

zato"; in Naples, "*pancettone*," and in Palermo, "*panza*." The part called "*reale*" is known as "*polso*" in Florence, "*matama*" in Genova, and "*fracosta*" in Rome; in Naples, it is called "*locena*," and in Palermo, it is "*spineddu*."

A recent survey conducted by the government census agency Istat, entitled "*I cittadini e il tempo libero*," has shown that 92.3 percent of all Italians are able to speak both the standard language and their local dialect. A mere 44.1 percent speak standard Italian at home, though 72 percent use it when speaking to strangers, "a vast improvement on the 1950's when only 33 percent did." Women are more reluctant than men to speak in dialect, either at home or in the presence of strangers. Nonetheless, a clear majority of the population, 52 percent, are capable of "fully expressing themselves" by means of "local language" alone.

Viewed topographically, the picture is pellucidly clear. Exclusive or predominant use of standard Italian is typical of the central provinces, with 63.2 percent, and those of the northwest, with 59.4, while in the south three out of four inhabitants "eschew the language of Dante" whenever they can help it. Florence and Tuscany score the highest, 83 percent, while Venice and the Veneto region—encouraging for one who has just signed a long lease on a palazzo at Ca' Rezzonico—rain acerbic disdain on all comers with the mainland low of 42.6 percent, lower even than the Alto Adige and Friuli. But then there's Ricotta, who can only count in Italian up to 100,000 lire for freshly made linguine with rock lobster.

So, in the cynical idiom of the duke of Mantua, *this one or that one*? Shall I stick it out, in the long term, with the well-educated, cool, and headstrong Venezia, or shall I view her as a mere holiday escapade, a shipboard romance, an afternoon in a swing in the sprawling garden of a Palladian villa in the Brenta? For I confess to have a great fear of being cuckolded by her long ere we marry—why else did the doges wed the sea every summer?—and it may be wisest to regard her with the same caution that her own fishermen reserve for her deceptively placid lagoon. Or shall I stake my all on a life with sultry Sicilia, hanging out in open-air cafés with her fathers, brothers, and sons, drinking coffee the color of her gently rounded eyes, and shouting "*Cuimmutu!*" whenever one of the men tells a won-

drous tale of his exploits in some sunken Atlantis?

Perhaps I should try two-timing the both of them. Or would that be too—I don't quite know how to put it—too Venetian, somehow?

Andrei Navrozov is *Chronicles'* European correspondent.

Letter From Texas

by Wayne Allensworth

All the Time in the World



The hawk, golden wings rustling in a stiff, cold breeze, floats above the prairie, eyeing its prey. A tiny movement in the sea of grass probably stirred the majestic beast from the powerline that served as a makeshift perch: The hawk takes to the air with a speed that defies my poor eyesight's ability to follow it through the sky.

It seems to halt in midair, its wings now spread wide, catching the currents of the invisible force that stirs the brush and ripples the waters of the nearby creek, the sky framing the scene in a background of china blue and wispy clouds, floating like ghosts in a sea of eternity.

Three longhorns stand by a fence near the powerline. The red one, his face marked with a narrow ribbon of white that looks like a desperate West Texas stream in summer, pokes his snout through the wire, turning as if to follow the course of the mighty bird of prey, as symbolic of this land in its own way as the rangy, ornery longhorns themselves.

The longhorn's glance seems like an act of acknowledgement from one king to another, though the hoofed monarch lost his plains kingdom long ago, becoming a logo for sports teams and "Cow Town" itself, instead.

Maybe he is saying goodbye.

The golden missile darts for the target and disappears from view, then is back again, heading for the powerline loft with something in its talons I can't make out.

I'm watching from the rear-view mirror, you see, and the kids are hollering at me to hurry up—we're late for Girl Scouts, or choir, or something. I can't remember what.

But the hawk takes his time. And

those longhorns have all the time in the world.

Or do they? Do we?

Up ahead, the earthmovers aren't taking their time in demolishing yet another stretch of prairie, making room for Heaven-knows-what. And Heaven, existing outside our manic world of timecards and schedules and second hands and deadlines, *does* know what. I decide it's better that we don't, sigh, and speed up again.

This is no world for coasting, not even here. The roads and powerlines and radios and cell phones take care of that. They won't leave us alone.

And the schedule says that patch of ground—ugly, I guess, in the eyes of the absentee planners who bracket our lives in neat segments of manmade time—has to go, making way for a housing development (something like "Whispering Oaks," maybe) or a strip mall, one indistinguishable from thousands of others. For the planners are now making war on geography itself, rendering the habitat of the homegrown Texan as endangered as that of the hawk, unaware that his days are numbered here.

Central Standard Time, Greenwich Mean Time, Break Time!, Quality Time—whatever you call it, it amounts to No Time Left for You. And no place, either.

I'm driving too slowly again, seemingly creeping along. Though I'm a person who doesn't like to be late—I've always seen that as a breach of good manners—I just let it go. Then somebody hollers something like *Hurry up! Did you know that the so-and-so's set their clocks ahead 30 minutes so that they won't be late for anything?*

Heaven help them.

So I speed up a little and remember a friend who, having heard my mother had been ill, took some time to call me on Christmas Day. Oh, I've got time, he says, for my daughter and my wife now. Been laid off. I say we'll pray for him, and he comes back with "Thanks, but don't you all worry about me, now, I'll sign up for those classes I was meaning to take and get something better. Nothing but time, old friend." I hung up, aching a little inside, since I hadn't thought to call that old friend in 20 years.

