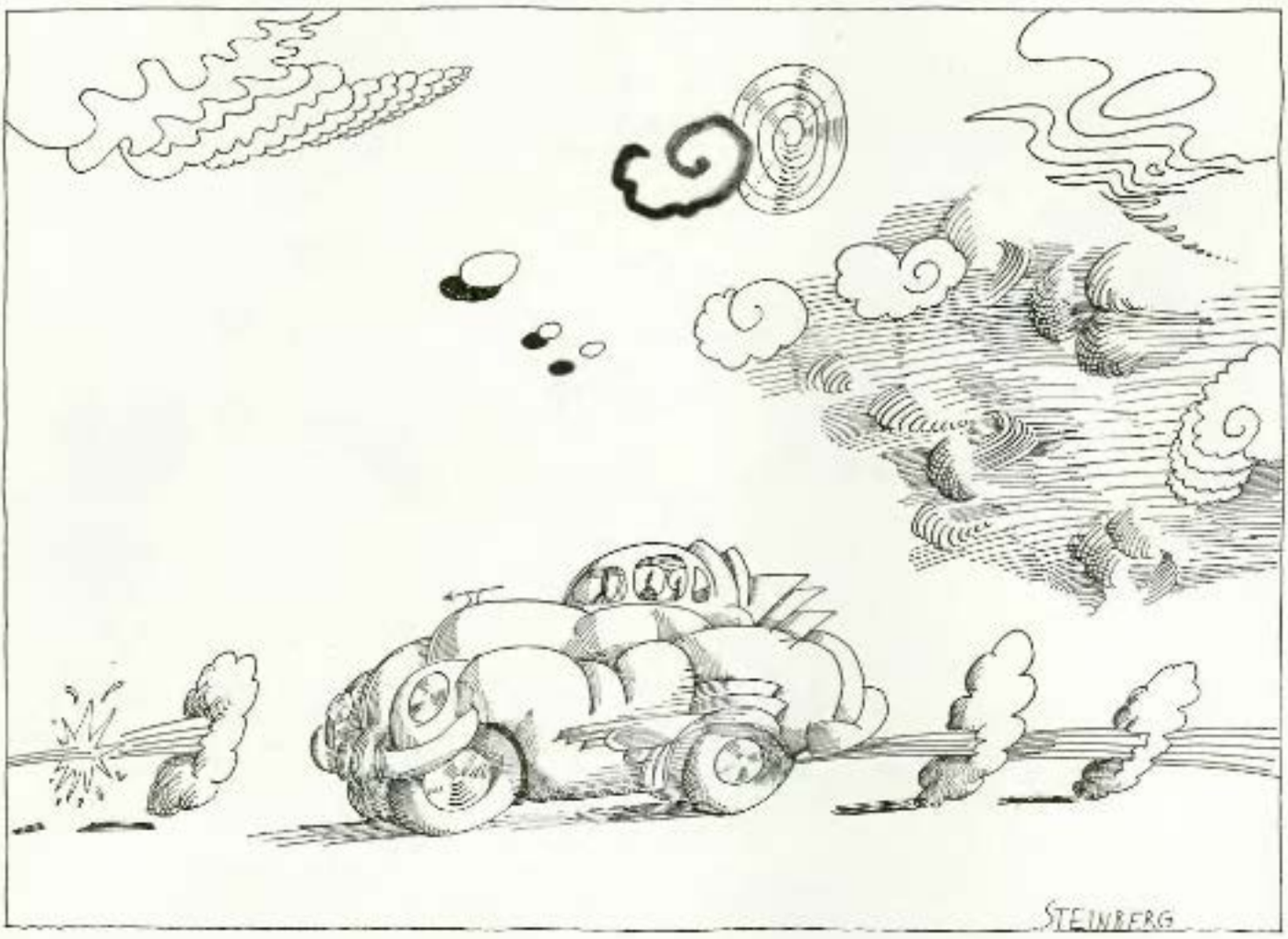
ANNALS OF POLITICS

THE POWER BROKER

IV—POINT OF NO RETURN



MOSES AND HIS EMPIRE

WITH his power, Robert Moses not only shaped New York City but built himself an empire. The capital of this empire was out of public sight—a squat gray building crouching so unobtrusively below the Randall's Island toll plaza of the Triborough Bridge that most of the motorists who drove past the toll booths never knew that the building existed. And most of them were ignorant also of the existence of the empire. But men who were interested in the geography of power were very aware of its existence. They realized that although theoretically it was only a creature of the city and the state, it had in fact become an autonomous sovereign entity. And, realizing that although its outward form was a loose confederation of public authorities and parks agencies, it was actually a tightly administered monarchy, these men described it with a single name, derived from the bridge that was its centerpiece: "Triborough."

Anyone who doubted Triborough's autonomy had only to look at its trappings. The empire had its own flag and great seal, distinctive license plates, and a self-contained communications network—an elaborate teletype hookup that linked the gray building with the provincial capitals, at Belmont Lake, on Long Island, and at Massena and Niagara, upstate. It even had its own island, on which it administered every structure and every inch of land. Randall's Island was near the geographic center of New York, but the waters of the East River, Bronx Kill, and Hell Gate were a moat between it and the city, and from the air the island, with its hundreds of acres of lawn, appeared separate—a bright-green oasis, sharply defined by a blue border, in the midst of the city's vast grayness. And the separateness was more than symbolic: no inhabitant of New York could drive across Randall's Island to reach other parts of the city without paying tribute in coin to Triborough.

Triborough had its own fleets, of yachts and motorcars and trucks, and its own uniformed army, of six hundred men—Bridge and Tunnel Officers, who guarded its toll booths, and revolver-carrying Long Island State Parkway troopers, who patrolled its suburban parks and roads, responsible to no discipline but that of Robert Moses. To command the army, under Moses, it had its own generals and admirals—senior officers of the United States Army and Navy who, upon retirement, took service under its banner. It had its own constitution—the covenants, unalterable by city, state, or federal government, of its bond resolutions. It governed by its own laws—the Rules and Regulations, harsher by far than comparable statutes of democracies, which it promulgated to regulate every aspect of conduct by the public within its dominions. And, most significantly, it had its own source of revenue—the quarters and dimes that poured in a silver stream into its long rows of toll booths.

It was a vast empire, comprising four public authorities (Triborough, Jones Beach, Bethpage, and State Power) and the New York City Parks

Department, the Long Island State Park Commission, and the State Council of Parks. In 1960, the year of its furthest expansion, the land area under its direct control—the parks of Long Island and New York City, the highways and highway-bordering playgrounds over which it had authority, and the enclaves surrounding the upstate power dams—totalled 103,071 acres, or a hundred and sixty-one square miles: an area half as large as New York City, and larger than the District of Columbia, the Republic of San Marino, or the independent principality of Monaco or of Liechtenstein. Its army was part of a work force of 13,548 that the empire employed directly; and another thirty thousand men, employed by contractors paid by Triborough, worked on its construction projects. But the best measure of the size of the empire was the dimensions of its wealth; its annual income—the toll-booth revenue, the fees it received for the use of electricity produced at the State Power Authority hydraulic-power complexes at Massena and Niagara, the yearly budgets of its parks agencies—ran as high as two hundred and thirteen million dollars; the surplus of just one of its public authorities, the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority, ran to almost thirty million dollars a year.

The court of this empire lived in luxury. Favored secretaries, for example, had not only bigger cars than city commissioners (with round-the-clock chauffeurs, so that they could be on call twenty-four hours a day) but also higher salaries. As for the men closest to the throne, the cadre of Triborough administrators known as "Moses men," not even Moses' most suspicious critics ever came close to guessing the extent of the wealth he poured into their hands. Triborough's ruler, utterly uninterested in riches for himself, made not a handful of men but scores—a low-salaried draftsman who caught his eye, a struggling young hot-dog seller, architects, engineers, contractors, bankers, restaurateurs, concessionaires, developers—millionaires and multimillionaires.

If Moses created an empire, he roamed it in imperial style. His car, the most luxurious that Detroit could provide, stood at his call day and night; to insure that it would, he had not one but three personal chauffeurs. Of the tens of thousands of cars that passed daily through the empire's toll booths, that car alone did not stop. (When a new director of public safety was appointed for the empire, he was briefed by Sidney M. Shapiro, a Moses aide: everyone else whose car was granted free passage—the governor, the mayor, even the police and Moses' top aides—was required to swerve out of line and outside the booths, so as not to complicate the treadle count. "Only one car goes through," Shapiro said.) And when the big black limousine with the row of shields on its bumper and the license plate 2000 roared through, not even slowing down, the police lieutenant or captain in charge at the toll plaza would hastily pick up his telephone—as hastily as the state trooper miles down the road, seeing the long black limousine loom out of the distance, would reach for his radio microphone—to keep the empire's capital on Randall's Island apprised, minute by minute and mile by mile, of its ruler's progress. Urgent messages could be delivered to Moses at the next toll booth. If, in reply, he wanted to make a call—he would not allow a telephone in his car—his chauffeur would pull in at the next police barracks, and troopers would spring up to escort him to a phone. His every wish was foreseen. On Sundays, when he rested, one of the boat captains who took turns skippering his favorite yacht waited by a telephone, sometimes for the entire day, just in case he might decide to go fishing. Like an emperor, he preferred his own table; people who wanted to dine with Moses had to come to him. And to insure that he could entertain them on an imperial scale, luxurious dining rooms were set up adjacent to the three offices—one at Randall's Island, one at Belmont Lake, and one in downtown Manhattan—among which he divided his time. Although only one of the dining rooms would be used at a time, each was equipped with a full-time staff of chef and waiters. Luncheons were just one aspect of his hospitality. When a dam or a park was to be opened upstate, chartered planes flew hundreds of guests to a whole weekend of lavish

"Could you please take this back? My boss just invited me to Benihana."

FOX

Driving fast down the country roads.
To a committee. A class.
When I stop for gas, a highway patrolman tells me
one of my lights is out.
Then he drives off to take up his position
behind a bush at the bottom of the hill
to wait for speeders.

Yesterday, a snake, black & green, coiled
down by the railroad tracks.
His mouth bloody, he moved slowly,
he looked like he was dying.
Boats being pulled up out of the water.
The dog ran into the lake
after the sticks the children threw,
And stood looking back at me from the gold water.

On TV, the faces of the captured Israeli pilots.
Syrian film of Israeli planes crashing,
martial music. The patrolman crouched behind the bush,
the mouth of the snake, hard & red,
his green-black body without ease,
a bent stick by him, as if maybe
a child had beaten him with it, maybe the same
child throwing sticks to the dog in the water.

Hurrying through Wisconsin.
Hundreds of black birds tossed up
from a cornfield, turning away. Arab or Israeli?
The man in the parked patrol car,
the sticks rushing, failing through the air.
County Road Q, County Road F.
The committee meeting, waiting for me.

The fox! It is a fox! It is a red fox!
I slow up. He is in the road.
I slow. He moves into the grass, but not far.
He doesn't seem that afraid.
Look, look! I say to the white dog behind me.
Look, Snow Dog, a fox! He doesn't see him.
And this fox. What he does now is
go a little further, & turn, & look at me.
I am braked, with the engine running, looking at him.

I say to him, Fox—you Israeli or Arab?
You are red; whose color is that?
Was it you brought blood
to the mouth of the snake? The patrolman
is waiting, the dog standing
in the gold water. Would you
run fetch, what would you
say to my students? He looks at me.

And I say, So go off, leave us, over
the edge of that hill, where we shan't see you.
Go on—as the white she-wolf can't,
who goes up & down, up & down
against her bars all day,
all night maybe.

Be fox for all of us, those in zoos,
in classrooms, those on committees,
neither Assistant Fox nor Associate Fox
but Full Fox, fox with tenure, runner
on any land, owner of nothing, anywhere,
fox beyond all farmers,
fox neither Israeli nor Arab,
fox the color of the fall & the hill.

And you, O fellow with my face,
do this for me: one day
come back to me, to my door,
show me my own crueller face, my face
as it really cruelly is, beyond what

a committee brings out in me, or the woman
I love when I have to leave her.
But no human hand, fox untouched, fox
among the apples & barns, O call out
in your own fox-voice through the air over Wisconsin
that is full of the falling
Arab & Israeli leaves, red, red,
locked together, falling, in spirals, burning . . .

be a realler, cleaner thing,
no snake with a broken body, no bent stick,
no patrolman crouched behind a bush
with bloody mouth, no stick thrown,
no beloved tamed dog in the water . . .

And let us pull up now out of the water
the boats, & call the leaves home
down out of the air, Arab or Israeli;
& you, my real red fox in Wisconsin,
as I let out the clutch & leave you,
you come back that time, be cruel then,
teach me your fox-stink even, more than now, as I
hurry, kind & fragrant, into committee,
& the leaves falling, red, red.
And the fox runs on.

