

argued with him, but to understand my point of view, it may help to know about two experiences—among many—that I'd had, echoes of another war.

Around the time of my visit to Barcelona, I was flirting with a job in Dallas. The woman who was recruiting me asked, more than once, whether I was really willing to move to, well, *Texas*. I told her the prospect didn't bother me, so she asked if my wife would mind. Finally, she asked me why I would want to leave Maryland—not in the sense of changing jobs, but as if I were living in Paradise and had decided to move to Hell. I thought Dallas sounded good. It sounded like home.

I told her she didn't need to apologize for Texas. I was from there, I said. I could have added that my mother's people had been in East Texas and Louisiana for 200 years—they even fought in That War—but something told me not to.

Through the local gossip kid, one of our daughter's friends, the whole neighborhood found out that we might move. When the ladies in the neighborhood ran into my wife, they told her not to go. She wouldn't like the South, they said; it wasn't like Maryland. "It's almost a different country," one of the women said.

Almost?

A few months before I went to Barcelona, I listened as the fervent feminist at work told us in a faculty meeting that she was going to accept a job in Texas. She lamented the fact that she would have to live there but said the opportunity was too good to pass up. Her announcement turned into a free-for-all, with jokes about the backward nature of the entire state. A native Texan joined in the fun, attacking Baptists, people with rifle racks in the windows of their pickups, and other undesirables. In short, he spit on his own people. Our chief, a native of North Carolina with a thick mountain accent, smiled and laughed along with the rest.

When Dr. A— told me that the lesson of Barcelona's history was to avoid war, I told him there were things worse than war. I didn't say what those things were, because he knew what I meant: to have your songs and your mother tongue taken from you; to raise your children as if they were foreigners; to lose your literature—in short, to lose your identity.

In Spain, it's not polite or even acceptable to ridicule a regional language or culture. But in the country where I live, people from other regions feel free to call Southerners unintelligent, uneducated,

fanatically religious, filled with hate, and violent. In polite company, people laugh and agree. In my circles, to suggest that the South might have had a point about state autonomy within a federal system, a valid concern over tariffs, reasons to object to Yankee culture, or any reason to go to war other than racism is to invite those around you—including many Southerners—to say you are pro-slavery and a hater.

You see, we're like the Catalans. We lost our war.

Brian Kirkpatrick writes from Augusta, Georgia.

Letter From Russia

by Andrei Navrozov

Return to Manor Farm



The protagonist of a novel I'm now writing speaks in the voice of George Orwell, except that he uses the manly, tobacco-and-gin accents of reason, detachment, and persuasion to discuss love, rather than politics. The novel is called *Earthly Love*, and it will be the ninth book I've written, which is a painful thing to recount as only five of them have seen the light of day.

When, in 1993, a work of autobiography I had written under the title *The Gingerbread Race: A Life in the Closing World Once Called Free* was published in England, to some enthusiastic notices from a press then still residually highbrow and still sensible to the heritage of the Cold War, it would have pleased me to no end to hear that its thesis was an echo of the closing pages of Orwell's *Animal Farm*. But although the critics said many flattering things, some of them interesting, none was to draw this particular parallel.

As for myself, of course, I had read both *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* while still a teenager in Russia. Once in the West, I went on to devour Orwell's essays and other writings, without, however, rereading the two masterworks, of which by then I remembered only the basic outlines of the plot, with the result that, in 1993, I did not make the connection between the thesis of *The Gingerbread Race* and that particular prophecy of Orwell's any more than did any of my readers.

I admire Orwell for the same reason I admire John Stuart Mill, which is the pleasure these writers give by involving the reader in the process of thinking. A woman I was once in love with asked me why I affected a stutter. I answered that, in the milieu to which I had been born, stuttering was *comme il faut*, like knowing which fork to use or how to uncork a bottle of champagne; only an intellectual parvenu would have his speeches prepared beforehand, rattling off apophthegms as though the audience had paid an entrance fee to see a conjuring act on stage; while stammering out one's thoughts made for an infinitely more refined performance, giving the audience the sense that they were every trick's intellectual progenitors, or at least coauthors. In contrast to such thinkers, Socrates, for instance, always seems to know in advance what he is going to say in the *Dialogues*, though he is clever enough and polite enough to try to conceal this.

The thesis of my book was that, in their evolutionary development, the Soviet and the American social systems were bound to merge into a single suprapolitical organism, arriving at the same ideology-free terminus at roughly the same moment by very different paths, historically thorny and almost equally circuitous. The Soviet system got there, in the half-century since 1953, by way of an alternative political culture fostered by an immensely powerful and, since Stalin's death, all but autarchic, secret-police apparatus. This culture first circumvented, then subverted, and eventually suffocated and displaced the dominant political institutions, those of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, together with their official ideology, namely communism. The final, open phase of displacement began with Gorbachev and was given the name *perestroika*, or social restructuring.

The American system took longer to mature, but, as in Russia, the main event was the burgeoning of unelected decision-making elites that eventually resulted in the emergence of a single cohesive oligarchy. As in Russia, the objective of the new culture was a social *modus vivendi* whereby the people would be pacified by the practices of participatory democracy and reassured by the public functioning of its mechanisms, while the power and the policy would remain in the hands of a small, and to a large extent hereditary, political junta.

