



Prague residents looking at U. S. I. S. display.

At Your Service

U. S. Information Abroad

Frances W. Kerr

International Press and Publications Division, State Department

What mountain has the sculptured faces of the American Presidents? Who carved them?

Why is Asheville, North Carolina, called "The Land of the Sky?"

Where is the longest bridge in the United States?

What is the history of the Statue of Liberty?

These are typical of the steady stream of questions that pour into United States Information offices, embassies and legations in 84 countries over the world. Similar inquiries are received daily by the Voice of America. Writers in the State Department Information program where such queries are answered are doing a world-wide public relations job for Uncle Sam.

The Voice of America is on the air daily in 19 languages. One half hour each week is devoted to "Here Are the Answers," a program replying to specific questions about the United States. In addition, motion pictures, film strips, exhibits, posters, and a volume of printed material for publication in foreign newspapers and magazines flows overseas regularly. Some of this material describes regional events, festivals, State celebrations, and National shrines, and is, in effect, "travel information."

The full-color magazine *Amerika* (a *Fortune-Holiday* type periodical) explains life in the United States to Russians and Czechs. Single sheets of this magazine sell for as much as 50 cents behind the Iron Curtain.

The United States also maintains libraries in most foreign countries, stocked with American newspapers, magazines, books, and recordings. In Warsaw, where the U. S. library is watched by the secret police, many Poles risk reprisals in order to learn about the United States.

It is often surprising to learn what interests people overseas about the United States. Among the books most

in demand in the U. S. libraries are the Sears-Roebuck and Montgomery Ward catalogs. One month the most popular American picture used in Finland was of Paul Bunyan and his Blue Ox Babe, in Bemidji, Minn. (used with a story of the Minnesota Centennial). Nine daily papers in Lisbon, Portugal, published a biography of Thomas Jefferson on his birthday, and 12,000 persons saw a Jefferson exhibit. An article, "How the U. S. President Lives," was popular all over the world. A movie that has been outstanding in stimulating interest in travel to the United States is "Panorama," depicting a cross-continent bus trip. There is enormous interest in the series of films on the States, one of the most popular being "A Date with West Virginia." A number of these films have been made available to the State Department by private industry.

This world-wide curiosity about the United States, inspired in part by the American GI and by our economic position in the postwar world, is being satisfied to as large an extent as possible by the State Department's information program. But as time goes on, more people will travel to the United States. They want to see our highways and supermarkets, the "Wild West," the Broadway signs, the Carlsbad Caverns, and Hollywood. They are coming already.

During the year, July 1, 1947, to July 1, 1948, temporary visitors to the United States totaled 476,006, as compared with 207,769 in 1930. Of these, the largest number—206,107—came here for pleasure and travel; 78,876 were on business. The remainder, traveling to another destination, were students, government or international officials, treaty-traders, or returning residents. This year the number of visitors from overseas will be even greater.

U. S.—Norway Travel

Travel between the United States and Norway is expected to be facilitated by the Fulbright Act agreement recently signed by the two countries, making \$1,250,000 available for a 5-year cultural travel exchange, in kroner.

Dr. Erling Christophersen, Norwegian cultural attaché, considers the two-way aspect of the cultural exchange under the act a real advance in strengthening ties between the two lands. In *News of Norway*, he terms the agreement "a milestone," and says: "We nurture the greatest expectations for what this program can mean in the future. Though Norwegian kroner rather than dollars are involved—necessitating pretty much of a one-way movement of persons—the ultimate results will be truly reciprocal, in that ideas will be flowing in both directions.

"American teachers and professors will bring of their knowledge—knowledge in fields which may be less developed in Norway than America. In return, American research scholars concluding a period of study in Norway can bring back with them a broader insight into fields where Norway is far advanced, such as meteorology and social institutions."