

that to question the issue in public would quite simply be immoral. Richard Gwyn, formerly the distinguished Ottawa correspondent of the *Toronto Star*, and a supporter of the policy, has admitted this frankly in his biography of Trudeau:

“Bilingualism, in truth, was nothing less than a social revolution. Like the introduction of the welfare state, like the counter-cultural revolution of the 1960s, it was a development that effected fundamental change in the character of the country. But in contrast to those transformational phenomena, no one in authority in Ottawa in the late 1960s and early 1970s let on that massive change was about to happen.”¹⁰

Similarly, the Progressive Conservatives have been deterred from the obvious electoral strategy of uniting their natural Anglophone supporters while writing off the Francophones—a clear route to victory, since the Anglophones constitute 75% of the population. Instead, they have persisted in playing down Anglophone concerns in an attempt to break into the Francophone stronghold of Quebec. Brian Mulroney has explicitly shied away from radical reform on the Reagan or Thatcher models because of the belief that Canada is somehow “different”.

8. CANADIAN POLITICS is deceptively volatile. The present political order is not particularly secure. Although for long influential in Canada, the Liberal ideology only finally established its hegemony in the 1960s. The full effects of Trudeau’s transformation of Canada’s institutions have not yet been felt, and may well prove to be merely a transitional phase.

The most obvious symptom of volatility, of course, has been rumblings and grumblings along regional fault-lines, not merely in Quebec but in Western Canada. Political scientists have also found it significant that—exceptionally

among countries with a similar electoral system—Canada has never evolved an unequivocal two-party system at the federal level. Instead, there have been repeated third- (and even fourth-) party insurrections. Further evidence of ferment shows in the sudden triumph of bilateral free trade with the US. Despite its inherent logic, free trade was so contrary to the conventional wisdom as late as 1983 that in the Tory leadership race of that year Brian Mulroney denounced the very idea, and fiercely attacked a rival who dared to raise the matter.

Quebec has always been the obvious flashpoint of Canadian politics, but in future the West may be a candidate. The reason is demographic. In 1901, the four Western provinces constituted only about 10% of Canada’s population; in the East, Ontario had 40%, Quebec 30%, and the Maritimes 20%. But by 1981, the West had risen to claim 27% of the population, for the first time exceeding Quebec, which was left with 26%. Ontario had just under 37%, and the Maritimes passed into insignificance, with only 10%.

Canadian politics, then, is becoming a three-actor system. Previously, Ontario and Quebec between them could dominate Canada. Increasingly, it will be possible for either to break away and govern Canada in alliance with the West. Indeed, this new system was already visible in the 1988 election. Ontario, as represented by its provincial government and by much of the Toronto media élite, opposed free trade. But the Quebec élite—once again showing its independence—and the West did not. This proved decisive. At some point in the future, the booming West may be able to force through fundamental institutional change.

The story of Canada contains a number of themes common in the latter half of the 20th century. There is the intractability of nationalism, as evidenced in Quebec’s steady rise to sovereign status. There is the rise of “the New Class” as a powerful interest group, with its apparent ability to create facts (such as an official Canada that is more or less bilingual), and the ultimate failure of this sort of social engineering to overcome intractable reality.

Finally, there is that peculiar malaise which has overcome other parts of the English-speaking world: the conviction that the only legitimate expression of its identity lies in subordinating itself to others. . . .

¹⁰ Richard Gwyn, *The Northern Magus: Pierre Trudeau and the Canadians* (1981).

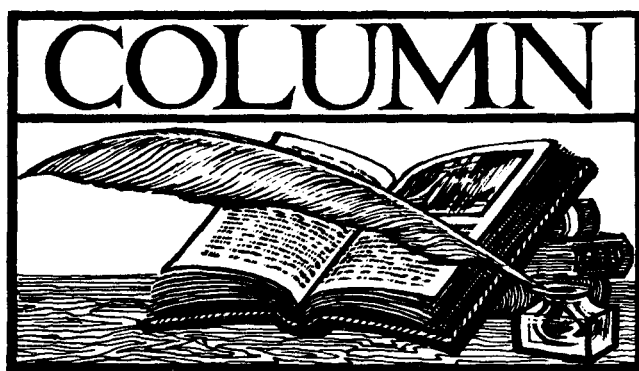
A Pastoral Escapist’s Valediction

But it would be very damp, you said:
Yes it would, on an excessively green
Slope of Devon clay, with the thatch
Rain-black, the low-browed sun-denying
Windows and that crooked orchard
Closing in.

What did we really fear—
That settled here we would live out
A hollow pastoral, unable to keep
Erect among its bent labouring ghosts?

Too sentimental: all that mattered was,
It was just our turn, for a brief stay,
To walk consciously where they plodded
On the rural roundabout, apt to break back
Or heart if you try to wrest from it
More than it can give: a daffodil slope
Hurts the heart with desiring too much
Merely of things that grow in the soil:
The blue-flashing machine is at the gate—
It was never, you knew, a complete retreat.

