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Bicycles in Shanghai: PM Chrétien takes to the Streets

By Richard Belliveau



To Rick,
The guy who made it all happen,
with my best wishes, Jean Chrétien

"Rick, The guy who made it all happen, with my best wishes, Jean Chrétien", in possession of the author.

In 1994, back when China liked us, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien led a massive trade delegation to that country, including over 400 business people and journalists, nine provincial premiers and two territorial premiers. Thirty years later, this "Team Canada" initiative is still considered the gold standard of a government-led Canadian trade mission.

The most memorable, and now iconic, media image from the event was a photograph of the Prime Minister pedalling a bicycle down a street in Shanghai. In its afterlife, the picture was featured on the cover of Chrétien's book of memoirs, *My Years as Prime Minister*; it was reproduced in Jim Bartleman's memoirs of his time as the prime minister's chief foreign policy advisor. That photograph has a story of its own.

The organization of the enormous commercial/political cavalcade involved hundreds of officials in Canada and at our diplomatic missions in China (Beijing and Shanghai, with support from Hong Kong), never mind the counterparts in the Chinese government and business communities. In addition to protocol, hospitality and touristy events, big solo Canadian trade fairs were mounted in both Beijing and Shanghai.

To move an official delegation of that size required some logistical innovation. Each of the provincial and territorial leaders would be assigned a minivan for their delegation, which made it easy to keep the political team together, both in Beijing and Shanghai. The prime Minister was provided with a Mercedes limousine and a couple of cars for senior officials. And motorcade buses for journalists and accompanying officials.

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The only provincial leader who declined to join in this huge trade mission was Jacques Parizeau, the Parti Québécois leader of Quebec. Given the *indépendantiste* government's separatist agenda, this was perhaps not a surprising response. As interest in the joint federal-provincial mission grew among the media and the public back home, Parizeau could be counted on to take pot shots at it.

In Shanghai, the entire governmental and political delegation was housed at the newly renovated state guesthouse, a multi-storey art deco apartment building constructed in the old French Concession section of the city. This residence was in the neighbourhood of the grand Le Cercle Sportif built in 1926, and which is now an annex to the modern high-rise Okura Garden Hotel. The former tennis courts of the French bourgeoisie now form a lovely spacious lawn and garden for the hotel in the middle of this teeming city.

Each morning of the stay in Shanghai, the Prime Minister and premiers, the Mayor of Vancouver representing the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and their staff would meet for a briefing on the day's activities. (It was a rather bracing experience for a Consul General like me to be called upon to kick off this session for nearly all of Canada's senior elected government leaders.)

At the second day briefing, the principal news item from Canada was of course the media coverage of the Team Canada trade mission, and the most interesting to these politicians, the story of Québec Premier Parizeau's sniping at the event. He justified his non-participation to the media saying that it would have been undignified for the Prime Minister of Québec to have been chauffeured around China in a minivan while the Prime Minister of Canada was driven in a Mercedes limousine.

PM Chrétien in this closed-door session joked to the premiers that they were lucky to be able to travel around in beautiful Canadian-made vans while he had to ride in some darned foreign-made vehicle.

We then moved on to the first event on the day's schedule which was the unveiling of a totem pole carved by B.C. indigenous sculptors as a gift to mark the twinning of the Port Vancouver and the Port of Shanghai. This ceremony was to take place on the lawn on the Garden Hotel, which was only a block away. The connecting side street was closed to traffic so that our largish delegation of premiers, aides and journalists could walk from the guest house to the hotel grounds. Naturally the questions directed at the politicians were looking for reactions to the Quebec leader's slanging from back home. Prime Minister Chrétien did not rise to the bait but talked only about the matters at hand. Ontario Premier Bob Rae, however, in a tone of moderate outrage, said that he was proud to ride through Shanghai in an excellent minivan manufactured in Windsor in his home province.

The program that day was full and included a big meeting with the Mayor of Shanghai and his senior officials, lunch, visits to city economic sights and an official dinner offered by the City of Shanghai.

The following morning, there was the usual quick morning briefing, and then another short walk from the guest house to a building close by where the Prime Minister was due to cut a ribbon opening the office of Canadian Pacific in Shanghai. As we were walking, the PM's senior media advisor, Peter Donolo, pulled me aside to tell me that the prime minister would like to ride a bicycle after they finished this event, and would I see if we could arrange something. Well, I had to find out if we could, so I went and spoke with the head of Protocol for the municipal government with whom I had liaised

regularly in organizing the visit. He in turn spoke with the security details who normally would be loath to allow such an unplanned activity. The possibility was not as impossible as it might seem, however, because an entire block of our side street had already been closed off for us.

Within ten minutes, the head of Protocol got back to me to report that the police had borrowed six bicycles from hotel staff, and they were available at the entrance to the street. I quickly alerted Donolo to this fact, and he in turn alerted the Canadian media people (and the PMO photographer of course) to keep an eye out for a photo op before we boarded the motorcade.

When Prime Minister Chrétien walked by and noticed the bicycles he casually asked if could take a little joy ride. He hopped on the bike and rode out into the street. The astonished local guards started to run after so as not to lose the man the were charged with protecting. Our ambassador, Fred Bild, grabbed a second bike and rode off after the PM. Nothing daunted, I did the same and there were just the three of us reeling down the street until a couple of policemen also found bikes. Chrétien went to the end of the block and wheeled back. The media photographers had their shots and footage for the evening news feeds back home.

The whole escapade was the most imaginative and clever piece of political commentary I had ever witnessed. Without saying a word directly about Parizeau's pompous rationale for his own absence from the Team Canada trade mission, Chrétien had managed to completely deflate the issue, if not the tires of the limousine, and present himself to the world as man of the people breaking ground for Canada in a modernizing China. Bicycles were the ordinary person's mode of transportation in a country where personal automobiles were a rarity. The main streets of the city were enormous bicycle lanes.



Photo Courtesy of the author

Bicycles in Shanghai

In as few as ten years later, with modern, fast and efficient mass transit in Shanghai, that would no longer be the case. Bicycles would be no more common than in Canadian cities. Chrétien and his media advisors had caught the crest of the wave and rode it to a public relations triumph.

The picture of the Prime Minister on a bicycle in Shanghai became the iconic photo image of the Team Canada mission of 1994. Six years later when I was on my way to Algiers to take up a new assignment, I stopped in Milan and had lunch with Peter Donolo, who had been appointed Consul General to that city. We, of course, discussed the great visit to Shanghai, and I casually

asked if the PMO photographer might have in his archives a picture of me on a bike that day in China.

A few weeks later, I received from Donolo, not a picture of me on a bike, but the famous picture of the Prime Minister on the bike. But it was undersigned with a hand-written note that said, "Rick, The guy who made it all happen, with my best wishes, Jean Chrétien."

That is how you do politics. ■

Richard Belliveau served as Consul General in Shanghai, High Commissioner in Brunei Darussalam, and Ambassador to Algeria. He bought his first bike in Toronto at age thirteen.

Vive le Zaïre !

Par Guy St-Jacques

Ma première affectation a eu lieu à Kinshasa en 1978 dans ce qui était alors le Zaïre – maintenant la république démocratique du Congo – dirigé par le président Mobutu Sese Seko. Même s’il s’agissait d’une affectation difficile, mon épouse et moi en avons gardé de bons souvenirs et avons pu constater à plusieurs reprises la débrouillardise et la résilience des Zaïrois confrontés à la pauvreté et à la corruption qui minait le développement économique d’un pays qui a pourtant de grandes richesses naturelles.

Les deux récits qui suivent illustrent des moments marquants survenus durant cette affectation.

Le vol d’un véhicule de l’ambassade

J’étais sur le point d’aller me coucher un samedi soir lorsque j’ai entendu, à l’extérieur de notre bloc-appartements,

des voix agitées. Presque au même moment, quelqu’un a frappé à la porte. En l’ouvrant, j’ai découvert un jeune Zaïrois qui me dit: « Patron, je suis le petit frère d’André, votre chauffeur. Il a attrapé le voleur de l’auto et veut que vous veniez le voir. » Je me suis rhabillé en vitesse, ai dévalé l’escalier et suis arrivé dans le stationnement mal éclairé. Là, j’ai aperçu deux chauffeurs de l’ambassade, André et Tadé, en train

« L’autre jour, je dis à un de mes employés : envoie, jump dans le truck câlisse! Y me regarde avec ses grands yeux de poisson, y’avait rien compris. J’ai été obligé de le prendre par la manche et de le mettre dans le maudit truck! »

de frapper un pauvre type, les mains liées, le visage en sang. Tadé déclara : « Je vous avais promis de retrouver le voleur; c’est lui... et nous allons le tuer! » Les deux avaient les yeux rouges et semblaient sous l’effet de l’alcool ou d’autre chose.

