

It is Christmas Eve, and I am on the road, heading south from Ft. Worth to a family gathering in central Texas.

My kids are sleeping, and my wife fades in and out, dozing in the beautiful half-light of the evening. I am alone to listen, to see, and to think. The sight of approaching judgment prompts me to envision the massive, rolling wall as one of Pharaoh's charioteers watching the Red Sea prepare to swallow him. Even so, Gentlemen Jim's music (*Long time ago in Bethlehem, so the Holy Bible says . . .*) eases my apprehension. And the storm never came.

That night, we share a Christmas spread with my wife's extended family and play a little game: Each of us draws a number for an anonymous gift. But the game doesn't end there. After each gift is opened, the next person in line can either risk the luck of the draw or good-naturedly force a previous recipient to hand over a particularly desirable present, prompting a fresh exchange. My wife wisely hangs on to a Shop Vac, a gift that will likely prove useful in a family with three kids and a dog.

Afterward, a kindly uncle asks about a close relation who has been diagnosed with cancer. His inquiry takes me by surprise: I've been preoccupied with my own selfish concerns and had almost forgotten about it. I thank him for his concern—and remember a painful moment from years before, when I had forgotten about the death of a boyhood friend's father. My youngest daughter, her sweet face illuminated by the lights of the Christmas tree, begins singing a hymn of the Christ Child, and all fall silent to listen and watch. Somehow, I find the prospect of her salvation much more believable than of my own.

On Christmas Day, we enjoy an abundant dinner, and the family, as is traditional in these parts, retires to the kitchen table for a game of dominos. Some appear to consider this a contact sport, so I choose to sit this one out.

I can't shake the melancholy that overtook me the day before. It's evening, but the sun is peeking out again, so I decide to take a walk in the breezy, brisk, 40-something degree air of this little town, retracing a walk I took years before down Pecan Street by the creek that runs parallel to Railroad Street, with a park sandwiched in between.

I walk down the cracked pavement of Pecan Street, strolling along the creek lined with its namesake trees, looking at

the modest little homes bedecked in an equally modest array of Christmas lights, Nativity scenes, and merry Santas. The post-September 11 flags are everywhere—on the cars, flying from the homes, and decorating the rusting bumpers of what we used to call, tongue-in-cheek, "cowboy Cadillacs." (One pickup's sticker defiantly proclaims "Don't Burn This Flag!")

Over on Railroad Street, the railroad is gone, leaving behind a battered Santa Fe boxcar and the ghostly remnants of a feed mill—the ruins of a bygone civilization, there to remind us that our small towns, like the people who inhabit them, are fading away. But the little homes are full tonight; the young people are back, and the old ones smile again and remember.

It may have been Gentlemen Jim's music that eventually took the edge off my gloomy mood. Sitting in the car a few days later, waiting on my wife to run an errand, I push the button on the CD player, and that mellow voice brings Jim back from the sweet by-and-by (*May the good Lord bless and keep you . . .*), then reminds us of why the Christ Child was born (*Dear Lord, forgive . . .*). Suddenly, everything's all right; the shadow has lifted from my soul as swiftly as it had descended days before.

The cold snap hasn't ended, but outside, the thick, gray clouds have broken, so I step out to watch the sun arch westward in a halo of glowing cotton puffs. A fat little sparrow bounces on the limbs of a leafless post oak, then flits over to light on an evergreen cedar.

Wayne Allensworth resides in Keller, Texas, and always listens to Jim Reeves at Christmas time.

Letter From the Upper Midwest

by Sean Scallon

Sans Frontiers?



"What is the purpose of your journey to Canada and how long do you plan to stay?"

That is the question anyone traveling across the Canadian border has to answer to the border guards, no matter where he

crosses. For myself, it was at the Pigeon River (which divides Minnesota and Ontario near the beautiful Grand Portage/Mt. Josephine area) on my way to Thunder Bay, the last leg of my summer vacation.

