

Travels of a Trade Economist

Chapter 5 Paris 1994



Friday, April 22, 1994:

I'm off to Paris this time. This is unlikely to be as exotic a place as Asia and Mexico, so I don't know whether this journal will be very interesting, but I'll give it a try. I've been looking forward to the trip more for the atmosphere than for adventure.

Pat was going to come with me originally, but we decided it was a bad time, so she didn't. I can see already, out the window, that she would have loved it. It is sunny and pleasantly warm, Paris is green and flowering, and the windows of my room open out onto a narrow street lined with old

5. Paris 1994

Paris-color buildings with wrought iron and sculpted ornamentation. I have to stick my head out a few inches to see the Eiffel Tower, but that's OK. I wish she were here.

I caught the limo yesterday at the Union. I sat in front and talked with the driver all the way out. He is sixty-three and has been with the company for seven years, after being laid off from an engineering firm that wiped out first his pension and then his job. He was a nice guy, but it also sounded like he was waging war on engineers, especially any that ride the limo and don't treat him well.

He has cancer of the liver and is expected to live only another couple of years. While he was laid up after his surgery, he spent his time at his computer, putting together a seven-page notebook telling himself, as a limo driver, everything he could want to know about his routes. He showed it to me, and he has offered it to his company for the other drivers to use, but the president he showed it to said not to tell him how to do his job. That president is now gone, replaced by the owner, who apparently is going to use the book and pay him for producing it. All this, I suppose, to keep his mind off the cancer, though not too far off, since he told me all about that too, and he needs to keep driving the limo to hang onto health insurance.

At the airport I checked into the World Club, then heard my name called as I went to hang up my coat. It was Barbara Anderson, director of the Population Studies Center, on her way to one night in San Francisco. We sat together until her flight, and she told me all about her struggles with the Center. I knew from David Lam that she had had a bad year – this just two years after she lost her husband – but I hadn't heard the details. Now I did, and I don't envy her, or David for taking on the job after her.

Bob [Stern] appeared right on time, and we tried, as Jim Levinsohn had told us he routinely does, to get them to let us sit in business class. They said that if the flight were overbooked, they could, but this one wasn't, and they couldn't. Figure that one out. But what they could do was put us at opposite ends of the middle section, with three empty seats between us. That worked great, later, when I stretched out to get some sleep. Bob was so far away, though, that I couldn't hear him when we talked, and I had to move one seat in to get closer.

We landed at Charles de Gaulle Airport, which is quite futuristic, though not very new. Planes dock at small satellites surrounding a large round building, and you get from the satellite to the center by a long moving sidewalk that angles down, under the runway, and then up again into the terminal. Or at least it was supposed to move; ours didn't. And it was somehow harder to walk on than a floor would have been. Bob especially found it difficult to navigate his wheeled suitcase along it, and it took us quite a while to get to the center.

There we went through immigration and customs in no time, then passed from one level of the terminal to another by riding another moving sidewalk. This one did move, through one of many tubes that crossed at angles through the spherical center of the terminal. As I say, really

Travels of a Trade Economist



from Web 2023

futuristic. At the other end we were in a big circular ring lined with car rental booths and similar services. With guidance from an information booth, we walked most of the way around the ring to the only money exchange. There was a choice of automatic or manual. Automatic was a machine in the wall into which you could insert any foreign currency and get francs back. I was intimidated by all the buttons and instructions, and instead got in line with Bob for the manual exchange. While in line, I watched a man insert a ten-dollar bill into the automatic machine, only to have it come back out, through another opening, a moment later. He tried several times, reading instructions and pushing buttons between tries, and succeeded in getting change on about the fourth try. I was glad I'd chosen manual, which did work easily for me, though not for the woman at the window, whose computer was down. She was using a calculator and a roll of adding-machine paper to calculate the change and write receipts. I'd given her ten twenty-dollar bills to change, and she counted them very efficiently and then stapled them together. It seemed a bit disrespectful of our currency. The largest French bill that I got in return, by the way, is too wide to fit in my wallet.

With more advice from the information booth, Bob and I took the Air France bus into the city. Not knowing exactly where we were going, I led us off the bus at the first stop and had to get back on, thus blocking the aisle for those who still wanted off. I think I only did this twice

5. Paris 1994

though, at that one stop. Eventually we reached the end of the line at the Arc de Triomphe, which is where we wanted to be. From there we caught a cab to my hotel, and Bob went on to his.