—Michael Dennis Browne

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receptions. In New York, highly paid Triborough officials had as their chief duty the entertainment of Moses' guests. They conducted tours of the empire, pointing out its principal natural features—the towers of the Triborough Bridge, marching like the façades of twin cathedrals across the East River, the long lawns of Riverside Park—and repeating at each monument the legend, burnished by time and constant retelling, of how Robert Moses had created it. And Moses' thousands of personal guests at the summer capital of the empire, Jones Beach, were entertained on an imperial scale—in a million-and-a-half-dollar restaurant, whose main purpose, to judge from its financial statements, was to entertain them, and in a four-million-dollar amphitheatre that Moses had turned over to his favorite bandleader, Guy Lombardo, virtually as a gift, and on which Lombardo reaped immense personal profits.

The wealth of the empire enabled Moses to keep many city officials in fear. With it he hired skilled investigators he called "bloodhounds," who spent their time filling dossiers. Every city official knew about those dossiers, and they knew what use Moses was capable of making of them, for the empire's wealth allowed him to create an awesomely efficient public-relations machinery. They had seen him dredge up secrets from men's pasts and turn them into glaring headlines. On the occasion of Paul Screvane's appoint-

ment as city liaison to the 1964-65 World's Fair, of which Moses was president, Mayor Robert Wagner leaned toward Screvane and said earnestly, "Paul, my *experience* with Moses has taught me one lesson, and I'll tell it to you. I would never let him do anything for me in any way, shape, or form. I'd never ask him, or *permit* him, to do anything of a personal nature for me, because—and I've seen it time and time again—a day will come when Bob will reach back in his file and throw this in your face, quietly if that will make you go along with him, publicly otherwise. And if he has to he will destroy you with it." Screvane admired—"idolized" would scarcely be too strong a word—Moses. He was loath to believe Wagner's warning. But, he recalls, during a series of battles in the Fair executive committee, "I saw it happen time and time again. Bob Moses has these files. On at least twenty separate occasions when we were on the same side, I would say about someone, 'I don't think he'll go along,' and Bob would say, 'Well, God damn it, he'd *better* go along! If he doesn't go along, I'll destroy the son of a bitch!' And he'd call for a file, and he would begin to quote chapter and verse. And, sure enough, the fellow would go along."

"Beg pardon, sir, but I couldn't help noticing you were spiritually bereft."

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Moses dealt with the city not as one of its commissioners but as a sovereign prince. Early in his career, he initiated the practice of sending ambassadors to Board of Estimate meetings instead of appearing himself. Face-to-face parleys with the city's mayor were frequently unavoidable, but, to make clear that he was as independent of the mayor's authority as he was of the Board's, Moses often refused to journey to the seat of the mayor's power, City Hall.

Moses and LaGuardia

Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia mastered New York City as no one since Peter Stuyvesant had mastered it. Roaming his domain in person, like Harun al-Rashid, he suddenly appeared on lines in front of municipal lodging houses, checking on the treatment of the luckless, or in police precinct houses, employing the mayoralty's theretofore unused magisterial powers to mete out swift punishment to arrested gamblers. Doffing his big Stetson for the helmet of a fire chief, he dashed to fires to make "personal inspections," from which he emerged covered with soot, and he once groped through smoke and flames to the side of two firemen pinned under a collapsed wall, and knelt by them whispering encouragement until they were freed. He raced to train wrecks in the sidecar of a police motorcycle, battered down doors at the head of police raiding parties, and snatched batons from conductors to lead bravura orchestra performances. (Conducting the Sanitation Department band at a special performance in Carnegie Hall, he instructed a stage manager, "Just treat me like Toscanini.") He mastered even the city's most unmasterable element—its government. When a Tammany alderman said, "It is the business of the *majority* to advance a constructive program," LaGuardia replied, with a grim smile, "In this administration, I am the majority." Sitting under the portraits of bewigged nineteenth-century mayors, his horn-rimmed glasses pushed up on top of his head and his feet dangling, he went through his paperwork as rapidly as if he were dealing a deck of cards, tossing letters at three secretaries and shouting, "Say yes! Say no! Throw it away! Tell him to go to hell!"

LaGuardia was a bullying petty tyrant to subordinates—not only to his secretaries, who came to dread being summoned into his office and would sit sobbing at their desks when they came out, but also to his commissioners, the nonpartisan, nonpolitical experts whose presence in his administration he was constantly bragging about. Rexford G. Tugwell, who joined the administration as Planning Commission chairman, recalls bitterly, in his book "The Art of Politics," "He boasted to the newspapers [of] his appointees. . . . He did not say that he often treated his commissioners like dogs. . . . We soon discovered that we were expected to do a good deal of humiliating kowtowing, to give many of LaGuardia's favorites jobs, and to respect without question whatever capricious notions the Mayor might have about our work." The Mayor moved his desk to the far end of his thirty-one-foot-long office (the Blue Room,

which, because of its size, is ordinarily used for ceremonial functions), so that visitors would have a longer walk to reach him, and when a commissioner entered—usually after a heel-cooling period outside—the Mayor would often cover his face with his fingers and peer between them, so that, as the commissioner approached, all he could see of his boss's face was a pair of button-bright little eyes staring at him. A commissioner who displeased LaGuardia by inefficiency, or by showing even a hint of independence, would be abused as if he were a wayward child. And the abuse was not delivered in private: in his desk the Mayor kept a large, polished shank bone, and at intervals he would call his commissioners together so that in front of them all he could "award" it to the one who had pulled the biggest recent boner. Once, with a commissioner in his office, the Mayor summoned a secretary and berated her viciously for an imaginary mistake, just so that he could have the pleasure of concluding the tirade by shouting, "If you were any dumber, I'd make you a commissioner!"

The Mayor's relationship with his Parks Commissioner was slightly different. Other commissioners might be made to cool their heels after answering a mayoral summons; when Moses was summoned, *he* would keep the *Mayor* waiting—showing up late, if he showed up at all. LaGuardia might browbeat other commissioners, but when the commissioner in the Mayor's office was Moses, the secretaries knew that if the Mayor's high-pitched voice began to pierce the door it would soon be joined, if not drowned out, by another, nasal and resonant. Men who happened to be sitting in LaGuardia's office during confrontations between the Mayor and Moses spoke of those confrontations with wonder thirty years later. "There would be scenes in the Mayor's office that I could hardly believe," Paul J. Kern, LaGuardia's first law secretary, said several years ago. Reuben A. Lazarus, whose expertise in bill-drafting, second only to Moses', had earned him the title "the walking library," witnessed many of the battles between the two men. "One time, Moses was threatening to do something—I don't recall what, exactly—to some other commissioner," Lazarus said once. "LaGuardia was pleading and pleading with him not to do it. He kept saying, 'Jesus, Bob, look at the trouble you're going to cause me.' Finally, Moses said, 'O.K., Major, I won't.' He left, and LaGuardia turned to me and said, 'Someday I'm going to hit that son of a bitch and knock him through that door!'" Jack Madigan, who was Moses' most trusted engineering consultant and was often waiting outside City Hall in Moses' limousine during the Commissioner's meetings with the Mayor, says, "Moses would come out wild—just absolutely wild. He used to say to me, 'Do you know what that dago son of a bitch told me this morning?'" ("That dago son of a bitch," "that wop son of a bitch," and "that guinea son of a bitch" were three of Moses' epithets for LaGuardia during the Mayor's first term. In letters and to his face, Moses addressed him as "Major," a reference to LaGuardia's rank in the First World War. During his second term, LaGuardia banned organ grinders from the streets, and Moses thereupon began referring to him in private as "the little organ grinder." Later, he took to calling him "Rigoletto." LaGuardia, feeling that Moses' insistence on his own infallibility was comparable at least to an archbishop's, referred to Moses in private as "His Grace.")

LaGuardia was constantly severing commissioners' ties with his administration, or threatening to sever them, but when he dealt with Moses the shoe was on the other foot. The resignation threat was a heavily used weapon in Moses' running battle with the Mayor. It worked, as it worked with succeeding mayors, because LaGuardia knew that no one else could provide the physical accomplishments that his administration needed. The threats might be delivered in writing or by Moses himself in a face-to-face confrontation—just before he whirled on his heel and slammed out of the Mayor's office. When Moses walked out with a threat hanging in the air, "LaGuardia used to go over to the window and wait to see if Moses really left the building," Paul Windels, who served as corporation counsel under LaGuardia, once recalled. "And if Moses did, LaGuardia would quickly send someone from the office—a secretary or whoever was with him—after Moses to try and stop him before he drove away, as if it were the secretary's idea and not his. . . . Then he'd stand by the window waiting to see what happened. After a while, it occurred to him that Moses could see him standing there and could see how anxious he was, so he had the lower panes of the window filled with one-way glass so he could look out but Moses couldn't see in."

Early in 1937, at the beginning of his fourth year in office, LaGuardia informed Moses that five thousand Works Progress Administration laborers assigned to Parks Department projects, including two thousand maintenance employees, would be reassigned that May, and five thousand men a month thereafter, so that work could begin on new, non-park projects. Moses replied that if he had to lay off men, some among them would be playground supervisors; some playgrounds would therefore have to be closed—a step sure to touch off a furious public reaction. About to leave by train for a national conference of mayors in Los Angeles, LaGuardia flatly ordered Moses not to close any playgrounds, threatening to fire him if he did. Moses defied the Mayor. While a Union Pacific Streamliner was speeding the Mayor across the country, the Parks Commissioner struck: he didn't take some of the two thousand men from playground duty—he took them *all*, and, with them, every piece of movable playground equipment, even the seats of the swings. And then he ordered the padlocking of a hundred and forty-two playgrounds. Telephoning frantically from a pay phone at each Union Pacific stop, LaGuardia ordered Police Commissioner Lewis J. Valentine to open the playgrounds—by force, if necessary. The police had to cut the locks when Moses refused to surrender the keys to Valentine, and though the play areas were technically open, the Parks Department was empowered by city regulations to hold on to the equipment it had removed, and the city's mothers, met by pistol-toting policemen instead of the familiar supervisory personnel, rallied behind the Parks Commissioner. When the Mayor came home, he was confronted by a sheaf of letters and petitions from a hostile public, to whom Moses had already taken his case. Lost in the tumult was the fact that it was the Parks Commissioner, not the Mayor, who had chosen that playground personnel instead of construction workers be dropped from the Parks Department payroll. The public outcry, fanned by the pro-Moses press, forced the Mayor to approve a Moses request for half a mil-

lion dollars so that the playgrounds could be properly supervised and the Parks Commissioner's construction projects could continue.

But if there was much in the characters of the two strong-willed, hot-tempered men to fan antipathy between them, there was also much to produce affection. For in many respects they were, at least for a while, fighting for the same cause. Against a panorama of politicians interested only in themselves, they stood out as two who were also interested in accomplishments that they believed would benefit others. Moses was, after all, not the only one of the two who was spending his evenings and his weekends driving endlessly around New York City trying to think of ways to make it more beautiful. Moses played on the Mayor's feeling for engineers and engineering. He was constantly pressing LaGuardia to accompany him on inspection tours of construction sites, and—with his great gift for words, his sense of drama, and his squads of engineers, who would follow the mayoral limousine in a second car so that they could leap out at a project site, elaborate artists' renderings in hand, and show the Mayor what the project would look like when it was completed—he made these tours wonderfully exciting to a man who, according to Paul Kern, "stood like a child in front of the simplest engineering feat." If Moses was putting on one of the greatest engineering shows in history, he made sure that LaGuardia had a ringside seat. For example, on the day the twenty-two-hundred-ton vertical-lift span that constituted the Harlem River arm of the Triborough Bridge was to be set in place, the Mayor was standing on Randall's Island in the very shadow of the tower that, with its twin on the Manhattan shore, would hold the span. And when the span was finally set in place, he said breathlessly, "This is the most thrilling moment I have had since I became mayor. . . . I congratulate the authority, the engineers, the contractors, and every man who has had a part in this magnificent piece of work. Moments like this make up for many heartaches and disappointments." The fact that Moses had never gone to engineering school—which astonished LaGuardia when he learned it—did not prevent the Mayor from gushing on several occasions, "Robert Moses is the greatest engineer in the country."

"Something tells me, Ferguson, that you're not making me this offer because of my great big baby blues."

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Moses and the United Nations

IN December of 1946, negotiations were under way to bring the United Nations headquarters to New York, and they weren't going well. The city had not come up with the money to get the project started or with a satisfactory midtown site. With a final decision by the U.N.'s Permanent Headquarters Committee due on Wednesday, December 11th, it seemed likely that New York would lose out to Philadelphia. On the sixth, a Friday, Mayor William O'Dwyer received a telephone call from William Zeckendorf. Zeckendorf, a real-estate wheeler-dealer on the grand scale, had for some months been secretly buying up property on midtown Manhattan's eastern shore, in an area of Turtle Bay that had been occupied since Civil War days by slaughterhouses, packing plants, and cattle pens. He had succeeded in acquiring an option to buy the heart of the area, a seventeen-acre tract bounded by Forty-second and Forty-ninth Streets and the East River Drive and First Avenue, for only six and a half million dollars, or seventeen dollars per square foot—a fraction of the price of most midtown real estate. He had planned to create a series of huge superblocks there, but plans and financing weren't completed, and the option was running out. He told the Mayor that he was willing to sell the tract, the largest one to become available in central New York in twenty years, to the U.N.