If predictions from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace come true, such border crossings would no longer exist. The U.S.-Canadian border, which 200 million people (according to estimates) cross every year and through which one billion dollars in trade flows every 12 months, will simply cease to be—"disappear before any politician finds the political courage to negotiate its removal," according to Demetrios Papademetriou, one of the authors of a recent study conducted by Carnegie.

I spotted a story on the study on the bottom half of the front page of the *National Post* while having drinks in the Valhalla Hotel's bar and lounge, in an attempt to unwind after a three-hour drive from Duluth and a morning rendezvous with a wonderful hotel clerk. Canadian newspapers and magazines carry many stories on globalization and nationalism, far more than you would find in a U.S. newspaper and written in a more studious and serious tone. If Canadians read this story seriously, they would have cause for alarm. If there were no border between the United States and Canada, then there would be no Canada: It would be absorbed into the United States.

How different are Canadians and Americans? Travel down the main drag of Thunder Bay, and you will find strip malls, supermarkets, travel lodges, housing projects, and Third World immigrants—not much different from what you would find in Duluth, just with a Canadian face. Instead of Burger King and McDonald's, you will see Robin's Donuts and Tim Horton's restaurants. Safeway replaces Wal-Mart. Inter-City Mall dominates the shopping district the way American malls do. Thunder Bay's Main Street is as Disneyfied as any you might find in a mid-sized Midwestern city.

There is one subtle difference, however. Years ago, Duluth turned a strip of land that juts out into the Lake Superior bay into a theme park of hotels, restaurants, shops, and office buildings. Warehouses and shipping companies now hold bookstores, brewpubs, apartment lofts, and gift shops. Along the lakefront, there is a convention center, an IMAX theater, and a new aquarium. The train

depot is still a train depot, but the train just conducts scenic journeys around the Lake Superior shoreline, and the depot itself is a museum. All of the ore docks, the grain bins, and the coal and cement storage fields are tucked away and hidden in the back of the Duluth-Superior harbor, as if they were embarrassing reminders of what Duluth once was (and still, for the most part, is): an industrial town with a commercial port that does a lot of business.

Yet somebody forgot to tell the tourists. You could find hardy souls sitting out in the rain at 9:30 P.M. or in the cold, gray dawn of 6:00 A.M., waiting for freighters to come in. What is one of the more popular tourist activities in the canal district? A tour through an old U.S. Steel ore freighter, the *S.S. William S. Irvin*.

Thunder Bay doesn't have that kind of playground—yet. You can't see the Lake Superior harbor until you get to the other end of town, and that's only a small marina and park. In between are the railroad yards, grain bins, and ore docks of the city's industrial heart. Of course, if the border disappears, American planners and developers may want to prepare the wrecking ball and earthmover.

I quickly picked up an appreciation for Canadian publications, some of which dare to tackle the topic of globalization. One story in the *National Post*, written by Niall Ferguson, questioned whether democracy actually creates prosperity. Another profiled leftist antiglobalist Noam Chomsky (ignored at home but taken seriously up north), while a third was an investigative report of a Tamil refugee organization in Toronto that funnels guns and money to its rebel brothers in Sri Lanka. (Police believe that there are at least 8,000 Tamil Tiger guerrillas in Toronto itself, about half the size of the current Canadian army.) Contrast this with what you would find in the Duluth paper, the *News and Tribune*, which published an Associated Press story about how Somali immigrants are having a wonderful time in their little houses on the prairie near Fargo, North Dakota. Why Fargo, of all places? Well, it's quieter than Mogadishu, and the Somalis believe the residents of Fargo have some of that wonderfully trite conservative notion of "family values." (Don't doubt for a minute that they are telling all their friends and family back in the refugee camps about the family values they just discovered in the Upper Midwest.) No ordinary citizen of Fargo was interviewed

about what he thought of the empire's flotsam and jetsam washing up on our shores.