Le vacarme avait attiré les voisins – pour la plupart des expatriés – qui sortaient sur leurs balcons pour comprendre ce qui se passait. Il fallait agir vite pour empêcher André et Tadé d’exécuter l’homme sous mes yeux. Je leur ai dit : « Écoutez, je suis content que vous ayez trouvé le voleur, mais je veux que vous l’ameniez immédiatement au poste de police le plus près pour qu’il soit mis sous arrêt. » Ils n’étaient pas enchantés, mais se sont résignés à obtempérer, non sans me rappeler que je ne comprenais rien à la manière dont la justice fonctionnait au Zaïre. Ils sont partis avec le voleur, et je suis rentré chez moi, satisfait d’avoir évité un drame.

Le lendemain matin, Michel Gélinas, mon collègue du quatrième étage – le seul dont le téléphone fonctionnait encore – m’annonça qu’on venait



d'appeler : je devais me rendre au poste de police sur-le-champ. J'ai sauté dans ma voiture, sans trop savoir à quoi m'attendre. À ma grande surprise, le policier de faction m'informa que nos deux chauffeurs avaient été arrêtés la veille et que je devais payer une caution pour les faire libérer. Je demandai à les voir. Ils m'expliquèrent : « Patron, quand nous sommes arrivés ici hier soir, le policier était de la même tribu que le voleur. Il l'a libéré et nous a mis en prison à la place. On vous l'avait dit que vous ne compreniez pas comment les affaires se règlent ici. » J'ai donc payé la caution.

J'appris plus tard que les employés zairois de l'ambassade se jetaient parfois des sorts entre eux lorsqu'ils n'étaient pas de la même tribu — et nous en avions plusieurs représentés. Tade m'avait d'ailleurs expliqué le vol de la voiture en se disant victime d'un mauvais sort.

Quelques semaines plus tôt, Tade s'était effectivement fait voler la voiture alors qu'il rentrait chez lui tard dans la nuit après avoir reconduit le courrier diplomatique à son hôtel. En l'absence de transport public nocturne, nous autorisons les chauffeurs à garder la voiture. Le courrier diplomatique arrivait toutes les deux semaines en soirée, en provenance d'Europe. Il fallait l'accueillir, mettre les sacs en sûreté dans la voûte de l'ambassade, puis reconduire le courrier à l'Inter-Continental, le seul hôtel acceptable de la ville.

Ce soir-là, le vol avait plusieurs heures de retard et Tade avait passé le temps en buvant quelques bouteilles de Primus, une bonne bière d'origine belge brassée à Kinshasa. Sur le chemin du retour, un besoin pressant l'avait forcé à s'arrêter au bord de la route. C'est à ce moment qu'un voleur l'avait assommé et s'était enfui avec la Peugeot de l'ambassade, emportant au passage le portefeuille de Tade, caché sous le tapis du conducteur.

Le lendemain matin, Tade était venu dans mon bureau, penaud,

accompagné d'André, pour m'annoncer la nouvelle. Je lui avais dit : « Il faut que tu retrouves la voiture le plus tôt possible, sinon *matata mingué !* » — ce qui signifie en lingala « beaucoup de problèmes ». Tade avait aussitôt contacté les membres de sa tribu pour leur donner le signalement du véhicule. À 11 h 30, bonne nouvelle : la voiture avait été retrouvée, avec le portefeuille. Les deux chauffeurs m'avaient assuré qu'ils retrouveraient aussi le voleur. Je leur avais répondu que ce n'était pas nécessaire, puisque le véhicule était intact.

Un voyage à Kikwit

J'avais acheté en vue de mon affectation une petite Peugeot rouge qui fut livrée à Kinshasa en juillet 1978. Elle fonctionna très bien, malgré l'absence d'air climatisé — peu pratique quand il faisait près de 40 °C pendant la saison des pluies, mais on s'habitue.

L'un de nos rares longs trajets fut une visite à Kikwit, à 500 km à l'est de Kinshasa, par la seule route pavée du pays. Nous allions voir un coopérant acadien du Nouveau-Brunswick, responsable de l'entretien de l'équipement routier de la région. Nous l'avions hébergé à son arrivée au Zaïre, faute de place à l'hôtel.

En route, nous nous sommes arrêtés au milieu de la jungle et avons éteint le moteur pour écouter les bruits : une cacophonie extraordinaire d'oiseaux, de singes et d'animaux divers — exactement ce qu'on imagine en pleine jungle. Nous sommes prudemment restés dans la voiture. Un peu plus loin, j'ai remarqué un problème avec le moteur.

Le coopérant, excellent mécanicien, avait retapé des camions, bulldozers et autres engins abandonnés dans la « cour à scrap », selon ses mots. Il avait raconté avoir vu un chargeur sur roue (*'payloader'*) avec aucune égratignure dans son godet mais avec 3000 km au compteur ; on lui avoua qu'il avait été utilisé pour faire

du taxi dans la ville... Il avait remis en état presque tout l'équipement pour un coût minime, simplement en remplaçant certaines pièces et en n'hésitant pas à mettre la main à la pâte, ce qui avait aidé à motiver ses employés. Mobutu, impressionné, lui avait demandé de prendre en charge l'entretien de tout l'équipement routier du Zaïre — ce qu'il avait poliment décliné.

Il vivait seul dans un motel à Kikwit qui avait été occupé par les ouvriers italiens qui avaient construit la route. À notre arrivée, il nous donna une clé et nous indiqua quelle serait notre chambre. Informé de mon problème de moteur, il souleva le capot et répara le cylindre défectueux en un rien de temps. C'était un personnage fascinant : ancien pilote blessé lors d'un combat aérien pendant la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, il avait travaillé comme ingénieur minier dans plusieurs pays et possédait un riche sens de l'humour. Il nous avait fait rire en racontant très sérieusement que les Zairois ne comprenaient pas si bien le français :

« L'autre jour, je dis à un de mes employés : *envoye, jump dans le truck câlisse !* Y me regarde avec ses grands yeux de poisson, y'avait rien compris. J'ai été obligé de le prendre par la manche et de le mettre dans le maudit truck! »

Il quitta ses fonctions après un an, probablement parce qu'il s'ennuyait, étant un des seuls expatriés dans le coin. À la fin de son séjour, les mécaniciens locaux maîtrisaient parfaitement les *wrenches, gaskets, bolts, pans à l'huile, towings*, et tout le vocabulaire mécanique en franglais. ■

Guy Saint-Jacques a travaillé pendant presque 40 ans à Affaires mondiales où il a occupé diverses fonctions à Kinshasa, Hong Kong, Washington et Londres. Lors de son dernier poste, il, était ambassadeur en Chine. Guy Saint-Jacques est officier de l'Ordre national du Québec et membre de l'Ordre du Canada.

Denmark's Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Decentralized, Risk-ready, Stream-lined

By Jan Top Christensen

Denmark has one of the world's most unified foreign services, where embassies deal with everything, including commercial, development and political issues. From a classical silo structure, the ministry is now organized as a matrix organisation, around five "technical" centres, each with a state secretary at the top. Overall responsibility is in the hands of one Permanent Secretary of State (Deputy Minister). The five areas are foreign policy, development policy, trade and investment, European affairs and the Arctic, organisation and consular affairs. There are also a Legal Office and a Secretariat for the Executive.

As in many other countries, the Prime Minister's Department plays a more important role today than 30 years ago. But the main strategic and operational work remains within the Danish MFA. The head of the PM's International Office (at under-secretary of state level) will typically be a person with a background in the MFA and will normally return to the MFA after some years.

Getting rid of under-performers

Soon after my appointment as DG for a department in September 2001, a new right-wing government started a significant cleaning process of the public sector. Like other DGs, I was instructed to put staff names on a list for further processing. I had no scruples doing that, as during my first ten years in the ministry, I had observed some colleagues that were free riders, disloyal to others and detrimental to the work environment. With enthusiasm I started screening staff to identify candidates, knowing that I had only a short time for

observations. Out of some thirty staff, I sent the name of one person to the HR department, recommending a check to verify whether my short-term observations were part of a long-term pattern. To no surprise, there was nothing in the file. However, some of the person's previous bosses all praised me for doing "the necessary job", from which they had shied away, with various bad excuses.

