



Arrival at Timbuctoo, Mali, illustration from Heinrich Barth's *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa*, c. 1857.

1935: United States

MASS OF ASPHALT AND AUTOMOBILES

The word “America” has well-developed, grandiose associations for a Soviet person, for whom it refers to a country of skyscrapers, where day and night one hears the unceasing thunder of surface and underground trains, the hellish roar of automobile horns, and the continuous despairing screams of stockbrokers rushing through the skyscrapers waving their ever-falling shares.

We want to change that image.

Skyscrapers, as well as surface and underground trains, are attributes of New York and Chicago, where there really is a lot of rumbling, noise, and rushing around. But even there brokers don't run down the sidewalks knocking over American citizens; they simmer, invisible to the public, in their stock exchanges, making all kinds of shady deals in those monumental buildings. New York has very many skyscrapers. Chicago has somewhat fewer. Other big cities don't have many at all, just two or three

per city. And they rise up in a lonely way somehow, like a water tower or a fire lookout. Small towns don't have any at all.

America is primarily a country of one- or two-story buildings. This is the primary unavoidable condition with which you will have to reconcile yourselves, comrades, if you want to see the energetic, smiling, yet at the same time sickly and oversensitive face of the United States.

What traveler doesn't know that initial, unrepeatable feeling of excited, almost infatuated expectation which seizes his heart on entering a city he's never been to before? Each street and alley opens increasingly more secrets to his hungry eyes. By evening he starts to think that he's fallen in love with the city. The traveler constructs his first, truest, and henceforth unshakable impressions of the city based on the faces of the crowds on the street, the architecture of the buildings, the smell of the market, and finally, the color particular to that city alone. Later, he can live in that city for a whole year, study it in every detail, and make friends. Even later, he can forget the family names of those friends and lose