

turned the President's passion into an icon: the teddy bear, beloved to children for a century now. Never mind the irony; suffice it to say that from target to toy, our bears have been alternately feared and loved, but rarely understood.

Doug Peacock, too, weathered frequent rough times, most of them in Vietnam and its immediate aftermath. He served two tours of duty as a Green Beret medic in the war's darkest moments, ministering to the Montagnard and Hre peoples of the highlands while trying to dodge the bullets that rang around him. As months of combat went by, Peacock began to lose some of the martial spirit he had brought from his Boy Scout youth. And, as a hunter will, he came to respect his foe, his prey. No longer in a world of gooks and slopes, Peacock describes his dead enemy: "They had been folded up into little fetal-like bundles, just like the prehistoric Indian burials I had found in Michigan as a teenager."

Wrapped tighter and tighter, Peacock was involuntarily rotated back to the world. On entering his parents' home, he threw away his uniforms and military papers, saving only his wartime diary, its pages glued together by mildew and fungus. Then he hid himself away until, still malaria-dazed, he headed to Montana. "I had no talent

for reentering society," he writes. "Others of my generation marched and expanded their consciousness; I retreated to the woods and pushed my mind toward sleep with cheap wine."

Peacock's urgent and moving story unfolds in *Grizzly Years*, with its nicely double-edged title. Its opening page announces all that will follow:

The big bear stopped thirty feet in front of me. I slowly worked my hand into my bag and gradually brought out the Magnum. I peered down the gun barrel into the dull red eyes of the huge grizzly. He gnashed his jaws and lowered his ears. The hair on his hump stood up. We stared at each other for what might have been seconds but felt like hours. I knew once again that I was not going to pull the trigger. My shooting days were over.

In the company of such bears, far removed from the workaday world, Peacock shook off the horrors of his first war. He would not, however, retreat into pacifism, for he found a second war in the continuing encroachment of civilization on the wild lands, in the helicopters, sport hunters, and beef cattle that ranged through once-desolate places. He began to refine techniques of

fighting back, performing unauthorized maintenance on yellow construction machines and sporty snowmobiles, terrorizing the countryside with his now-bearlike scowl. His mastery of these dark arts led him to early fame as the model for the hero of the late Edward Abbey's *Monkey Wrench Gang* (1975) and *Hayduke Lives!* (1990), novels that, like their author and his protagonist, are full of anarchic rage and good humor.

Abbey suggested that Peacock take a proper anarchist's revenge on society by landing a job with the federal government, and Peacock, now a fire lookout for the Forest Service, took up residence in a tower near Glacier National Monument, close by his beloved bears. There he met his wife Lisa, an adept in the ways of the wilderness, a monkey-wrencher of distinction, and—as is evident in the full-color insert in *Grizzly Years*—a fine photographer. The two set up house in their ursocentric universe, surrounded by snuffling, rooting, grunting, maundering, lolling, rearing, bawling, and occasionally charging bears.

When fire season ended, the two traveled to Tucson, Arizona, an early Peacock haunt where his friend Abbey lived. There he began to organize research projects on the grizzly bear and agitate for their protection, efforts that were documented in a 1988 PBS documentary called *Peacock's War*. For years, too, Doug Peacock labored over the pages of the present book, taking advice from writer friends like Abbey, Peter Matthiessen, and especially Jim Harrison, the poet and novelist.

Their collective efforts are reflected in what is an altogether remarkable memoir. Peacock writes with assurance of his haunted past and occasionally rocky present, never descending into bathos or sentimentality, leading the reader away from both fright and feegoodism to understanding. *Grizzly Years* is a genuinely patriotic book. In its pages, the bears of Montana and their world come to life, and through it, we trust, something of the best of wild America will endure and thrive. They have found an eloquent protector.

Gregory McNamee's most recent book is *The Return of Richard Nixon and Other Essays*, published last year by Harbinger House.

BRIEF MENTIONS

KEEPING CANADA TOGETHER by Kenneth McDonald
Agincourt, Ontario: Ramsay Business Systems, Ltd.; 94 pp., \$7.95

McDonald's short paperback gives in abbreviated form his own contribution to the on-going debate about Canada's future. Secession is hounding Canada as vigorously as it is Central Europe, and with just as much acrimony if perhaps less violence. Like many Anglophones, McDonald (who immigrated to Canada from England in 1957) has lost all patience with Quebec, and properly sees the federally-mandated bilingualism as the inequitable and divisive legislation it was meant to be. McDonald considers the centralization and new constitution undertaken by Trudeau a replacement of an "English" system with a "French" one, in which, for example, rights are conferred by the state rather than reserved by the citizens. This is in many ways a useful distinction, but it is also true that centralized power and the sheltering of government workers from citizen anger or reform is a trend in most late-20th-century Western republics, very much including the States, where (alas) we cannot blame it on our French minority.