My hotel is small and not particularly luxurious, but it has a good feel about it. The woman at the desk was very welcoming, and she suggested a smaller cheaper room when she learned that Pat hadn't come. The room, as I said, has two windows that open out onto the street. I'm sitting here on the bed typing, with the smell and sound of Paris in the spring here with me. I showered and changed and will now venture out to see where I am.

Saturday, April 23:

I love this city! I can't believe that I didn't care for it when I was here before. It is beautiful, clean, fascinating. I just wandered yesterday, first down toward the river, then back up along Rue de Passy to the other end where the OECD is, and finally a little way south to Bob's hotel. Everywhere, there were people playing, strolling, working, all seeming relaxed and cheerful. Of course, it was a beautiful spring day; maybe they aren't always like that. But it was wonderful.

I took several pictures, though I can't really say of what. In one park, I stopped to watch an old woman, dressed in dour black clothes and a hat, kicking a ball back and forth with the small boy. Otherwise, I just took what struck my fancy, and I'll find out what they were when the pictures are developed.

I stopped several times at cafes to sit and drink coffee and read. This was exactly what I had pictured myself doing, and it was as good as I had hoped. I loved watching the people go by, often with dogs.

I met Bob at his hotel, and we went for dinner. The woman at his hotel suggested a restaurant and we went there. But we found about six restaurants on the same street and spent quite a bit of time looking at the menus of all of them, trying to decide. We settled on a brasserie, where we both had very good (though not very healthy) dinners. We had met at six, but it turns out that the dinner hour doesn't start until at least seven, so we were the first in that restaurant. Tonight we'll meet at seven.

Bob knows a little French, but he apparently did not know rare *versus* well done; I got the latter. Still, it was good: entrecot -- some sort of steak -- flavored with Roquefort.

Back at the hotel I quickly crashed and slept until eight this morning. I kept the windows wide open most of the night, until it got a little chilly early this morning. It was noisy, but I liked that.

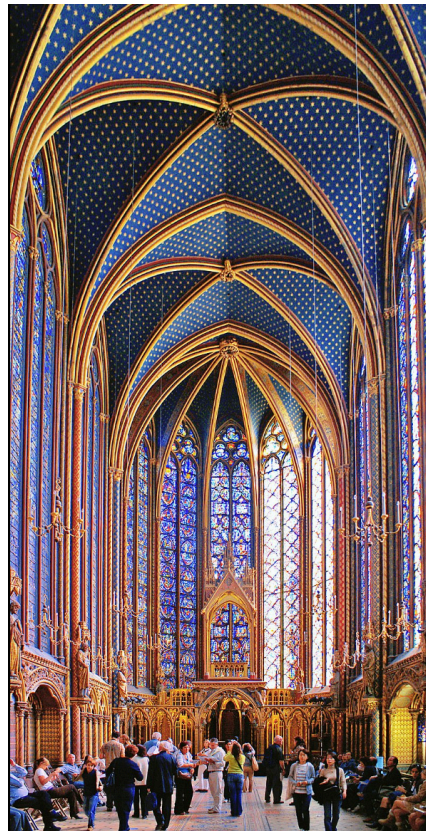
Breakfast this morning was in a glass covered area extending out into a courtyard. The croissant (but shaped differently than at home) and the French roll were very good, and so was the coffee. But the coffee came in a small pot that I couldn't pour from without spilling. I made quite a mess.

Travels of a Trade Economist

Sunday, April 24:

I intended to go out and explore Saturday morning, but when I went downstairs about eleven, it was raining. I sat in the hotel lounge for about an hour and a half, reading. By then the rain had stopped, and I started out. My plan was to take the metro to Ile de la Cite, the island in the center of the city where Notre Dame is, then make my way in a loop to end up back at Notre Dame.

Off the Metro, I first saw the church of St. Chapelle, which Bob had mentioned as being very beautiful, so I went in. It was indeed beautiful, but also very familiar. I must have gone there with Bob when we were here before. It is basically a single room with huge intricate stained-glass windows, and it took me only a few minutes to look at.



Sainte-Chapelle from Wikipedia 2023

5. Paris 1994

From there I wandered along the Seine away from Notre Dame, then crossed over to the right bank near the Louvre. I hadn't much interest in going into the Louvre, but I was curious to see the Pei pyramid, so I walked around to the center of it to look. At about the time I got there, it started to rain again, so I changed my plans and went in.



