

bout de papier

Vol. 33, No. 2

CANADA'S MAGAZINE OF DIPLOMACY AND FOREIGN SERVICE
LE MAGAZINE CANADIEN DE LA DIPLOMATIE ET DU SERVICE EXTÉRIEUR

SPRING / PRINTEMPS 2025

SHATTERED LIVES

THE LGBT PURGE
IN EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

Svend Robinson

BREAKING THE NON-PERSON SHELL

The Foreign Service spouse
experience Kate Mackenzie

THROUGH THE EYES OF BOUT DE PAPIER

A brief history of four decades
of Canada's Foreign Service
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TRANS- MISSION

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UN ABUS DE CONFIANCE

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EXIT INTERVIEW : ROBIN WETTLAUFER

Michael Creighton





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Predictably Unpredictable



Lillian Thomsen
Editor-in-Chief // Rédactrice en chef

WHEN I WROTE MY LAST message to the readers of **bout de papier**, I anticipated that 2024 would be a complex and unpredictable year. Many months later that seems to have been an understatement. While the war in Ukraine was still ongoing as was the conflict in Gaza, I could not have anticipated the twists and turns in the United States during this critical election year. All these events have had an impact on the work of Foreign Service Officers, particularly, but not exclusively those posted abroad.

In this issue we have a mix of features covering issues and events. From a historical perspective we have a piece by John Halstead, a distinguished Foreign Service Officer who served on a number of occasions as a Head of Mission, most notably to the then Federal Republic of Germany from 1975 to 1980 and then as Permanent Representative to the North Atlantic Council (NATO) from 1980 to 1982. His piece on the 40th anniversary of NATO makes gripping reading. For those of us who are the children of immigrants, as I am, Ken Neufeld’s reminiscences of being the odd child and teenager in his high school will resonate. We also have a piece from PAFSO President Pamela Isfeld providing an update on issues related to MSH International and the Public Service Health Care Plan.

Derek Burney has penned a tribute to Brian Mulroney. Not an obituary but written from the perspective of the former Prime Minister’s Chief of Staff, a tribute to the Foreign Service and the many Foreign Service Officers (yes, names are included) for whom he had a high regard. We also include an excerpt from a recently published book, *Supervising a Peace That Never Was*, on the International Control Commission in what was then called Indochina, a tour of duty fulfilled by many new entrants to the Foreign Service in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Turning to the world of today’s Foreign Service we have a piece by Kate MacKenzie on diplomatic partners and the challenges of managing a rotational lifestyle when one of the partners is not a member of the foreign service. Holly Jacobs has penned a very moving piece, “Trans/Mission” on her very personal experience transitioning, set in part in our Embassy in Washington, DC.

Over the summer we were able to hire a wonderful student, Karyss Hancock-Hore, to digitize the inventory of issues of **bout de papier** dating back to the 1970s. Karyss, with a fresh set of eyes on all the back issues, has written a feature article on what struck her most as an undergraduate student with an interest in international affairs.

On issues of policy, the deputy editor-in-chief of **bout**, Zal Karkaria, has written an opinion piece, making a convincing case that there should be more cross-pollination, through assignments and interchanges, between Foreign Service Officers working for IRCC and those in the four streams housed at Global Affairs Canada.

Rounding out the issue we have an “exit interview” with Robin Wettlaufer, who has not left the Foreign Service, but has left PAFSO, having been promoted to the EX ranks. And a book review on the very timely issue of global human smuggling by Zal Karkaria, whose career with IRCC has given him a wealth of insight into this subject, which is growing and expanding globally.

Our inimitable food columnist, Lisa Bitto, has turned her mind to the ultimate comfort food for many of us, namely a hot, well-made pizza. In addition to providing a culinary history, she also provides a recipe for pizza dough you can make at home, probably no matter where you happen to be at this time. And A Aalto has done it again – a complex puzzle full of more twists and turns than you can count.

If I may finish with a plea. We are always looking for contributions from readers. Pieces from serving Foreign Service Officers, their partners, their adolescent dependents – all are welcome and, indeed, needed. We are trying to ensure that **bout** reaches not only the members of the Foreign Service community but that it is read – or at least glanced at – by senior officials including parliamentarians as part of ongoing and continuous advocacy on behalf of Canada’s foreign service. Happy reading and please do not hesitate to send suggestions and comments to bdp_editor@pafso.com. Thank you!

PAFSO Turns 60



Pam Isfeld
President, PAFSO // Présidente de l’APASE

AS PRESIDENT OF PAFSO, it was a great pleasure to chair our 59th Annual General Meeting on October 21. In addition to welcoming Ashely Durec, Trish Chang, Marc-André Desmarais, and Zach Campbell to our Executive Committee, we also adopted our second-ever strategic plan. The new plan will guide us through the celebration of our 60th anniversary and into the next phase of our growth and development. It reflects our commitment to protecting and representing our members, advocating for the value of the professional Foreign Service, and ensuring that PAFSO remains strong, united, and well-governed.

The key elements of the 2025–28 plan are:

1. Protect and Represent

Our first priority is to continue protecting and representing you, our members. As we look ahead to negotiating our next collective bargaining agreement in 2026, we remain focused on ensuring your needs are met in every aspect of labour relations. We will also work tirelessly to safeguard your health and safety and seek beneficial conditions of service for both you and your families. The existing Foreign Service Directives provide a strong foundation, but we are also exploring other mechanisms that could enhance support – both within and beyond current frameworks.

2. Advocate and Engage

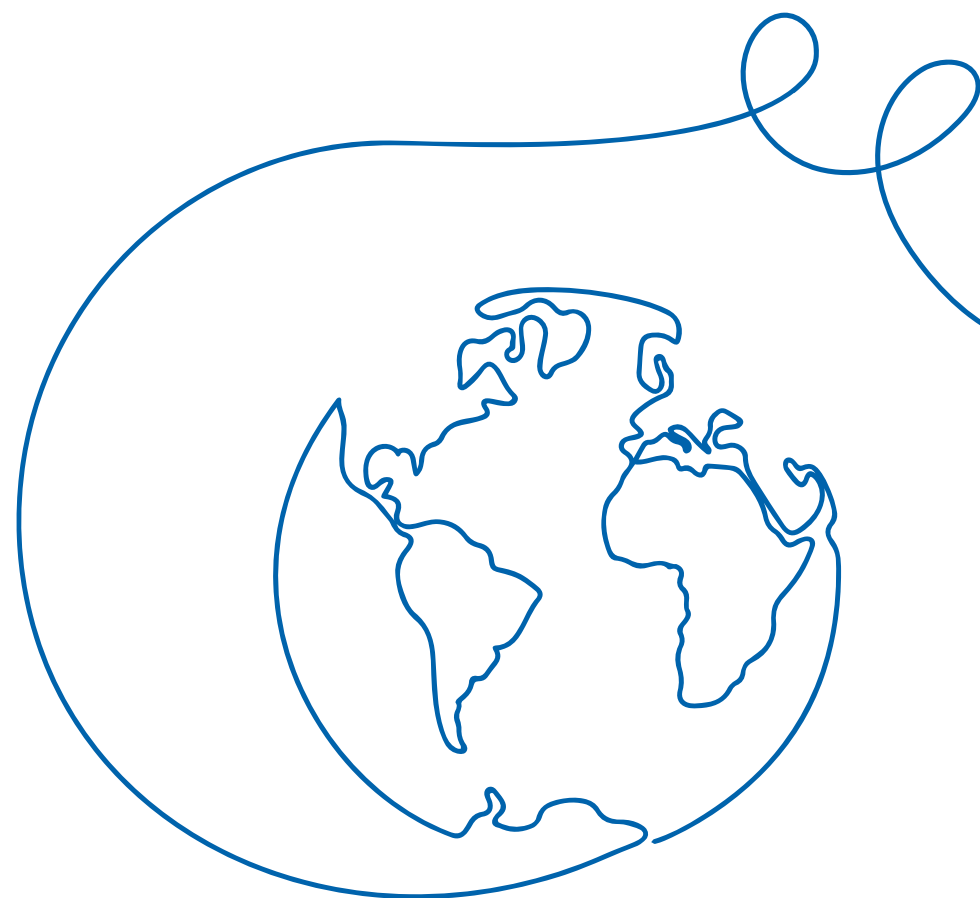
In addition to protecting members, PAFSO is committed to ensuring our profession’s contributions are widely recognized and valued. We will continue to advocate for the professional Foreign Service and the broad Foreign Service community in targeted, strategic ways – engaging with the public, media, and key decision-makers on key issues such as health insurance abroad (which I discuss elsewhere in this issue). As we prepare to celebrate PAFSO60, we have a unique opportunity to highlight our role outside our traditional circles, building broad public support and awareness for the work we do on behalf of Canada and Canadians.