Michael Thorpe



PARACHUTING, for all but experts, is a scary business. It has two bad moments and one good. The worst is stepping into space and a brief, wild, panicky free fall. The good moment is the jerk on the harness, followed by amazing peace, floating down in near-silence. But that doesn't last. As you try to steer, heaving away from hazards like trees, water, or power-lines, the ground comes up with a rush. You weren't floating: you were being hurled towards it. Landing is hard and sudden, the second bad moment, especially if there's much wind. A roll and a scramble, dragged along by the canopy until you master it, fighting with silk ectoplasm that has a life of its own.

Europe and the Alliance have been in free fall lately. For what now seems a past age, we droned along in a mental fuselage: deterrence, détente, Western Europe uniting, Atlantic partnership, Star Wars, East-West negotiations—there might be turbulence, but we knew our familiar surroundings, the walls, ribs, and rivets of the plane. Even the Berlin Wall, a Russian once told me, was a factor for peace. "It gives us stability", he claimed. And a senior German diplomat used a wall metaphor to describe NATO. "We need", he said, "a wall behind us that has no crack in it." He was not alluding to George Orwell's biographer. He meant "crack".

Then, abruptly, those solid certainties slid open. Beneath our feet was a void of rushing wind and night air. At our side, the dispatcher was waiting to clap us on the shoulder. In a gasping moment, heels together, arms close, head erect, we dropped.

As I write, we're still falling, tossing and tumbling, all landmarks lost. It's happening so fast that plans and predictions look silly as soon as they're made. But there may just be a case for trying to map the terrain below us, with a few scenarios of where we might land.

1. The end of the Alliance?

This has been mooted by some observers, and may lie at the back of Mikhail Gorbachov's mind. The Alliance was formed, they point out, to meet a specific danger at a specific time, after the coup in Czechoslovakia and the blockade of Berlin. If the fear of a Soviet attack in Europe is no longer felt or justified, what becomes of NATO's preparedness? All those manoeuvres in Germany—where now is the Redland they were practising against?

Five points seem worth making here. The most obvious is that nobody knows whether Mr Gorbachov might not be

ousted by some grim-faced, grey-hearted member of the old guard. That alone will certainly dictate caution. Secondly, for reasons of geography that even Wegener's "continental drift" seems unlikely to remedy, Europeans will never see East and West as symmetrical. The USA is 3,000 miles away; the USSR is close. Modern technology, it's true, can reduce distances: but it still takes time to move troops. If the Alliance ended, or the USA withdrew all Americans in uniform from Europe, however peaceful relations might be with the USSR, Europeans would feel dangerously exposed. Nor is asymmetry merely geographical. For the present, at least, the respective defence systems mismatch each other: the West relies far more heavily on missile systems, whereas the East is better supplied with conventional hardware and manpower.

Thirdly, while the old perceived threat of Soviet aggression may have faded, it would be rash to assume that all danger of armed conflict in Europe has disappeared. Not all wars are superpower wars; and in some circumstances, as in 1914, small wars can become big. Nor, fourthly, is Europe the only or the most likely scene of potential violence. It remains conceivable that developments elsewhere—in the Middle East, and perhaps in the Far East—could threaten Western interests to such a degree as to need a collective Western *démarche*, if not collective intervention. It might even come about that some form of dangerous adventurism—perhaps on the part of China, perhaps by Libya, perhaps from militant fundamentalist Islam, perhaps even within Europe—could call for a collective stand by *both* the West *and* the Soviet Union. In that, Americans and Europeans would undoubtedly feel more comfortable if still united in the Alliance.

Finally, crystal-gazing even more rashly, let us suppose that in some future world, better organised to keep pace with technology and global dangers, there might be created the "world police force" or peace-keeping unit that naive idealists prattled of during and shortly after World War II. In that case, too, it would surely be wasteful to dissolve an existing alliance of 16 nations, which could be used as a building-block for a world-wide "peace corps" whose role would not always be military.

2. Slowing down the European Community?

Hardened Community-watchers may smile at that phrase. Slow it down still further, they might argue, and the European Community would go into reverse. That, in fact, has always been the contention of ardent "Europeans", who see it as a bicycle which would fall over if it stopped.

Some degree of deceleration does seem inevitable, whether we like it or not. The "1992" operation—"Europe without Frontiers" by the end of that year—has lost some of its glamour now that Europe's most notorious frontier, the Berlin Wall, is being physically demolished. Freer trade in consumer durables looks pretty tame compared with freedom for people so long oppressed.

Technically, too, the old timetable looks like last year's edition. A brisk dash to 1992, quicker moves to economic and monetary union, revision of the EC Treaties to bring more efficiency and democracy: that was the plan. Till then,