Louvre with Pei Pyramid from Wikipedia 2023

I had not realized what the pyramid is all about. It is the entrance to the Louvre, the large pyramid in the center of the Louvre courtyard being where everyone goes in and descends to a large area where there are ticket sellers, restaurants, bookstores, etc. Then there are three smaller pyramids atop the entrances from the big one into each of the three wings of the museum. It is nicely laid out. When you first enter, one way down to the main floor is a spiral staircase that is apparently supported only by itself. As I walked down, I noticed that it gave a bit, with the weight of the crowd, bouncing slightly up and down like a spring. Looking up I could see the water cascading down the outside of the pyramid, so it was good to be inside. I brought both my raincoat and my umbrella on the trip, but they were safely back at the hotel.

They say the Louvre is way too big to see in a day, but I looked over the floor plan and decided that all I wanted to see was sculpture and painting, and I worked out a route that would take me through most of it. I must have spent about two hours there, but that took me through an incredible amount of both. Unfortunately, it was all pre-modern. I don't know what the right term is, but what I mean is that there were no paintings as recent as the impressionists, and no sculpture as recent as Rodin. Lots of naked men and women, though, usually posed as if they were warriors despite their undress. And the paintings were typically either royal or religious. I had my fill. I did see the Mona Lisa, which looked exactly like its pictures. Unlike any of the other art, it was in a special glass-fronted case, presumably to protect it.

By the time I left the Louvre, it was way too late to follow my plan, so I just headed off toward the Place de la Concorde and the Champs Elysees, thinking to work my way back toward the

Travels of a Trade Economist

hotel. Still in the courtyard of the Louvre, I waited at one point for the sun to come out from behind a cloud, because there was a picture that I wanted. While I waited, I was hit hard from behind, when a tall teenage boy, who must not have been watching where he was going, ran into me. He apologized in English, I felt for my wallet anyway, and then watched him and his friends as they continued across the courtyard. He didn't run into anyone else, but only by luck; he still wasn't watching where he was going.

Like the day before, crowds of people were out enjoying the spring. I'm sure many were tourists, but I think many were not. In the various parks I went through, and around a couple of reflecting pools, the chairs that are thoughtfully provided by the city were mostly full of people just sitting and enjoying themselves. I sat for a few minutes by a pool and read in the sun, but then realized I needed to get back to meet Bob for dinner. I found the Metro at Place de la Concorde and headed back.

When we were here ten years ago, pickpockets on the Metro tried to get my wallet and succeeded in getting Bob's. It was a group of them – black in my recollection, North African in Bob's – who entered one door of a subway car, jostled people and picked their pockets, and got off through another door before it closed, leaving the victims speeding down the tunnel before they knew what had happened. Remembering this now, and also having read warnings in the guidebooks, I was paranoid the whole time I rode. I kept my wallet in my front pants pocket and tried as much as possible to keep my hand on it too, though that wasn't always easy.

On the way back to my hotel, I got into one of the stations just as a train was leaving, so I sat down to wait. As I waited, a group of young men appeared in front of me, huddled in a group talking among themselves. One was black, in a black leather jacket; the rest were white. I wondered to myself what they might be talking about. Then, as the train pulled in, the black stepped to one door of the train right in front of me, while the whites all moved down to another door of the same car. Ah hah, I thought, they are up to something. I got on the train and stood inches behind the black, gripping my wallet tightly. At one point a young man on a seat next to me tapped the black's arm and asked him something, and I thought, the plot thickens. But he then got off at the next station. The white guys from the group got off after that. And the black got off at yet another stop, all without incident. As I say, I was paranoid.

Back at the hotel, I freshened up, got the desk clerk's advice of a restaurant, and waited for Bob. He showed up a little late, commenting that it had been a longer walk from his hotel than he'd expected, and I led him back the way he'd come to the recommended restaurant. It was indeed nice, and somewhat more expensive than where we'd eaten the evening before. I had a salad nicoise, which my phrase book said would have tuna, anchovies, and olives. It didn't, in fact, have tuna, but it was very tasty in spite of, or perhaps because of, the anchovies. I also had their pasta special with "fruits of the sea." It was wonderful, though I was a little put off when it arrived and some sort of shellfish was perched in the middle of it, its back arched, its claws gracefully extended backwards in the air, and its head pointing up at me with a smile on its face. I lifted it out and set it on the table next to my plate, where it watched me through dinner.

5. Paris 1994

Fortunately, it wasn't the only fruit of the sea. There were shrimp, scallops, oysters, and other things I couldn't identify, all – except my smiling friend – without shells. It was delicious, and even after it was gone, I continued soaking up the sauce with French bread and eating that. We both finished with lemon sherbet, which tasted much lemonier than I'd had before, like it had just been made with fresh lemons and perhaps a bit of the peel.