3. Govern and Operate

Lastly, we are committed to maintaining excellence in governance, operations, and financial management. We will continue to follow best practices in these areas, ensuring that PAFSO speaks with a unified voice that reflects the diversity of our membership. We will also ensure that our internal operations evolve with the needs of our members, providing you with the best possible support.

We are excited to embark on this journey together, and we look forward to working with our members, including by telling your stories here in **bout de papier**, to celebrate our past and build an even stronger future for PAFSO and the professional Foreign Service for the next 60 years.





ZAL KARKARIA has been a Foreign Service Officer with IRCC for 17 years. He has been posted to Nairobi, New Delhi, and London and has undertaken various assignments at IRCC headquarters. Last year, he joined the **bout de papier** team as Associate Editor-in-Chief.

ADVICE FROM FARAWAY PLACES // CONSEILS VENUS DE LOIN

Ping-pong Diplomacy

Zal Karkaria

Deputy Editor-in-Chief // Rédacteur en chef adjoint

IN MY 20 YEARS AT IRCC I've engaged in many a cathartic gripe-fest with colleagues in relation to mysterious creatures whose habits and mannerisms we find difficult to comprehend: our Foreign Service cousins at GAC. "How can they be so obstinate/naïve/pushy?" the refrain might go, concluding with a shake of the head and the conclusion that they "just don't get it", whatever "it" may be.

Before GAC readers begin drafting angry letters to **bout**, a plea for self-reflection. Admit it – you have the same catty convos about us.

This "IRCC is from Mars, GAC is from Venus" perception is normal coming from departments with such different mandates. But maybe there are ways to reduce the divide. If, in the early 1970s,

China and the US were able to organize a tension-reducing sports tournament as part of what was famously dubbed "Ping-pong Diplomacy", perhaps two departments separated by a ribbon of pot-holed road can find a pathway to greater understanding. While a table tennis tournament would be great fun, how about, instead, a formal exchange of officers every year?

However, when an IRCC staffing official was asked in a recent conversation about the possibility of an FS officer undertaking a temporary assignment with GAC, the response was pessimistic: that would be a "heavy lift". And to be fair, in the absence of a formal exchange program between two gargantuan bureaucracies, it probably would be. But it shouldn't. A "heavy lift" is organizing a sporting

event between enemy countries, ideologically opposed and lacking diplomatic relations. An exchange program between departments of the same government – departments that work closely together on a range of issues, including the now seemingly constant need for crisis response – is, in fact, a relatively straightforward way of improving interdepartmental cooperation.

All joking aside, this is a critical issue. There are fundamental misconceptions between IRCC and GAC as to our mandates, limitations, and priorities. IRCC is a highly operational department bound by regulations, policies, and program directives that (for the most part) apply to all foreign nationals equally. These can seem inflexible to the outsider but represent the foundation of a fair immigration program that processes millions of visa applications a year. By contrast, GAC operates on a diplomatic playing field involving untold unwritten rules that vary depending on one's interlocuter. This could be anyone from a State Department trade official to an Egyptian intelligence officer to an Indonesian mining executive. The potential for misunderstanding between departments is clear and does play out from time to time.

Having more officers capable of decoding the rules of the other's department could reduce these misunderstandings. They could not only allow for a more coherent approach to complex global issues but also improve and accelerate cooperation, for

example in the case of fast-moving responses to crises. These have multiplied since the onset of the pandemic in 2020 – think Afghanistan, Sudan, Israel/Gaza, Haiti – often involving complex assisted departure operations that require close interdepartmental collaboration. Having had direct involvement in many of these efforts as a temporary embed with the GAC Watch Centre, I've had the good fortune to work with and learn from tireless GAC colleagues working 24/7 responding to people in distress. But these are adrenaline-fuelled assignments, thrown together at the last minute. Why not have an exchange of officers mandated to work systematically on long-term, inter-departmental crisis response planning? This is just one example.

An annual exchange of officers is also a cost-neutral investment in employee learning and development. As I've written previously, Canada's Foreign Service must demonstrate that it can adapt to remain relevant. This small, silo-busting endeavour is just such an initiative. While acknowledging the bureaucratic challenges, surely our departments' finest HR minds can find a way to swap a few boxes between org charts in order to make this happen.

But until then, I'm happy to talk shop with any of my GAC colleagues in a more informal setting: you find us a ping-pong table, I'll bring the paddles and ball. [bdp](#)

Through the Eyes of *bout de papier*

A BRIEF HISTORY OF FOUR DECADES
OF CANADA'S FOREIGN SERVICE

by Karyss Hancock-Hore

This year, I was fortunate enough to work with PAFSO as a summer student to assist with a huge archival project for *bout de papier*. My main task was to create a digital archive of the magazine, while also picking out articles for an upcoming book project celebrating PAFSO's 60th anniversary. So, after 10 weeks and only two papercuts, I read, scanned, and catalogued 119 magazines covering approximately 43 years of global events.

EACH MAGAZINE IS LIKE A SNAPSHOT of a moment in time offering insight into Canada's place in the world. Throughout each decade, certain topics dominated the articles – many were unique to their period and others seemed to transcend time. While some decades focused on exactly what I expected, others held plenty of surprises. With this article, I constructed a comprehensive but compact look at our magazine throughout its four decades of existence – read on to understand the world through the eyes of *bout de papier*!

The 1980s Mulroney, Globalization and the imminent fall of the USSR

For *bout de papier*, the 80s were marked by an interest in Brian Mulroney and Joe Clark. Plenty of criticism was levied towards the Mulroney government, particularly surrounding political appointments, the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement, and American dependency. In 1986, Eric Keirans wrote his article, "We Must Protect Our Differences", where he dissected the basic theories of free trade like David Ricardo's theory of comparative advantage which argues that free trade is not truly free. Keirans reflected on Great Britain's early participation in free trade in 1846 when it was the global power and showed that the United States followed a similar path after World War II when it was the largest industrial power. In doing so, Keirans illustrated the inherent power dynamic of free trade agreements and raised concerns over how the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement would affect Canada's sovereignty. I also found these concerns reflected in the feature articles from Canadian companies like Ontario Hydro and TVO.

Concerns over the Free Trade Agreement speak to the era. Globalization as we understand it was just beginning, Canada was emerging as a middle power and further establishing its independence from the British Empire, and Western powers were beginning to out-source their labour to Eastern countries. It's strange to consider how attitudes have changed; while globalization was a relatively new idea in the 1980s, today it is the status quo.

Another important topic during this era was, unsurprisingly, the USSR. In *bout de papier*, the perceptions of the Soviet threat level varied, but overall, I get the sense that our contributors understood that the Soviet Union would not last much longer, and subsequently there was a focus on international cooperation (or international assimilation depending on how you look at it) through trade and trade agreements. At the time, many countries were cutting ties with the Soviet Union, or gaining their independence from it, and the West jumped on the opportunity to have them join the capitalist international market.

In "Christopher Bertram on Future Foreign Policy Challenges" (1998), Don Page recounts a talk Bertram gave at the Canadian Institute of International Affairs on foreign policy in the 21st century. In his talk, Bertram imagined the international landscape at the beginning of the 21st century. He confidently argued that the USSR would no longer be a threat by the 2000s, noting that Gorbachev's policies were becoming more Western, and the Soviets were becoming less interested in proxy conflicts. Bertram also remarked that the instability of Eastern Europe in the 1980s was Europe's greatest security threat and called for North America to pay more

attention to the issue. Furthermore, he predicted that nuclear deterrence was going to remain a key feature of international security.