In all, this process led to a gradual reduction of the MFA staff of 25 percent. Since this exercise, HR has stressed the importance of doing regular and realistic personal assessments, permitting decisions based on serious long-term observations, making challenges from our powerful unions extremely difficult.

Economic Diplomacy – Charging the Companies

Today, Danish diplomats are heavily involved in economic diplomacy, involving all aspects of commercial activities for private companies, constituting the bulk of work at most embassies. Where diplomats from some countries still shy away from such practical involvement out of fear for integrity and credibility, Danish diplomats are today actively involved across the board. Specific key performance indicators (KPIs), have been developed to track the work of the embassies, and the final salary of ambassadors depends on the commercial services rendered.

There are charges for specified assistance to Danish companies. This system, in existence for many years, is negotiated with major organisations in the private sector. It helps companies focus and request

what they need to know, not what is nice to know. Companies are charged for at least three hours for a job, and proposals are presented by the embassy. The hourly payment varies according to the economic level of the country. The latest Departmental Order from 2025 sets the hourly payment for advanced economies to 1230 DKK (approximately 260 CAD/hour) as of May 2026.

HQ sends embassies an annual income target for commercial activities, based on a basket of criteria, size of market, development degree, presence of number of Danish companies, etc. It's not unusual that ambassadors are stressed in reaching the target and cash in the bonus. The target is part of a wider annual contract drafted at each embassy, with involvement of the staff. Discussed with management before signing, the results are evaluated after the end of the year. Of course, unexpected events demand attention and necessitate decisions about reallocation of resources. But contracts help making conscious decisions.

Political Ambassadors – Still a Rarity in Denmark

Whereas Canada, the US and many other countries often use politically-appointed ambassadors, the numbers in Denmark have historically been very limited. In recent years, Danish governments of both Centre and Right have expressed interest in introducing "political" ambassadors, persons without a career in the MFA. The resistance from career diplomats has been loud and fierce. As one former colleague put it, "diplomacy is a trade, as many others, diplomatic skills are not a gift of grace; you have to gain experiences, you have to work

for them.” The motto for the neutral civil servant is “fearless in advice, loyal in implementation”. Political appointees may have difficulties living up to this distinction.

One difference from Canada. You don’t reach the top in the Danish MFA without having served most, if not all, of the time, in the ministry. I have no recollection of any Deputy Minister in the MFA having not started in the MFA. Experiences at lower levels, working in the “engine room”, are seen as key for understanding the intricacies of the foreign service.

Embassies open and close

By December 2025, Denmark had 71 embassies worldwide, fewer than Norway and Sweden, plus multilateral missions, consulates-general, innovation centres, and representative offices (e.g. Ramallah). With the establishment of the EU External Action Service (EEAS) in 2011, to take care of the EU’s foreign and security policy, some

observers predicted the end of national foreign services in EU countries. Not so. Only Malta, Luxembourg and Cyprus are without Danish embassies. And embassies in major EU countries have been reinforced. The key is this: to be prepared for meetings in Brussels, it’s important to know the positions of EU members. New openings of embassies in Georgia, Moldova, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Albania are evidence of the desire to be prepared to welcome these countries into the larger EU.

In other parts of the world, the presence of embassies is a dynamic process, opening and closing according to assessments of opportunities and continuous cost-benefit analyses. I had the opportunity to re-open two embassies. In 2007, we re-opened the embassy in Lebanon, closed for years during and after the civil war of 1975-90. The reason for reopening was Danish interest in having a much closer political dialogue in Muslim countries after the so-called “Cartoon-crisis” in 2005.

(The publication of cartoons in a Danish newspaper in 2005, picturing the prophet Mohamed, ignited widespread protests in the Muslim world, leading to attempts to burn down Danish embassies in several countries. Boycotts of Danish goods followed in many Muslim states. It was considered “the worst diplomatic crisis for Denmark since WWII”.) I spent substantial time explaining to religious leaders that Denmark is not Islamophobic but is committed to protecting freedom of expression. Embassies were also opened in Jordan and Morocco at the same time. Jordan closed three years later, when things had calmed down.

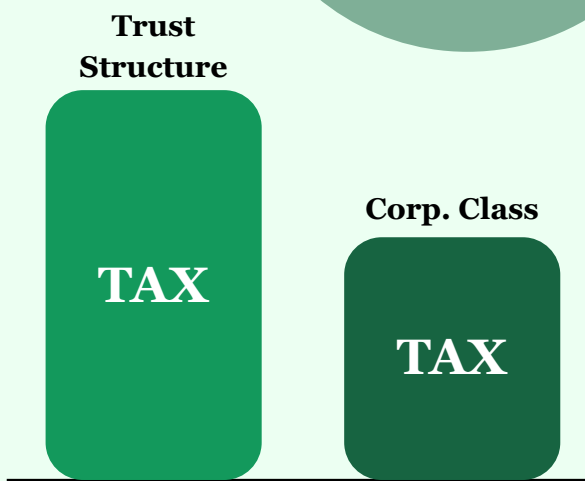
In 2014, we reopened the embassy in the Philippines. The main motivation was the growing Philippine economy and the interest of Danish companies in being part of the expanding market.

When a country’s economy deteriorates, this can lead to an embassy closure. Argentina is a crown example. Over the last thirty years, the embassy has reopened

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and closed several times, following the success or failure of the volatile Argentine economy. In 2026, the embassy in Buenos Aires is opening again, optimistically believing President Milei will be able to reform the economy in a sustainable way.

Recently, the opening of a number of embassies reflects migration considerations. Denmark has become a hardliner in the EU when it comes to immigration. Opening in countries such as Tunisia, Senegal and Rwanda will facilitate discussions with local authorities about reducing migration flows from Africa through these countries or helping by serving as recipients of rejected migrants.

Public Diplomacy – Engage and Explain

When I entered the ministry in 1990, the emphasis was on being as invisible and quiet as possible for the public. At best, dealing with the media would do no harm. Today, the situation is different. Ambassadors are ordered to be active on social media, explaining and promoting Danish policies and initiatives, and actively engaging both with local media Danish media, so that Danish tax-payers are see that they get value for the buck. Many ambassadors have shown creativity and could be candidates for advertising agencies.

Trust is a valued capital, also in the Foreign Service

“Better safe than sorry”. This slogan, expressing risk adversity, is no longer the guiding principle of foreign service. Ambassadors have leeway in operating locally. They don’t have to consult with HQ when there are challenging issues to deal with. And management accepts the corollary that the more active you are, the higher the risk of a faux pas.

Lenin said, “Trust is good, control is better”. In Danish society at large, trust is valued capital, with

Memorial Service in Ottawa for the late David Malone (1954-2025)



David Malone, courtesy of the UN

On 24 March, 2026, the foreign service community held a celebration of life to honour the memory of David Malone, an outstanding Canadian diplomat who died on 24 November, 2025, at the age of 71, in Victoria, B.C. The youngest son of Paul Malone, who also enjoyed a long and distinguished foreign service career, David joined External Affairs in 1975 and after a series of postings, left government service to become head of the International Peace Academy in New York (1998-2004). He later became Canadian High Commissioner in Delhi (2006-2008), President of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Ottawa (2008-2013), and Rector of the UN University in Tokyo, Japan (2013-2023).

The celebration of life emphasized David’s significant emphasis on mentoring young diplomats and aspiring diplomats, and it included numerous anecdotes about David’s long and accomplished career. Not mentioned was one anecdote that he circulated privately to friends years ago, that went to the heart at how he used his diplomatic occasions. In 2013, he was attending a meeting of UN heads of agencies in Rome, where they met the Pope. As Pope Francis moved down the line, shaking hands with each head, he got to David, who then said: “I’m gay and Catholic, and we need your help.” His Holiness responded: “You’re my brother in Christ and I’ll do what I can.” An obituary noted that David “leaves behind an extraordinary legacy of service, but just as importantly, a legacy of love, loyalty, and the lasting influence of a man who supported others wholeheartedly, with both compassion and candour.”

Denmark scoring at the top of international comparisons. In the MFA, trust helps the organisation to be more efficient. Staff are expected to possess the necessary qualifications and experience to operate smoothly within general, defined strategies. This feature also accounts for embassies that run major development programmes. A decentralisation process in the late 90's has put them in control, with little interference from Copenhagen.

Denmark has also moved towards using more locally recruited staff, who are trusted to perform more functions than in most other foreign services. There are several gains, apart from economic savings. Local staff command the local language, stay longer, have a better understanding of the country, as well as detailed networks, just to mention a few of the advantages.

