

between the U.S. and the developing countries, confrontations to which we have become accustomed though not injured, will be transformed, and the nations of the world will form new alignments. The U.N. will be the better for it, the Third World countries will be the better for it, and so will the United States. No panaceas; there will still be sufficient problems to occupy us, but the discussion of the international economic order will have been placed on a more realistic and productive level.

JF

EXCURSUS III

Thinking Canada

It has been a troubled summer along this little stretch of the Ottawa River's five hundred-mile journey to the St. Lawrence. Sandbars seem to be popping up in the middle of what are supposed to be boating channels, the water intake pipes for summer cottages need constant adjustment, and the fishing has been plain lousy. And all because the people thirty miles upriver at the Des Joachims dam (pronounced, for some reason, "Diswishaw") have forced the water level to an unprecedented low. Next to boats, beer, and the weather it's the chief topic of conversation in this part of the Ottawa Valley a hundred miles north of the nation's capital, so to speak. Were he or she not better informed by the natives, the visitor would find the place near idyllic. The local newspaper says the low water is a scandal, and people say the "guvurmet" should do something but that they don't expect much help from that quarter. So it seems the burden of living in paradise will continue to be relieved by the presence of at least one small thorn.

If you are foolish enough to let the newspaper from Ottawa invade your vacation idyll you discover Canadians are disturbed by much more than low water levels. In the Canadian version of world affairs lead stories have to do with the "beef war" with the U.S., with U.S. indecision about accepting a South Vietnamese former general who failed the morality test for Canadian residence, with the notorious Senator Vance Hartke (how he might wish Americans knew his name as well) and his suggestion that the U.S.-Canada auto pact be renegotiated, with the heroic Senator William Proxmire, who, in revealing Lockheed kickbacks to Air Canada, has given Canadians new hope for a Watergate of their own (every real nation should have one), and with whether or not the energy minister really got one up on President Ford when

they dedicated that dam together in Libby, Montana. That most people in the United States never heard of these momentous events only increases nationalist resentment of the colossus to the south. As is often the case in dealing with giants you basically, if ambivalently, admire, Canadians alternately feel neglected and exploited by the U.S. and are not sure which angers them more.

In any case, "Canadian news" is essentially protest news, the chief protest being that Canada is a country in its own right and not merely an appendage of the U.S. The dirty secret and motor force of Canadian nationalism is that it is a somewhat desperate search for arguments against the "commonsensical" proposition that Canada should reorganize itself as several states of the Union. Protest news, by being almost entirely reactive or comparative to the U.S., simply reinforces the impression it would dissipate.

The government of Pierre Trudeau is very big on promoting Canadiana in realms cultural and otherwise. The word is that anyone who can chord a guitar or has gotten beyond oil painting by numbers can readily get a grant from the arts council, but that may be an exaggeration. One local artist complains his application for a stipend was turned down, but then he is still having trouble with his chording, and his folk version of "O, Canada" sounds more like a bad imitation of Paul Simon under the 59th Street Bridge than it does authentically Canadian, whatever that may mean. "Whatever Canadian may mean" is, of course, the chief intellectual industry up here, and for years has occasioned innumerable, frequently unmentionable, articles in Canada's magazine or two. Of late there has developed an intellectual subindustry of criticizing the preoccupation with Canada's identity problems. "Let's stop talking about who we think we are and just get on with the business of being Canadians"—whatever that may mean.

Canada is an amorphous idea in search of a nation. As one born and raised here (although for the last twenty years or so making an uncertain way in "the States") I have never escaped its fascination. "Thinking Canada" is for Canadians what those "Think Snow" bumper stickers are for people in the Vermont ski hills. Think hard enough and something may happen. This winsome superstition, once an innocent indulgence, is now bankrolled by government money and advanced by government fiat. Canada is now demonstrating a penchant for coercing by law what cannot be created by social dynamics. In the communications media there is a mandated quota of "authentically Canadian" material. (A touching example is a recent TV show that, out of a zillion Hollywood movies, celebrated the first musical score written by a Canadian-born musician. It is a degree of distinction more likely to embarrass than to fill young

hearts with pride for their country. "Canadian-born," incidentally, is the euphemism for talent that went to the States at the first opportunity.) Lest Canadian culture be excessively strained by competition in the pursuit of excellence, cultural imports from the U.S. are placed under increasing restrictions. Nor are Canadians sure they can hold their own in competition with the second-rate or even with the junky. Thus it is proposed that *Time* and *Newsweek* be excluded from Canadian magazine racks, and some want to go so far as to black out American TV, which is the main entertainment fare for the 80 per cent of the Canadian population that lives in the strip from Montreal to Windsor, Ontario. But government will likely be cautious in violating the good sense of the people in preferring even "The Waltons" to documentary reruns all generically entitled *The Undiscovered Wonders of Canada*.

To be sure, there is a positive side to all this. There was *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, a movie seen by a few Canadians after receiving the warm approval of New York critics. And Rudolf Nureyev is permanently employed in Toronto, although he might not be there very often. And the imitation Coldstream Guards do a very credible (inevitably described as colorful) changing of the guards at the Parliament buildings. (Of course that's only for the tourists from June through August, mainly "Amurkin" tourists, or, less kindly, the "Richamurkins.") And then there are always the Mounties, who this year had the poor taste to form a union in order to get a higher price for getting their man. (Around the chief tourist attractions they still wear their red blazers and sometimes ride horses, while elsewhere they dress like Hungarian border guards and serve as Canada's national police force.) Finally, under the late Lester Pearson Canada did drop the British navy banner and got its own flag. It is probably unfair to blame Mr. Pearson for the fact that visitors regularly mistake it for the pendant of a gas station or supermarket chain ("Funny, it doesn't look like a flag.") or that the red maple leaf turns a pallid orange upon brief exposure to the sun. It is generally admitted that the new flag has been something of a disappointment in generating national pride.