Interestingly, many of the authors and interviewees drew comparisons to the work they had done during World War II and the early years of the Cold War, placing the ongoing situation in the context of their previous experience. In 1987, *bout de papier* asked four retired Canadian diplomats – George Grande, John Halstead, John Holmes, and George Ignatieff – to read George F. Kennan's theory on containment and reflect on it in "Containment: Forty Years Later." This article further demonstrated the changing tides of the 1980s. For example, George Grande remarked that internationally, countries were beginning to understand that security involved more than military power. The retired diplomat also argued that deterrence theory and containment could not be the way forward for de-escalating conflicts.

Overall, the pages of *bout de papier* indicate that the 1980s were a time of bridge building. Canada-US relations continued to grow (for better or for worse), and the post-WWII emphasis on international cooperation through soft power methods instead of hard military power – a trend that would continue into the 1990s post-Cold War – was ever-present.

The 1990s New ideas and a new golden age

At the risk of sounding like my parents, the 1990s were a great time for Canada. They were also a very busy time internationally. The Golden Age of Diplomacy was in the 1960s, but from what I read in *bout de papier*, Canada achieved plenty of diplomatic success in the post-Cold War decade, even with budget cuts. The focus on trade agreements as a form of international cooperation continued into the 90s, and Canada embraced its soft power potential. For instance, in "The Upper North Side: Canada in New York," Kevin O'Shea and Bernard Etzinger outlined how they hosted events at the Canadian Consulate to promote Canadian culture and trade, making Canada seem cool to New Yorkers in the process. Furthermore, Canada established economic relationships with up-and-coming economic partners like Latin America and Asia Pacific (Prime Minister Jean Chrétien even dubbed 1997 Canada's Year of Asia Pacific). David Bickford reflected on the economic rise of Latin America in "The Americas on the Brink." He examined Canada's relationship with the area, as well as the country's 1990 admittance to Organization of American States (OAS).

Additionally, Canada became one of the key advocates for international human rights. In his article "Canada in the New World Disorder" (1997), J.H. Taylor posited how Canada's international role might change in the aftermath of the Cold War. The author noted that Canada had already demonstrated a willingness to participate in human rights conflicts and believed that would remain the case going forward.

The 1990s was also characterized by the integration of new countries into Western Systems, but in *bout*, there was a greater focus on UN peacekeeping operations aimed at establishing democracies. With the fall of the USSR, the Soviet satellite states and countries with Soviet relations were newly open for the West. In Peter Zalite's



Soviet and Russian flags fly over the Kremlin in December of 1991, just days before the fall of the Soviet Union.

article “Latvia in Transition: the Price of Freedom” (1999), he looked at how Latvia had to rely on external sources to help establish a functioning democracy and integrate its economy into the international system. He also flagged an interesting disconnect – since there were so many newly independent states, external actors were overwhelmed, and did not have the resources to offer tailored solutions that truly reflected the situation in Latvia. Instead, external actors relied on policies that worked in other countries. Zalite argued that applying a “catch all” approach to democracy establishment made Latvia vulnerable – if the foundation was poor, anything built on it would crack. Furthermore, Zalite argued that by imposing policies and institutions that did not suit the needs of the country, Western powers would add fodder to anti-Western sentiments.

While many articles spoke to the importance of establishing democracy in newly independent countries, others questioned the practice outright – I found these writings particularly helpful in better understanding the current West/East conflict. I’m sure we all agree that democracy and human rights are ideal, but when an external power comes in and imposes it on another, what does that do to the country’s sovereignty? Cindy Kleinman wrote an article in the early 2000s titled “Sovereignty in the Age of Cholera” (2001) where she examined this exact predicament and argued that human rights are often used to justify these international interventions – a theme that is still prevalent today.

Non-government actors (like NGOs or transnational corporations) also came into focus in the 1990s –

their role on the international stage was a frequent topic of discussion in our pages. In his article, “World Conference on Human Rights: Vienna, June 1993” (2002), James R. Trottier reflected on the large presence of NGOs at the Vienna conference. Trottier explored how NGOs impacted conference dynamics, noting that Canada advocated for their inclusion and supported NGOs during event.

The 1990s also saw the first mention of the environment and environmental policies in **bout de papier**. The UN’s Earth Summit and its outcomes were related back to the collapse of the Soviet Union, as the 1992 summit was focused on sustainability in the post-Cold War era. In John Bell’s article “The Earth Summit” (1993) he recalls Maurice Strong’s (Secretary General of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development) closing remarks. In many ways, Strong’s comments encapsulated the decade – he stated that international cooperation (diplomatic and economic) and sustainability had been forever changed.

Writers also focused on domestic matters, showing a new concern for different minority groups. Same-sex couples were a newly common topic (LGBT+ had seemingly not yet entered the popular vocabulary). Authors examined problems related to the alienation of same sex workers in the workplace, the lack of safe spaces for minorities within the government, and spousal benefits for same sex partners.

Quebec, la francophonie, and the Canadian identity were also discussed due to the rising tensions and the 1995 Quebec referendum. James Reed wrote an article, “Alone in North America” (1992) reflecting on the Conference on Canadian Foreign Policy (1991) where academics and representatives questioned Canada’s and Quebec’s, role internationally. His article drew on many different perspectives and highlighted the vast complexities of Canada–Quebec relations. Reed recalled words from Ivan Bernier, a representative from the Centre québécois de relations internationales. Bernier referred to Quebec as having “quasi-diplomatic” representation – a unique feature in Canadian diplomacy. This perspective invoked the view of Canada as a cultural mosaic, but what I find more interesting is that it recognized the importance of Quebec’s French character and allowed for Quebec to have some international recognition for its efforts in preserving its language and culture.

If the 1980s were bridge building, the 1990s were bridge maintenance and damage control. Canada continued to build and maintain its international position, and domestically began to reconcile with minority groups. As far as damage control is concerned, the fall of the USSR caused a massive restructuring of Eastern Europe and Soviet allied states which called on the West to assist in the rebuilding and plan for a stronger, more collaborative future.

The 2000s 9/11 out of focus?

As I reached the 2000s, I expected to enter the War on Terror era and anticipated that **bout de papier** would focus heavily on the Middle East, but that was not the case at all. To my surprise, I didn’t see any mention of 9/11 in the 2000s volumes. While the Middle East was a hot topic prior to the events of September 2001, afterwards, it seemed as though the topic was being tiptoed around.

In hindsight, it’s possible that speaking about 9/11 directly after the event would have been premature as its repercussions were unfolding in real time. Even though this critical conflict was overlooked in the pages of **bout de papier**, it seemed as though 9/11 still indirectly shaped the pages of our magazine. Instead of focusing on the Middle East, **bout de papier** authors took interest in the multifaceted Canada–US relationship, examining topics like Canadian–American economic relations, American views on Canada, and Canadian independence from the United States.

Conflict was also still a primary area of interest with many authors focusing on the topic through the lens of peacekeeping. Oftentimes, our writers seemed to make the case that UN peacekeeping operations had failed to adapt to the changing dynamics of conflict. Lester B. Pearson created the UN peacekeepers in the 1960s, when country versus country conflict reigned supreme. But as the globe shifted toward intra-state conflicts in the 1990s and 2000s, many worried that peacekeeping was ill-equipped for the times.

In “Peacekeeping: The Dynamics of Structural Rigidities” (2000), Stephen Moffat, Ulric Shannon, and Alan Bones offer a clear explanation of this difference. In its simplest terms, their view was that inter-state conflict had political or territorial motivations, whereas intra-state conflict was often economically motivated. The authors argued that negotiation was not as effective in economically motivated situations, as the instigator could thrive in the instability they created. Another key difference was that in inter-state conflicts, UN peacekeeping operations assisted in negotiations as a neutral third party. By contrast, UN peacekeeping in intra-state conflict became far more complex and slow moving: in addition to being involved in negotiations, the UN also became involved in rebuilding institutions, a complicated mission requiring cooperation from multiple organizations and departments.

Authors still demonstrated concern about environmental issues and Canada’s geopolitical positioning in the world, and some worried that Canada was not maximizing its soft power capabilities.