Unlike the Russian version, however, despite the fact that it had taken more than twice as long to mature, in the Unit-

ed States the new culture never became fully coherent. Since their Tammany Hall days, American elites have been flying by the seat of their pants, as witness the simple yet significant fact that one can hardly name a single nattering nabob of negativism who can do the nattering in a language other than American English. By contrast, Arab friends who have heard the secret-police oligarch Evgeny Primakov address an audience in Arabic insist that he speaks it like a native of Syria.

Coming back to Orwell, what is remarkable about his posthumous fate is the measure of fame this subtle writer has achieved. The public debate of the last decades of the Cold War, which may be said to have ended in 1984 with the publication in Russia of a Russian translation of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, had been animated by the spectral presence of Orwell, and few political commentators, right or left, had not tried to relate their versions of events to one or another of his ideas. And then, suddenly, just as the visionary's central prophecy had begun to come true, he was put away in the back of the wardrobe like an old suit of clothes that had outlived the fashion.

Yet turn to the last couple of pages of Orwell's fable, as I recently did. All I'd remembered was that the animals (that is, the Bolsheviks) of Manor Farm (meaning Russia), as it was called before they changed its name to Animal Farm (Soviet Union), were collectively a satire on the history of Russia since 1917, with the pigs eventually emerging as the Stalinist elite, which, in 1944, when *Animal Farm* was completed, was of course the only elite that mattered. Stalin saw to this by regular pruning of the secret-police apparatus, a prudent practice that his heirs

were unable to maintain.

But I had completely forgotten about Mr. Pilkington of Foxwood. My God, he is every inch the American Everyoligarch, from Averell Harriman to the present day. He is George Bush incarnate. Upon his return to Animal Farm, he notes "a discipline and an orderliness which should be an example to all farmers everywhere." He puts forward the view that "between pigs and human beings there was not, and there need not be, any clash of interests whatever." And here he is in his cowboy hat, in a moment of off-the-record bonhomie, sipping a beer and slapping Gorbachev on the back: "If you have your lower animals to contend with," he said, "we have our lower classes!"

The pigs respond in kind by putting in train a process of social restructuring. Nobody now believes, says their leader, that "old suspicions" still linger, but "certain changes had been made recently in the routine of the farm which should have the effect of promoting confidence still further." Thus, the "foolish custom of addressing one another as 'Comrade'" is dropped, as are the revolutionary symbols, equivalent to the Soviet hammer and sickle, on the farm's flag. Finally, "henceforward the farm was to be known as the 'Manor Farm,'" which was "its correct and original name." And then the chill of the final paragraph:

[A]nd they were all alike. No question, now, what had happened to the faces of the pigs. The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which.

On this brief visit to Manor Farm, as it is now known, I have not once used the word most associated with Orwell — namely, *totalitarianism*. But even a cursory rereading of *Animal Farm* leaves no doubt in the reader's mind that, by this word, Orwell designated a complex political reality more viable, more capable of evolution, more adept at mimicry — and, in the final analysis, more assured of survival — than the West, with its comic-book bugaboos of wicked communist and red commissar, rubber truncheon and prison bunk, was ever able to accept during the period known as the Cold War, to say nothing of the euphoric years of Pax Reagana that followed. Once again, it all comes down to the historic failure of America's governing classes to develop a

culture, at any rate a culture capable of interpreting Orwell.

Andrei Navrozov is *Chronicles'* European correspondent.

Letter From Geneva

by Curtis Cate

How Cosmopolitan Can One Become?



A friend of mine who worked for more than 30 years for the ILO (International Labor Organization) in Geneva was standing in a post-office queue one day when he noticed that the man just in front of him was in a curiously agitated state. "*Mais c'est impossible, intolérable!*" he kept muttering. He turned out to be a vintner who had been trying surreptitiously to extend his acreage of vineyards on the western, sun-absorbing slopes of the nearby Jura mountains by buying up new plots of land. "Those *Boches*," he exploded. "Those *Boches* will stop at nothing! You know what they did? They hired a helicopter and had it fly over my lands and take photos! Without permission or a word of warning! Ah, *ces Boches* — they are capable of anything!"

When my astonished friend asked him why on earth Germans from somewhere to the north would be indulging in aerial espionage, the vintner explained that, by "*Boches*," he did not mean Germans but "*les gens de Berne*" — snooping inspectors from the German-speaking capital of the Swiss Confederation.

It is virtually a truism to say that any inhabitant of this extraordinary land-locked confederation is first and foremost a member of his canton (of which there are 26, each with its own police and law courts) and only secondly Swiss. He (or she) is primarily a Basler from the pharmaceutical-industrial nexus of Basel; a Zürcher from the busy banking hub of Zürich; a Luzerner from the lovely lake-fronting jewel of Lucerne — on one of whose beautifully wooded, "four-canton" (*Vierwaldstätter*) shores was sealed the momentous anti-Habsburg pact of 1291; a Luganer or, more exactly, a Luganese from sun-blessed Lugano, in the Italian-speaking Ticino; or a Genevois from the world's watch-making capital of Geneva.



Elizabeth Wolf