Another AP gem right next to the fish-out-of-water story was an announcement from a recent globalist conference held at the Universal Academy of Cultures, headed by Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel. The resolve of this gathering was to "better hear the cries of the world," as Wiesel put it. Aristide R. Zolberg of the International Center of Migration, Ethnicity and Citizenship at the New School for Social Research was more blunt: "It's no longer a world where there are some 'us' and the rest 'others.' We can no longer turn our backs and say 'these are not my people.'" To whom was he referring? The article, like much of the AP's drivel, does not provide details.

All of this goes to show that Canadians often ponder the question of nationhood and identity, while Americans give it a wink and a grin. North of the border, at least, citizens ask questions: Who am I? How do I define myself? What is my place in the world? Profound, to be sure, but necessary inquiries in a world in which your borders are being threatened by think tanks. A Canadian TV commercial depicts a youth who, over stirring, patriotic music (*à la* George Patton), reads a list of what Canadians are and are not to those snotty Americas who think Canadians are nothing but Americans who would rather be dull than hip.

Despite the invasion of American culture from radio and TV stations in Seattle, Duluth, Detroit, Cleveland, Buffalo, and Rochester, Anglo-Canadians cling to what makes them Canadian: loyalty to Great Britain. Queen Elizabeth is still on their dollar bills, and Canada is still a commonwealth. Newspapers ran in-depth stories on Prince William's coming of age. The sports sections feature stories on England's play in the Euro soccer championship, the NHL draft, and the Formula One Canadian Grand Prix. American sporting news—coverage of Major League Baseball, in which Canadian teams in Toronto and Montreal play—was buried in the back pages. Back at the Valhalla, something called the Society of St. George held a dinner and pageant the evening I was there, and Thunder Bay is dotted with Royal Canadian Legion posts. Leading candidates for the 2001 general election never seriously talked about getting rid of the country's troubled government-financed health-care system, because it is viewed

as a unique Canadian institution.

How would such institutions survive without a border to define them? They wouldn't. The destruction of the border would mean the collapse of the Canadian dollar, as merchants would attempt to get their hands on *real* dollars, just as the waiter at a restaurant where I dined was eager for a tip from a tourist that would be worth more than one from a local. Canadian hockey teams, perpetually strapped for cash, would find it easier to move south to, say, Biloxi, Mississippi. Anything remotely Anglican would die along with the old folks. The health-care system would fall down when patients tired of waiting for surgery headed south to American clinics in even greater numbers. American society would not tolerate Quebec's language police or its French dictums, so it would either become independent or be taken out by smart bombs.

The traffic wouldn't be one way, either. Canada has done much, thanks to former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, to pioneer the multicultural society, and a few ideas would filter south. Every government sign you see is in both French and English. There are separate English, French, and Spanish television stations on my hotel's cable package, and it seems every ethnic group has its own Sunday morning show. Black Entertainment Television and Unavision wouldn't survive competition in the States from something like Tagalog TV, or HmongVision, or the SBC (Somali Broadcast Company, based out of Fargo, North Dakota.)

If there are no international boundaries, why are there provincial boundaries? Why do we need state boundaries? Is anarchy really good for the soul? Globalists never ask these questions because they assume that all people are the same, and, therefore, all systems are the same. Canadians may not be all that different from Americans in what they eat, drink, wear, watch, or worship, but they do have different ways of doing things, different ways of governing, different ways of looking at themselves. That's why Canadian Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs George Haynal dismissed the Carnegie study with the back of his hand, stating in the *National Post* article: "The border is necessary for the preservation of identity and security." That is something Americans should ponder.

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by Srdja Trifkovic

State of the Union: An Empire, Not a Republic

President Bush's recent State of the Union Address was an historic occasion. His speechwriting staff went through nearly 30 drafts and finally presented him (and the rest of us) with a mature ideological framework that reflects the balance of outlooks within the present administration. The preceding debate may have been the last chance for any remaining republicans (small "r") within the national-security team to raise their voices and insert certain qualifications into what has emerged as the "Bush doctrine," but this did not happen. The neoconservative policy of permanent global interventionism has triumphed.