Many 2000s articles also examined the secret service and intelligence, with some authors providing a historical analysis on the role of the Foreign Service in intelligence operations during World War, as well as the historical intelligence relations between Canada and the US. To me, this perhaps reads as another way that the unspoken events of 2000s shaped the pages of **bout de papier**.

Overall, there was a distinct shift in tone in the 2000s – the institutions for peace were losing the unflappable image they had constructed in prior decades, and the pages of **bout de papier** were coloured with a degree of pessimism.

The 2010s and 2020s Familiar issues

From the perspective **bout de papier** provides, the 2010s were also defined by conflict. There was a renewal of interest in the Middle East as our contributors were starting to examine the events that followed 9/11 from a place of greater distance. Some contributors spoke to their experience in the Middle East during the 2000s and 2010s. For instance, in Richard Kohler’s article, “Bob Fowler’s Season in Hell” (2011), he offers a summary of Fowler’s book *Season in Hell: My 130 Days in the Sahara with Al Qaeda*, walking readers through Fowler’s experience over those 130 days. Pakistan came into focus in this context through Lieutenant-General Talat Masood’s article, “Pakistan and the Aftermath of 9/11: What the West Fails to See” (2011). Masood offered a look at Pakistan’s history and highlighted the fragility of the institutions within the country.

In the same vein, democracy promotion was also a key feature of the 2010s editions of **bout de papier**, especially in the Middle East and Islamic Africa. Ben Rowswell

At 8:46 am on Tuesday, September 11, 2001 Flight 175 hits the South Tower.






Fragmented World in 2021” (2021), he highlighted how Western attitudes towards China were souring. He also discussed the fragmentation of international institutions while pointing out that Canada had an opportunity to play an active role in their rebuilding.

In the 2020s, authors also began to focus on democratic backsliding, which I find particularly interesting when contrasted to the 2010s, a period where writers focused on democracy promotion. In “The Decline of Democracy in the World: The Crisis and Its Implications” (2021), B.G. Ramcharan used China and Russia to highlight this backslide, suggesting democratic societies could provide greater support to democratic activists in these countries. This calls back to Kinsman’s article, and further underlines the need for cohesive collaboration through international institutions to remedy democratic backsliding.

I would be happy to continue writing about **bout de papier** and what I learned by reading through its pages, but I’m afraid I’ve already gone well beyond my word count. Before I started at PAFSO, I had a very small understanding of what diplomacy meant in real terms. The extent of what I learned through my international relations class was “when two countries like each other, they establish embassies.” Through **bout de papier**, I was able to recognize different facets of diplomacy and their evolution over the years, whether that be Cold War containment theory, fear of free trade, or democracy establishment and promotion.

While **bout de papier**’s writers navigated a vast array of topics, concepts, and geographic areas of focus, throughout its four decades, one idea remained consistent: our world is entirely intertwined. Globalization is not a new feature, and not too long ago we learned just how connected we all are, even while six feet apart. International cooperation is truly the throughline this magazine’s history.

Our contributors have never been shy about providing a critical eye to our international practices and institutions. However, their work has also shown that while these practices may not always succeed and these institutions may not operate as effectively as they should, Canada must renew and maintain its commitment to diplomacy. My hope is that **bout de papier** will continue to be one effective institution in a better more cooperative world. So now, please continue to use these pages as a platform to explore new ideas, to present fresh critiques, and of course, to continue logging the history of PAFSO and Canada’s foreign service. 

KARYSS HANCOCK-HORE is a fourth year French immersion student at the University of Ottawa studying a Joint Honours BA in Political Science and History. During the Winter 2024 term she and her colleagues assisted the Embassy of Mexico in analyzing the strengths, weaknesses, and providing recommendations for the Seasonal Agriculture Worker Program (SAWP).

offered his perspective in “Democracy and the Digital Revolution” (2012), where he examined social media as a tool for democracy promotion.

Much like in the 1990s, authors once again examined the role of third party actors. In the article “Private Military Companies Under International Law: Combatants or Civilians?” (2013), Peter McRae argued that the status of private military companies existed was lacking in clarity, and he offered several solutions this problem. Notably, he suggested Canada take on this dilemma to re-assert itself as a leading diplomatic power.

Finally, that brings us to the 2020s.

Even though we’re nearly halfway through the decade, it’s hard to discuss this period without speaking about the pandemic. So far, a key focus of **bout de papier** has been the impact of COVID-19 on those working abroad. Many authors wrote about the trials and tribulations of the pandemic, relating their experiences working under constantly changing circumstances. However, others focused on positive aspects. In “Hello from Delhi” (2023), Martina Stvan touched on both sides, walking readers through some of the unforeseen perks of lockdown in India (like low levels of air pollution) but also providing a breakdown of the organizational skills required to help Canadians leave the country at the height of the pandemic.

The Middle East remains one of the most discussed geographical areas; however, China also came into focus in the 2020s, especially following the Two Michaels incident in 2021. In Jeremy Kinsman’s article, “A Saner, Less

On the evening of 24 March 2020, the government of India ordered a nationwide lockdown for 21 days.

FEATURE // REPORTAGE

Un abus de confiance

par Pam Isfeld



PAM ISFELD est une agente du Service extérieur de carrière et présidente de l’APASE. En plus de ses missions à Kaboul et à Kandahar, elle a également servi à Moscou, Nairobi, Sarajevo et Varsovie.

UNE DES TÂCHES QUE JE PRÉFÈRE comme présidente de l’Association professionnelle des agents du Service extérieur (l’APASE), c’est l’accueil des nouvelles recrues. Ces personnes brillantes et talentueuses, mettent leurs compétences et leur énergie au service d’une profession qui exige l’excellence, souvent dans des conditions difficiles et dangereuses. Et pourtant, alors que j’étais debout face à une salle bondée de nouveaux arrivants à Affaires mondiales Canada, mon cœur a cessé de battre lorsque les questions ont commencé à porter sur MSH International et l’administration du Régime de soins de santé de la Fonction publique (RSSFP) à l’étranger. J’ai dû les regarder droit dans les yeux et leur dire quelque chose qui m’aurait paru inconcevable quand j’ai joint le service extérieur il y a 31 ans : l’employeur qui les a recrutés n’est pas disposé à leur offrir le régime d’assurance-santé fonctionnel dont ils ont besoin pour se protéger, eux et leur famille, durant leurs affectations à l’étranger.

Ce qui aurait dû être une discussion enthousiaste sur les joies et les aléas de notre profession est devenue une confrontation avec la dure réalité au moment où je leur ai expliqué que l’entreprise chargée d’administrer leur régime d’assurance-santé manque gravement à ses devoirs envers eux et que le gouvernement du Canada refuse d’assumer la responsabilité de remédier à cette défaillance. Au lieu de responsabilisation, nous n’avons vu rien d’autre que des mesures symboliques et des renvois de la balle entre l’employeur et Canada Vie, puis MSH International, alors que la situation met en danger la vie et le

gagne-pain de personnes. Cela s’inscrit dans une tendance du gouvernement du Canada à se soustraire à ses responsabilités en les refilant à des sous-traitants, ce qui est devenu manifeste avec Phénix – qui nous hante toujours neuf ans plus tard – et qui doit cesser.

Une défaillance en temps de crise

Depuis le passage de l’administration du RSSFP de Sun Life et de sa sous-traitante, Allianz, à Canada Vie et à MSH International en juillet 2023, nous avons vu, cas après cas, des membres de l’APASE et autres dans la communauté du Service extérieur se voir refuser la protection de base du régime d’assurance-santé, bien que leurs cotisations soient quand même retenues à la source. Pouvez-vous imaginer avoir besoin de soins d’urgence, apprendre qu’il vous faut des tests de toute urgence et être renvoyé parce que votre assureur ne peut pas confirmer votre protection? Ou être hospitalisé dans un pays étranger et apprendre que vous avez besoin d’une deuxième procédure, mais que vous devez passer des journées supplémentaires dans une unité de soins intensifs – à grands frais en période de pandémie –, parce qu’il est impossible de joindre l’entreprise pour obtenir son autorisation? Si je semble fâchée, c’est que je le suis – ces personnes se trouvent dans un pays étranger, elles sont vulnérables et nécessitent des soins médicaux essentiels, tout ça pour se rendre compte que leurs réseaux vitaux faillissent à leurs devoirs envers eux.

