great respect from the leaders of the

Communist world. It used to be that no Soviet representative visiting the United States would think about going home to face the Central Presidium without having paid a courtesy call on Eaton. Consequently, the traffic in Soviet delegations traveling in and out of Cleveland used to be very brisk until the United States Government, in a fit of pique over the action of the U.S.S.R. in limiting the travel of Americans, ruled Cleveland out-of-bounds for all Russians, except when granted special permission.

Until this regrettable breakdown in international relations occurred, Clevelanders had become accustomed to the sight of the visiting Russian firemen, and had found a uniform pattern of approval in the Russians' attitudes and reactions.

Most of the Reds came into the Best Location in the Nation (as the Cleveland electric utility extravagantly describes the city in its advertising literature) looking like second-rate imitations of Andrei Gromyko on one of his bad days at the United Nations; that is to say, with a dark, glowering, beetle-browed visage, more commonly associated in the United States with morning backache.

But Cleveland has some very strong medicine that wipes the scowl off the Russian countenance and puts a happy smile in its place every time. It's a building called the Terminal Tower. When the average Russian sees it for the first time he is in danger of losing control of his emotions. There is no question whatsoever that the Terminal Tower has a headier effect on a homesick Muscovite than a jug of vodka spiked with four-way cold tablets. It chases the vapors, establishes regularity, restores skin tone, and otherwise energizes the Russian onlooker. There have been Reds occasionally who have lost their composure entirely and reacted by giving their comrades violent bear hugs, the popular expression of Russian approval. That sort of enthusiasm is highly contagious, of course, and it isn't surprising that once in a while the Russians dropped to their haunches for a quick kazatsky, the traditional folk dance of their country, kicking out their legs with great agility and shouting unintelligible lyrics of an old Soviet hit ballad about a farm tractor.

People who are not familiar with Cleveland surely must be wondering about this point just what the Terminal Tower has to do with international politics. They will be wondering, at the very least, how a mere building possibly could arouse our usually phlegmatic adversaries in the world arena to a state of unhinged delight bordering on complete giddiness.

The answer, of course, is that the Terminal Tower is not an ordinary building. It is a very uncommon structure. They don't build buildings any more the way the Terminal Tower was built. It is not one of those straight up-and-down rectangular-shaped slabs, nor is it one of those

glass wall buildings with the general conformation of a box of soap chips. The Terminal Tower is a classic structure of its type. It is built along the lines of a tiered wedding cake, complete with frosting and candles. It is Cleveland's most conspicuous landmark, a spire of neo-Gothic design which rises some fifty-two stories and some 708 feet high above the city. There was a time, indeed, when it was known as the tallest building in all the world outside of New York City.

Architects and other building fanciers will find such information about the Terminal Tower important—perhaps even fascinating. Still, the points cited are not the kind of attributes calculated to make a real dent in the Slavic mind. There has to be something more important about the Terminal Tower, and there is. The key to the building's fascination is that it bears a remarkable resemblance to the skyscraper tower of Moscow University in—where else?—Moscow, Russia, U.S.S.R.

The Russian counterpart of the Terminal Tower is only twelve feet higher, and there is no denying that the architecture and the general appearance of the two buildings bear a close similarity—so much so that every Russian who visits Cleveland immediately is smitten with an overpowering attack of homesickness. This is the reason for the strange and excited behavior of all the Soviet delegations upon their arrival in the city.

None of the Russians ever have come right out and said as much, but you get the inescapable impression, from the sly winks and nods and digging of elbows into each other's stomachs while toasting Cyrus Eaton's troika horses, that the Russians really and truly believe that they are the ones who invented the Terminal Tower.

Nothing could be farther from the truth, and every single Clevelander worth his salt (and all Clevelanders, incidentally, are rich in salt, but more about that later) resents the implied Soviet claim.

The established truth is that the Terminal Tower was invented by a pair of Americans, two brothers who made their homes, their reputations, and their fortunes in Cleveland. Their names were O. P. and M. J. Van Sweringen, and there is no room for shilly-shallying or beating around the bush when you talk about the Vans. They were a pair of genuine capitalists.