When O'Dwyer reported the offer to Secretary-General Trygve Lie, Lie's reaction was that "Turtle Bay . . . even now, could turn the tide." There was still the problem of money. Zeckendorf recalled in his autobiography that the Mayor "fervently" said that to keep the U.N. in New York "he'd give an arm, a leg, and various other parts of his body . . . but that none of them was particularly salable." The Rockefellers were suggested as a source of the cash, perhaps because the family had once given the U.N.'s predecessor, the League of Nations, a large donation. But O'Dwyer had no entrée to the Rockefeller from whom at that time a gift of the necessary dimensions would have to come—John D. Rockefeller, Jr., who had spent long days riding over the route of the Palisades Interstate Parkway with Robert Moses, who had worked closely with Moses in the construction of the Cloisters and a children's playground in Fort Tryon Park, and whose admiration for Moses was well known. "This is where Moses came in with Nelson Rockefeller, working on Mr. Rockefeller, his father," O'Dwyer recalled later. There were endless details to be worked out: acquiring land that Zeckendorf didn't control, widening Forty-seventh Street to provide access to the site, deciding

whether city property should be included or excluded, obtaining a commitment for a federal gift for construction. And there was only a little more than four days—ninety-six hours—to work them out. When the gavel slammed down to call the U.N. Headquarters Committee into session on Wednesday morning, it would be too late.

But in ninety-six hours it was done. For every tangle that arose, Moses had a knife. Teams of lawyers were prepared to research for days the details of city surrender of East River bulkheads; Moses called in a secretary and dictated on the spot, without reference to a single law book, a memo setting out the method—a memo that lawyers later found to be correct down to the last comma. Legislative approval was needed for the city to close certain streets within the site and to give the land under them to complete the site; a few phone calls from Moses to Albany, and a guarantee of the permission was obtained. Late Tuesday night—only hours before the Headquarters Committee convened—Zeckendorf, who had taken no part in the discussions following his offer and did not know whether there was any chance of its being accepted, was celebrating a friend's birthday in a private dining room of a night club called the Monte Carlo, at Fifty-fourth Street and Madison Avenue. Wallace K. Harrison, a distinguished architect and an intimate of the Rockefeller family, walked in with a block-by-block map of the site bulging from his jacket pocket, sat down at the table, tried to assume an air of nonchalance, failed, and blurted out, "Would you sell it for eight and a half million?" Zeckendorf said yes, and the next morning at ten-thirty, as he sat in his office nursing a hangover, the phone rang and he heard Nelson Rockefeller say, "We've been up all night patching up the details, but it's going to work. The old man is going to give that eight and a half million dollars to the U.N., and they're going to take your property. . . . See you soon . . . Goodbye." Within three days, the General Assembly accepted New York's proposal.

Moses and O'Dwyer

Moses often used the power of money to discipline mayors, as he did in the case of Mayor O'Dwyer and the proposed Mid-Manhattan Expressway. On December 30, 1949, the Board of Estimate authorized the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority, of which Moses was chairman, to apply in the name of the city for federal funds to study the "most feasible plan" for an express crossing of the middle of Manhattan. On June 2, 1950, Mayor O'Dwyer announced that Triborough's study had been completed; that it had "proved" the most feasible plan to be an elevated highway proposed by Triborough's chairman; that the chairman had already persuaded the federal government to pay the cost of plans for the road, which would run across Manhattan at Thirtieth Street about a hundred feet in the air, using the sixty-foot street width and a hundred-foot width created by tearing down the buildings lining the south side of the street; that the chairman had persuaded the Port Authority to pay the cost of planning and building a linkup with the Lincoln Tunnel; that Triborough had agreed to pay twenty-six million dollars for the rest of the highway's construction; and that the preparation of detailed blueprints would begin at once.

There was ecstasy in the editorial columns but agony among trade and civic associations; they charged that the Board of Estimate had directed Triborough to study all proposals—including one for a tunnel, which would be less destructive, aesthetically and physically—but that Triborough had studied only its chairman's. Representatives of twenty civic and business associations, along with Jerry Finkelstein, chairman of the City Planning Commission, and Manhattan Borough President Robert Wagner, visited O'Dwyer to ask that the tunnel study be made by the Planning Commission.

O'Dwyer's response was frank. He himself would prefer a tunnel, the Mayor said, adding, "I don't like overhead structures." But his preferences were not important. "I'm sure you can draw me a satisfactory plan for a tunnel," he said, "but all the talk in the world is no good if there isn't anyone to build it. . . . You've got to show me someone who'll put up the money to build it." There was only one man who had that kind of money—and he would put it up only for an overhead crossing, not for a tunnel. Pressed hard by his visitors, the Mayor finally said that he would permit the Planning Commission to make its own study. But such a study would be a useless waste of money, he said, and he wasn't going to provide any city funds for it. Finkelstein pointed out that the Mayor's "permission" was therefore meaningless, since the commission had neither the personnel capable of making such a study nor the funds to hire such personnel. He said he and his allies were not saying that an overhead crossing should not be built. They all agreed that some solution of the mid-Manhattan traffic problem was necessary. All they were asking was a chance to find out which solution would really be best for the city. Could the Planning Commission not have even fifty thousand dollars? The Mayor simply threw up his hands without replying.

No reply was necessary, of course. He was mayor of a city that couldn't afford to build a crossing. Moses could.

Moses would have to be allowed to build whatever type of crossing he wanted. The Mayor's stand certainly seemed pro-Moses—much too pro-Moses—to Moses' opponents. But it wasn't pro-Moses enough for Moses. Angered because O'Dwyer had dared to give permission—even meaningless permission—for an independent study, he decided to teach the Mayor a lesson. The Triborough board approved a resolution stating that the authority was no longer willing to build a mid-Manhattan crossing of any type and formally withdrawing the authority's request for federal planning funds.

O'Dwyer pleaded with Moses to reconsider. Moses refused. The humiliated Mayor had to acknowledge that the expressway he had announced with such pride just three weeks before was now dead. It was all very well for Jerry Finkelstein to call Moses a "cryhaby" who, if other boys wouldn't let him play by his rules, would take his money and go home. It was the Mayor who was still faced with the mid-Manhattan traffic crisis, and with the realization that he had absolutely no way to solve it. All he could do was try, angrily but lamely, to pin the blame on others, saying, at a press conference, "I do hope that the actions of the opponents of the elevated-highway study will be a lesson to them that they can't push Bob Moses around. . . . Thirtieth Street and the surrounding area will have the same traffic congestion for a long time to come. The next time a tried-and-true outfit proposes a forty-million-dollar traffic improvement, without expense to the city or cost to the taxpayers, I hope the Hate Moses Club will keep away from City Hall. I shall have very little welcome for them." Summoning Finkelstein to his office, he gave him an hour-long tongue-lashing so violent that when reporters crowded around Finkelstein as he left the Mayor's office, the normally ebullient young man pushed past them without a word.

Moses and Impellitteri

IN August of 1950, with scandals shaking the Police Department, and with a Senate committee about to begin investigating links between the underworld and New York politicians, Mayor O'Dwyer resigned to accept the post of Ambassador to Mexico. The resignation placed the city in Moses' power more firmly than ever. By law, the successor to a retiring mayor is the president of the City Council. By fate, the Council presidency was held in 1950 by a man who during the forty-five years of his life prior to his nomination to that post had never held any job more responsible than that of legal secretary, at seventy-five hundred dollars a year, to a State Supreme Court judge.

The nomination of this unknown Tammany ward heeler to the city's second-highest elective office had, Warren Moscow wrote in his book "The Last of the Big-Time Bosses," "staggered even the most imaginative among political reporters." And so had the explanation of how he obtained the nomination. During a last-minute reshuffling of the 1945 Democratic ticket, the leaders finally agreed on Lazarus Joseph for comptroller, and then realized that since O'Dwyer was Irish and from Brooklyn, and Joseph was Jewish and from the Bronx, the slate could have ethnic and geographic balance only if its third member was an Italian from Manhattan—and the leaders were unable to think of a single Manhattan Italian they could trust. After hours of impasse, one leader reasoned that since legal-secretaryships to State Supreme Court justices carried a respectable salary for which little or no work was required, they would have been given only to the "safest" of Democratic workers. Pulling out the little "Green Book," the official directory of city employees, he turned to the list of legal secretaries, ran his finger down it looking for a name that even the dumbest voter would be able to tell was Italian, and came to Vincent R. Impellitteri. "No one knew who the hell he was," Reuben Lazarus recalled several years ago. In any event, after determining that Impellitteri lived in Manhattan, the leaders telephoned his district leader and were assured, "You don't have to worry about him. He's a good boy."

Although this explanation was attested to privately by members of Tammany's hierarchy (and by Moses, whose presence at the crucial ticket-making session reveals his standing with that hierarchy), it seemed almost unbelievable—until one met Impellitteri. If he had a single qualification for the job of Council president other than the length of his name and the fact that it ended in a vowel, he kept it carefully hidden during his five-year tenure (he was reëlected with O'Dwyer in 1949). "The perfect Throttlebottom," Moscow called him. "He voted as the Mayor told him to, on matters he did not necessarily understand, and spent most of his waking hours shaking hands at public dinners, political clambakes, and cornerstone layings too unimportant to merit the Mayor's presence."

If Impellitteri wanted to keep the office he had fallen into, he had to seek election in November, less than twelve weeks after he had succeeded O'Dwyer. His P.R. men quickly hit on two ways to create an image for him: first, take advantage of the fact that, since no one knew him, he was not identified with any political bosses, and portray him as the "anti-boss," "anti-politician," "anti-corruption" candidate; and, second, identify him with Robert

Moses. The price of that identification came high: Moses wanted an even freer hand than he had enjoyed under O'Dwyer in setting all city construction policies. But Impellitteri paid it, and he got full value in return. Moses endorsed him and then led him around by the hand to officiate at—and share in the credit for and front-page pictures of—the openings of highways and housing projects with which he had had nothing to do other than, as Council president, to affix his signature to documents that he had often not even bothered to read. Impellitteri was elected, and most observers, noting that the campaign had consisted mainly of charges and countercharges of bossism and corruption, felt that the endorsement by an official characterized as "independent" and believed to be above corruption was an important factor in Impellitteri's victory.

During the campaign, thanks to his addiction to the blue suit and the boutonniere, his iron-gray hair, his deeply earnest mien, and a solidity that was mistaken for dignity, Impellitteri had appeared to be the very model of a modern mayor. At the approach of a camera, his brow would furrow, his lips would purse, his jaw would jut, and his eyes would focus on whatever piece of paper happened to be handy just as intently as if he understood the words written on it. But once in possession of the prize he had won he proved to possess not the slightest idea of what to do with it. He disclaimed any influence over the Board of Estimate, telling reporters, "All I have is three votes on it, you know." Mayors were always telling reporters that, but City Hall observers soon realized, to their astonishment, that this mayor *believed* it. Victor F. Condello, one of Impellitteri's aides, suggested once that the Mayor call the five borough presidents to an executive session to discuss a thorny issue. "Yeah," the Mayor said. "That's a good idea." Pause. "You think they'll come?" He would take orders from whoever happened to be talking to him at the moment. He was a man simply unequal to meeting the duties that had been thrust upon him. Warren Moscow, who was a *Times* political reporter at the time, has recalled, "My God, at Board of Estimate executive sessions, he'd sit there and some problem would come up, and the poor bastard would say, 'I got no answer on this, boys. You got any ideas?'" And if no one had any, the hundred-and-first mayor of the City of New York would sit there with his gavel before him, literally wringing his hands in agitation while long minutes passed in painful silence. He was desperate for someone to turn to, almost frantically anxious to drop his enormous powers—and responsibilities—into someone else's hands, and the biggest hands around were those of Robert Moses.

Within weeks of Impellitteri's inauguration, Lazarus was noting in his diary, "Robert Moses is actually running this town today. There's no important act Impellitteri takes or does that he doesn't consult Mr. Moses." Condello says, "Moses' word was law in the city." Soon other political observers were saying the same thing. Moses' consultations with the Mayor were held almost every morning, at Gracie Mansion; Moses dropped by at nine or nine-thirty, or even earlier. And these were private consultations: when Moses was closeted with Impellitteri in the Mansion drawing room, no one else was allowed to be present. Sometimes the Mayor saw no one else until eleven. Moses would come in with a big envelope filled with papers he wanted the Mayor to sign, and, invariably, by the time Moses drove away in his limousine they were signed. One Impellitteri aide says that the Mayor never left the Mansion in the morning until Moses had given him "his marching orders for the day."

During the forty months of the Impellitteri administration, the trends that Moses had set in motion during the forty-six months of the O'Dwyer administration—forty-six months beginning in January of 1946, during which Moses had exercised near-absolute power over the construction of all public works—intensified. During the O'Dwyer administration, the city spent $3,102,000 on the construction of colleges, $1,169,000 on the construction of libraries, and more than $80,000,000 on the construction of highways. Before the war, the city's hospital situation had been desperate, and yet $80,000,000 was more than twice as much as the city spent on hospitals during the O'Dwyer administration. It was more, even, than it spent on elementary and high schools. During the Impellitteri administration, the city spent $16,176,000 on colleges, $4,118,000 on libraries, $70,314,000 on hospitals, $137,290,000 on schools, and $172,294,000 on highways.