Même des personnes qui sont capables de puiser dans leurs goussets ou d'obtenir de l'aide sous forme de prêt d'AMC, puis soumettent des demandes de règlement de frais pour des traitements dont ils ont eu besoin, ont déclaré s'être butés à toute une série de refus arbitraires. Nos membres nous signalent que des demandes de règlement sont rejetées de toute part pour aucun motif valable. Ils se font dire que leurs procédures médicales ou leurs médicaments nécessaires ne sont « pas couverts », même si ces services font explicitement partie intégrante du régime. Face à cette négligence institutionnelle, ils sont obligés de perdre énormément de temps à contester ces refus. J'ai entendu parler de membres qui ont dû scruter leur régime de soins de santé de manière plus approfondie que les propres employés de la société d'assurance payée pour l'administrer, puis assumer le fardeau de renseigner ces employés.

Un cauchemar bureaucratique

Ce fardeau additionnel de surveiller les erreurs, les malentendus et la mésinformation de la société d'assurance est particulièrement flagrant. Les membres de l'APASE, qui sont censés se concentrer sur leur mission de servir le Canada et les Canadiens et les Canadiennes à l'étranger, consacrent des heures – et parfois des jours – à combattre le système. Les employés de l'assureur, qui connaissent scandaleusement mal les modalités du régime, donnent constamment de la mauvaise information, ce qui oblige nos membres à contre-vérifier chaque détail, à intensifier chaque problème et, essentiellement, à effectuer le travail à leur place. Il suffit déjà que certains membres aient signalé avoir dû faire reporter d'importantes consultations médicales et que d'autres se soient sentis dissuadés de postuler des affectations à l'étranger.

L'APASE a également été obligée d'assumer le fardeau du suivi des dossiers afin de vérifier les affirmations de MSH International. Par exemple, il y a quelques jours, nous avons reçu un rapport du Secrétariat du Conseil du Trésor dans lequel il est déclaré que MSH n'avait aucune demande de règlement datant de plus de 30 jours. Comme cela semblait peu vraisemblable, j'ai posé la question par l'intermédiaire du groupe Facebook du Service extérieur et, en moins de huit heures, j'avais reçu des réponses de 52 membres dont les demandes de règlement remontent à aussi loin que juillet 2023. Notre siège social possède aussi des dossiers exhaustifs sur plusieurs demandes de règlement remontant à plus de 12 mois. Cette information aurait été accessible à l'employeur s'il avait fait preuve d'un minimum de diligence pour vérifier les affirmations de l'entreprise. (Vous ne serez pas choqués d'apprendre que ma demande visant à obtenir un plan de la méthode de vérification du SCT reste sans réponse au moment d'écrire ces lignes.)

Personne d'entre nous n'a jamais voulu s'embarquer dans une telle galère. Ce n'est pas comme cela que les membres du service extérieur du Canada devraient être traités par un employeur qui s'est engagé à leur fournir un filet de sécurité et non pas à les empêtrer dans un cauchemar bureaucratique. Ces professionnels travaillent dans des environnements difficiles, très stressants, parfois à des milliers de kilomètres de leur foyer, et ils méritent à tout le moins de savoir que le gouvernement du Canada s'occupe de leur santé au meilleur de sa capacité.

L'APASE agit

L'APASE ne reste pas là les bras croisés. Elle a pris d'importantes mesures pour lutter contre ces injustices pour le compte de ses membres. Premièrement, elle a présenté un grief de principe, dénonçant les nombreux cas de violation du régime d'assurance-santé et exigeant des mesures correctives immédiates. L'employeur a

réagi par le silence au grief. Son refus de reconnaître la gravité de ces enjeux ne contribue qu'à empirer les choses.

Conscients qu'il s'agissait là de bien plus qu'un simple enjeu de relations de travail, nous avons intensifié notre lutte en déposant des plaintes auprès de la Commission canadienne des droits de la personne. Ces plaintes ciblent tant le gouvernement du Canada que la MSH International pour leurs violations des droits fondamentaux de la personne. Le déni de soins de santé, en particulier dans des situations d'urgence, ne constitue pas simplement une rupture de contrat – c'est du non-respect de la décence la plus élémentaire de l'être humain et il entraîne des répercussions sans commune mesure sur les familles et les personnes handicapées. Le gouvernement du Canada ne peut pas s'en laver les mains et refuser sa responsabilité en sous-traitant son obligation de diligence à un assureur incompétent.

Malgré ces efforts, la situation reste sans solution. Face à l'irresponsabilité du gouvernement du Canada, nous venons de prendre une mesure audacieuse, soit la présentation d'une requête en ordonnance de mandamus. Cette action en justice a pour objet d'obliger le gouvernement à remplir ses obligations juridiques envers ses fonctionnaires et les membres de leur famille en réglant cette situation désastreuse une fois pour toutes. Nous exigeons que le tribunal ordonne au gouvernement d'intervenir, de prendre le contrôle et de garantir que nos membres jouissent d'un régime d'assurance-santé adéquat jusqu'à ce que cette défaillance systémique soit réglée. Nous avons également demandé que, dans la prise de décision concernant cet enjeu, la priorité soit accordée à la santé et à la sécurité des membres et de leur famille.

Nous ne pouvons pas continuer à attendre que MSH International se réveille; le gouvernement doit prendre les commandes et faire fonctionner le système. L'heure n'est plus, depuis longtemps, aux demi-mesures ni aux vaines promesses.

Le temps est venu de trouver une solution

Je dois l'avouer : avant que cet enjeu ne s'intensifie, la mention de la protection d'assurance présentait peu d'intérêt à mes yeux. Cependant, il ne s'agit pas simplement de paperasserie ou de surveillance administrative. Il s'agit de vies – d'êtres humains qui servent leur pays à l'étranger, souvent à leurs risques et périls et à ceux de leur famille. Le défaut du gouvernement du Canada de garantir qu'ils obtiennent une protection d'assurance-santé adéquate, que ce soit par l'intermédiaire de MSH International ou autrement, constitue un abus de confiance à l'égard de nos membres, de leur santé et sécurité et de leur dignité.

L'APASE ne peut pas permettre que cette situation perdure et elle ne le permettra pas. La communauté du Service extérieur, sans compter le contribuable canadien, mérite mieux, et nous continuerons à lutter sur tous les fronts possibles – par des griefs de principe, des plaintes portant sur les droits de la personne et, à présent, devant les tribunaux. Nous avons pris l'engagement de faire en sorte que le gouvernement soit tenu pour responsable de cette défaillance – il ne faut pas qu'elle devienne un autre Phénix.

À nos nouvelles recrues, je dirai ceci : nous luttons pour vous. Vous ne devriez jamais avoir à craindre que vous ou les membres de votre famille ne puissiez pas obtenir des soins médicaux essentiels durant vos affectations au service du Canada et des Canadiens et des Canadiennes à l'étranger. Ce n'est pas votre responsabilité. Nous allons continuer à vous défendre jusqu'à ce que le problème soit réglé et que vous – et tous les membres dévoués, actuels et futurs, du Service extérieur du Canada – obtiennent la protection, les soins et le respect qu'ils méritent. [bcp](#)

FEATURE // REPORTAGE

NATO: Does Life Begin at 40?

by John Halstead

This piece was originally published in 1989, in **bout de papier** volume 7 number 1, to mark the 40-year anniversary of NATO. Now, with NATO in its 75th year, we hope this article will yield brand new insights.

THIS IS A YEAR of many anniversaries. 50 years ago, the most destructive war the world has ever seen broke out. 44 years ago, VE- and VJ-Days marked the end of that war, and with it the emergence of a new bipolar world order. 40 years ago, the North Atlantic Treaty was signed, giving clear warning to the Soviet Union that further encroachment on the Western democracies would be met by force and sealing an historic new commitment by the United States, as leader of the free world, to transatlantic co-operation and collective defence.

