The Music

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The great explorers have always been independent, strong-minded individuals. They are going where no one else has been before, so they have to be bold, courageous, totally self-motivated — and driven by their ideas.

It doesn’t matter whether the goal is to see what is on the other side of the hill, the ocean, the continent or even on another planet: the same determination must exist. Vasco da Gama was in the port to welcome Christopher Columbus returning from his historic voyage across the Atlantic and, looking at Columbus, da Gama will have acknowledged that they had similar qualities.

These two were different men from the 13th-century Marco Polo, who was more of a merchant than an adventurer; and they were different again from the 18th-century Captain Cook: a quieter, controlled Englishman as much interested in expanding scientific knowledge as gung-ho exploration. But there would have been a mutual respect between all these men, and they would all have recognized the bravery and achievement of those on the Apollo 7 Mission. In this case, the men knew where they were going (unlike Columbus who only had a hazy idea) but also knew that their survival depended, in the end, upon a knife-edge of computer calculations and space theory. Subsequent deaths in space missions illustrate only too graphically how dangerous it is to travel at the limits of man’s practical experience.

Of course, international travel now is very easy. We can all fly across the Atlantic or the Pacific to holiday destinations. We mix with people from different continents, people with very different habits and expectations. If we are walking in remote regions, we generally have a guide who speaks the language, understands the customs, and can introduce us gradually to the glories of the country — and advise us where to be cautious. But Bartolomeu Diaz and Magellan, Columbus and Cook had no guides. Lewis and Clark occasionally managed to enlist help from local tribes, but they still had to find routes over impassable stretches of land; and when they were expecting to find the Pacific, they suddenly had to deal with the Rocky Mountains — a very different prospect!

Quite quickly, travelling in the footsteps of these figures became commonplace. Bartolomeu Diaz sailed down the West African coast in 1488, discovering the tip of southern Africa which he called The Cape of Storms. He was superseded less than 10 years later by Vasco da Gama, who finished off the job, discovering the sea route to India. Within decades of Columbus’s great achievement, ships were plying across the Atlantic by the hundreds. And only 50 years after Magellan, Sir Francis Drake went round the globe in The Golden Hind. It took less than a generation for settlers to follow in the footsteps of Lewis and Clark, marking out the territory of the United States of America.

The challenges that remain to the contemporary explorer are different. Space is perhaps the biggest frontier. But if little of the land mass of Planet Earth remains to be discovered, the same cannot be said of the oceans. The sea covers two thirds of the Earth’s surface, and much exploration still needs to be done in its depths. And there remain other journeys requiring considerable fortitude — the high and forbidding mountains, the hot deserts of sand and rock, the icy wastes of Antarctica.

Perhaps equally important, if not quite so historic, are those less spectacular but nevertheless challenging journeys which stretch most of us to the limits of our capacity, where we can experience for ourselves different sights and ways of life beyond (what we see through) the living-room television portal. When Christopher Columbus sailed into the unknown, he took with him the Travels of Marco Polo. It clearly wasn’t enough for him to read about adventure in his armchair — he had to go and do it for himself!

Notes by Nicolas Soames

Cassette Information

Cassette 1, Side 1 . . . . . . . . . (40:38)
Introduction
Marco Polo 1254-1324
The Polos at Kublai Khan’s Palace
Ibn Battuta c. 1304-1368
Ibn Battuta in India
Christopher Colombus 1451-1506
The Second Voyage
Cassette 2, Side 1 . . . . . . . . . (38:57)
Captain Cook 1728-1779
The Endeavour sets sail — August 26th 1768
The Second Voyage
Lewis and Clark and the Corps of Discovery
1803-1804 The Corps assembles
Winter 1804
Cassette 1, Side 2 . . . . . . . . . (38:44)
The Second Voyage continued
The Third Voyage
The Fourth Voyage
Bartolomeu Diaz c. 1450-1500
Vasco da Gama c. 1460-1524
Ferdinand Magellan c. 1480-1521
Magellan’s search for the route to the Pacific
Total Time on Cassette 1: 1:19:22
Cassette 2, Side 2 . . . . . . . . . (37:27)
Dr David Livingstone and Henry Morton Stanley
Attacked by a lion in Mabotsa
Henry Morton Stanley
The Apollo Mission to the Moon
The Launch of Apollo 11 — July 16th 1969
Total Time on Cassette 2: 1:16:22
Total Time on Cassettes 1&2: 2:35:44
Throughout the history of mankind, there have been several adventurous souls who set out to explore the unknown. Spirited and courageous, they risked their lives on their expeditions to seek out lands hitherto unknown to the civilized world. When we talk of explorers, Portuguese explorer Vasco de Gama, would undoubtedly be one of the first names that come to our minds after all as one of the pioneers of the Age of Exploration, he was the commander of one of the sailing ships that ventured into India from Europe. There are many people throughout history who had the spirit of an adventurer and decided to explore the unknown. In some cases, they risked their lives to make their contributions recognized by the world.