City Comptroller Frank Taylor had warned his successor, Joseph McGoldrick, and McGoldrick had warned *his* successor, Lazarus Joseph, that Moses would "bankrupt" the city. One way in which the comptrollers were afraid Moses would do this was by forcing the city to issue long-term revenue bonds to pay the "negligible" city share of the costs of his public works—costs that, he assured the press and the public and city officials not as familiar with city finances as the comptrollers, were being borne almost entirely by the state and the federal government. Since most of his public works were not revenue-producing—those that were he built under the auspices of his public authorities, so that they, rather than the city, would get the revenue—the only method of paying the interest on such bonds was to take money out of the city's current revenues; that is, to include debt service in the expense budget. Thanks to the wartime curtailment of construction, and therefore of new bond issues, the city's general funded debt at the beginning of the O'Dwyer administration was down to a little more than two billion dollars—on which the annual debt-service charges were a hundred and eighteen million. By 1952, the funded debt was up to more than three billion dollars and the annual service charges were two hundred and eleven million dollars—up eighty per cent in seven years. Another way, more subtle but, in the long run, more damaging, that Moses affected the city budget was by draining away for new construction so much of the city's resources that it could not pay for maintenance of its existing twelve-billion-dollar physical plant. Not only subways but highways fell into this category; even Moses' own roads could not be kept up. And the cost of making up for neglected maintenance is astonishingly high: the West Side Highway, for example, could have been kept in perfect repair during the nineteen-fifties for about seventy-five thousand dollars a year; by the late nineteen-sixties, because virtually no repairing had been done, the cost of maintenance was almost a million dollars a year; and in 1974 the highway had begun literally to fall apart—a process that would take tens of millions of dollars to reverse. By the time Moses left power, in 1968, the city was utterly unable to make even a pretense of keeping its physical plant in repair.

The forty months that Impellitteri sat in the mayor's chair were a crucial forty months for the city. It was during this time that the city's last large open spaces, with the exception of those

on Staten Island, disappeared. New York filled up, assumed a new shape—the shape that Moses dictated. And Moses' forty months of absolute power enabled him to shape the city for far longer than forty months. The appointments that Impellitteri made on his recommendation—for example, staff engineers for city agencies—extended his influence for years after Impellitteri had ceased to be mayor. Protected in general by Civil Service, such appointees remained in their sensitive posts while new mayors sat in City Hall; they knew that mayors came and went but Moses stayed, and that therefore, in conflicts between Moses and a mayor, it was in their interest to give their loyalty to Moses.

Moses and Wagner

Moses felt that no rules—not even the most innocuous—applied to him. Making a rare appearance at a public hearing on one of his projects—a hearing at City Hall, before the Board of Estimate, on his proposed Bay Ridge approach to the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge—he declined to identify himself for the record by name and address, as all other speakers had been required to do.

"Make him give his name!" a woman shouted. Then several men picked up the shout, and soon the audience, which had filled the Board chamber to overflowing and had filled the corridor outside, turned it into a chant: "Make him give his name! Make him give his name!" Mayor Wagner, presiding, looked at Moses appealingly, but Moses crossed his arms, locked his hands around his biceps, tilted back his head, and, with his prognathous jaw jutting, stood in the face of that chant like some haughty Ramses. He finally said to the Mayor—who, according to one of Moses' aides, "was shrinking down behind his microphone so you could hardly see him"—"Well, what are you going to do about it?"

"Now, if you people can't be quiet, I'll have the room cleared," Wagner said. "You people know who this is. This is Robert Moses."

With the name in the record, Wagner motioned for Moses to proceed, but when Moses began his presentation, the crowd began to chant, "Make him give his address! Make him give his address!" Again Wagner looked at Moses, again Moses stared him down, and again Wagner had to intercede: "You all know where he lives. He lives across the street from me." (Moses' apartment was at 1 Gracie Terrace.) Moses was furious that the Mayor had not ousted from the room this rabble trying to make him abide by the rules that governed other men. Despite a previous promise to the Mayor that he would, this once, give at least the appearance of participating in a public hearing, he talked only briefly, describing a seventy-nine-million-dollar project, for which an hour-and-a-half presentation had been prepared, in about ten minutes; then he snatched up his papers and strode from the room, leaving the Mayor to sit alone listening to protests until two o'clock the next morning.

City Parks and Housing

By the time Robert Moses resigned as New York City Parks Commissioner—in 1960, after more than a quarter of a century in the post—every one of the city's parks bore his mark. He had created several big parks from scratch—Flushing Meadow, Great Kills, Soundview, Ferry Point, Randall's Island, and Sara Delano Roosevelt—and had substantially remade the creations of pioneers like Frederick Law Olmsted and the forgotten John J. Mullaly, the creator of the Bronx park system. For example, Central Park was still Olmsted's in shape and over-all design, but Central Park's zoo, Wollman Memorial Rink, Tavern-on-the-Green, Chess and Checker House, bicycle paths, widened north-south drives, and nineteen perimeter playgrounds were Moses'. In all, Moses added twenty-two thousand acres to the city's parkland, bringing the acreage in parks to thirty-six thousand. Into the parks he put not only a score of amphitheatres and stadia (ranging in size from Shea on down) but seven hundred and fifty-one new playgrounds, six hundred and seventy-three new baseball diamonds, two hundred and eighteen new tennis courts, thirteen new golf courses, uncounted miles of new walkways and bicycle paths, and eighteen of the largest swimming-pool complexes ever built.

Housing was a field that Moses first tried to take over in 1938, when he realized that, as one of LaGuardia's aides has put it, "that was where the big money was going to be"—meaning the construction funds that to Moses spelled accomplishment and power. LaGuardia not only stopped that first takeover attempt but cut Moses off the air when he tried to make a housing speech over the city-owned radio station, WNYC. But in 1942 Moses conceived a plan too spectacular for the Mayor to pass up: a proposal to combine the city's power of eminent domain with the vast pools of capital sitting idle in the vaults of insurance companies. Out of this concept—embodied in a new State Redevelopment Companies Law, drafted by Moses—came Stuyvesant Town, Peter Cooper Village, and Riverton, in Manhattan,

three huge developments financed by Metropolitan Life, and Fresh Meadows, in Queens, financed by New York Life. The next source of private capital he tapped was that of savings banks, and the result was Concord Village, in Brooklyn; Colonial Village, in Manhattan; and Parkway Village, in Queens. Labor-union funds were growing, and out of that growth—thanks to Moses' use of city powers, his intricate financing arrangements with the union-backed United Housing Foundation, and what the foundation called Moses' "vision" in selecting sites—came half a dozen huge developments. Such insurance-company, bank, and union "redevelopment" projects gave New York City forty thousand new apartments, housing a hundred and forty thousand persons.

And these projects were not the only front on which Moses attacked the city's housing problem. As chairman of the Mayor's Committee on Slum Clearance, Moses controlled urban renewal in New York—a billion-and-a-half-dollar program, by far the largest in America—for a decade. By 1960, when Moses resigned as head of the program, there were under way in New York fifteen projects, housing a hundred and three thousand persons, and also dormitories and classroom buildings for Pratt Institute. Moreover, urban renewal (financed under Title I of the National Housing Act of 1949) helped Moses get a start on what he described as a "vision of a reborn West Side, marching north from Columbus Circle, and eventually spreading over the entire dismal and decayed West Side." The first encampment on the march was pitched at the Circle, in the form of a huge convention center and exhibition hall, the New York Coliseum, topped by a twenty-six-story office tower. After several years of trying unsuccessfully to finance the next encampment, a cultural center, three unrelated occurrences combined to show Moses the way. Sitting beside him on a dozen daises, the Very Reverend Laurence J. McGinley, S.J., president of Fordham University, repeatedly mentioned to him that the university desperately needed a midtown campus but was unable to pay midtown real-estate prices; Moses' longtime friend Ruth Baker Pratt and other opera lovers kept mentioning to him at black-tie dinner parties that for the Metropolitan Opera to be forced to perform in its ancient, inadequate building on Thirty-ninth Street was scandalous; and then, one morning in 1955, Moses read in the papers that Carnegie Hall had just formally notified the New York Philharmonic that its lease would not be renewed after 1958. From the three occurrences, his mind leaped to a grand conception: razing eighteen square blocks of slums that stretched northwest from Columbus Circle toward the Hudson River, and rearing on their ruins a glittering cultural complex—Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts—that would house not only the Opera and the Philharmonic but a ballet center, a repertory theatre, and a new home for the Juilliard School of Music, all alongside a two-block-square Fordham campus. By 1957, his plans for the site—on which there were then eleven thousand low-income tenants and eight hundred businesses—also included a high school for the performing arts, a pub-

"Well, you can't change human nature. There always have been, and always will be, interminable peace negotiations."

lic elementary school and playground, an underground parking garage, a firehouse, a park with a band shell for outdoor concerts, a headquarters for the American Red Cross, a new printing plant for the *Times*, and forty-four hundred units of new housing (all but four hundred of them luxury units).

For most of this time, Moses was also in complete control of the City Housing Authority, because, thanks to his influence with O'Dwyer and Impellitteri, a majority of its members had been appointed on his recommendation and took orders from him rather than the mayor—as many of its key staff officials did, too. Although his dominance of the authority was never more than hinted at by the press, for about a dozen years—from 1946 until 1957 or 1958, when Mayor Wagner reorganized the authority so that he could appoint a new board—no public-housing project was built without his express approval. And during these years the authority erected 1,011 buildings, containing 82,704 apartments, in which 464,750 persons lived. By the time Moses was finished with housing in New York, a total of 709,000 New Yorkers were living in buildings in whose creation he had been the moving force.

As monumental as the amount of housing built by Moses was the amount of corruption involved in the building. To some observers it seemed that every aspect of construction—from the initial condemnation proceedings to the final coat of paint before occupancy—was the subject of financial deals with politicians. Furthermore, under a unique method for Title I redevelopment which Moses worked out, "slum-clearance" sites were turned over to favored developers with the buildings on them intact and the tenants still inside. This method made the new owners slumlords, and since many of these owners were not legitimate real-estate builders at all but Tammany clubhouse politicians, they took advantage of the situation, doing no renewal for years—in some instances *never* doing any—while demanding exorbitant rents from the helpless tenants and refusing even the most basic maintenance. United States Senate studies of one of Moses' Title I projects—Manhattantown, west of Central Park in the Nineties—showed that its "developers," who were headed by a former slum furniture dealer and Tammany clubhouse politician named Samuel Caspert, made millions by milking the project's three hundred and thirty-eight tenements, which were valued at more than sixteen million dollars but had been handed over to the "developers" for one million.

Questions about Moses' housing policies will be debated by urbanologists for generations. His housing—his public housing, in particular, for Moses believed firmly that such housing was charity and that its tenants should be made to feel like recipients of charity—was bleak, sterile, institutional, and monolithic, and was built without any attempt to relate it to the surrounding community, or even to the needs of the people it was supposed to serve; public housing under Moses had, for example, an inordinately low percentage of large units, for large families, and of small units, for the widowed living alone. To build such housing, moreover, Moses tore down existing housing, and though much of this housing consisted of genuine slums, much consisted of sturdy, still serviceable apartment buildings and brownstones, better suited to the needs of the poor than the buildings that Moses put up. Moses believed that large-scale slum clearance—the razing of entire neighborhoods, in what became known as "the bulldozer approach"—was the only feasible method of beginning redevelopment in the city.

In evicting tenants from slum-clearance sites, Moses employed—and permitted his favored developers to employ relocation tactics that led Stanley M. Isaacs, who was a city councilman and a reformer, to say that tenants were being "hounded out like cattle." The effect of such policies on the people involved inevitably led to a feeling of helplessness in relation to "the city"—which, in their eyes, Moses represented—and so contributed substantially to the bitterness and alienation that eventually marked the attitude of minority groups in New York. The effect of such policies on the city was equally severe, for the people hounded out of their homes by Moses, who were prevented by their income, and perhaps by their color, from moving into many neighborhoods in New York, were driven into existing slums, further overcrowding them, or into adjoining "soft" areas, which then became slums. There is considerable evidence suggesting that Moses' slum-clearance program created new slums faster than it cleared the old; one fact beyond dis-

pute is that after his program was completed—with the expenditure of a billion and a half dollars—there were more slums in New York City than when it was started. There is also considerable evidence that Moses' policy of building low-income projects only in low-income areas and luxury apartments only in high-income areas contributed to the ghettoization of the city—its division along lines of race and income. But Moses would say that his way of building was the only way to get things done in a crowded city, and if he was wrong, no one has been able to prove him wrong. Both before and after he came to power, reform administrations showed themselves utterly unequal to the task of making even a dent in the city's housing problems; Moses built more housing in any one year of his reign than was built in John Lindsay's entire first term. However, it was not with his housing policies that Robert Moses most significantly and permanently shaped New York but, rather, with his transportation policies.