Back at the hotel, I thought I might have trouble sleeping, since I didn't feel at all tired and it was still afternoon at home. I read for a while, with Billy Graham, muted, talking on the TV about the death of Nixon. One or the other tired me out, and I got to sleep fine.

This morning, Bob and I were to meet at the Picasso Museum at 10:30. I intended to get up early and go there ahead of time, so as to wander the neighborhood before we met. But I slept a half hour more than I intended and then saw that it was cold and cloudy, which dampened my enthusiasm for exploring. I had a leisurely breakfast in the hotel, did some writing I needed to do, and set out just in time to meet Bob.

At breakfast, by the way, I now mastered pouring the coffee so that it would drip onto the tray rather than on the floor. I was so proud of myself that I forgot to keep a finger on the lid, and it fell into my cup as I poured the last of the pot, splashing coffee in all directions. That's OK. I've got four more mornings to get this right.

The Picasso Museum is in an old, palace-type building, which seemed incongruous for such a



Musée Picasso Paris from Web 2023

modern painter. But it turned out that the inside had been renovated in a way that blended the old and the new very well. In fact, it was the architecture that I liked best about the museum. Picasso himself I got my fill of quickly, even though he went through several distinct periods.

Travels of a Trade Economist

All were very strange. How a man who loved women as much as he apparently did could portray them as he did, I don't understand. Supposedly, though he took great liberties with anatomy (as one of the explanatory signs said), he always made sure that the pieces of the bodies were those of his models (usually his mistresses). But I sure couldn't see that the pieces were even human.

Next, we went to a cafe on a boulevard for lunch, sitting at an outside table both facing the street to watch the passersby. A man at the next table noticed our English and asked where we were from. He turned out to be from Dublin, though he was working now in Paris and apparently lonely. He works for a Japanese company, buying equipment throughout Europe for the company to use in oil construction projects in Asia. When he asked what we do, I first said we were professors who do trade, then corrected that to "study trade," since he is the one who obviously "does" it.

I had French (what else?) onion soup that was excellent and enough for a meal. I should have stopped with that, but also had another salad nicoise. This time it did have tuna, plus carrots, beets, tomatoes, olives, celery, and the inevitable anchovies. It wasn't nearly as good as the night before, and I didn't finish it.

For coffee we went to another place, where we ordered at the counter because Bob said it would be cheaper than sitting at a table. I guess it was, but what I liked was that we could watch the bartender make the coffee. This guy moved so fast, grinding the beans with one move of a lever, sticking them into the machine where the water immediately filtered through them into the cup, steaming the milk, pouring it, and sliding it along the counter to the customer or waiter, all in short, quick, fluid moves. When the action let up for a moment, he was loading the dishwasher, drying glasses, and even cleaning the milk foam off the steamer (why haven't the coffee houses in Ann Arbor heard of doing this?). It was a pleasure to watch.

From there we went to Musée d'Orsay, a former train station that has been turned into an art museum. Now this was great! It had a huge collection of impressionists, and we spent a couple of hours going through it. I've become quite a fan of Monet – who was well represented -- perhaps because of our visit to his garden last summer or because Pat has taught me to understand some of what he does. I also found that I like Van Gogh a great deal. In fact, I think that Bob had seen enough before I had.

One other thing that they had on display that I liked was a model of the architecture of an opera house. It was cut down the middle so that you could see everything, and what amazed me was that the area of the stage was just about as big as that of the auditorium where the audience sits. The stage goes way, way back. Also, above it are rows upon rows of mechanisms for hoisting curtains and sets, up high into the building. And below are similar rows of mechanisms, extending far below the stage, presumably for raising and lowering it as well. I had no idea how complicated an opera house could be.

5. Paris 1994



Musée d'Orsay from Wikipedia 2023



Model of Garnier's Opera House from Web 2023

After the museum, Bob headed back to his hotel to rest before dinner. I thought I'd explore the area around the museum for a while first, but I didn't find anything interesting and so I headed back too. On the subway, at one point, a man got on and played the accordion for all of us in the car to listen too. I enjoyed it at first, though he stayed with the same tune longer than I'd have liked, and I was hoping he'd stop before he did. I wondered how he would collect contributions

Travels of a Trade Economist

from the crowded subway car, then looked down to see a little girl, no more than six, I'd say, passing through the car collecting handouts. She had a pretty good fistful of change and was already moving away from me before I saw her, or I might have contributed. The music wasn't that great, but the girl was so cute and so sad that it tore at my heart.