Also at HQ, trust is a key precondition for fast, efficient work. A great example of this was the handling of the Lebanon-

crisis in 2006, when Hezbollah was in a fierce fight for more than 30 days with Israel. Evacuation of Danish citizens and residents became necessary. From the outset, the foreign minister and top management gave a green light "to do the necessary" to get people out of Lebanon. Staff at the DG level were delegated to contract with shipping and airline companies without a long chain of command. Within a short time, some 6.000 persons were evacuated, while the citizens of other countries had to wait much longer.

Innovation and adaptation to new challenges

When Denmark appointed a unique ambassador for "techplomacy" in 2017, publishing a strategy based in Silicon Valley, other countries, including Australia and Estonia, got inspired. The appointment was a recognition of the fact that big tech companies often rival some countries when it comes to influencing global development.

Diplomacy or ammunition

The previous American Defence Secretary during Trump 1.0, James "Mad" Mattis, is known for the quotation, "Every time the State Department has personnel cuts, I have to buy more ammunition". He understood that diplomacy has an important role to play to prevent war. In a world with "a rupture" of the old rule-based order, with trade systems dismantled and big powers using raw power to promote their interests, foreign ministries have to be equipped with sufficient resources to analyse situations and build the structures that meet new, extraordinary challenges. It is not the time for reductions, but for adaptation. ■

Jan Top Christensen, a retired Danish diplomat living in Ottawa with his Canadian wife, started his professional career in academia and the UNHCR. In his thirty years in the Danish foreign service, he covered all aspects of diplomacy, reopening the embassy in Lebanon in 2007 and in the Philippines in 2014. He is currently a Fellow at the Canadian Global Affairs Institute.

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C'était avant la rectitude politique... au milieu des années 80s

Par feu Ross Snyder avec la participation de Gérald Cossette

Pour la diplomatie, une visite d'État ou une visite ministérielle est la façon la plus sûre de consolider les relations bilatérales. Presque toutes les missions suggèrent à Ottawa de bénéficier des rencontres que font souvent les ministres, dans les rassemblements multilatéraux, pour inviter officiellement leurs homologues à se rendre au Canada. Dans le présent cas, la visite d'un ministre africain est le résultat du passage en Afrique du/de la ministre canadien.ne du développement international.

Certains pays, considérés par le Canada pertinents pour la promotions de nos intérêts nationaux et de nos valeurs, sont plus chanceux que d'autres quant au nombre de fois qu'ils sont invités au Canada. Nous avons aussi nos chouchous chéris. Parfois, c'est la relation personnelle de notre ministre avec certains.nes de ses homologues qui milite en faveur de ces visites.

Comme toutes les visites officielles, celle-ci s'est déroulée, en surface, sans anicroche. Le résultat final fut l'annonce conjointe concernant le financement d'infrastructures qui permettent l'acheminement d'eau potable à plusieurs villages.

« Dieu merci », les ministres ne savent rien de l'organisation de ces visites sauf lorsque des bavures viennent entacher ce que rapportent les médias.

Mais derrière les portes closes, pour cette visite comme pour plusieurs, c'est le zoo habituel de dernière minute. Celui ou celle responsable de la visite doit s'assurer que le/la ministre est mis.e au courant des derniers développements bilatéraux tout en vérifiant que les détails

logistiques tombent en place. Le « système » n'exige rien de moins que l'omniprésence de celui ou celle responsable de la visite.

Malheureusement, ce matin de septembre, pour diverses raisons, la coordination de la visite du ministre africain du développement était sans dessus-dessous. La personne qui devait l'escorter au bureau du/de la ministre ne l'attendait pas. Le ministre africain se présenta donc seul à la réception de l'ACDI au 200 Portage. Il demande alors à la réceptionniste de l'annoncer. Cette dernière, avec la plus grande simplicité du monde s'empressa de l'annoncer sans fioriture -pratique à laquelle les leaders de l'Afrique sub-saharienne sont peu habitués. Ils aiment bien le décorum qui entoure leur titre. La réceptionniste avec assurance, à haute voix et avec son

plus bel accent pris le téléphone pour communiquer au bureau du/de la ministre: « J'ai un grrros nègrrre ici, il prétend qu'il est attendu par le/la ministre X ». La personne qui a pris l'appel au bureau du/de la ministre, a presque fondu de gêne à l'écoute de ce message. Puis se ressaisit à l'idée que le ministre africain n'avait sûrement rien compris au message de la réceptionniste en raison de l'accent local. Tel fut le cas.

Quelqu'un du personnel de le/la ministre s'empressa de descendre chercher le ministre africain. Ce dernier ne fit aucun cas de cet accrochage diplomatique et s'en retourna satisfait de la tournure des événements. Après tout, il avait obtenu ce pourquoi il était venu. Nul besoin de faire une scène pour si peu, d'autant plus qu'il n'avait rien compris. Reste à savoir si cette maladresse était monnaie courante à l'époque? ■

Ross Snyder, a été posté à Haïti, en Tanzanie et à Washington. Gérald Cossette, lors de sa dernière affectation au QG, était sous-ministre délégué.



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Alcide

By John Graham

I had never met anyone before who wore three pair of trousers at the same time. As one pair began to rot and let in more light and bugs, a better pair was slipped over them. This did not mean that the outside pair was in good shape - it was through its holes that the remains of the other trousers were visible. But they were fairly clean and for Alcide it was obviously a convenient arrangement that gave him three times as many pockets. Alcide was a pork knocker. In Guyana this meant a prospector.

He led me and a friend of mine up a stream to pan for grains of gold and the very ordinary-looking pebbles that might be diamonds. In some of Guyana's rivers gold and diamonds are mined together.

Alcide was seventy-five, bright, lean, crinkled and mahogany coloured. He stepped easily from stone to stone. Water swished and separated the sand in his nimble hands. But we found nothing and after awhile sat down on some boulders to rest. My friend asked Alcide if he had any gold to sell. Alcide reached into a pocket of his furthest inside trousers and drew out a plastic envelope. He showed us some small strips of pounded metal. My friend selected what he thought a goldsmith could use to make earrings for his wife. Alcide chose another pocket, brought out and assembled a jeweler's scales. The gold was weighed and my friend paid cash. Bewitched, I asked Alcide if he had any diamonds. He reached into another pocket and brought out several Vicks VapoRub phials. He emptied them one by one on separate sheets of paper. Most were industrial grade. All were uncut, but one phial contained gem grade stones. I selected one with a crude marquise shape. Alcide withdrew another set



Photo courtesy Atlas Obscura

A handful of diamonds at a dealer in Georgetown. From Atlas Obscura.

of weights for diamonds. Mine was about half a carat.

“How much will that cost?”

Alcide calculated and said “1820 Guyanese dollars.” (a little more than \$200 US dollars at the time.)

“I don't have enough cash. I don't suppose that a cheque is any good to you?”

“Cheque is fine.”

My wife, who was back at the camp, seemed pleased – if she thought I had been had, she didn't say so. Not so Mr. De Silva, a jeweler back in Georgetown. “You have bought a diamond from a wild black man in the jungle. You don't know a rough diamond from a cough drop. It's probably quartz.” He looked at it closely.

“Hmmp – you're lucky, but it's almost certainly flawed and a poor colour.” He placed it under a jeweler's microscope.

“Um, well, you are lucky. It's clear and a good colour. Let's see about the weight.”

The weight coincided exactly with Alcide's measurement. De Silva conceded that I had paid a fair price.

I floated out of the store pleased with myself and pleased with Alcide.

Alcide had been a pork knocker on the Potaro River for fifty years. His home was Waratuk Falls. If the scattered holdings and his leases of gold and diamond-bearing shoreline within a twenty mile radius of Waratuk had ever been assessed, they probably would have shown that he was at least a millionaire. Alcide would have been amazed and possibly disconcerted. His joys were the search for gold and diamonds, his few friends on the river, the exercise of his mind, the monthly visit of his girlfriend from down-river, and an almost untrammelled freedom.

His father and his grandfather lived well into their nineties in St. Lucia. He believed he would go on for close to a hundred years. As Alcide told it, his great-grandfather came to St. Lucia from Corsica, where he had known the young Bonaparte. His grandmother was born of the union between the Corsican and a black slave.

We met again about a year later. I had been invited to join (as unpaid gaffer) an English/Guyanese film crew heading up the Potaro to do a documentary on pork knockers.