Moses and His Highways

AFTER the Second World War, when gasoline rationing ended and production of cars for civilian use was resumed, streets and highways, so empty for forty-four months, filled up with astonishing speed; mounting day by day, traffic was back practically to its prewar level within weeks. Nowhere did it mount faster than in New York, and New Yorkers had their memories of prewar traffic jams harshly jogged. By August 23, 1945, the *Herald Tribune* was demanding to know why, during the long breathing space afforded by the war, the city had not come up with congestion "remedies." Robert Moses' response—a letter four times as long as the editorial, sped to the *Tribune* by limousine—accused the newspaper of "ignoring and playing down what in other less busy and sophisticated communities would be hailed as great achievements." Speaking as the city construction coördinator, the chairman of the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority, and the dominant member of the City Planning Commission, he said that blueprints of highway improvements were spilling over his floors and that traffic would flow smoothly in the city within three years.

Soon Moses was documenting the extent of his plans. Blueprints were ready, he said, for widening and reconstructing the city's old boulevards (Horace Harding, Queens, Conduit, Northern) and his old parkways (the Belt, the Gowanus, the Cross-Island, the Laurelton) and for building close to seventy miles of new, broader roads—"expressways"—to carry not only automobiles but trucks and buses. Soon New York's newspapers began to be filled with such names of projected highways as Bruckner, Van Wyck, Major Deegan, Cross-Bronx, Brooklyn-Queens, Harlem River, New England, Richmond, Willowbrook, Clove Lakes, and Prospect. And that was just within the city. On Long Island, the old parkways were to be lengthened and extended, and expressways were to be built. The blueprints may indeed have been spilling over the floors. What Moses was proposing was the widening or the construction from scratch of no less than one hundred miles of roads. And roads were only part of Moses' solution to traffic congestion. There were also the facilities to carry traffic under and over the waters that divided the city. He was simultaneously completing the huge Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel and initiating preliminary planning for two huge bridges—a Throgs Neck span, two miles east of the Bronx-Whitestone, and a bridge across the Narrows, which would finally link Staten Island to the rest of the city.

The troops did not respond to this ringing trumpet call as they had to his prewar plans, however. Even before the war, some urban planners had begun to see—largely because of the effects of Moses' creations—that building more facilities for traffic would not in itself cure traffic congestion. These planners had said—the Regional Plan Association had been saying it since 1929, and after the opening of Moses' creations during the nineteen-thirties had been saying it with increasing urgency—that the movement of people and goods in a great metropolitan region required a *balanced* transportation *system;* that is, one in which the construction of mass rapid-transit facilities kept pace with the construction of roads. During the last two or three years before the war, a few planners had even begun to understand that without a balanced system roads and bridges not only would not alleviate traffic congestion but would aggravate it. Watching Moses open the Triborough Bridge to ease congestion on the Queensboro Bridge and open the Bronx-Whitestone Bridge to ease congestion on the Triborough Bridge, and then watching traffic counts on all three bridges mount until each was as congested as one had been before, planners could hardly avoid the conclu-

sion that "traffic generation" was no longer a theory but a proved fact. As more highways were built to alleviate congestion, more automobiles would pour onto them and congest them, thus forcing the building of more highways—which would generate more traffic and become congested in their turn, in an inexorably widening gyre, with awesome implications for the future of New York and of all urban areas.

The only way to check that vicious spiral, these planners knew, was by coordinating new highways with new mass-transit facilities. But Moses, far from planning new facilities, was destroying some of the old facilities—not just trolley tracks, which he was boasting about "ripping up," but the Third Avenue "L," which he wanted torn down. Viewed in the light of the need for a balanced transportation system, such destruction was not an achievement but a disaster. And not only was Moses destroying old facilities and not planning new ones but his monopolization of construction funds and his hold over the city government was making it impossible for anyone else to plan new facilities. If you poured public investment into the improvement of highways while doing nothing to improve mass-transit lines, there could be only one outcome: the new highways would lure customers away from parallel mass-transit lines; those losses would make it more and more difficult for the owners of the lines to sustain service and maintenance; service and maintenance would decline; the decline would cost the lines more passengers; the further loss in passengers would accelerate the rate of decline; the rate of passenger loss would accelerate correspondingly; *and* the passengers lost would do their travelling by private car, further increasing highway congestion. No crystal ball was needed to foretell such a result; it had already been proved—most dramatically, perhaps, in New Jersey, where the Susquehanna Railroad had lost more than two-thirds of its passengers in the ten years following the opening of the George Washington Bridge, but also in New York, where the New York Central had been hit hard by the opening of the Triborough Bridge. The end result of Moses' immense new highway-construction proposal, which not only ignored any provision for new mass transit but, deliberately or not, sabotaged what mass transit there was, was that the program could not conceivably accomplish its purpose, the alleviation of congestion; it could

only make congestion, already intolerable, progressively worse. His program was self-defeating. It just didn't make sense.

It made less sense still, some planners felt, because of certain other results of the Moses style of highway building. Highways—expressways or parkways—opened new areas to development. (Moses' prewar parkways had caused a vast upsurge in development on Long Island, in both Brooklyn and Queens and in the suburban counties of Nassau and Suffolk.) Subways opened areas to development, too, but to a different pattern of development. Because people travelling by subway arrived home on foot and didn't want to walk far after they reached their stop, subway-inspired development was development close to subway stations: high-density, predominantly apartment-house development. People travelling on parkways arrived home in automobiles. It was relatively easy for them to travel long distances from their "stops," the parkway exits. Realizing this, developers took advantage of people's growing desire for open space by building on larger plots of land, and spreading out the communities in which people lived. Once, growth in the New York metropolitan region had been, to a great extent, upward—people being piled on top of people in apartment houses. Now the growth was outward. Not only was the population of the region growing at a rapid rate but it was spreading away from the traditional center of the region at a rate far more rapid.

Had enough jobs followed the people out into the suburbs, the effect of this spread might not have been so serious. Given the advantages of open space, it might, in fact, have been desirable. And normally, because land was relatively cheap on Long Island, businesses and industries *would* have followed the people out. But Moses' policies made that impossible. Most roads foster commercial as well as residential development, but his roads were barred to commercial traffic. His success in getting nearly all the land bordering his parkways zoned as residential may have insured that the parkways would be kept pristine and beautiful, but it also insured that the land on Long Island most desirable for commercial development would be closed to such development. Moreover, industries and businesses that could have imported raw materials and shipped out finished products by rail instead of truck shied away from Long Island, because the Long Island Rail Road, whose lines should have formed the hub of industrial development, was a rickety, "Toonerville Trolley" line, and because there was no rail connection at all to New Jersey, and so the rail lines that brought the goods and commerce of the nation into New Jersey could transport it to Long Island only by expensive lightering. Therefore, industry and business stayed back in New York City.

In the decade after Moses opened the Southern State Parkway in Nassau County, two hundred thousand new residents—about fifty thousand families—moved into the county, but only twelve thousand new jobs were created there. This meant that thirty-eight thousand family breadwinners in Nassau County and in the areas of Brooklyn and Queens opened up by the parkway had to come back into the city to win that bread. Hardly had the war ended when the surge to the suburbs resumed its prewar pace, leaped beyond it, and soared to previously undreamed-of proportions, spilling past Nassau into rural Suffolk. Every projection made by planners showed that hundreds of thousands of families would be moving to Long Island within the next few years. The vast majority of the breadwinners for these families were going to have to travel into the city every day to work. To the tens of thousands of drivers who had already filled Moses' roads to capacity and beyond capacity would be added tens of thousands of additional drivers. How could anyone ever build enough roads to accommodate them?

The answer to the questions that planners and reformers were beginning to raise about Moses' transportation policies was, of course, mass transit. Moving tens of thousands of commuters into and out of the city in a couple of peak hours every weekday—a problem so unmanageable in terms of expressway lanes whose peak capacity under ideal conditions was two thousand cars (carrying twenty-six hundred people) per hour—would be made manageable by rapid-transit lines, a single track of which could carry between forty-five and fifty thousand people per hour, and could bring them into the city without their cars, so that they wouldn't require parking space. Mass transit was, moreover, the only answer. New highways had a vital function to fulfill: the transportation, at a reasonable rate of speed, of

people and goods that, for one reason or another, had no choice but to use highways. If you had a viable mass-transit system in the region—fast, clean, inexpensive, modern subways and suburban commuter railroads—you would attract to it a substantial share of the traffic that did have a choice, and by removing this traffic from the highways you would be freeing the highways to fulfill their function. Pour all available funds into roads without building subways and railroads and the problem would never be solved.

Rebuffed by city officials, who summarily referred their inquiries and suggestions to Moses, and forced to admit to themselves that they could suggest no immediate method of financing new mass-transit lines, the planners pleaded for the city to take at least one simple, inexpensive step that would make the construction of new lines possible in the future. Building transit lines underground was wildly expensive. Building them at ground level was cheap, in terms of construction costs. It was only when the ground was covered with people that the cost of acquiring it became financially and politically prohibitive. And, the planners said, there existed at that very moment an opportunity for obtaining the right-of-way for train tracks quickly, cheaply, and with an absolute minimum of public hostility. The city was about to begin acquiring close to seventy miles of strips of land between a hundred and fifty and two hundred and fifty feet wide—the right-of-way for Moses' new highways. Some of these highways were to run through areas that either were empty or contained only single-family houses—areas in which land was relatively inexpensive. Simply obtain another fifty feet of right-of-way, add it to the center mall of Moses' highways, and there would be enough room on that mall for a double-track surface mass-transit line, a "subway" running at ground level. Build the six-lane highways just as you have been planning to do, they urged Moses, but make the center mall wide enough to accommodate those tracks; then, sometime in the future, when the city is ready to build the rapid-transit lines, there will be no problem in acquiring the right-of-way.

ONE planner who asked Moses to grasp this opportunity, in building the Van Wyck Expressway, was a little bright-eyed Irishman named F. (for Francis) Dodd McHugh. As director of the Division of Master Planning of the City Planning Commission,

McHugh had previously aroused Moses' hostility by objecting to his refusal to make provision for schools, libraries, and transportation facilities for the residents of his huge housing projects. Calling McHugh a "smart-aleck," and his objections "stupid, long-winded, contentious, and impractical," Moses told McHugh's boss, Edwin Ashley Salmon, chairman of the Planning Commission, "We had better get rid of staff work of this kind." But McHugh had declined to take the subtle hint. Later, when Moses was planning the Van Wyck, McHugh was assigned to draw up a *pro-forma* Master Plan of Major Airports; he asked himself how people were going to get to these airports, and he came up with some rather striking figures.

By conservative estimates, when the immense new airport under construction on the marshes at Idlewild, on the shore of Jamaica Bay in southeastern Queens, was in full operation, forty thousand persons would be employed there and thirty thousand passengers would pass through it every day—most of them during morning and evening peak-period rush hours. If Idlewild (later Kennedy International) Airport should operate at its theoretical capacity, ten thousand persons would be trying to get to it every hour during peak periods, enough of them in buses, taxis, and private automobiles so that they would be travelling in more than three thousand separate vehicles. And heading for Idlewild at the same time would be hundreds of trucks carrying air mail, express, and freight. Most of these vehicles would undoubtedly be using the Van Wyck Expressway; Moses' stated purpose in proposing it was to provide a direct route to the airport from mid-Manhattan. But the expressway was designed to carry —under "optimum" conditions (good weather, no accidents or other delays)—about twenty-six hundred vehicles per hour. And Idlewild traffic was going to be only a fraction of the traffic on the Van Wyck. The new expressway would be the most direct route not only to the airport but to the whole of southeastern Queens and to the Southern State Parkway, which led to Nassau and Suffolk Counties. During highway rush hours—which usually coincided with airport rush hours—the Van Wyck would be flooded with thousands of cars heading for these areas. It could not—even under optimum conditions—conceivably come anywhere near fulfilling the purpose for which Moses was building it.

Building the Van Wyck with rapid transit was the answer to this problem, and an easy one. The expressway was going to cross Queens Boulevard in Kew Gardens. A subway—the Independent line running out from mid-Manhattan, eight miles away—crossed that very intersection. When it reached the intersection, moreover, it slanted south—by coincidence, toward Idlewild—for almost a mile before heading east again. During that mile, its tracks lay almost precisely beneath the right-of-way that Moses was then acquiring for the Van Wyck. For a mile of its four-mile length, therefore, the expressway would be running almost on top of the subway. All that was needed to complete a rapid-transit link between mid-Manhattan and Idlewild was to bring that subway up to the expressway's center mall and extend it for three more miles. Nine miles—nine expensive miles—of rapid-transit link between mid-Manhattan and Idlewild was already completed. All that was needed to complete the link was three miles—three inexpensive miles—more. Moreover, another subway—the IND's Fulton Street line, coming out from lower Manhattan through downtown Brooklyn—ran close to Idlewild's western edge. Build a branch into the airport—a simple, inexpensive job—and travellers from lower Manhattan, including the Wall Street business district, from which so large a proportion of the airport's users would come, would also be able to reach it by train.