Monday, April 25:

Just a quick catch-up before I head off to this morning for the conference.

Bob and I planned to go to a Vietnamese restaurant next to his hotel, but it turned out it was closed Sundays. So we walked back up to the main square where we'd eaten on Friday and ate at the restaurant that the woman in the hotel had recommended the day before. It was somewhere between the two we'd been to before, in quality and price.

I ordered a fish that my phrase book translated as "whiting." I guess I thought that would be like white fish, so I was surprised when it arrived: a small whole fish, bent into a circle on the plate with its tail in its mouth. Once again, it seemed to be looking up at me. I have a knack for this. It turned out that it was not hard to eat, though, and was pretty good. I followed up with a chocolate mousse, which it seemed like I should have once while I'm here.

Back in my room I worked on my presentation for this morning, then read a bit and went to sleep. I sleep with the window open because it gets stuffy otherwise. That means, since my room is in the front of the hotel, that I get lots of street noise. That would bother most people, I suppose, but I enjoy it. It does wake me up around six each morning as the garbage collectors come through, but that's OK too.

I'm off to breakfast and then the conference. Bob was told that there will be about a hundred people at it, so it is a bigger deal than I'd expected. I hope people can see my tie.

Tuesday, Apr. 26:

I've just had breakfast, and I see it's raining out. The minute walk to the OECD is about twenty minutes, and I'll have to use my umbrella. I've mastered the coffee pot now, pouring two days in a row without a mess.

My role in the conference went well, I think, though I am not entirely sure. I had three points to make, and I knew that two of them would be controversial. I introduced them (I was only the second speaker of the conference – sitting, by the way, so they couldn't see my tie) by saying that I intended to be provocative, and I went out of my way to draw attention to the points I was making. My worst fear was that I would be ignored. I wasn't. When we came to the discussion after all the speakers were done, three quarters of the comments were about me and my several points. I filled a page with notes on their criticisms, and then intervened at one point myself to respond. So, I did indeed create a stir. Afterwards several people congratulated me on the effect

5. Paris 1994

I'd had, including some who had been critical. If nothing else, I think people thought I had at least livened up the proceedings. (The other speakers were mostly dreadful, not in content, I suppose, but in style. And most were very hard to follow.)

The downside is that I know I did not convince anyone of my points, and I think that to some extent I was dismissed as an impractical theorist who wasn't in touch with reality. They didn't convince me I was wrong, though, and I'll probably still press my points in conversation when I get a chance.

I should say a word about the layout of this conference, since it was quite different from anything I'd experienced. We were in the large windowless conference room where the country delegates to the OECD apparently hold their meetings. The room was square, with a big rectangle of tables in the center, and a couple of rows of other tables and chairs behind each side. The tables had microphones at each seat, and signs with our names on them. Half the room had names of people, like me, and the other half had names of countries. The speakers for the workshop were all people, but in discussion the country representatives also spoke up.



OECD meeting from Web 2023

To speak, you pressed a button on the base of the microphone, and a light on it lit up. Your voice was then amplified over speakers to the room, but also sent to headphones that were at every seat in the room. By pushing a row of buttons, you could replace the speaker's voice with that of a translator who did simultaneous translation. Almost everyone spoke English, except for

Travels of a Trade Economist

a couple of French, so when they spoke I used the headphones to listen. Also, in a couple of cases people speaking in English were hard to hear, and the headphones were useful then as well.

Each session of the workshop had a chairman – a moderator who introduced the speakers and then called upon people during the discussion. Most of the participants seemed to address their remarks to him, saying "Thank you Chairman" and sprinkling the word "Chairman" throughout what they said. I wasn't able to get this habit myself, though. Also, to get the attention of the chairman in order to speak, they used a custom that I have seen before: you take the name sign that sits in front of you and stand it up on end. The moderator then keeps a list and calls on people in the order that they got his attention. That works quite well for letting everyone speak – too well perhaps – but it doesn't really allow discussion, since by the time you are recognized the comment that you are referring to has been forgotten.

We broke at about 12:30 for lunch, which to my surprise was not provided. Instead, we all tramped up to the sixth floor of the OECD, where there was a cafeteria. The food was not bad. Bob and I and Bernard Hoekman (our former student, now at the World Bank) ate together, talking about the project for Tunisia that we may do. Bernard knew quite a bit about the country situation from work that he had done.