McDonald proposes a new constitution of his own, with a greatly reduced government workforce (at present 21 percent of Canadians work for government on some level); more local control, most especially over spending; and greater reliance on national referendums so that voters can directly vote their will on such major decisions as increasing the national debt. With all his irritation with Quebec, McDonald understands that despite its autocratic nature and its misuse of central power, that province may be showing the way to a more fairly federalized Canada.

—Jack Ramsay

Letter From Eastern Europe

by Thomas Molnar

A Difficult Road

Over the course of a one-month (April) trip through five European countries, Eastern and Western, I collected notes of many conversations, particularly with young people, about their view of what is called over there "the situation." A more concrete term should not be used since not even the leading *quattur*, Gorbachev, Thatcher, Mitterrand, and Kohl, know exactly what tomorrow will bring. "The situation" is fluid, or at least half of it is: while Western Europe shifts between joy and anxiety, and follows the road of consumer societies, Eastern Europe makes history, for the first time since about A.D. 1500 when the Turkish occupation put an end to its independent existence. There followed other occupiers, Habsburg, Russian, and German up until 1918, and there were new occupations, German and Soviet, up to the crumbling of the Berlin Wall. Add it up: close to five centuries.

The history now made in Eastern Europe may bring with it revolutions, civil wars, wars among nations, unexpected independence (the Ukraine?), the breakup of Russia, new hegemonies (Germany). Or it may bring a peaceful unity with Western Europe and the extension of consumer society's wasteland from West to East. Everything is possible; history continues; Fukuyama was mistaken.

My contacts in Eastern Europe, France, Switzerland, and Austria were made easier by the fact that in several places I gave lectures and seminars, so that I was able to meet large groups of articulate people. The additional fact that I came from America bestowed on me a kind of extraterritoriality, while my European origin and the languages I speak brought me closer to them than would be the case of a journalist or interviewer. We talked after classes, at beer halls, on mountain paths, in cafés and homes. I think I can trust what my young friends told me.

Young people in the West regard "the situation" with unbelieving eyes. This is already the TV generation in Europe too, conditioned to register only what the screen deity reports, or else they formulate their views according to the opinion-group to which they belong: nationalist, Catholic, anti-German, socialist, liberal, radical, or Jewish. Almost everybody is enthusiastic, minus the chauvinists in France, duty-bound to suspect the "Boche" whatever he does. (So much for the Franco-German love affair, the foundation stone of a "united Europe.") The greatest sympathy is manifested for Rumania, a "Latin sister," but as one travels eastward, sentiments palpably change, and Hungarians and Poles win hands down.

In the West I asked questions about eventual threats to the consumer society in case reforms in the East prove costly for Western budgets. At first, the answers indicate solidarity and generosity with the East; then people become slightly nervous, and strictly local problems leap into focus: unemployment and African immigration in France; joining or not joining the United Nations in Switzerland; and joy in Vienna about reassuming the central position of the city (and country) lost when Hitler annexed Austria as Germany's easternmost thus-marginalized province. I concluded from all this that *sacro egoismo* is still uppermost in these people's minds, and that people generally are only superficially interested in what happens next door. Sacrificing their prosperity for others is out of the question, solidarity and sacrifice are activated exclusively within the nation. Thus Hungarian students, upon hearing of Ceausescu's fall and the needs of the Magyar population in Transylvania, collected truckfuls of foods within 24 hours and drove them to Rumania—where Securitate sharpshooters received them. There were quite a few casualties.

As my train or car traveled east, not only the landscape, but the mentalities and worries changed. My interlocutors became more alive to "the situation." In Austria, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland many of the people I talked with

were Polish, Hungarian, and Czech students, and their first concern was the state of the economy and general morals at home. While the experts hatch projects and Western or Japanese investors buy up entire industries and media groups and install sex-shop chains, my young friends, almost without exception, are pessimistic about the years of transition, which may be as long as one or two decades. During that time and without the party's crushing presence (but it crushed bad things, too, they acknowledge, such as openly offered pornography), people's selfishness and indifference are likely to grow and corruption of all sorts to spread. "We are at our best when it comes to talking or writing, but where are the practical minds and the organizers?" Or: "Politicians are filled with good intentions, but there is not one statesman among them." Or: "A unified view would be necessary, not the dispersal of party-politics, yet nobody wants another monolithic power structure." Democracy, yes, but without the anarchy of pressure groups and demagoguery; a strong national government, yes, but without one party in charge; etc., etc. A young Polish woman summed up the general preoccupation. She and her friends were fighting for years for political and cultural pluralism, but are beginning to have doubts as they are now face-to-face with Western anarchy and confusion. It suddenly becomes clear to me: if the one-party system had not been a totalitarian one (this is no contradiction), and had been able to acquire legitimacy in the eyes of the people, they would have hesitated to overthrow it. The multiparty system is not received with enthusiasm. Only a minority of the population votes—not because they are unused to democracy, but because they distrust *Danaos et dona ferentes*.

A group of students from Prague and Brno was, perhaps, the most even-minded. "What we have seen of your consumer society scares us," one of the group said. "If it invades us too, there will be those who succumb to it, but also others who will try to block it with any means. A cultural civil war may be next on the agenda." A Finnish girl