Perhaps the city could not afford at that time even the relatively small cost of the construction of three miles of surface rapid transit. McHugh doubted whether this was true: the cost would be no more than nine million dollars; it didn't make sense to say that a city that was planning a hundred-and-seventy-million-dollar expressway program—not counting federal and state contributions—could not afford nine million dollars for an improvement that would make the expressways so much more pleasant to use. But even if it was true, McHugh wrote—even if the city could not construct the rapid-transit lines now—at least let it make provision for their future construction. The cost of providing the additional fifty feet of right-of-way would be less than a million dollars—

about seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars, McHugh estimated. The Van Wyck Expressway, whose function was to provide reasonably fast, convenient access to Idlewild Airport, would cost thirty-seven million dollars. For that amount, the road would probably never be able to fulfill its function properly. For less than a million dollars more, it would be able to.

McHugh intended to include his suggestion in the airport master plan, but he made the mistake of mentioning it first to his immediate superior—Colonel William J. Shea, the Planning Commission's chief of staff, from whom Moses always received close coöperation. "I was called into Shea's office," McHugh has recalled, "and George Spargo, the Triborough Bridge Authority's general manager, was there raising hell—that I was impeding progress, that this thing had to go through and stop this crap, that I was going to cost the city millions in federal money. The whole effect was 'Why don't you shut up?' I was asked not to write any memo." Declining to comply with that request, McHugh wrote that rapid-transit access should be provided for Idlewild, and predicted what would happen if it wasn't. But his statements had been cut to a few generalizations when the Planning Commission adopted the Master Plan of Major Airports. The only future on which his memo had an effect was his own. His job was under civil-service protection, but his salary could go up or down within a certain range. When the next city budget was adopted, he found that he had dropped from the upper limit of the range to its lower limit. He had been fighting Moses for years, and he was well aware he wasn't getting anywhere. His report on provision for rapid-transit access might as well not have been written. He resigned.

Within weeks after the opening of the Van Wyck Expressway, on October 14, 1950, which moved Moses to boast that "no network of major urban vehicular arteries comparable to the one on which we are now working in New York City . . . will be found anywhere else on this or any other continent," the road was as jammed as F. Dodd McHugh had predicted. "Cars will flow freely," Moses had promised. Inappropriate verb. Inappropriate adverb. Drivers were chained to the Van Wyck for endless minutes. Other Moses creations were jammed, having created by their opening more traffic than had existed be-

fore. The Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel opened on May 25, 1950, with a traffic count almost twice as high as had been predicted. Moses' engineers had forecast that the tunnel would carry 7,350,000 cars during its first year of operation. At the end of six months, it was carrying traffic at the rate of 15,000,000 vehicles per year. Traffic was backed up for blocks at its entrances. Moses had expected it to draw off traffic from the Queens-Midtown Tunnel and the three toll-free East River bridges. But, after a slight drop initially, traffic on the bridges remained "normal"—which meant jammed—and traffic through the Queens-Midtown Tunnel, fed now by the widened Queens-Midtown Expressway, increased instead of decreasing. On the other side of Manhattan, where since 1927 the Port Authority had opened to vehicular traffic the George Washington Bridge and the Holland and Lincoln Tunnels while New Jersey railroads had been allowed to deteriorate, this situation was being duplicated.

AS the first of Moses' postwar highways opened, he was as confident of the wisdom of his policies as he had been when he first announced them, in 1945. "Today, we are well under way to a solution of the traffic problem," he boasted in 1948. In 1954, with considerable new mileage open, the problem was worse than ever, but the confidence was diminished not a whit. All that was necessary, Moses said—and he believed it—was more of the same. He did not give the slightest indication of understanding that his transportation policies were doomed to failure. His thinking had been shaped in an era in which a highway was an unqualified blessing to the public—in which roads were, like automobiles, sources of relaxation and pleasure. Changing realities could have changed his thinking, but he was utterly insulated from reality: insulated by the sycophancy of his yes-men; by his power, which deterred other public officials from arguing with him; by the nature of that power, which was independent of official or public opinion; by, most of all, his personality, which made it not only unnecessary but impossible for him to credit other opinion, which made it impossible for him to *conceive* that he might have been wrong. For Moses, comfortable in the richly upholstered, air-conditioned, soundproofed rear seat of his limousine, travelling by car was still as pleasurable as it had always been. Robert Moses, the builder of the highways jammed with traffic, had never had to drive in a single traffic jam. Writing about "traffic relief" in 1951, in a New York *Times Magazine* article, he said, "If we give this to our people we shall deserve their gratitude." He was confident that his roads would earn him applause now, just as they had always earned him applause before. Applause not merely of the age but of the ages; he was confident that his roads would bring him immortality. He had read Statius. He knew that in gratitude for the benefits bestowed upon them by the construction of the Domitian Way, the senate and the people of Rome had raised a triumphal arch to Domitian. He knew that the Appian Way had brought immortality to its builder, the blind censor Appius Claudius Caecus. Democracies raised no triumphal arches to road builders. But Moses was confident that history would remedy such oversights.

The roads Moses had been building had all been conceived by him in the nineteen-thirties. Now, in the early nineteen-fifties, for the first time, he expanded his highway plan. New arterials should be built paralleling existing arterials, he announced: a Bruckner and a Sheridan paralleling the Major Deegan, the Bronx River, the Hutchinson River, and the Henry Hudson, which already ran down through the Bronx; a Nassau paralleling the Van Wyck southeast through Queens. Arterials should be built into sections of the city into which no arterials now ran—a Cross-Brooklyn Expressway into the heart of that borough, for example. And arterials should reach out from the city into its suburbs—a Long Island Expressway deep into still rural Suffolk, for example.

He fought to its death any proposal that city money be spent on mass transit instead of on his highways. When some state legislators suggested that the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority take over the city's subways and use its surplus to improve them, Moses rushed back from a Virgin Islands vacation to declare that there was no surplus, because "all our future revenues are pledged to our bondholders"—who, he said, would never permit the Triborough Authority to become involved in deficit-producing operations. (In that same year, the Urban Traffic Division of the Gen-

eral Electric Company announced that it had "costed out" rapid transit on highway center malls and that if provision for tracks was made in the original highway design their cost would be one-tenth the cost of subway construction. Moses' reply? "The cost of acquiring additional width and building for rapid transit would be prohibitive and hundreds of families would be dislocated.")

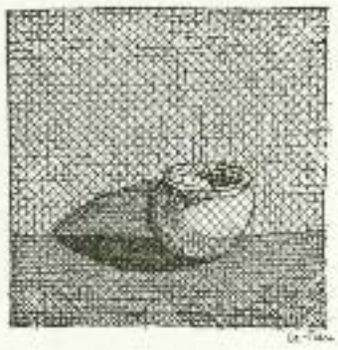
Not all planners fully understood that if Moses' proposals were carried out, New York would become a place not for people but for cars, though they did understand fully that Moses' proposals made no sense. More and more frequently, editorials in New York's newspapers expressed doubt about the city's transportation policies, yet they never linked those policies with the man responsible for them. There was no direct attack on Moses, no serious threat to his power. With that power, he laid out the new routes, obtained the state and federal commitments for them, had the blueprints drawn, and started them on their way to completion. And in 1954 he took a further step—one that may have brought the city to the point of no return.

THE silver stream of coins on which Moses' power was based was flowing faster and faster in the late forties and the early fifties. By 1953, with a hundred and twenty-eight million vehicles per year using the facilities of the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority—the Triborough Bridge itself, the Bronx-Whitestone Bridge, the Henry Hudson Bridge, the Marine Parkway Bridge, the Cross-Bay Bridge, the Jacob Riis Parking Field, the Queens-Midtown Tunnel, the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel, the Battery Parking Garage, and the East Side Airlines Terminal—the authority's annual revenues stood at more than thirty-one million dollars; this was an increase of three hundred and forty per cent over prewar levels. After paying all bills and interest, the authority's surplus for 1953 alone was twenty-two million dollars. At 1953 interest rates and bond-market conditions, this would have supported a revenue-bond sale of close to half a *billion* dollars. Moses now had available to spend on public works in the city far more money than the city itself had.

The very size of that surplus, however, made it a source of danger to its possessor as well as a source of opportunity. Were the attention of the public and the politicians to be focussed

upon it, they might demand that it be used, in the spirit of the law creating the authority, to retire the outstanding bonds and make the bridges and tunnels toll-free, or to ease the subway deficit and the need to raise subway fares. Either course—bond retirement or subway bail-out—would strip Moses of his accumulating millions and of the power to build that they represented. He had realized back in the thirties that public authorities could be a means to immense achievement and a source of immense personal power only if money was spent on new public works as fast as it was earned by the old. To his desire to build there was thus added a need to build. Triborough's money had to be spent, and spent fast.

There was, however, a problem. Vast as his resources were, they were nowhere near as vast as his dreams. By early 1954, the site was already being cleared for the Coliseum; he was going to have to pour thirty-five million dollars into that gaping hole at Columbus Circle. The Throgs Neck Bridge must get under way as soon as possible, and for that span he would need ninety-two million. He had already allocated fifty-five million to get work under way on the New York City portions of the Long Island Expressway and on the Prospect Expressway and the Ninety-sixth Street overpass on the East River Drive. So more than a third of the half-billion dollars was already committed. Then there were the other roads, envisioned decades before and still unbuilt. Their cost was measured now in the hundreds of millions of dollars. And his Narrows Bridge, the bridge that he had conceived of as the crowning glory of his career, as the supreme monument to the life of Robert Moses a bridge whose construction would take close to five years—was not yet even begun, and Moses was, after all, already sixty-five years old; who knew when time, so long on his side, might turn on him? And the Narrows Bridge—just the bridge structure alone, without approaches would cost three hundred and twenty-five million dollars. And how about the new parks he wanted to create, the old parks he wanted to reshape? There was so much yet to do for New York! Even the monumental wealth of Triborough was nowhere near enough to do it.



Wealth far greater was almost within his grasp. A proposal—even then in preparation (with his active participation) in Washington—for a National System of Interstate and Defense Highways, under which the federal government would pay ninety per cent of the cost of interstate highways and the states only ten per cent, would make fifty billion dollars available to construct forty-one thousand miles of highways during the next thirteen years. But to be eligible for inclusion in this program highways had to connect with highways in another state and form with them a *system* that was interstate rather than local in character. Given the geographical location of New York City, Moses' highways, to be part of the system, would have to connect with highways in New Jersey—and in the portion of New Jersey closest to New York, that meant cooperating with the Port of New York Authority.

The Port Authority, which had been created in 1921 by a compact between New York and New Jersey, had long been Moses' chief rival for public-works power in the metropolitan region. But now it was time for coöperation instead of rivalry. With Port Authority help, he would be able to get there first for the federal cash in the nineteen-fifties, as he had in the nineteen-thirties. Immediately upon passage of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956, he would be able to present to Washington a proposal for a complete, unified system of highways joining, across Port Authority bridges and tunnels, New York and New Jersey and, through New Jersey, linking up with other highways and other states. Most important, it would be a proposal ready to go—planned, blueprinted, costed out, approved, and ready for groundbreaking—while the proposals of other cities were still in the talking stage, years away from even a possibility of realization. Coöperation might be more profitable still, because it might allow him to tap not only the federal but the Port Authority cashbox, a cashbox fuller even than Triborough's. Where Triborough's 1953 surplus was worth five hundred million dollars in new bonds, the Port Authority's surplus was worth seven hundred million.

Sometime late in 1953 or early in 1954, over luncheon at Randall's Island, Moses broached to the Port Au-

thority board a plan of staggering scope. More luncheons followed, at which Austin Tobin, the executive director of the Port Authority, represented the authority, and at which all did not go smoothly. The plan was Moses' plan—what he was proposing *they* build turned out to be the bypass route around New York which he had conceived in the nineteen-thirties and had been building in bits and pieces ever since—and he lost no opportunity to make it clear that the plan was his, and that those who questioned any of its details didn't know what they were talking about. At one luncheon, Tobin jumped up from the table, said, "I don't have to sit here and be insulted like this," and walked out. But, as it turned out, Tobin *did* have to sit there and be insulted. His boss—Howard S. Cullman, a tobacco magnate, who was the chairman of the Port Authority board—had been convinced by a super helping of Moses' charm that he and Moses were again the close friends they had been in the Al Smith era, and Cullman ordered Tobin to conduct himself accordingly. Besides, if Moses had reason to be anxious to coöperate, so did the hardheaded Port Authority commissioners.