We had been told that our payment for the workshop, about \$3000 out of which we were to cover expenses, would be available on deposit at the bank in the OECD. Several of us headed there at the start of the lunch break, only to find it closed for lunch. Bob and I went back, therefore, after lunch at 2:00, missing the opening of the afternoon session, in hopes of getting our money. We succeeded, but not, as we'd hoped, in the form of a check. Instead, we are both now carrying around that amount of cash, which is not very comfortable. Also, Bob changed his to dollars while we were at the bank, since we were told that the exchange rate there would be a good one. I also tried to change mine, but Bob had taken all their dollars and I couldn't. I now have a big wad of huge French Francs in my pocket.

The afternoon sessions were boring, and I struggled to stay awake and upright in my chair. I think I succeeded, although I saw Bob dose off several times and he said later that he saw Geza Feketekuty, who is the head of the OECD Trade Policy Committee and in charge of this whole business, also dose off. Like many others, I left the room occasionally for coffee or just to walk around to try to stay awake.

I had faxed my paper to the workshop organizer, but it apparently had never arrived. My only copy was marked up, so on one of these breaks I tried to phone Sue to get her to print and send another. She had instructed me on phoning from Paris using the university's Sprint phone card. Unfortunately, I couldn't make it work, and I ended up giving my marked-up copy of the paper to one of the staff to duplicate. By that time, I had also spilled coffee on the front of it, so it won't look very good.

5. Paris 1994

While trying to phone, I was standing in one of a bank of phone booths wondering what to do when the phone rang. It made no sense that it could be for me, but I picked it up anyway. An operator told me that this was a call for a delegate, and would I please get him. I said that I didn't know how to do that, that this was just a phone booth, and I'd picked it up. She scolded me (in English), saying that if I picked up the phone, I now had a responsibility to find the delegate, since this was a long-distance call. I left the phone off the hook and went out looking for someone who worked there. I found a man at a counter and dragged him over to the phone. I've no idea if he knew what to do either, but at least I had gotten off the hook myself.

The afternoon sessions ran over by quite a bit, so it was time to go to dinner when they ended. This was hosted by the Japanese ambassador, and served in a room in the "Château," the old building that must have been the first to house the OECD. There were cocktails beforehand, for which we stood around outside the dining room. I found myself mostly talking to a woman (one of the very few at this meeting) from the IMF, who told me how pleased she was with two of my former students who are now her employees, Mike Leidy and Clint Shiells. A waiter circulated through the group with trays of hot hors d'oeuvres, one of which, though it was bite-size, I made



Panda tie

OECD Château de la Muette from Web 2023

the mistake of biting into. A yellow-green sauce squirted out of it and onto my hand and the floor, though fortunately not onto my panda tie.

The dining room was all old and marble, quite impressive, except for the ceiling. That had been done in those small square acoustical tiles, and it looked very out of place.

Travels of a Trade Economist

Periodically a parade of white coated waiters would file in and serve us the next course, every one of which was excellent. Unfortunately, the meal was not free: there were speeches both before and after dinner. The speaker after dinner was at least enjoyable, or so I thought. Bob found him boring. He was the former chair of the OECD trade committee, now the CEO of a Swiss multinational corporation. He spoke of the view of trade and trade negotiations from the private sector, a view however that probably is not widely shared, given his extreme international orientation.

During dinner I talked a good deal with John Whalley, who was at my table, and who has had terrible back problems since I'd last seen him. It seems he was having spasms and went to a physiotherapist who prescribed some exercises. The exercises cured the spasms but ruptured two disks. He is only now starting to feel better, and he travels with a special cushion to sit on at meetings like this. I talked also with Carlos Braga, a young fellow from the World Bank whom I'd met once before, and with Carl Sauvant, from UNCTAD, whom I hadn't met. Sauvant, I learned, was staying at my hotel, so after dinner we walked back here together. We talked mostly about international direct investment in Tunisia (where Bob is going today), but also about the trauma of him and his wife being moved suddenly from New York to Geneva last summer. I hadn't known that working for the UN would entail such dislocations.

Wednesday, April 27:

There were two more sessions Tuesday morning, including one in which our student, Bernard, gave a paper on services that was well received. I was proud of him. Also, Richard Snape, an Australian who had said some of the most sensible things the day before, was the discussant for Bernard's paper and said things that were largely equivalent to one of the points I'd made the day before to so much criticism. That made me feel good, if not him.