Taken together these events confirmed dramatically the truth, hitherto only dimly perceived, of two important lessons. The first was that it costs

infinitely more to fight a war than to prevent one. And the second was that the security of Europe and that of North America are inextricably linked and can be decoupled only at the peril of both. To these lessons, NATO has added a new concept, stability, which depends as much on political as on military means. Hence NATO's "two-track" policy (as elaborated in the Harmel Report of 1967) of defence/deterrence and dialogue/détente. NATO has thus been able to avoid the mistakes leading up to World War I, when there was too much defence and not enough dialogue, as well as those leading up to World War II, when there was too much dialogue and not enough defence.

These lessons bear repeating, because our collective memory tends to be very short and a majority of our population has no personal experience of the events leading up to the creation of NATO – events which had as much to do with two world wars as with the Soviet threat. It also bears repeating that the Alliance has done well the job for which it was created. For 40 years, it has secured peace in freedom for its members, while countless conflicts have raged in the rest of the world. But 40 can be a difficult time of life, with risks of middle-age complacency and hardening of the arteries of communication. It should, therefore, be a time of taking stock.

The challenges NATO has had to face over the years have been as much internal as external. Differences of power, perception, and policy have often strained the transatlantic dialogue. Divergences have arisen over how to maintain the nuclear deterrent (the European allies wanting to tie NATO's defence in Europe as closely as possible to the US strategic deterrent, the Americans wishing to make the link discretionary); how to reconcile defence cooperation with economic competition (the European allies accusing the Americans of mismanaging the economy, the Americans complaining that they are carrying an unfair share of the defence burden, and both sides charging the other with protectionism); and how to deal with the Soviet Union (the European allies wishing to avoid confrontation which might deepen the division of Europe, the Americans giving priority to showing resolve). While the Alliance has shown remarkable resilience under these tensions in the past, it cannot simply be assumed that in future the allies will always weigh their shared interests as more important than those which divide them, or that they will continue to regard the Alliance as the best available means to secure those shared interests at acceptable cost and risk. It is no longer enough for the allies to know what they are against; they must now define more clearly what they are for.

NATO's very success is now one of its problems. It has led some people to overlook the causes and to take the results for granted as self-generating. They think that, since there has been no fire for so long, it is no longer necessary to pay the fire insurance premium. For others, NATO's success means that yesterday's fire prevention methods will continue to be effective against tomorrow's fires. They fail to see that the elements which have secured peace so far have to be constantly renewed and adapted to the changing international environment. And today that environment is in greater flux than at any time since 1945.

It is no longer enough for the allies to know what they are against; they must now define more clearly what they are for

For one thing the post-war world of the two superpowers has yielded to a more diffused multipolar pattern, with the rise of other power centres in Europe and Asia. And the predominance of the Atlantic basin as the centre of economic and political gravity has been modified by the increasing importance of the Pacific rim. This does not mean that Europe is no longer where the global balance of power is at stake, but it does mean that the growing weight of Japan and China, and the mounting social and population pressures in Latin America are drawing American attention increasingly south and west.

By the same token, the United States is no longer in a position to exercise the sort of hegemonic leadership it did in the past, not because the United States has declined but because others have grown stronger. While internal pressures are working to limit US overseas commitments, the momentum of "Europe 1992" is leading the European allies to concentrate their defence efforts more closely, to articulate a European defence identity, and to deal with the United States on a more equal footing. Such changes are bound to have enormous implications not only for burden sharing (in its broadest sense), but also for power sharing within the Western world. Another remarkable development is the second Communist revolution going on in the Soviet Union as a result of Gorbachev's "new thinking." His reform program is impelled by the failure of the Soviet system to deliver the goods. The imperative of economic reform has led to political reform and the imperative of internal reform has led to foreign policy initiatives designed to ensure a more stable and predictable international environment. It has certainly caused a dramatic improvement in East-West relations and significant changes in public perceptions in the West of both Soviet military capabilities and Soviet intentions. Gorbachev's announcement of unilateral force reductions has made a deep impression, as has the less ideological and more pragmatic approach adopted by Soviet spokesmen.

Gorbachev may not have realized when he started how hard it would be to put his "new thinking" into effect, but it is now clear that, having let the genie out of the bottle, he has a tiger by the tail (to mix metaphors). The trouble is that too much depends on him alone and his problem is that, while the results of "glasnost" are immediate, the results of "perestroika" will take years to realize. His game plan must be to try to bridge the gap, and his strongest card is that there is no alternative. At the same time, there are likely to be serious threats to stability not only in the Soviet Union, but even more in Eastern Europe, as the old order gives way to pressures for more freedom, pluralism, and decentralization.

In these circumstances, it will be prudent for NATO to keep its guard up. The East-West confrontation is certainly reduced, but even with Gorbachev's unilateral reductions the Soviet Union retains a decided superiority in conventional forces in Europe. Deliberate war is certainly unlikely, but there is still a risk of inadvertent conflict. The prospects are certainly better for setting East-West relations on a more constructive course, but the inherent instability in the Eastern European situation is likely to make the task of managing the East-West relationship more complex rather than easier. We should therefore be cautious, but that does not mean standing pat. The "Soviet threat" is no longer sufficient to guarantee Alliance solidarity or public support for NATO. It is no longer enough for the allies to know what they are against; they must now define more clearly what they are for.

The time has come to revisit the Harmel Report and reconsider Article 2 (the "Canadian article") of the North Atlantic Treaty. Well-articulated, comprehensive, long-term strategies are needed for the management of both East-West and West-West relations. In a situation where new opportunities are opening in East-West relations, policies should be developed to bring the Soviet Union and its allies more fully into the international system and to make the transition with as little disruption as possible. There is also need for a new conceptual framework of "mutual security" in which both sides would acknowledge that they cannot buy their own security at the price of the other's insecurity.

All this can be accomplished only if Alliance solidarity can be maintained in conditions of greater burden sharing, risk sharing and decision sharing. Statesmanship of a high order will be needed to build a more reciprocal partnership in which there is a concerted effort by the United States, on one side, and its allies on the other, to take greater account of each other's views, and to contribute more to each other's interests. Such a partnership should seek, among other things, to promote the strategic unity of the Alliance, to establish better coordination between NATO's military and political "tracks" and to bring Alliance strategy and arms control policy into closer alignment.

Canada has an important though difficult role to play here. The polarization of NATO between American and European "pillars" and the accompanying trend toward regionalism threaten either to make us "odd man out" or to absorb us into the American "pillar." Neither would be in our best interests. NATO still offers the most congenial framework for seeking our security in cooperation with like-minded nations. It is our entrée into the

highest councils affecting our security. And it is our window into the arms control negotiations and the confidence building process in Europe.

Given Canada's geopolitical position, we have a vital interest in the betterment of superpower relations and we are well placed to contribute to increasing East-West exchanges, particularly with respect to the environment and circumpolar cooperation. At the same time, we should help ensure that better East-West relations do not lead to a weakening of cohesion in the Alliance and we are well situated to contribute ideas for reinforcing the bridge across the Atlantic. Such a role will depend, however, on our maintaining our transatlantic vocation, and the presence of Canadian forces in Europe which is its visible symbol.

Projecting present hopes into the future, I foresee the prospect that the progressive integration of the Soviet Union and its allies into the international system could lead to East-West cooperation in dealing with the global problems facing all of us. NATO could become an essential political instrument for helping to manage that process. Far fetched? Perhaps, but what we need in this age of rapid change is a vision of where we want to go, for without that we will become victims, rather than managers, of change. [bop](#)

JOHN HALSTEAD is a member of *bout de papier's* Senior Editorial Board. A retired Foreign Service Officer, he was Canadian Ambassador to Bonn and Acting Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs. He teaches now in Washington and Ottawa.

Given Canada's geopolitical position, we have a vital interest in the betterment of superpower relations

FEATURE // REPORTAGE

The Shallow Callousness of Youth

by Ken Neufeld

David showed up in class one day at E. B. Nesbitt Primary School wearing bell bottoms. I had never heard of bell bottoms and found this new development unnerving. David's last name escapes me, but I do remember that "Hey Jude" was big that same week. And that some girls in my grade 6 class were developing armpit hair.

There are a lot of things like this I remember, and many of them probably happened.