In addition to "ridding the world of thousands of terrorists" in Afghanistan, the U.S. military had "saved a people from starvation and freed a country from brutal oppression." Its women "were captives in their own homes, forbidden from working or going to school, while now they are free, and take part in Afghanistan's new government," all of which is "a tribute to the spirit of the Afghan people, to the resolve of our coalition and to the might of the United States military."

The President was vague concerning the estimated number of terrorists still at large, but "our war against terror is only beginning" and will cover the whole world, because

Thousands of dangerous killers, schooled in the methods of murder, often supported by outlaw regimes, are now spread throughout the world like ticking time bombs, set to go off without warning . . . tens of thousands of trained terrorists are still at large. These enemies view the entire world as a battlefield, and we must pursue them wherever they are . . . freedom is at risk and America and our allies must not, and will not, allow it.

The list of enemies also includes "regimes who seek chemical, biological

or nuclear weapons" and "at least a dozen countries" that offer refuge to "a terrorist underworld." Three countries in particular are "threatening America or our friends and allies with weapons of mass destruction": North Korea, Iran, and Iraq. These "constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world." America will have to act, and she welcomes friends and allies in that endeavor, "but some governments will be timid in the face of terror. And make no mistake about it: If they do not act, America will."

To handle the threat, the United States must "develop and deploy effective missile defenses to protect America and our allies from sudden attack." In addition, we will *preempt* any possible threat. President Bush "will not wait on events while dangers gather" and "peril draws closer and closer." The job may not be finished on our watch, he said, "yet it must be and it will be waged on our watch." This task is transcendently ordained: "History has called America and our allies to action, and it is both our responsibility and our privilege to fight freedom's fight." All of this will require an enormous amount of money, more than anything spent on defense even at the height of the Cold War, but "while the price of freedom and security is high, it is never too high. Whatever it costs to defend our country, we will pay."

The President invited Americans to commit two years of their life to the new USA Freedom Corps: "America will continue to depend on the eyes and ears of alert citizens . . . We want to be a Nation that serves goals larger than self." The final goal is "a just and peaceful world beyond the war on terror," and America will "lead by defending liberty and justice because they are right and true and unchanging for all people everywhere." She will "always stand firm for the non-negotiable demands of human dignity . . ." And "real" Islam is an ally in this bold endeavor: "Let the skeptics look to Islam's own rich history—with its centuries of learning, and tolerance, and progress."



All of this, according to President Bush, is to be based on a deeper understanding of the world and our purpose in it: "We've come to know truths that we will never question: Evil is real, and it must be opposed . . . Rarely has the world faced a choice more clear or consequential."

What does all this mean?

Afghanistan has been saved from starvation and brutal oppression, and its women are free. That is wonderful, except that none of this was among the stated objectives of the military operation: to punish and neutralize those responsible for September 11. The embarrassing failure to capture or track Osama bin Laden (who was not mentioned once in the President's speech), his key aides, and their leading Taliban allies is now covered up by the allegedly splendid results of America's new role as the harbinger of progress and empowerer of the underprivileged around the world.

By throwing at his audience vastly different figures about the number of terrorists still at large, the President has created the impression that the actual numbers no longer matter. Precision is essential if you are planning a limited response calibrated to the magnitude of the threat, of course, but the numbers can become blurred if you are planning an unlimited and open-ended global campaign. Judging by President Bush's treatment of those numbers—which he magnified tenfold from one sentence to another—this is no longer a focused operation against a clearly defined threat. In practical terms, this means that the intelligence community now has a bureaucratic incentive to keep its estimates on the wild side. Once all measurable parameters give way to nebulae, and "terrorism" joins "poverty," "racism," "injustice," etc., in the repertoire of ills that will nev-