Alcide, with his strong, grizzled face, and earthy anecdotes accompanied by bursts of warbling cackles, was cast for a leading role. We shot some film the first morning, managing to drop one reel in the Potaro. Alcide invited several of us – Joey, Eric, Chan and I – to his shack on the river bank for cucumber sandwiches. The thin soil supported cucumbers and not much else. Outside the shack was a clay oven where he baked his bread. As we entered the main room, Chan, who is a veterinarian, noticed a set of clean precision instruments.

“What are these?” asked Chan.

“Ah” said Alcide. “I do a bit of dentistry.”

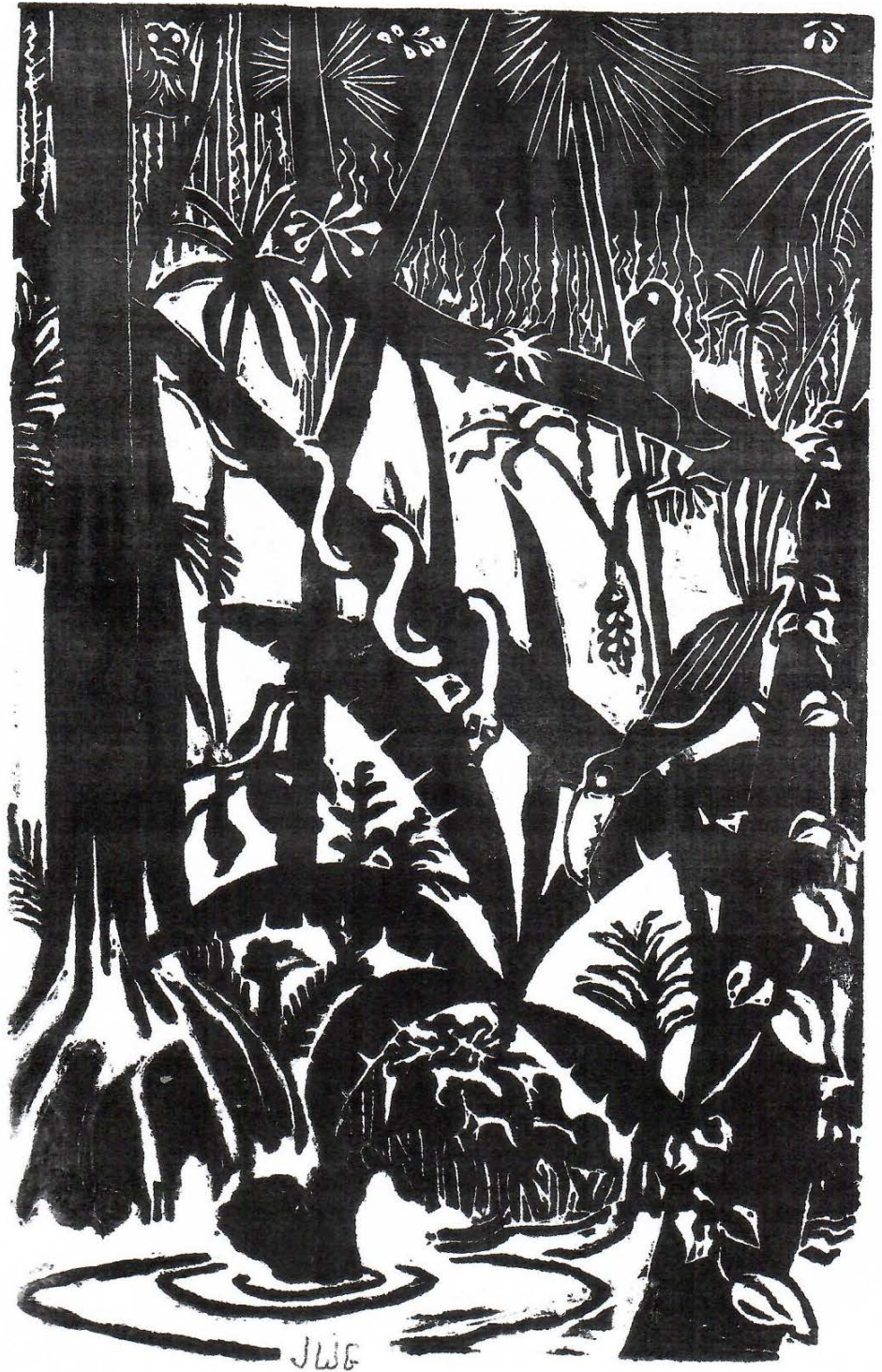
In another corner of the house was a large, different set of surgical instruments and one or two medical books.

“Ah, well, I do a bit of doctoring.”

Another pork knocker, who had joined us, explained that the nearest certified physician and dentist were a day and half away and that, as far as he was concerned – and that went for anyone else scattered along this reach of the Potaro – Alcide was a successful dentist, homeopathic GP and surgeon.

After lunch and upon our insistence, Alcide entertained us with some tunes on his fiddle.

Late that afternoon, when there was a breeze and it was cool in the shade, I walked with Alcide into the forest. I carried a small tape recorder with the idea of capturing his observations. His knowledge of flora and fauna surpassed that of the local Amerindians with whom, for a time, he had been an apprentice. The sap of that tree was used in the preparation of an infusion against fever. The leaves of that vine could be used against another fever. Pounded and boiled, the bark of that tree would become a poultice. There were a multitude of aphrodisiacs. He identified herbs and leaves that



Alcide, by John Graham, 2026

could be used for spider, scorpion and snake bites. There was very little that grew or moved on its own that Alcide could not identify.

In the evening we sat by the shore drinking rum, listening to stories of the Potaro and looking at the water. It was the colour of iodine, stained by the roots in its path. In the distance

was the steady roar of the river as it dropped 800 feet over Kaieteur Falls.

On my return to Georgetown, I tried to persuade government botanists and other specialists to visit Alcide and record this extraordinary and possibly valuable accumulation of knowledge. There was interest, but no action.

I remained in touch with Alcide



Kaieteur Falls, Guyana

through mutual friends and looked forward to seeing him when the time came for the screening of the now completed documentary, entitled “*Men of Gold*”. We had sent word ahead that we would be coming to Mahdia, the only substantial village near the Potaro and the only one accessible to those who had taken part in the filming. After a night camping in hammocks in the rain forest, we bounced into the village with a projector and generator strapped onto a mattress in the back of our Land Rover.

Mahdia consisted of a few rows of shacks, including a ramshackle guest house where we were to stay, a small schoolhouse, a remarkable concentration of gold and diamond dealers, a profusion of bars, a psychedelic disco and several brothels. There was also a government office, presided over by Oscar, the befuddled District Commissioner. Oscar had agreed to make arrangements to show the

“What are these?” asked Chan.

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“Ah, well, I do a bit of doctoring.”

film – but hadn’t. To make amends, he circled the community in our Land Rover, hanging out the side, shouting “Flim show! Flim show! – Alcide and the boys! 8 o’clock in the schoolhouse”.

In the meantime, preparations were not going well. The entire community was descending on the schoolhouse which was too small and the generator had not survived the long timber trail. Eventually we negotiated a spacious room with chairs and benches behind D’Aguiar’s Gold and Diamond Emporium and Bar. This soon filled to overflowing. D’Aguiar lent us a generator, but there were still technical problems.

This was not a quiet suburban audience. It had high expectations, and as the wait lengthened the crowd became loud and restless. Eric and I were wrestling with the equipment when Joey came up to us.

“Man”, he whispered “this is a rough crowd and they’ve been soaking up D’Aguiar’s rum. Look the Land Rover is outside, it’s switched on. Pretend we’re going for some tools and make a run for it.”

“Easy Joey,” said Eric. “She’ll work.”

She did – and none too soon.

The show was a double feature and began with a Canadian Film Board animated film about the fatal sexual mishaps of postmen. A good appetizer, but the main course transfixed the audience. It was about them and their way of life. They had never seen themselves on a screen and everyone’s appearance was greeted with loud screams and course suggestions. When the star performer appeared, shouts went up: “Alcide! Alcide!”

The shouts were louder and different because Alcide wasn’t there. We learned only on arriving in Mahdia that he had died three weeks before – long before his one hundred years. ■

*John Graham is a regular contributor to FORUM. He enjoyed a long and successful career in External Affairs and the OAS and for the last twenty years has been a principal advocate for the restoration of cultural affairs in Canada’s foreign policy. This story is drawn from his memoir, *Whose Man in Havana?* *Adventures from the Far Side of Diplomacy.**

From VERPROG to ISROP — Continuity of Commitment in a Transformed World

By Stewart Henderson

The Strategic Rationale for Transition

To understand the transformation of the Verification Research Unit / Programme (VERPROG) into the International Security Research and Outreach Programme (ISROP) in 1998, one must appreciate the profoundly altered international security landscape of the late 1990s. The end of the Cold War had not diminished the need for Canadian expertise and engagement — it had, rather, redistributed it across a much wider terrain. The bipolar world of nuclear deterrence and superpower arms races had given way to a more complex, multipolar environment in which the threats to peace and security were simultaneously more diffuse and more unpredictable.