All Clevelanders are aware that the Van Sweringens were responsible for the design and construction of the city's leading landmark and, to a man, they resent any sly insinuations by the Russians to the contrary. The indignation runs especially high among members of the very exclusive Union Club. The Union Clubbers are morose enough just thinking about Cyrus Eaton, without being flicked by this added provocation. One of the things about Cyrus Eaton that makes his fellow Union Clubbers morose, apart from the fact that he is smarter and richer than they are, is his past insistence on entertaining some of his Soviet

friends in the parlors of the club. Some of them feel that this was a very cheeky thing for him to do.

It would be a terrible mistake, however, to believe that the only things in Cleveland that the Russians like are the Terminal Tower and Cyrus Eaton. The appreciation of the foreign visitors runs deeper than that. Cleveland is a formidable city. It is a city with the biceps of industry and it has a rough-hewn manner that is indigenous to the Midwest of America. Cleveland also has some of the charm and grace of an old European city and, withal, it shows indisputable traces of its New England heritage as no other city west of the Alleghenies does.

The muzhik pulses pound when the Russians see the entire sweep of the industrial Cuyahoga River valley which twists and turns its way through the entire city, coming in from the southeast and ending at Lake Erie at a point which is virtually the geographical center of the city. This is the northern anchor of that area of incredibly heavy industrial production called the American Ruhr. The axis of the region extends from Lake Erie through Cleveland, Akron, Warren, Youngstown, and all the way to Pittsburgh.

Beauty does indeed rest in the eyes of the beholder, and there is a muscular, dynamic, sullen beauty in this industrial valley which is known to most Clevelanders simply as "the Flats." Margaret Bourke White, the distinguished photographer, fell in love with the Flats when she was a young student at Western Reserve University. She saw beauty, photographically speaking, where none had seen it before, and her classic pictures of the steel mills, the machinery, and the smoking stacks were an artistic revelation and even something of a revolution.

It must be said that Miss White had great material to work with when she took her cameras down into the Flats. There are few such concentrations of industrial might anywhere in the world, and the grouping is spectacular. Little wonder that the Russians respect Cleveland. They understand as few other peoples do the significance of the smoking, sprawling steel mills, the flame-topped towers of the gasoline catalytic cracking plants, the red hills of iron ore stacked along the banks, and the bulky freighters angling their way up and down the river, and, of course, the night-and-day caravans of thousands of laborers up and down the steep roads leading to and from the valley.

It is at night that the Flats show off at their very best—especially when the clouds hang heavy and low over the city, giving the open-hearth steel furnaces flaring below a sky-screen against which to project their flickering glare. It is a sight that never gets tiresome to people of the city because they know that when the underbelly of the clouds shines with rubious light at night, it is the healthy glow of industry that is reflected. Even apart from this unromantic interpretation there is the simple fact of beauty in being, a condition which needs no explanation.

There is no satisfactory way to describe a city or to convey its spirit in words. Facts and statistics, names and dates, prose and poesy all are well-intentioned bids to give flesh and breath to a chunk of real estate, but they hang lifelessly on the skeleton. If there is a way to give life to a city with words, those words must try to renew some of the lives that created the city. This is the route I chose to follow, ignoring all the commandments of the Chamber of Commerce, skirting around most of the treasured civic boasts, and searching out, as diligently as I could, the rare good men and the rogues alike, fast in the belief that where I found them, I would find Cleveland.

I cannot forget the words of a New Yorker who ventured as far west as Cleveland a few years ago. He looked at the vast sweep of the forested city, the soft gray-blue lake lapping at the foot of the high bluffs, the ubiquitous placement of beautiful residential neighborhoods and parks, and he blinked.

"This Cleveland," he said, pondering, "has to be the best kept secret in the United States."

What he meant to say, of course, was that it was a secret to other Americans. Not the Russians. That is one thing you have to say about those Russians—they are very quick to notice a good thing like Cleveland.