KEN NEUFELD's career meandered through a CUSO placement at a girls' secondary school in Iringa, Tanzania, the Wheat Project, CIDA, DFAIT, and GAC postings in Haiti, Peru (twice), Bolivia, Tanzania (again), Mozambique, and Afghanistan, with periodic stints in Gatineau and Ottawa for re-education. He is also blissfully married to Cheryl Frankiewicz.

The Neufeld family tree with me in my army surplus uniform

BUT I DON'T REMEMBER, because I never knew, how David got a jump on the rest of us with those bell bottoms. Reflecting back, I suppose he had a cousin down south. Toronto, that is. That is what we meant in Sudbury when we said “down south.” Or maybe David’s parents were cool somehow. Certainly, my parents weren’t cool and were at least as taken aback by the appearance of bell bottoms as I was. I did have a cool cousin, but he lived in the Deep South. Leamington, that is, and he was too cool to be bothered clueing me in to bell bottoms.

My family was different, and in grade 6, different was not a desirable characteristic. It all started with my grandparents. Opa and Oma (Mom’s folks) wore black clothes, hardly spoke English, ate chicken feet and didn’t believe Neil Armstrong had stepped on the moon. Grandma and Grandpa (Dad’s folks) at least spoke English, but they were rural, rustic, and disapproving. My classmates had grandparents who vacationed in Florida, gave useful advice, and maybe even gave bell bottoms as Christmas presents. Sure, I loved my grandparents, but I wouldn’t have been happy to take any of them to school. In fact, family in general seemed poised to cause embarrassment.

Part of this embarrassment had to do with occupation. Most fathers seemed to work in the INCO mines and most mothers at Sears. My parents worked with alcoholics during the day and made us help with the janitorial work they did in the evening to make ends meet.

Another part was origins; that whole Mennonite culture thing what with the black-clothed ancestral photos and the chicken feet in the soup (not to mention a suspicious preoccupation with peace). In retrospect, pacifism was having one of its rare periods of popularity around that time so at least that was a point of pride. But something in that Mennonite background did lead to unusual behaviours. Like that time my mother weeded the city’s flowerpots in downtown Thunder Bay.

Not that my younger brother and sisters were any help. They seemed unaware or unconcerned about our general lack of coolness. Too young maybe, or just insensitive, I

My mother
on Opa’s knee

couldn’t figure it out. Some of my friends had older siblings who were able to provide guidance or at least a sympathetic ear, but I was on my own.

Then one day Sudbury got an FM radio station. Not much hope there you would think, but there was this one program squeezed between the Opera Hour and The Symphony that offered some. I remember lying on the couch in the middle of a Saturday afternoon contemplating the futility of my teenage existence; kind of a northern Ontario seventies version of Ilya Illich Oblomov, when Tchaikovsky faded out and “Little Green Bag” by the George Baker Selection came blasting over the CBC airwaves. I had never heard anything like this before and it blew my mind that staid old CBC would dare to play such obviously subversive music. In hindsight I now realize this could have been interpreted to mean that I was too late for the counter-culture revolution; that it had already been co-opted by the establishment before I could even get on board. But that was not how I took it. For me it was a crack in everything that was oppressing me and provided me the licence to grow that hair, fail my classes and join the youth migration to Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco. Or Stanley Park in Vancouver. Or perhaps, as an interim step, to skip classes and hang out at pool hall in Sudbury.

I was going to need a uniform. Ralph (my revolution soulmate) and I headed down to the Army surplus store on Notre Dame to check out the threadbare fatigue jackets. Perfect. Except that my mother took anguished and tear-filled exception to my selection when I wore it home. This obviously had hit a nerve linked to a Mennonite’s instinctive objection to military paraphernalia and anyone’s normal instinctive objection to paying for stained, threadbare clothing. A tough negotiation ended with splitting the difference. We went together to the shop and exchanged my pride and joy for a less ragged jacket. As a bonus, she agreed to sewing a marijuana leaf patch on the shoulder and I was on my way to a life unfettered by Mennonite family baggage.

So it seems a bit surprising that only 25 years later I would find myself with my mother on the SS Mennonite Heritage Cruise floating down the Dnipro River in Ukraine listening to lectures on our ancestral history and touring old pickle factories.

My grandparents had owned a fruit-tree nursery in Memyrk in what was then the Soviet Union and is now Ukraine. My mother wanted to see if we could find it. Mennonites in the 1770s had bartered with the Russian Empire exchanging their agricultural skill for the freedom to practise pacifism on the fertile and sparsely populated soil of the western Eurasian steppe.

Mennonites are a migratory species ... my ancestors’ flock started their migration in the Netherlands at the time of the reformation when their insistence on adult baptism and pacifism got them targeted by both the Catholics and the emerging Protestants. Somewhere along their 240-year trek from the Netherlands to Russia, via Danzig, they seemed to have forgotten their Dutch origin and by the time my family arrived in Canada they spoke German and broken Russian.

They were certainly perceived as German by the Soviet regime when the Russian Revolution and the First World War arrived simultaneously and that put the Mennonite communities in a tough spot. Mind you, being Kulaks and stubbornly attached to their religion they were already viewed with hostility both by the state and by neighbours. By 1929 Stalin was inciting violence against not only land owners but also non-Russian ethnic groups and religious groups; the “Golden Age” for the Russian Mennonites was over.

What little the family knows about this period came after my Oma and Opa died and Opa’s journal came to light. He had used no adjectives in his recounting but it was obvious the events leading to me being born Canadian had been hair-raising. My mother’s motivation to undertake her trip came from reading this journal and from the memory of her mother crying while the CBC announced the start of the Second World War, knowing that the rest of her family and her community would not survive. Sure enough, one of the things we learned on our floating lecture hall was that the remaining Mennonites in the USSR were forcibly moved to Siberia or what is now Kazakhstan, never to be heard of again.

My grandfather went to the Post Office in Memrik one day in 1928. A local party official was napping on a bench. Legend has it the official once worked for my grandparents and they were on good terms. He heard my grandfather’s voice, and without raising his head, told him it was time to leave.

This is where things get a bit murky as the written record is much sparser than the collective family legend but let’s take it for mostly probably almost true.

Opa goes home, has a quiet word with Oma and the move is on. Dinner is put on the table, stove is stoked and family slips out in the dark to a train station in the neighbouring town. Mom claims Oma had a pillowcase full of dried bread to sustain her, Opa, and my uncles, Jacob and Johann.

The surveillance state must not yet have achieved its full efficiency as they caught a train to Moscow, but you have to figure their hearts were in their throats. Oma was eight months pregnant. They stayed in Moscow somehow or other while Opa applied to the Canadian Colonization Immigration Board and Oma gave birth to my uncle Heinrich.

To make a long story short, the Neufeld clan eventually got through the necessary Canadian and Soviet hoops and somehow made it from Moscow to a port somewhere and then to another port in Great Britain, took a train across the country to maybe Liverpool and then caught a ship which eventually dumped them on a dock in Montreal. Soon they were all settled near Leamington and working as labourers on an onion farm where my Mother was born. By the time I met them, they were once again owners of an apple orchard.

Which brings us back to me lying on the sofa in Sudbury pining for something but with no clue what it was and without much gumption. For a couple of years, sneaking around smoking Export A cigarettes and low-grade pot of exaggerated exotic provenance had to suffice. At least this gave me a bit of a link to all that evocative stuff in the music we were listening to. I knew something was happening here,



but how I could get in on it was not exactly clear.

Towards the end of high school, my sulking wore thin and I managed to fall in with a crowd who had their sights on university. I think it was like a peloton which creates a draft pulling the weaker or exhausted rider along with the group. Some friends in the group headed off to Europe with their back packs and suddenly I saw a goal worth pursuing. I finished high school, to the surprise of many, and rushed off to Europe and eventually my career in international development.

But the point I want to make is that, until my travels with Mama Anna down the Dnipro River, I would brag that I was the first Neufeld in history to travel abroad. This was an astonishing lack of understanding of what my family had endured. It would be nice if I could go back to the young guy mouldering on that couch in Sudbury, flick the smoke out of his pouting mouth, and deliver him a bit of a history lesson.

Ken reports he has successfully shed youth and is in hot pursuit of wisdom. Marrying Cheryl and retiring are his two wisest moves to date.