The arms control agenda of the 1980s and early 1990s had, by the mid-1990s, yielded an extraordinary harvest of agreements. VERPROG had contributed to the success of many Canadian non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament initiatives, earning a Minister of Foreign Affairs award for foreign policy excellence in 1995 and a Government of Canada award for excellence in 1996. The major treaties that the VRU had laboured to support — the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention review, the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty — had been concluded or were entering into force. In this sense, VERPROG had done its work with uncommon distinction.

But rather than representing a retreat from Canada's commitment to arms



An RCAP CC-130 carrying a verification sensor pod

control and disarmament, the 1998 transition reflected a deliberate strategic judgement: that the security challenges demanding Canadian attention and analysis had broadened beyond the technical parameters of traditional verification. The 1990s marked a new era of international relations focused on humanitarian action, peacekeeping, and global cooperation. Canada eagerly endorsed the new security order, actively pursuing efforts to establish itself as an actor driven by human security objectives.

The human security agenda championed by Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy — encompassing the Ottawa Convention banning anti-personnel landmines, the campaign against small arms and light weapons proliferation, and the effort to establish the International Criminal Court — demanded research support that was both broader in scope and more agile in its policy connections than the original VERPROG mandate had been designed to provide.

The decision to rename the programme and broaden its mandate was therefore less a cancellation than an evolution. The VRU had built something durable: an institutional culture of rigorous, policy-relevant

research, a network of world-class academic and scientific partners, and a reputation within the international arms control community that Canada would have been foolish to abandon. VERPROG supported more than 350 research projects and published more than 200 studies for official and public use — a body of work without parallel in the Canadian government's engagement with international security scholarship. The transition to ISROP preserved this institutional inheritance while expanding its field of application.

ISROP: Architecture and Mandate

The International Security Research and Outreach Programme drew upon the expertise of academic and think-tank communities in Canada and abroad to inform and support the development of Canada's international security policy. ISROP acted as a focal point for timely, high-quality and policy-relevant research on international security and defence issues related to North American, regional and multilateral security and defence cooperation, and on non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament.

The word "Outreach" in the new programme's title was not decorative. It signalled a conscious determination to extend the reach of government-sponsored security research beyond the specialist community — to engage a broader public audience, to draw in emerging scholars, and to build the kind of informed national constituency that arms control diplomacy requires to be sustainable.

Photo courtesy of the author

Where the VRU had been primarily a generator of technical and policy research for negotiating purposes, ISROP added a public education and capacity-building dimension that reflected the more participatory character of the post-Cold War security debate.

ISROP annually invited researchers from Canada and abroad to submit proposals to conduct contract research relevant to the Government of Canada's international security priorities and policies, commissioning on average four to five research projects per year. The competitive contracting model preserved the VRU's core approach — research directed to a policy mandate — while making the programme more accessible to a wider range of researchers and institutions.

The WMD Verification Dimension: Continuity Under a New Name

Whatever the broader expansion of ISROP's mandate, the programme never abandoned its foundational concern with verification. As the post-9/11 security environment brought questions of weapons of mass destruction proliferation back to the centre of the international agenda, ISROP responded with substantive policy research. In anticipation of the convening of the 2006 panel of government experts, as well as to support the work of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, Canada commissioned a two-part study through ISROP in the fall of 2004 designed to update thinking on verification issues.

ISROP organized two major papers on verification as Canada's contribution to the Blix Commission. One was written by Trevor Findlay and associates at VERTIC in London. The second involved a survey, conference calls, and a seminar among verification experts to consider current

The bipolar world of nuclear deterrence and superpower arms races had given way to a more complex, multipolar environment in which the threats to peace and security were simultaneously more diffuse and more unpredictable.

challenges and responses in relation to the verification of chemical, biological, and nuclear treaties. This was, in spirit and in practice, the direct heir of the VRU's work — rigorous, policy-relevant, internationally connected analysis delivered in support of Canadian multilateral diplomacy.

The establishment of an institutional base for this continued work was also a signal ISROP achievement. In March 2005, ISROP helped establish the Canadian Centre for Treaty Compliance at Carleton University in Ottawa — a development that forged an enduring link between ISROP's policy research mandate and Carleton's long tradition of hosting and publishing the annual verification symposia that had been such a feature of the VRU era. The hiring of Dr. Trevor Findlay to begin a Compliance Management Project based in the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs at Carleton University, reviewing past responses to failures to comply and developing a "tool kit" for use in future instances of noncompliance, represented a direct and deliberate investment in the next generation of Canadian arms control scholarship.

The Simons Foundation Partnership: A Model of Public-Private Collaboration

Among ISROP's most consequential strategic relationships was its partnership with The Simons Foundation Canada — a collaboration that became one of the most productive public-private alliances in the history of Canadian arms control policy engagement.

The Simons Foundation Canada is a private foundation committed to advancing positive change through education in peace, disarmament, international law, and human security, established by Dr. Jennifer Allen Simons, in 1985. Under Dr. Simons's leadership, the Foundation had built a remarkable record of convening governments, academics, and civil society organizations around the most pressing disarmament challenges of the era.

Dr. Simons initiated an ongoing disarmament education programme in 2002 in partnership with ISROP. The centrepiece of this collaboration was the Graduate Research Awards for Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-Proliferation — a programme that would prove to be one of the most enduring legacies of the ISROP era. The primary objective of the Awards was to enhance Canadian graduate-level scholarship on non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament issues. Since its inception, the programme provided over \$425,000 in scholarships to Canadian graduate students working on policy-relevant NACD issues and helped to encourage a new generation of young Canadian scholars dedicated to further expanding their knowledge and expertise on these critical issues.

The Simons Foundation joined with the Department of Foreign Affairs in the Graduate Research Awards programme because of its interest in

furthering disarmament education and building a community of disarmament scholars. The Department of Foreign Affairs shared this goal because of its need for a pool of specialist expertise to aid in the formulation of Canadian foreign policy. The programme also contributed to the fulfilment of Canada's United Nations commitments to disarmament education.

The Foundation's collaboration with ISROP extended beyond the GRA programme. In 2003, Dr. Simons, in partnership with Project Ploughshares and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, initiated what has become the Outer Space Security Conference Series organized by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, a series designed to inform the UN Conference on Disarmament on issues of space security and the prevention of an arms race in outer space — themes that resonated directly with the VRU's original work on PAXSAT

and satellite-based verification. In this, the circle was neatly closed: the institutional memory of the VRU era was informing a new generation of multilateral diplomacy.

Conclusion: A Legacy Without Equal in Canadian International Security

Taken together, the arc from the VRU through VERPROG to ISROP represents one of the most sustained, sophisticated, and genuinely impactful investments that any Canadian government department has made in the intellectual infrastructure of international security. The VRU, in its early years, performed the foundational work: building the research networks, defining the scholarly agenda, producing the analytical tools, and establishing Canada's international reputation as a rigorous and constructive contributor to arms control verification. VERPROG deepened and institutionalized this contribution

across a full decade of landmark treaty negotiations, earning its government awards not through self-promotion but through the consistent quality of its work. And ISROP — in recognizing that the world had changed, while insisting that Canada's intellectual commitment to international security must not — preserved and extended that legacy into the more complex security environment of the post-Cold War era.

Through its research grants, the programme encouraged an entire generation of Canadian academics to become specialists in international security issues — a contribution whose value is difficult to overstate. The technical skills, the institutional relationships, the scholarly networks, and the policy literacy that flowed from this unbroken commitment represent a form of national security capacity that cannot be purchased off the shelf and cannot be reconstituted quickly once lost.

In this light, the VRU/VERPROG/ISROP continuum deserves to be recognized not merely as a successful government research programme, but as a model of what a thoughtful middle power can accomplish when it invests in ideas, builds trusted partnerships with the academic and scientific community, and refuses to treat arms control as someone else's problem. Canada's contribution to the architecture of international security verification was real, was recognized, and was earned. Whatever the challenges of the security environment in 2006 and beyond, that example remains a powerful argument for renewed commitment. ■

Stewart Henderson had postings to New Delhi, Tokyo, Manila, The Hague, Brussels (Stability Pact for Southeast Europe), Brussels (EU), and Baghdad. In 1998, he was tasked with managing the evolution of the Verification Research Unit and developed the International Security Research and Outreach Programme.