But time flies.

Everybody seems calmed down now, as if they can read my mind, but I know I'm not a hard one to figure.

When we get where we are going, I open the door and hug my daughter.

Not to worry, little one, we have all the time in the world.

Wayne Allensworth recently moved back to his native Texas and hates to be in a hurry, ever.

Letter From Southern Asia

by Raju G.C. Thomas

Afghanistan, Kashmir, and South Asian Security



A poem written by Sir Alfred Lyall in the mid-19th century and quoted by King Abdur Rahman Khan in his 1900 biography, *The Life of Abdur Rahman Khan, Amir of Afghanistan*, reads:

The Afghan is but grist in the mill,
And the waters are moving it fast,
Let the stone be upper or nether,
It grinds him to powder at last.
And the lord of the English writes:
Order and justice, and govern with
laws;
And the Russian he sneers and says:
Patience and velvet to cover your
claws;
But the kingdoms of Islam are
crumbling,
And round me a voice ever rings
Of death, and the doom of my
country.
Shall I be the last of its kings?

If the word “American” is substituted for the word “English” in the fifth line, this poem would be relevant still, especially following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on December 24, 1979. The 19th-century “great game,” however, has taken on a new twist since September 11, 2001. The struggle over Afghanistan now has regional and global ramifications—the prospect of an Indo-Pakistani nuclear war and further acts of terrorism by Muslim extremists, bringing the war into the heartland of the United States and the West.

On October 12, 2001 Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage told reporters again that Kashmir “is the most dangerous place in the world” and that

“the main purpose of [Secretary of State Colin] Powell’s trip would be to ensure that tensions between the two countries do not escalate.”

With the elimination of the Taliban regime and the Al Qaeda (“base”) of its “special guest,” Osama bin Laden, the Bush administration plans to establish stability in the region. This includes setting up a multiethnic interim Afghan regime under the symbolic leadership of the octogenarian king, Zahir Shah, and the resolution of the Kashmir issue so as to diffuse the prospect of a nuclear war between India and Pakistan.

In the long term, it is unlikely that the Northern Alliance (made up of minority Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras) and the various tribal and religious factions of the majority Pashtuns will cooperate under American occupation. Large-scale U.S. aid may only increase the struggle among the parties for the spoils. A new danger may arise if disgruntled Pashtuns revive the pre-1980 “Pashtunistan” movement that sought to unite Pashtuns on either side of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

The problem with Kashmir is that there is no room for compromise on either side. Pakistan will not give up her claim to the valley. India may relinquish her claim to Azad Kashmir, but she will not give up the valley or any other part that she holds. Any concession here, the Indian government believes, would be the first step toward the unraveling of India, as it was in the former Yugoslavia. There will be no change in these positions, no matter which government is in power in Islamabad or New Delhi.

From the Indian standpoint, to accept American mediation would be to acknowledge that there is something to mediate, and that would be the prized Valley of Kashmir. To India, mediation would be the first step toward losing the Valley and, perhaps, more. India is a country of seven major religions and about 35 (18 official) major languages. If India loses Kashmir, the entire turbulent northeast sector of India could go the same way, and then possibly Sikh-majority Punjab and parts of the prosperous Dravidian south, although much of the rest of India is now deeply integrated, thanks mainly to the Bollywood film industry and the economic integration of the country.

The basis for the settlement of the Sino-Indian border dispute was the territorial *status quo* with marginal adjustments, whatever the legitimacy of the In-

dian claim to Aksai Chin in the northwest and the Chinese claim to Arunachal Pradesh in the northeast. Both India and China have accepted these realities and have incorporated them in the 1994 Border Peace and Tranquility Agreement. Today, the Sino-Indian Himalayan border dispute is resolved *de facto*.

A solution to Kashmir must be drawn along similar lines. Beyond the risk of India unraveling like Yugoslavia in a bloodbath (when Slovenia and Croatia were hastily and recklessly recognized) or the probability of Indonesia unraveling after East Timor was dislodged through diplomatic intervention, the future of 144 million Muslims in India depends on maintaining the territorial *status quo* in Kashmir. If four million Kashmiri Muslims cannot live in Hindu-majority India, by logical extension, neither can 144 million Muslims in the rest of India. The leaders of the Indian Muslims in the Hindu-majority areas of British India were mainly responsible for the creation of Pakistan, not the Muslims of the Muslim-majority areas that became West and East Pakistan.

The four million Kashmiri Valley Muslims, out of a total Indian population of one billion, could easily have been swamped through Punjabi Hindu and Sikh settlements. The Indian government has continued to prevent this for more than 50 years through a special constitutional provision. Indeed, in Azad Kashmir, the Kashmiri identity does not exist because of Punjabi Muslim settlements and intermarriages with local Kashmiris.

The answer to South Asia’s problems is the same as that being enforced in Israel, a state that was not recognized by the vast majority of the states of the world until after the 1991 Gulf War. The Palestinians led by Yasser Arafat have learned to recognize that reality. Similarly, Kashmir is a part of India, Tibet is a part of China, and the Pashtun province of the Northwest Frontier Province is a part of Pakistan. Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and China must face these realities and agree to maintain the territorial *status quo* and internal sovereignty of one another’s states, whatever the legitimacy of one another’s territorial claims. Only marginal adjustments may be allowed.

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