The first session started late, and the speakers mostly went long, so that there wasn't time for discussion. Instead, the second session started without a break, and it too went long and was followed by endless speeches by the political types who were present. I've enjoyed this trip very much, and I found the meetings enlightening just to see what went on, but for the most part the content was very weak. This is not the place to get any good discussion going or make any progress toward understanding the issues.

When we finally broke up, Bob and I headed for the sixth-floor cafeteria where we'd had lunch on Monday. That time we had gone with several locals and just followed them. This time we tried to do it ourselves, and we couldn't seem to find our way into the serving line. Eventually, we squeezed our way past people who were on their way out, until we got to the start of the line. I'm still not entirely sure what we did wrong.

After leaving the OECD, Bob and I went one more time for coffee. He was heading for Tunisia that evening to explore the opportunity for us to do some work for them, paid for by the UN. But he was not looking forward to it, partly because of some conversations we'd had with Bernard

5. Paris 1994

and others about what the Tunisians were up to, and partly I think because we were told that the Tunisians are worse than the French used to be about not wanting to speak anything but French. (The French, by the way, are better about that these days – one of the effects, apparently – of the European Union.) Bob speaks some French, having started as a Romance Languages major in college, but I think he had found it harder than he expected. Anyhow, we talked about what he would tell the Tunisians and then split up, going to our respective hotels.

I spent the afternoon doing a little work and wandering the neighborhood again. I sat for a while in a park near here, which was pretty, but it was also kind of cold and I didn't stay long.

At 6:30 I walked down the hill and across the river to the apartment of the Australian ambassador to the OECD. He had invited us all to his place for a cocktail party, and it turned out that he was in a very modern and surprisingly tall building not far from the Eiffel Tower, an easy walk from my hotel. His apartment was on the top floor of this building, with the elevator dumping you right inside, and with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking Paris on both the front and the back. Quite a place! We all stood around sipping drinks and eating hors d'oeuvres that waitresses were constantly bringing to us. There must have been two dozen different hors d'oeuvres. By the time we left, there was surely no need for dinner, though that didn't stop us.

I was standing on the edge of a group that included Bernard, Carlos, Patrick Messerlin (my French host for giving a seminar today), and several people I didn't know, when Carlos asked if I wanted to join them for dinner. I said sure, and we headed down the elevator, seven of us, and tried to sort out how we would get to the restaurant that one of them had picked. We split into two groups, three of us hailing a cab, when John Jackson came out of the building looking for me. I think he was hurt that I had left without him, and he asked if he could join us. (He had seemed so involved in conversations with various other people throughout the conference that I hadn't realized he would want to join me.) I said yes, thus adding him to someone else's party, though that wasn't a problem. We squeezed the four of us into a cab (illegally, apparently, but Patrick was a fast talker and got the driver to let us) and headed off across Paris for the restaurant.

I have been taking the Metro mostly and hadn't had much experience with Parisian cabs. The ride seemed long and somewhat harrowing. So I was surprised when we ended up at a restaurant only a few blocks from my hotel, having started from the ambassador's apartment that was also only a few blocks from it. I have no idea why it seemed like such a long ride.

The restaurant was a small and lively place, and very packed with people. We had to wait outside for a few minutes while they made space for the eight of us, and when we were seated, we were only inches from the group at the next in the long row of tables. There was a man in that group whom I found fascinating to look at: short, round and with bristly hair and very adept at eating the tiny snails that the restaurant served.

We had a good dinner – mine was steak with béarnaise sauce – with lots of talking and laughing. Half the time, of course, I didn't know what we were laughing about, but half the time I did and it

Travels of a Trade Economist

was fun. I got a very favorable impression of Patrick Messerlin, who has been described, we were told, as the only French economist who believes in free trade. Better still, it turns out that he is completely self-trained in trade theory, since I guess the French don't really teach it, and he discovered the classic results of trade theory on his own. He is a very unpretentious guy too.

After dinner, one of the group whose name I never did catch walked with me back to my hotel, since he lived in the neighborhood. We passed the Trocadero, which is a pair of monumental buildings that were erected for some exposition years ago, and between which we could see the Eiffel Tower all lit up. It was beautiful. This fellow – I wish I'd caught his name – commented that he always feels safe in Paris, everywhere he goes, but the minute he lands in America he is on his guard. I told him I feel safe in Ann Arbor, but he didn't seem to have much interest in



Place du Trocadéro from Web 2023

places that small.

