

comment

by Gladys J. Peterson

Some Cities I Remember...

Before making assignments for this "cities" issue of *Interlit*, I checked the 1979 *World Book* for the list of the 50 largest cities in the world. I was surprised to learn that I have been in the seven most populated. Of the first ten, I have been in nine.

Admittedly most of my trips are to learn firsthand what is being done to reach people for Christ in regions (rather than countries or areas). But I usually start in a city adjacent to the airport where I land. Few people visualize a missionary as a city dweller who lives in an apartment, drives to work every day and uses a host of sophisticated equipment—including computers—to print, record, and broadcast the Christian message. But it's what I found in urban areas.

Cities are people—usually *lots* of people—and of all I have memories that—to use the old trite expression, but which says it so well—bless and burn.

A year ago I was in **Shanghai**—at 13 million the largest city in the world. Once the most westernized of Chinese cities, Shanghai is still graced (?) with buildings put up by the British and French. It was strange to find western faces a real curiosity practically on the eve of the American recognition of the People's Republic of China. The Chinese crowded around us fascinating (to them) tourists. For them staring is not impolite, and stare they did, eye-to-eye at very close quarters. But the stares were friendly, the smiles wide. I marveled that people who for 30 years had been told Americans were imperialistic warmongers could be so benign.

Seven other Chinese cities are included on the list of the world's 50 most populated.

Tokyo, #2, at nine million, is one of my favorite cities. The first time I was there, in 1970, I had a definite chip on my shoulder (another hackneyed idiom that expresses exactly what I want to say). I had lived through World War II, losing someone very dear to me over Okinawa. Then I stopped at Pearl Harbor on my way across the Pacific. I just wasn't going to like the Japanese at all. Love them in Christ, of course. But *like* them I would NOT.

Then people in line at a Tokyo railroad station ticket window insisted I go to the

Continued on page 19



Paul: the Urban Strategist



Unswerving concentration on cities was the apostle Paul's paramount strategy for Gospel proclamation. Paul was an urban strategist and never wavered in his determination to reach influential urban centers throughout his lifetime. Cities such as Antioch, Corinth, Philippi, Jerusalem, Thessalonica, Ephesus, Paphros, Athens, and Rome.

Tarsus was home for Paul. A great cosmopolitan, seaport city—it was the entrance and exit to all the Middle East. Tarsus made a profound impact upon the man who remained an adventurer, pioneer, and explorer all his life. Paul began his pastoral ministry in his hometown and not until the call came from Antioch did he leave Tarsus.

Amazingly, Paul loved the fast pace of the city. Despite the city's paganism and corruption, Paul knew it could be the seedbed for Christian influence—an influence that could be exported worldwide through the sudden stream of travelers, businessmen, caravans, and others who came to the metropolis.

Nowhere was the concentration of power, wealth, and influence greater than in the first century cities. The city set the tone, the pace, the fashion, and the life-style. It was the hub of political, social, and religious activity.

A careful study of the *Acts of the Apostles* suggests that Paul had some criteria for the selection of the city that would be part of his urban strategy. Each city that he included in his itinerary was a place with Roman administration, Greek civilization, Jewish influence, and of significance commercially or politically.

Michael Green points out in *Evangelism in the Early Church*, that

editorial

by Robert B. Reekie

Paul had a fourfold vision that was simultaneously personal, urban, regional, and global. Paul's vision was wide-angle rather than tunnel. His was a panoramic view.

Not surprisingly, Paul traveled some 6,000 miles during his life. And, as someone has said, none of the cities where Paul went were stopping places, they were beginning places.

For Paul, each city was where growth and expansion resulted. His strategy was to go to a city of major influence, evangelize and gather a group of believers, and develop them as a base for outreach for the entire area. Paul did not make the mistake of some modern foreign missions—he did not wait until "colonial independence" before developing able local leadership.

Dr. Marjorie Shelley, a missionary leader in Ivory Coast, made this comment about today's missions: "Modern missions have tended to ignore the city for the village and we are paying a great price for this error in strategy."

Cities are growing at a rapid pace and their influence is greater than ever. More people are becoming city dwellers. In the year 1800, 2.5 percent of the population were in cities. A hundred years later, 12 percent were urban dwellers. By 1971, 40 percent of the world population was in an urban area. By the year 2000, we're told that 90 percent of the world's people will be urbanized.

In the United States, more than 70 percent of the population already live in urban centers. Over half of the U.S. population is concentrated on only one percent of the total land area. In the Soviet Union the same thing is happening. 40 years ago, about a third of the Russian people were urban. Today, 50 percent are in metropolitan areas.

The same facts are true in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. People by the thousands are deserting their villages and moving to the already bustling cities and towns.

Yet, in spite of this movement to cities, the church and its evangelistic outreach has been largely village-based or village-oriented. In many places

Continued on page 18