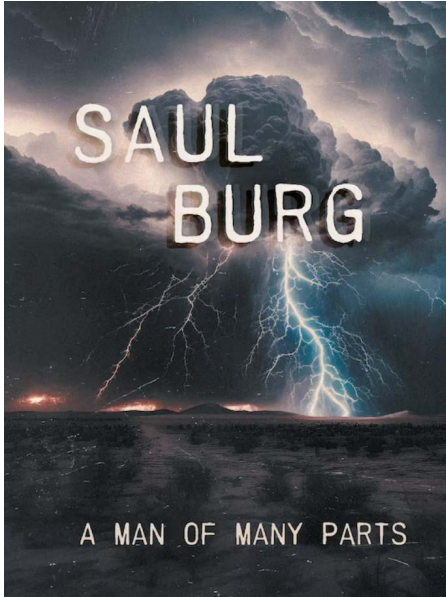
Inspectors verifying the absence of deployed nuclear weapons in a military base during UNIDIR's verification exercise "Menzingen Verification Experiment", March 2023.

Books in Revue/ Critiques de livres

Adriaan de Hoog, *Saul Burg: A man of Many Parts*

Friesen Press, 2025, 420 p.

By Sam Hanson



*All the world's a stage, writes
Shakespeare,*

*And all the men and women
merely players.*

*They have their exits and their
entrances,*

*And one man in his time plays
many parts...*

As You Like It, Act 2 Scene 7

Such a man is Saul Burg, the central character of Adriaan de Hoog's latest novel, a multi-layered geopolitical thriller. Burg has been sole survivor of a terrorist attack, then a soldier, commando, spy, assassin, and is, in the present day, the enigmatic director of an obscure UN specialised agency in Geneva. His entrances and exits are quick, stealthy, and often lethal.

The novel shifts backward and forward in time, with Burg changing roles in a seemingly happenstance or opportunistic manner. In the

present day, the narrator is Blake Crawford, originally from Pincher Creek, a new hire at Burg's agency. His naiveté makes Candide look like a cynic.

In our career, it is not unusual for us to turn in our work, and be left to wonder what use, if any, will be made of it. He designs a project management package for the agency; it is given a positive reception. He is asked to write a special sub-program, and does, without thinking too deeply about it. Only gradually does he start to wonder why access to his innocuous sub-program is so tightly controlled, and what the results of its talent-spotting function really are.

In the meantime, the relationship between Blake and Burg develops in an ambiguous manner. Burg is by turns engaging and distant, friendly and cold. He gives Blake a fearsome program of assigned reading, invites him on weekend hikes and climbs that turn into ever-harsher tests of endurance. Is Burg grooming a successor, or merely trying to find Blake's limits? We wonder what lies at the centre of Saul Burg: a cold emptiness, or an unshakeable drive to revenge?

In the end, it is Burg whose limits are reached. He is wrenched out of the story with a shock almost as abrupt as that of Ahab's disappearance in "*Moby-Dick*". Blake, like Ishmael, is left to tell the story – and save his soul if he can.

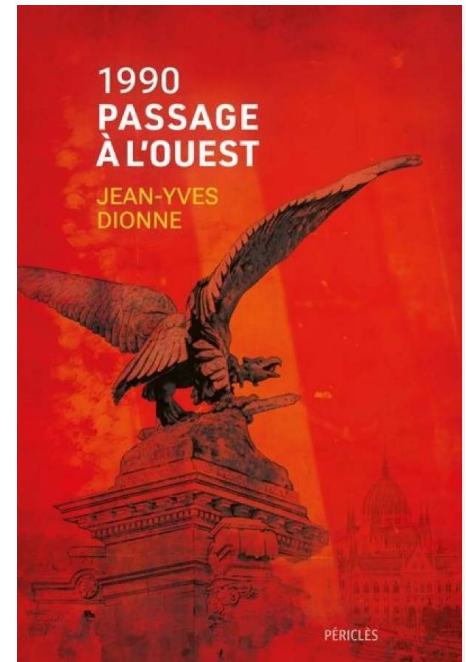
Adrian de Hoog's career in the Canadian Foreign Service placed him in an array of positions abroad and in numerous foreign policy areas. He is the author of three previous international thrillers: "*The Berlin Assignment*", "*Borderless Deceit*", and "*Natalia's Peace*". ■

Sam Hanson retired from the Canadian Foreign Service in 2012 after a career of 38 years. He had eight foreign postings, including Head of Mission assignments in Zagreb, Sarajevo, and Khartoum.

Jean-Yves Dionne, *1990 Passage à l'Ouest*

Éditions Périclès, 2025

Par Christian Lapointe



Ici l'auteur relève un bien grand défi à articuler dans un même ouvrage les genres : roman, récit, essai, reportage, mémoire. Bravo! L'observation de l'évolution socio-politique au courant des dernières années de la Hongrie ne cesse d'étonner. Il semble compliqué de comprendre comment elle a pu devenir la bête noire de l'Union européenne. La lecture de ce livre nous révèle des parcelles significatives de la genèse de cette réalité.

Ce livre nous introduit dans la difficile période de transition à l'entrée de la Hongrie dans le monde "libre" avec ce que cela impliquait d'avoir été autant sous le joug russe. Cette réalité n'a pas disparu aussi vite que certains ont pu le croire. À ce propos, le livre nous décrit toute la complexité de cette sortie d'influence et de la puissante résistance des mentalités et des intérêts des élites nouvelles et anciennes. Une situation dans

laquelle ce pays semble se trouver encore aujourd'hui. Il faut l'avoir vécu et être témoin aux premières loges, comme ce fut le cas de l'auteur, pour pouvoir en révéler les dessous. C'est sans aucun doute l'un des aspects les plus intéressants du livre, plongeant le lecteur dans sa réalité la plus crue.

L'auteur propose un descriptif réaliste sans trop de romance de la période du début des années 90. Un exposé clair de la désinstallation du communisme en Europe centrale qui fut si complexe après autant d'années d'existence. Ayant moi-même vécu cette période mais au royaume du petit frère rebelle et résistant cubain, on peut prendre ce cas en exemple pour imaginer la difficulté que pourra représenter la chute, et surtout, l'après communisme à Cuba après presque 70 ans.

Jean-Yves brosse une fresque de la vie socio-politique hongroise avec des détails qui amènent à visualiser la réalité de 1990. De plus, les repères qui nourrissent son récit sont précis et encore en place dans bien des cas. Le tout y est décrit dans un style littéraire captivant. L'auteur parfois n'arrive pas à calmer la passion qui l'anime à l'écriture de ce livre car on le surprend, à quelques reprises, à s'installer à la place de son narrateur, sorte de trahison involontaire autobiographique magnifiquement amusante.

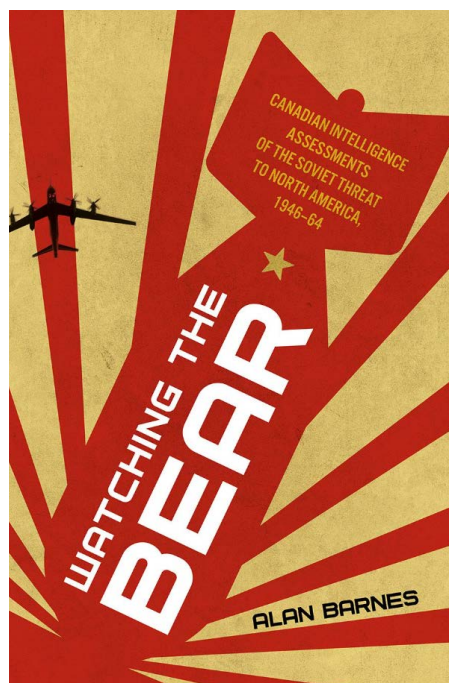
Témoignage éloquent d'une expérience diplomatique authentique. ■

Christian Lapointe a eu une carrière diplomatique de plus de 35 années. Il a été posté à Bamako, La Havane, Paris et a été ambassadeur en République d'Équateur.

Alan Barnes, *Watching the Bear: Canadian Intelligence Assessments of the Soviet Threat to North America, 1946-64.*

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2025.
ISBN 9780774871662.