This morning I gave a seminar that Patrick had arranged at some institute. This was in response to Bob offering our services, then himself opting out when he had to go to Tunisia. I wondered if Patrick was only doing this to be nice, which would have been a pity since so was I. I also didn't know what sort of a presentation would be appropriate, and I went prepared with my NAFTA slides hoping for inspiration. I made my way by Metro to the address he'd given me, got there a few minutes early, and stopped for coffee across the street. The institute was in a huge modern building – I'm beginning to learn that not all of Paris is quite alike, just most of it. I think I'd have had a hard time finding the institute inside of it if Patrick hadn't appeared in front of it just when I came out of the coffee shop. He had never been there before either. It was

5. Paris 1994

somebody else's institute that he has arranged for me to speak at. He also didn't seem sure that anyone would show up.

After this inauspicious beginning, though, a nice little group assembled, and we had a very pleasant seminar. I focused more on the history of our modelling activities than on the NAFTA per se, and that seemed to suit them fine. They were very interested and asked good questions. I was pleased and I think they were.

Patrick then invited me to lunch, somewhat hesitantly because, he said, he thought I might prefer to go off on my own as a tourist. And it is true that when this was first set up by Bob, I did think it would cut into my own time. But it was a gray day anyway, and I liked Patrick and also Richard Snape who would also be joining us, so I was glad to go along. He took us to by far the fanciest restaurant I've been to here. Patrick explained that there is a book that rates Parisian restaurants, not with stars, but on a scale of one to twenty. This one, he said, got a sixteen, but was very reasonably priced despite that. He was right, I guess. The fixed-price lunch, which we all had, was only about \$30. Patrick insisted that his institute was paying, and I vowed to myself that I would skip dinner.

Oh yes, was it any good? Well, we all ordered a main course of veal wrapped in a thin crepe and the veal seemed to me to be mostly fat and gristle. The others cleaned their plates, but I left enough that the solicitous waiter asked with concern if I had enjoyed my lunch. I lied.

This took us until after three o'clock, so I've spent the rest of the day on my own, doing what I'd planned: wandering and reading. I took a few pictures, but it was too cloudy for them to be any good, I suspect. I ended this evening with a bowl of onion soup in a brasserie (just soup, not dinner), and have returned to my hotel for the last night. With luck my trip home will be uneventful, and I won't write any more here, so I'll close with a few miscellaneous things I've noticed or learned about Paris:

The gutters, next to the curbs, often have water streaming along them, pumped out from somewhere under the curb at the top of the block and presumably helping to keep the place as clean as it is. Each place where the water comes out into the gutter there is a small rug rolled up and placed to guide the water in the right direction. Men in bright green jumpsuits and with bright green plastic brooms appear occasionally to sweep debris into these streams.

I've seen several groups of kids playing on roller skates. That wouldn't be worth mentioning, except that I was surprised that they weren't on roller blades or skateboards, which is all we see any more at home.

Bob and I were impressed, when he paid in the restaurants with a credit card, that they came to the table with a hand-held scanner in which they swiped the card and entered the amount, and which printed the receipt for him to sign. We wondered why we don't have these in America, though I also wondered how anything portable like that could check the validity of the card with a central computer. Then last night I learned that their system is even more impressive than I

Travels of a Trade Economist

thought. European credit cards themselves each contain a microchip that has your personal code number. After the waiter swipes the card on this portable device, he hands it to the customer to enter their code number, and that's how it takes care of security. They didn't do it with Bob, of course, because he had a primitive American credit card with no microchip.

I've been to several parts of Paris this trip, and every place I've been has been very nice, clearly inhabited by people who are well off. I wondered if I had just been lucky to miss the slums and working-class neighborhoods, or if there just weren't any. The answer, it turns out, is neither. The poor and working class all live in the suburbs. Unlike ours, the suburbs are where the government has built huge apartment complexes for the lower classes, rather like the "projects" in the U.S. though surely not as bad. Of course, public transportation is excellent, so that is how these folks get into Paris to serve hors d'oeuvres to the likes of me. I didn't ask, but I presume that the factories are also on the outskirts of the city, since I haven't seen anything that looks remotely like one.

Finally, and as I sit here in my hotel room with the window wide open as usual, let me mention the downside of sitting by the street, both here and in the cafes that I've been enjoying: exhaust. Somehow my vision of the cafe society did not include inhaling noxious fumes, but I've noticed enough of it today that it is starting to get to me. And in one place today it was mixed with cigar smoke from a man at a table near me. So Paris isn't perfect.

5. Paris 1994