Wherever they wanted access from New Jersey to Manhattan, they found running along its shore, like a barricade in their path, the West Side Highway, over which, as park commissioner, Moses had absolute control. They wanted to build a new bridge across the Hudson at 125th Street, and such a bridge required connections with the highway, and, for maximum effectiveness, with Moses' proposed Upper Manhattan Expressway, across 125th Street, and, via that expressway, with Moses' Triborough Bridge, on the other side of Harlem. They wanted to double-deck the George Washington Bridge, and double-decking required new connections with the West Side Highway. Moreover, with bridge traffic already filling the streets of upper Manhattan so full that travel to the bridge was a joke, the seventy-five-per-cent increase that double-decking was expected to generate could be handled only by the construction of an expressway across Manhattan to the Bronx—with, at its far end, a bridge link to the Cross-Bronx, and with links to the Major Deegan Expressway and the Harlem River Drive. And city and state had given Moses a veto power over all such bridges and expressways. Three Port Authority bridges—the Goethals, Bayonne, and

Outerbridge spans, connecting Staten Island and New Jersey—had been losing money every year for twenty years; in 1953, for instance, they had earned half a million dollars less than the interest on the bonds that had been floated to build them. Only the construction of the Narrows Bridge, which would connect Staten Island to the rest of the city and open it up to large-scale traffic, would turn those money-losers into money-makers. And Moses, thanks to his takeover in 1946 of the New York City Tunnel Authority, held sole legislative authorization to build the crossing.

Moreover, Triborough's surpluses were not the only surpluses being eyed by politicians. The pressure on the Port Authority to aid mass transit was even greater than the pressure on Moses, because the five near-bankrupt railroads whose lines ended at the Hudson were pleading for adequate rail connections across the river, and because the Port Authority's refusal to spend money on such connections was weakened by its original legislative mandate, which clearly envisioned its doing so. The New York and New Jersey Legislatures were, in fact, even then in the process of establishing a bi-state Metropolitan Rapid Transit Commission, with a distinguished board of its own, and the Legislatures had pointedly given the M.R.T.C. the responsibility of producing "an over-all coördinated plan for transportation." The Port Authority had to get its surpluses committed, and it was difficult to do so on the basis of individual projects. A far-reaching road-and-bridge program would obviously be easier.

In February of 1954, the Port Authority agreed to work with Triborough on a Joint Study of Arterial Facilities, and in January of 1955, the results—sixty-two pages long, hard-bound, printed in four colors on glossy paper, with an introduction by Moses, whose name, not by chance, was listed first among its sponsors—were released to the press. The Joint Study announced that the two authorities "recommend and are prepared to proceed" immediately with three "bridge facilities": building a bridge at Throgs Neck and one across the Narrows and double-decking the George Washington. It laid out a vast system of new arterial highways extending to and from these bridges, and it recommended for future construction a lower- and a mid-Manhattan expressway.

The Joint Study was nothing more or less than a business arrangement, and it worked out well for the arrangers. As a result of the construction of the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, use of the Port Authority's three Staten Island-New Jersey spans increased two hundred and thirty per cent between 1953 and 1970—an increase that in 1970 represented five and a half million dollars per year in additional tolls. As a result of the double-decking of the George Washington Bridge, use of that bridge increased eighty-eight per cent—an increase that in 1970 represented about eleven million dollars per year in additional tolls. The Port Authority's profit from the Joint Study was thus about seventeen million dollars a year in hard cash. By 1970, Triborough was collecting seventeen million dollars in tolls on the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge and nine million on the Throgs Neck Bridge—a hard-cash profit of twenty-six million dollars for that year alone. The two giant authorities were dividing the potential profits from the city's traffic as if congestion were a large and succulent pie. And Moses, who had got the slice he wanted, was ecstatic. Talking to a reporter about the Narrows Bridge just before the Joint Study was released, he had been again, as a friend had described him forty years before, a young man "burning with ideas." Unable to sit still, striding around his office with smiles breaking through the carefully aloof mask he habitually wore, gesticulating vigorously, he told the reporter that at last, after so many years, the Narrows Bridge was no longer "an academic dream."

He said, "It's going to be the most important single piece of arterial construction in the world. It will be the longest suspension bridge in the world, and the tallest. . . . It will be the biggest bridge, the highest bridge, the most expensive bridge, and the bridge with the greatest clearance. It's all superlatives when you talk about this bridge."

IN January of 1955, Triborough and the Port Authority had a combined immediate fund-raising capacity of nearly a billion and a quarter dollars. A billion and a quarter dollars could have built a wonderful mass-transportation system for New York and its suburbs. Triborough's share alone—

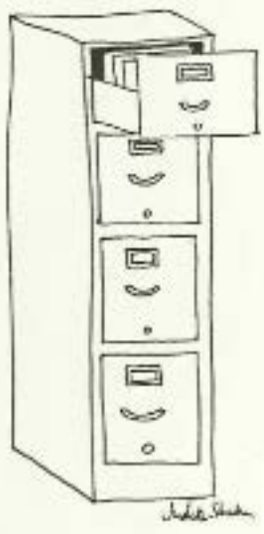
the close to five hundred million dollars that could have been raised from the sale of revenue bonds backed by its annual surpluses—would in 1955 have been more than enough to give the desperate Long Island Rail Road new cars, new, powerful locomotives much faster than the old ones, and straighter tracks so that those locomotives could attain the speeds they were capable of. It would have been enough also—especially if right-of-way had been obtained along the median strip of the Long Island Expressway—to build a new rapid-transit line to supplement the existing Long Island Rail Road lines, a line with tracks so straight that trains could speed passengers into and out of the city at eighty miles per hour. It would have been more than enough to build what would in effect have been a whole new Long Island Rail Road—a modern railroad capable of meeting the mass-transportation needs of a modern metropolitan area, and of attracting to mass transportation enough highway users to go a long way toward solving the area's highway problem as well. The cost of such a system—impossibly expensive in 1974—would in 1955 have been not five hundred million dollars but two hundred million.

The Port Authority's share alone—something over seven hundred million dollars—would have been more than enough to build a modern trans-Hudson rail loop connecting New Jersey and Manhattan via two new tunnels under the river, one at the Battery and one at Fifty-ninth Street, and providing transfer stations to all the New Jersey railroads and all the major New Jersey highways in the area. Such a loop would have been capable of speeding a hundred and forty thousand commuters, shoppers, and theatregoers a day into Manhattan and removing tens of thousands of cars from New Jersey highways, from the trans-Hudson vehicular tunnels and bridges, from the West Side Highway, and from Manhattan streets, so that those commuters who still used them would also have easier trips. The cost of such a system would have been about three hundred million dollars in 1955.

If what would have been left over after the completion of both the Long Island Rail Road modernization and the trans-Hudson rail loop—another seven hundred million dollars—had been used to improve the city's subway system, it would have been more than enough to build the long-proposed and desperately needed Second Avenue Subway, which would provide ade-

quate subway service for the first time to the East Bronx and would ease the congestion on the Lexington Avenue line, *and* to build a tunnel across the East River through which a branch of the Second Avenue Subway would extend out to Queens to provide adequate subway service there, *and* to build extensions of the existing subway lines in Queens to provide service to the hundreds of thousands of residents of eastern Queens who were miles from the nearest subway, *and* to extend the Nostrand Avenue line in Brooklyn three miles along Flatbush Avenue to serve the growing Sheepshead Bay and Marine Park areas, *and* to construct a new plaza and eliminate grade crossings near the DeKalb Avenue station. The total cost of these improvements in 1955, according to estimates by transit experts, would have been less than seven hundred million dollars.

And there might have been enough money available to provide not just these improvements but a completely modern subway system. During the decade following the Joint Study, the two authorities' annual revenues from tolls rose so much faster than predicted—for their forecasters never understood, and therefore never took fully into account, the phenomenon of traffic generation—that their wealth far outstripped even their most optimistic expectations, and the amount available for mass-transit facilities might well have been not a billion and a quarter dollars but more than two billion dollars. The two authorities had it in their power in 1955 to enable the people of the New York metropolitan region to travel around that region quickly, cheaply, and pleasantly. They had it in their power in January of 1955 to change the way the region's millions lived. Instead, as a result of Robert Moses' Joint Study, the two authorities, with three major exceptions—Triborough's Coliseum and the Port Authority's substantial expenditures for airports and for a 1962 takeover of the Hudson and Manhattan Railroad—spent their money on facilities for the automobile. During the decade following the presentation of the Joint Study, public investment in new highways in and around New York was actually about two billion dollars. During this period, two hundred and six miles of new highways were built and another two hundred and sixty-five miles were under construction. Not one mile of new railroad or one new subway line was built. In 1965, people using subways and railroads in and around New York were still riding on subway lines laid out between 1904 and 1933—the year before Moses came to power in the city. Not one new line had been laid since.



In 1955, the city's subway cars were thirty and forty years old and due for replacement. Such replacement would have been possible with the authorities' surplus. They were not replaced; they were kept in service until they were forty-five years old and fifty—and more. In 1965, almost twenty per cent of New York's subway cars had been in use for more than half a century. Not only were new cars not bought but the old ones were not repaired. In 1955 or 1956, there was instituted on the New York City subway system, because of lack of funds, a policy of "deferred maintenance"—a phrase that, translated into practice, meant that brakes and signals and switches were inspected less frequently, wheels were less frequently ground round to keep rides smooth, electrical relays that should have been replaced every five years were replaced every thirty years, and that the vast system was sometimes completely out of light bulbs to replace burned-out signals, out of alcohol to keep switches from freezing, and out of other basic supplies.

So superbly engineered and maintained had the system been in the past (New York had once been enormously proud of its subways) that it took years for the damage done by this systematic neglect to be fully recognized, but every year after 1956, by every criterion of subway performance—on-time runs, individual car breakdowns, and so on—it was obvious that the damage was steadily mounting. By the late nineteen-sixties, the day of reckoning had arrived. In a single eight-month period in 1970, more than seventeen thousand trains had to be taken out of service after starting their runs. On an *average* day, forty cars broke down. Within a single year, forty trains were derailed. By the time Moses left power, the *Times* could report that on a

system that had for decades been called "the safest in the world"—an accurate designation at the time—"there have been more serious accidents . . . in the last ten years than on any other major subway system in the world; in the last year, there have been more accident injuries here than on any other subway system." The operating authorities responsible for the subways, knowing that they could no longer rely for safety, as they once had, on brakes and signals, responded to each major disaster by placing more of their reliance on caution; trains crept where once they could have safely sped, and ground to a halt at the slightest possibility of danger ahead. Consequently, the time that New Yorkers were forced to spend daily shivering or sweltering on those bumpy, jolting trains grew longer and longer. Where once the average trip from the city's outskirts to its center had taken forty or forty-five minutes, it now took an hour or more. When Robert Moses came to power in New York, the city's mass-transit system was probably the best in the world. When he left power, it was quite possibly one of the worst. (That system was outside Moses' jurisdiction, of course. But, intentionally or not, he had contributed to its decline through his monopolization of the city's resources and his construction of competing facilities.)

Moses' Joint Study of 1955 sealed the fate of the metropolitan region's nine suburban commuter railroads. In 1955, some of those railroads were still providing good service—the New Haven had just bought scores of gleaming new cars, and the New York Central's Harlem and Hudson Divisions were, one commentator later said, "a model of how to keep commuters happy"—but others were on the brink of disaster. The Long Island, the commuter railroad most directly in Moses' line of fire, had, in fact, been shoved over the brink; it had plunged into bankruptcy in 1949, and had been kept alive—barely alive—thereafter only by a series of state tax concessions.

Moses' Joint Study expressways siphoned off the railroads' customers precisely as the planners had predicted. The railroads were private corporations, in existence for the sole purpose of showing a profit. To do so, they would have had to compete successfully with the public authorities. But while the authorities' toll-charging facilities were subsidized by hundreds of millions of dollars of connecting highways and by freedom from taxes on their income and on their hundreds of millions of

dollars of real estate, the railroads enjoyed no such subsidies; in addition, the railroads were trapped by mounting labor costs—a minimal concern for public authorities, which operated only low-maintenance bridges and tunnels. Every attempt during this decade to obtain meaningful subsidies for railroads was defeated by New York's local "highwaymen"—the politicians, banks, construction unions, contractors, engineers, and bonding and building-supply firms that reaped profit from Moses' highways. As the distinguished public spokesman of this coalition, Moses assured Congress on one occasion that no subsidy was needed, because "there is little need for an expansion of railroad commuter facilities in the New York metropolitan area;" on another occasion, when an impartial study called a subsidy imperative, Moses assured the public that the major problem was simply that the railroads were not as efficient, prudent, practical, and businesslike as the public authorities, and he added, "These railroads have got to be more ingenious . . . bailing out busted, lazy, and backward private enterprise is [not] the business of government." Unable to compete with the authorities, the railroads grew poorer as their rivals grew richer. By the early nineteen-sixties, the ones that still had any money in the bank were drawing on it just to stay alive, and were rapidly consuming the last of it. They had no alternative but to raise fares and cut back service, and these moves touched off a self-defeating cycle: each fare increase and service cutback sent railroad passengers to the highways.