So far I haven't even mentioned Quebec, and as every radical on New York's West Side knows that's where the action's at in Canada. Much to the chagrin of terrorists everywhere, the Québécois have traded in their revolution for affirmative action. A notorious "Bill 22," passed by the Quebec legislature in the name of cultural authenticity and so far unchallenged by Ottawa, is marvelously free of inhibitions about democratic notions of freedom. At least in theory, little of life is not prescribed by quota in order to "preserve the distinctive heritage of the French-speaking people of North America."

For example, children whose mother tongue is French are forbidden by law from attending English-speaking schools. Even picket signs protesting Bill 22 must be printed in French. And of course all business and political transactions are conducted in French.

The Trudeau government strongly supports the proposition that all Canada is bilingual, even though French-speaking Canada is clustered in Quebec. Thus federal civil servants from secretaries to department heads spend long hours learning something like French—although, it is charged, there have been no instances of French-speaking civil servants being forced to learn something even remotely like English. It is a kind of linguistic version of Jim Foreman's "reparations" proposal of some years back for rectifying U.S. racial injustices. Again, in theory, a mailman in Saskatchewan must do penance by learning French, and just in case some Frenchman turns up on his route ten years from now.

In fact the government has been a good deal more sensible in practice than is the law in theory. But the federal government, and certainly the Quebec government, cannot afford politically to admit they have no intention of implementing what they have mandated. Privately it is suggested that biculturalism is a necessary hypocrisy for defusing all that troublesome talk about separatism and revolution. Were the law to be implemented seriously from above, it might provoke reactions enough to make politicians yearn for the good old days of separatist terrorism. The reaction would come not only from the British-Canadian millions, but also from the millions of European immigrants who have formed strong ethnic communities in the last two decades. (Contrary to its sometime image as an unspoiled colony of the British Empire, Canada is—this time more like the United States than the United States itself—a country of immigrants. Recently it has become even more like the U.S.—at least like the U.S. from 1924 until a little while ago—in adopting some rather nasty discriminations against "undesirable" immigrants.)

Nor, apparently, are the people of Quebec all that enthusiastic about political or cultural separatism. The storekeeper in the neighboring village of Chapeau thinks the professors in Montreal and the politicians in Quebec City have something maybe not right with their heads. Surveys suggest that, were a choice forced, a very large part of the population of Quebec would elect to join neighboring Ontario. Not, of course, that they have a greater affection for their English-speaking countrymen, but they know that man does not live by cultural authenticity alone. Nonetheless—as is known by unreconstructed Gaullists and by cocktail party champions of the IRA and Puerto Rican independence, and as is

supinely agreed" to by federal politicians—"Quebec Libre!" or the Quebecization of Canada is where the action's at.

In any event, Canada may yet divide. Then Quebec could join the U.S., thus acquiring a sense of imperialist repression worthy of its capacity for resentment. Or all of Canada might give up its status as the world's richest underdeveloped nation and finally join the Union. That, in the minds of many, would bring political fictions into line with social, economic, and cultural facts. Or, most likely, these lovely people in this most beautiful of lands will continue to continue, "thinking Canada" in the hope that something may come of it yet.

RJN

QUOTE / UNQUOTE

Convergence

...the Christian must now be a Marxist because and only because there is no longer any issue in the world but one, the issue of being for or against the revolution of the capitalist world. For just so long as 'the world' is specifically a capitalist world, Marxism alone can define the *praxis* of the Christian. And this is because for just so long as the world is capitalist there is only one revolutionary *praxis*. That is not a doctrine of Christianity. That is just a fact which capitalism imposes. And furthermore, that is just why the Christian and the Marxist actually agree that the criticism of religion is the first premise of all criticism. For, insofar as the socialist revolution really does represent the next historical step in human emancipation and in the enlargement of the possibilities of love, it also represents the next historical step in the dismantling of the Christian church.

—Denys Turner, "Can a Christian Be a Marxist," *New Blackfriars*, June

O Tempora...

The National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice has cancelled a conference it planned for mid-August explaining that "the great interest in civil rights issues and concerns is just not what it once was even though many of the problems are more pressing than ever." The conference, entitled "The Church and the City—Strategies for Service," was scheduled for August 14-17 at Fordham University. The conference coordinator said that preregistration was "not sufficient for us to move forward with the type of conference advertised and planned," adding that it "seems more reasonable for us to redesign programs to suit the interests of those who registered and to attempt to deliver part of this program to them in their own areas in the future."

—Origins (NC Documentary Service), August 28

Moral Judgment

...right and wrong include the thoughts we think and the actions we take under God's judgment. The practical and proximate take their strength from higher principles enshrined in religion and philosophy. The nation's founders far more than our contemporaries saw themselves as acting under the judgment of history. There were an almost infinite number of rights and wrongs for individuals in their public and private life. By comparison we have tended, in Paul Tillich's words, to see morality as slavish adherence to a narrow moral code. Dean Acheson said of a contemporary: "He believes there is only one kind of immorality, outright thievery." Because the higher truth sets forth goals toward which men and women strive but never fully realize, it understands and forgives moral shortsightedness.

—Kenneth W. Thompson, "Right and Wrong: A Framework for Moral Reasoning," *Christian Century*, August 6-13

Relax! It's Only the Rockies

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—Aspen Airways seat card

A Religious Man

Mr. Fitzsimmons himself denied last week any knowledge of Mr. Hoffa's fate and one friend added his assertion that the Teamsters president, whom he described as "a deeply religious man," was "just incapable" of such a move.

"He'd have a guy, roughed up," the friend said, "but not this."

—John M. Crewdson, *New York Times*, August 14