By Kurt Jensen



Alan Barnes has written an important book on Canadian intelligence. It's also a significant contribution to understanding the dangers which Canada (and the US) faced in the postwar era from a potential Soviet attack on North America, coming over the Arctic. The successful Soviet atom-bomb testing magnified perception of this threat. Barnes spent his career in foreign intelligence at GAC/FI and PCO/IAS. In retirement, Barnes became a key member of the Canadian Foreign Intelligence History Project, dedicated to an enhanced release of archives relating to foreign intelligence

The book examines “the assessments prepared by the Canadian Joint Intelligence Committee on the Soviet military threat to North

America in the early Cold War and to place them in the wider context of Canadian intelligence and defence relations with the United States.” He provides an excellent insight into the establishment of the early postwar Canadian intelligence architecture.

Canada emerged from World War II with a limited intelligence community but a recognition of the importance of a sovereign analytical capacity. Canada sought a partnership with the US to achieve common Canada-US assessments of the Soviet threat to North America. Canada relied heavily on US intelligence resources and saw largely the same material as was available to US analysts. This was a significant achievement. Canada's Joint Intelligence Bureau (JIB) possessed a surprising ability to objectively assess the limited intelligence available, partly from taking a broad holistic approach and not appeasing the aspirations of various defence sectors, as happened in the US. While the Soviet threat assessment in both countries was prepared by military intelligence, Canada introduced a political dimension to its assessments. Overseeing Canadian intelligence was the Joint Intelligence Committee, headed by an intelligence officer from External Affairs.

The Canadians were less apt than Americans to drawing sweeping conclusions about Soviet plans based on broad assumptions of conflict being launched by the USSR. One significant contribution was an effort to determine Soviet capabilities and political factors, provided by the nascent intelligence group in External Affairs. Still, there were limited insights into the thinking of the Soviet leadership. The focus was on capabilities rather than intentions.

The book makes an important contribution by highlighting the complexity of assessing threats based on insufficient data with limited interest in the political environment in which an enemy may be arriving

at decisions. Barnes highlights that, in the 1948-50 period, drafting of joint intelligence assessments became more professional. Canada made it clear that its role was not limited to commenting on US draft assessments but also providing significant insights and more balanced perspectives on US papers. Canadian analysts situated conclusions within a broader understanding of Soviet overall strategy in a possible future war.

There were many challenges. The successful Soviet nuclear bomb test of 1949, with Canada relying on incorrect American estimates, was one. Another was the Soviet TU-4 long-range bomber. Assessments concluded that there might be as many as 3,000 to 4,000 such bombers, but only 847 TU-4s were built when the production line ended in the early 1950s. These erroneous estimates reflected poor intelligence resources, as well as efforts to bolster the USAF desire for more and better equipment.

The Soviets recognized the offensive limitations of their long-range bomber fleet before the Canadians

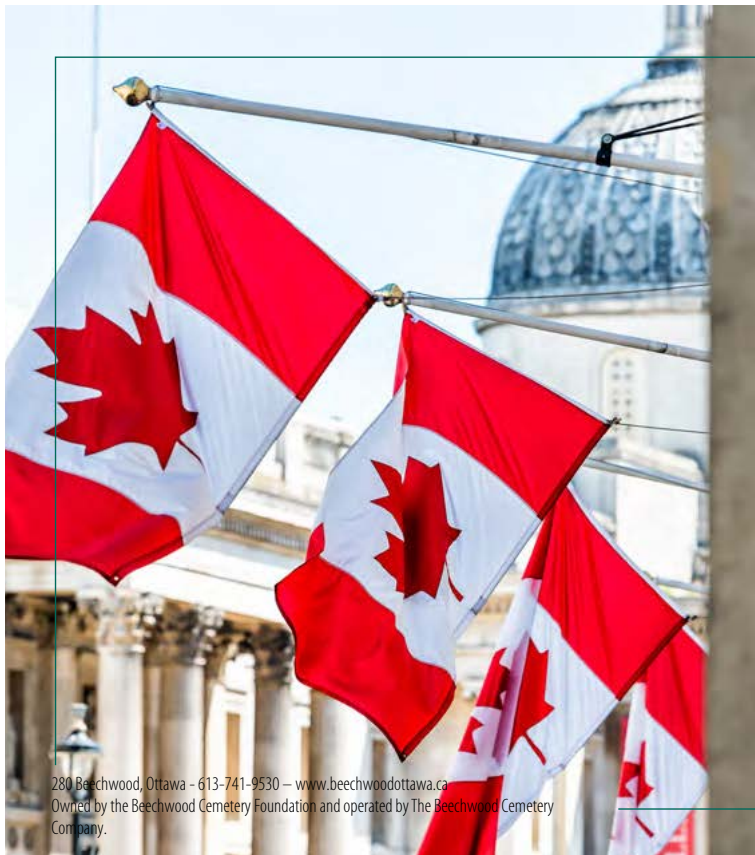
and Americans. The atomic bomb changed the dynamics. And the two Western powers also overestimated the number of nuclear bombs which the Soviets could produce. By 1950, the Soviets had five nuclear bombs, and they had no effective delivery system before 1954.

Assessments improved with experience but continued to reflect vested interests favouring weapons-development programs, most vehemently pursued by both air forces. Slowly, an evolving perception of the Soviet threat focused on submarine-launched cruise missiles and, eventually, the use of ballistic missiles. There also occurred, by 1958, a greater reflection on Moscow's likely planning constraints and the perceived impact of a US retaliatory attack, both making a Soviet attack more unlikely. A realization emerged that the real danger rested with a miscalculation by either side.

One of the most important contributions of Barnes' book is the intelligence-derived perspective

he throws on the controversial Canadian fighter aircraft, the CF-105 Arrow, which was cancelled by the Diefenbaker government. The cancellation was, in part, reflective of the escalating costs. But equally important was the recognition that the aircraft no longer had a defensive mission. The Soviet threat had ceased to be long-range bombers; it was now intercontinental missiles, against which the CF-105 could do nothing.

Barnes' book reflects the evolution of Canadian and US intelligence analysis of a Soviet threat to North America. The Canadians, while lacking in intelligence collection resources, were more objective in their analysis of the available data, and more concerned with understanding the Soviet political dynamics and policy-making process. The US remained wedded much too long to the idea of threatening Soviets bombers and the 'Bomber Gap' debate of the late 1950s. Barnes also emphasizes the evolving understanding of the post-Stalin Soviet Union. Gone was the notion



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that the Soviet Union sought ‘world domination;’ the Soviet Union was unlikely to start a war unless it thought that there was a risk of an attack by the US.

While the binational threat assessments continue today, the available archival material ends around 1964. The most significant Canadian success, Barnes writes,

was that the joint assessments are “indicative of the extremely close intelligence relationship that has developed between the two countries.”

Barnes has provided a significant contribution to an understanding of the East-West strategic political environment of the late 1940s to the mid-1960s. This is a very rich,

carefully crafted book, with an amazing trove of information. It is not a long book but one constructed carefully to provide a better understanding of the Canada-US perception of a Soviet threat during a tense period in modern history. ■

A frequent contributor to FORUM, Kurt Jensen is a member of FORUM's editorial board.

La leçon

Par Anne Leahy

Ma toute première affectation aux Affaires extérieures fut au Service du Protocole en juin 1973. Coup de chance, la reine Élisabeth II devait inaugurer le nouvel édifice Pearson quelques semaines plus tard. Il régnait bien une certaine excitation, bien maîtrisée, à Ottawa et au Protocole étant donné cet honneur insigne dévolu à notre ministère mais rien n'indiquait que la nouvelle

arrivée au bureau n'était concernée directement.

Dans la plus pure tradition du ‘ministère’, sans m'avoir donné ne serait-ce qu'un indice la veille du jour-J, au jour dit, le chef adjoint du Protocole Tom Read me happe à mon arrivée au bureau. Le Protocole était un des premiers services à avoir emménagé dans le nouvel édifice sur la promenade Sussex, avec la cafétéria et la bibliothèque. Un grand nombre d'invités était déjà arrivé et M. Read m'informe sans plus que j'aiderais à placer les membres du

corps diplomatique, dans une section à l'entrée de l'édifice. Heureusement, ai-je pensé, que je suis vêtue de façon qui convient mieux à une cérémonie en présence de la reine qu'à un vendredi informel.

J'ai appris ce jour-là deux principes qui définissent assez bien les Affaires étrangères soit qu'il faut s'attendre à l'imprévu et que sauf exception, on gagne à partager l'information avec son équipe. ■

Anne Leahy a travaillé aux ministères des Affaires étrangères entre 1973 et 2013.



Queen Elizabeth, with Mitchell Sharpe, at Rideau Hall during the visit of 1973.

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