IN the nineteen-seventies, after the fall of Robert Moses, public officials talked about modernizing the existing mass-transit facilities on Long Island and building new ones. Handsome four-color brochures—designed to win voter approval for bond issues in the billions which would be required to finance these improvements—assured voters that the expense, if it did not end traffic congestion on Long Island, would at least substantially alleviate it. But building new facilities wasn't going to be so easy. If Moses had accepted McHugh's plan of reserving space on the Van Wyck Expressway for rapid transit, for example, that move would have cost less than a million dollars at the time, and today it would still be possible to establish all the high-speed rail links involved for less than ten million dollars. Only in 1968, however, was the decision taken to build a rapid-transit line, and, because Moses did not reserve the space for it, that line would cost, according to official estimates, three hundred and sixty-nine million dollars today—a figure so high that no man can say with any certainty when the line will be built.

Similarly, the cost of modernizing the Long Island Rail Road has increased by tens of millions of dollars, because of the increase in the cost of land that would be needed for parking areas and terminals. And inflation has caused these costs to multiply. In 1954, before the Joint Study was undertaken, the modernization would have cost two hundred million dollars. In 1970, after Moses' fall from power, the cost was estimated at one and a half billion, and inflation and further land development are causing the cost to rise by more than fifty million dollars a year. The populating of the land around the Long Island Rail Road lines has meant that certain changes indispensable to a true modernization program—straightening and elevating the tracks on portions of the line to permit the operation of high-speed trains—are immensely difficult politically. No man can predict with any certainty that improvements of real scope—not the patchwork supplying of new cars and improving of repair and maintenance facilities that were going on in the early seventies but the transformation of the Long Island Rail Road into a truly modern carrier—will be carried out during his lifetime. No man can predict that they will be carried out within his children's lifetime. As for the possibility of building a new rapid-transit line to serve Long Island on a large scale, no man can predict with any certainty that such a line will ever be built. Most of the planners who have studied the prospects feel that, as Lee Koppelman, executive director of the Nassau-Suffolk Regional Planning Board, says, "they'll never do it."

And even if mass-transit lines are built they aren't going to help the transportation situation on Long Island nearly as much as some public officials believe—or, to be more precise, nearly as much as they have told the public they believe. For instance, according to computer-printout projections made by the Nassau-Suffolk Planning Board,

by 1985 one million four hundred thousand cars a day will be crossing the city line from Nassau into Queens. The roads available to handle them were jammed to capacity and far beyond capacity in 1968, when they were handling only half that much traffic. The most disturbing printouts of all are those dealing with "modal split," which is planners' jargon for the percentage of travellers who can be persuaded to change their present mode of travel for another—in the case of Long Island, to go from highways to mass transit. These show that on Long Island, optimistic predictions to the contrary, there would be hardly any modal split. If travel on the Long Island Rail Road were revolutionized—if, that is (unlikely as it is to come about, at a present estimated total cost of two and a half billion dollars), the railroad were given modern rolling stock, travel time were cut in half, and new, more convenient stations were strategically located throughout Manhattan—the modal split achieved would be no more than ten per cent. Sixty-five per cent of all commuters to Manhattan from Nassau and Suffolk Counties used the Long Island Rail Road in 1968; spend two and a half billion dollars and you could increase that percentage only to seventy-five per cent.

The numbers are even more depressing than the percentages. Some eighty-six thousand commuters to Manhattan used the Long Island Rail Road in 1960; revolutionizing the railroad would increase that number to some hundred and fifty-seven thousand by 1985—an increase of some seventy-one thousand riders. But by 1985, the number of daily commuters from the two counties to Manhattan will have increased not by seventy-one thousand but by eighty-one thousand. The Long Island Rail Road's additional riders would not be riders diverted from the highways. The load of commuters the highways would have to carry, far from being reduced, would be increased by more than ten thousand daily. And by far more than ten thousand. For that figure covers only Manhattan-bound commuters. Hundreds of thousands of other Nassau and Suffolk residents are going to be commuting to jobs on Long Island by 1985, hundreds of thousands *more* than in 1960. The daily average of "all work trips by all travel modes" made by residents of Long Island—work trips to Manhattan or anyplace else—was more than half a million in 1960. By 1985, it will be more than

one and a quarter million. And the modal split induced among the non-Manhattan commuters by a modernization of the Long Island Rail Road would be infinitesimal. The number of daily work trips to points outside Manhattan will rise by more than half a million. The number of those trips by rail would increase by a mere fourteen hundred.

And all the figures above represent only work trips. How about non-work trips—all the journeys to supermarkets, to tennis or swimming or golf or bridge clubs, to school, to the movies, to restaurants, to the doctor or the dentist—which, added together, come to a total that dwarfs even the immense total of work trips? Highways and local streets in Nassau and Suffolk were handling a heavy load of traffic in 1960. By 1985, the load those highways and streets will have to handle will be more than twice as heavy. And no improvements that could be made in mass transportation at any expense that could conceivably be borne by state, city, counties, or public authorities could lighten that load much. "You see," John Sheridan, director of the Suffolk County Department of Traffic Safety, says, "if we had had subway lines, or rapid-transit lines, in the fifties, we would have had high density along those lines. But since there was no mass transit, the development took place according to the way the automobile dictated it. And that meant low density, very low density. To have feasible mass-transit routes, you have to have sufficient density. And we don't have it—and, except perhaps in central Nassau, we're not going to in any foreseeable future. Because of the highway, because of the pattern of highway use developed by the lack of mass transit in the past, we're faced with this problem now, and right now we just can't get around it." It is a problem to which a solution, if there is a solution, seems decades—generations—away.

The Loss of Power

THE story of how Robert Moses lost power is as complicated as the story of how he gained it, and almost as long in span—the fall from public popularity and, one by one, from his nine power-laden government posts took more than a decade—and it can be told here only in the briefest outline. It began in the mid-nineteen-fifties, when a handful of New York City reporters resolved, despite a conspicuous lack of interest on the part of their publishers, to bring to public attention the maladministration and political payoffs that had come to permeate Moses' far-flung operation. Their efforts were at first crushed, often within their own city rooms, but the story of the corruption of Title I, the billion-and-a-half-dollar urban-renewal program that Moses directed as chairman of the Mayor's Slum Clearance Committee, was too scandalous to be concealed. The Title I story appeared at a time when the city's political atmosphere was changing. In the twenties and thirties, and to a large extent in the forties, the public had cheered uncritically the Man Who Got Things Done, but by the fifties, when the failure of Moses' policies to solve the city's problems was growing more and more noticeable, there was increased interest in whether the things he proposed *should* be got done; there was a steadily growing awareness that the Moses bulldozer approach to housing and transportation problems might not supply the answer to those problems. Two spectacular battles during this decade helped to illuminate the arbitrary and dictatorial nature of his decisions: the "Battle of Central Park," in 1956, with a handful of mothers who were determined to save a lovely park glen from Moses' bulldozers, which were about to turn it into an expansion of the Tavern-on-the-Green parking lot; and a confrontation in 1959 with a brash young theatrical producer, Joseph Papp, who was determined not to let Moses force him to charge admission to his New York Shakespeare Festival in Central Park.

Nonetheless, so thoroughly was Moses' power insulated from the force of public opinion that it was more his own personality than his growing loss of public esteem which led to his loss of power. A key element in Moses' personality—almost an obsession—was the desire for more power, and in 1960, after New York was chosen as the site for the 1964-65 World's Fair, he saw in the Fair, with its immense construction requirements, a source of new and greater power. But the city's Code of Ethics prevented anyone from holding both a quasi-private job like the Fair presidency and a job in city government. Once, Moses would have found a way around this hurdle, but his chagrin at his inability to produce fast, spectacular results in urban renewal, as he had in parks and highways and power dams, coupled with fear that his precious reputation was being irretrievably damaged by his identification with the scandal-ridden Title I program, made him willing to resign his formal city posts to get the Fair presidency. In March of 1960, he did so, leaving not

only his chairmanship of the Slum Clearance Committee but his park commissionership and his membership on the City Planning Commission. (Thanks to the vagueness with which his post as city construction coördinator was legally defined, he succeeded in devising a way to keep it.)

In 1962, Moses' arrogance and uncontrollable temper led him, during an angry confrontation with Governor Nelson Rockefeller in the Governor's Fifty-fifth Street town house, to submit his resignation from his state posts: the chairmanship of the State Council of Parks and of the Jones Beach, Bethpage, and New York State Power Authorities, and the presidency of the Long Island State Park Commission. When Moses left the town house, the Governor, apparently stunned, hurried after him, begging him to reconsider. Sid Shapiro, Moses' aide, who had been waiting outside in Moses' limousine, recalled later that he had witnessed an "astonishing" scene: "The Boss comes out of the building and there's the Governor coming out after him and tugging at his arm, really pulling at him, trying to get him to come back inside and let's discuss it. Mr. Moses pulls his arm away from him and gets inside the car, saying, 'Come on, let's go,' and we pull away, leaving the Governor of the State of New York just standing there on the sidewalk." On his return to Randall's Island, Moses found that Rockefeller had been repeatedly telephoning to persuade him to reconsider, and he felt he had won. But thereafter the interplay of the two willful men's personalities led them to a conclusion that neither had intended: Moses put his resignation in writing, and Rockefeller accepted it.

Moses still had the World's Fair, but it ended in 1965, leaving him just two bases of power: his post as city construction coördinator and his chairmanship of the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority. How much power the authority chairmanship alone gave Moses was something that the new mayor, John V. Lindsay, a longtime critic of Moses' policies, discovered after he deprived Moses of the coördinator's job. Humiliated in confrontation after confrontation, once sent fleeing home from a defeat in Albany at Moses' hands, Lindsay found himself all but helpless to interfere with Moses' plans for the city.

Moses had believed that Triborough's bond resolutions—which, because they were contracts, were, under the United States Constitution, unalterable by city or state—would keep him in control of the authority indef-

initely. Any attempt to interfere with Triborough, he had believed, would be opposed in court by Triborough's bondholders, or, more specifically, by the trustee for the bondholders as a group. But in 1967—when Nelson Rockefeller proposed that the Metropolitan Commuter Transportation Authority, which operated the Long Island Rail Road, absorb Triborough and other mass-transit facilities in the metropolitan area—the trustee was the Chase Manhattan Bank, whose president was David Rockefeller, Nelson's brother. Although the bank filed the expected suit against Triborough's absorption, the case was mysteriously settled in an out-of-court proceeding, the papers for which were immediately sealed. Moses could have fought the absorption himself, but he did not, because he believed, apparently with reason, that the Governor had solemnly promised him he would be appointed to the new Metropolitan Transportation Authority board, and would remain in command—with only nominal control by M.T.A.—at Triborough. On the strength of this promise, Moses not only refrained from opposing the new transportation setup but campaigned vigorously for approval of the two-and-a-half-billion-dollar bond issue that made it possible. But then when—at the last minute, and only after he had almost had to beg for a meeting with Rockefeller—a job in the M.T.A. setup was offered him, it was a humiliating "consultantship," at twenty-five thousand dollars a year. And when he accepted the post, he quickly found that although he had the title of consultant, he was seldom consulted about anything by the M.T.A. chairman, William Ronan.

On March 1, 1968, the date of the M.T.A. takeover, Robert Moses lost the last of his power, forty-four years after he had gained the first of it. The Age of Moses was over. But Moses, still mentally and physically vigorous at eighty-five, has constantly sought to regain some measure of power, and he may yet succeed, if Governor Malcolm Wilson, who is an old friend of his and is among the most fervent of his admirers, is elected in November.

DURING the Age of Moses, New York City and its suburbs were transformed. Were they transformed for good or ill? Would New York be a better place to live if Robert Moses had never built anything? Any critic who says so ignores the fact that both before and after Robert Moses—under reform mayors, such as John Purroy Mitchel and John V. Lindsay,

and under Tammany mayors, such as Red Mike Hylan and Jimmy Walker—the city was utterly unable to meet the needs of its people in regard to physical construction. Robert Moses may have bent the democratic processes of the city to his own ends to build public works; left to themselves, these processes proved unequal to the building required. The problem of constructing large-scale public works in a crowded urban setting, where such works displace or otherwise impinge on the lives of thousands of voters, is one that democracy has not yet solved.

Moses himself believes that he will be justified by history, that his works will endure and be blessed by generations not yet born—that his works will make him immortal. Perhaps he is right. It is impossible to say that New York would be a better city if Robert Moses had not shaped it. It is possible to say only that it would be a different city. —ROBERT A. CARO

(This is the last of a series of articles.)

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CINDERELLA LIBERATED

I sleep with
my feet in the fire
destroying the evidence
one glass shoe
melting like butter
both feet black as briquettes
while the prince
in a world of questions
searches for an answer
he carries near his jewelled sword
the other shoe of the pair
he drinks from it champagne
or Schlitz and that's not
all he does he has
a special pillow for it on his
bed where he polishes it
and in it sees his own
reflection
it has become his talisman his illusion
his astigmatism and his lotus
let no man touch it it's
all he has left
that and this note
dear sir whenever you see
rising from the ashes a bird its feet
blazing like torches
observe closely
it passes for me

—ANNE HUSSEY

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All this has absolutely nothing to do with getting or giving an education; and most of it, in fact, interferes with the primary purpose of a school—which is to instill a lifelong love of earning in the student.—*Sydney J. Harris in the Phoenix (Ariz.) Arizona Republic.*

Oh, not anymore. That's old hat.