Oma and Opa
in Leamington
in 1969, 40 years
after fleeing the
Soviet Union





Kate in Mumbai, India. While the foreign service life can be filled with adventure and travel, more support is needed for spouses to adapt and thrive

KATE MACKENZIE is a freelance journalist, writer, and photographer based in Mexico City. She's always loved writing and the thoughtfulness and reflection it requires, and she received her journalism degree in 2021. Her work has appeared in Maclean's Magazine, the Calgary Herald, CityNews, and more.

FEATURE // REPORTAGE

Breaking the Non-Person Shell

THE FOREIGN SERVICE SPOUSE EXPERIENCE

by Kate Mackenzie

TWO YEARS AGO, BEFORE GOING to New Delhi on my first posting with my husband and knowing little about living abroad, I had a call with another spouse who had previously lived in Pakistan with her husband.

“Just be aware of the lack of spousal support,” was her recurring message to me. At the time, I didn’t truly comprehend what this meant. Lack of support in what? Why would I need support from my husband’s employer? Then in October we landed in India, and within weeks, her warning became clear. My husband was now the sole breadwinner, captain of our two-person social committee, and therapist and career counsellor for how lost I felt in pursuing my journalism career. By December, I knew I was depressed, spending only a few hours each day writing; then I would watch TV, clean, or do laundry, wondering as I picked lint out of the dryer what exactly I was doing with my life.

My experience as a diplomatic spouse is not unique, but it is rarely acknowledged, at least when it comes to policies. In 1981, the Royal Commission on Conditions of Foreign Service tasked Commissioner Pamela McDougall with writing a report on the changes needed in the foreign services; she writes that spouses “are key to an effective Foreign Service and too long have gone unsung and unheralded for the part they play in representing Canada abroad and making it easier for rotational employees to do their jobs.”

The McDougall report outlined key issues facing spouses at the time of its creation: a lack of employment opportunities, insufficient support services, and the overall disruptive nature of life with a Foreign Service Officer.

“Spouses are the other members of the Foreign Service community who have to be broken out of the ‘non-person’ shell,” McDougall writes, noting that spouses’ aims, ambitions, and motivations don’t fit into one mould.

Over 40 years have passed since McDougall’s report and the spouses who share their experiences in this piece echo the same issues as McDougall. While the newly formed Canadian Diplomatic Family Network is working hard to change this, it’s clear that this “non-person shell” spouses are placed in has yet to be broken.

Canadian Diplomatic Family Network

Created this past March, the Canadian Diplomatic Family Network is made up of spouses and spearheaded by IRCC Foreign Service Officer Meagan Dalby, who says throughout her 15-year career with the Foreign Service, families have never seemed like a factor in many policies and Foreign Service Directives (FSDs).

“As long as I’ve been in the Foreign Service, I’ve always thought that in this day and age, when we think about how we’re at a certain place when it comes to gender equality and all of these kinds of things, just to have this expectation that spouses are going to just you know, love their partners enough to give up everything ... career, friends, family, the whole thing, and not ask for anything in return.”

According to Dalby, the committee has three main goals: increased access to employment, increased access to information, and respect and recognition from the government.

Finding employment while at post is the most common issue among spouses and can affect their sense of self-worth and financial stability, she explains, especially if they feel they must rely on their partner financially for their whole life.

“Whether in the Foreign Service or out of the Foreign Service, we know that divorce and separation are a thing. We know that ... it makes women more vulnerable to financial hardship if they are underemployed, being out of the workforce, and the longer you are out of the workforce, the harder it is to keep working.”

Lost in translation

Arriving in Senegal at night, J.G. and her partner were picked up by his manager, who informed them that there had been a break-in in the area two days ago, information which made J.G. feel worried, especially when realizing their balcony doors weren't locking. Alone all day in their apartment, J.G. winced at every little sound, worried someone was breaking in.

Before moving to Senegal, her partner did hazardous environment training, an in-person course that prepares government employees for dangerous situations. J.G., however, was only provided with an online self-defence course, which she had to watch during her free time.

"So, we arrived, I was scared, and then I just remember going out and not understanding a single word, and that was just terrifying," she says.

After learning they would be moving to Senegal, a French-speaking country, J.G. asked if she could take French classes. She was told that because French was an official language of Canada, the employer would not provide lessons, a barrier that would follow her throughout her two years at post.

Not long after arriving, someone walked them through their apartment to ensure they knew how the gas stove and alarm worked. The entire walkthrough was done in French, leaving J.G. clueless about what was said until her partner translated. Every time something went wrong with their apartment, she had to ask her partner to submit a Mission Request Online (MRO) – an online ticket system to request maintenance assistance – something spouses don't have access to. While her partner was at work, the maintenance crew would come and speak only French, forcing J.G. to call him up during his work hours so he could translate for her.

With the language barrier and working remotely from their apartment, J.G. says it was difficult for her to meet people. When the embassy put on a Canada Day party, she was told it was for employees only.

"I don't know, I just felt dead and not supported," she says, adding that it was also difficult to relate her struggles to her friends at home, who couldn't understand what she was going through.

"They think that if you have a big apartment, you're abroad, and you have household help, you're just living in a castle, and you're living your best life when that's very often the opposite. And you just have no one to talk to."

With the language barrier and working remotely from their apartment, J.G. says it was difficult for her to meet people

Skills and experience but no opportunities

R.L., who was previously in the Canadian Armed Forces, is now on his first post as a spouse in Peru but did two international postings in his previous position. Much like J.G. in Senegal, R.L. says there was no language training before their move.

"When you're sitting around here [home] all the time, you have a massive language barrier, and all your family and friends are back in Canada. It's not that great; it gets boring after a while," he says.

While R.L. initially had a remote contract as a threat analyst for his home department in Ottawa, the work required him to be at the embassy every day. However, the government was unwilling to pay for an office at the embassy for him, resulting in the contract being cancelled. Since then, R.L. says there have been few other work opportunities, and the ones offered are tasks like shredding paper or moving couches from people's apartments.

"I left the Canadian Forces with an incredible amount of experience and skills and knowledge, and the certifications don't mean anything," he says, adding that even government jobs back in Canada he's applied to haven't been forthcoming.

"I think it's not a great idea to do another one [post] as a spouse without having something tangible to do," he says when asked if he would want to do another one.

Sacrificing careers

S.D. has to make the difficult choice of either going on a second posting with her husband or staying in Canada so she won't have to give up the government job she worked hard to get.

After finding out about their next posting, S.D. talked to her manager and director to see if she could continue her job via telework, an idea they said they weren't comfortable with despite S.D. saying she was fine working Canadian hours while overseas.

In December, she emailed the spousal unit at Global Affairs Canada (GAC) to see if they could help; after a month of silence, they responded, saying they couldn't do anything and that it depended on her manager.

"So, at this point, I'm unsure what I can do. See if it's possible for me to leave my current job and come with you [her husband], or you might need to go by yourself. Honestly, it's hard. It's not an easy decision to make, especially because I have a four-year-old as well."

Previously posted to Bangladesh with her husband, S.D. knows what it's like to be on a posting without any meaningful work, saying she felt completely lost the first year of the post.



Kate and her husband visit a tomb in New Delhi.

"My husband's working hours increased ... especially the first six months. Most of the time, he came back home around 11 p.m. So, imagine me staying at home, doing literally nothing and depressed," she says. "My background is psychology, so I learned how to adapt and help myself, but honestly, I'm not superwoman."

She actively looked for work and eventually got a short-term contract with the British High Commission. However, the idea of going abroad again without a job makes her hesitant to leave her current position.

"Work was very rewarding for my husband. He loved his job," she explains. "It was nice for me to learn about a different culture as well. But in terms of the work experience or finding something for myself, I find it extremely frustrating. Honestly, it wasn't easy for me to deal with. What should I do for my own career?"

Second class citizens

A former political officer for Global Affairs Canada, N.S. knows what it's like to be on posting as a Foreign Service Officer and as a spouse of one. Starting her career in the Foreign Service in 2003, it wasn't until 2015 that she went on her first posting as a spouse in India.

In her second year in Delhi, she applied to three different positions at the embassy and

didn't get any of them; when she and her partner went on their next posting in Dakar, she applied to a junior political position and didn't even get an interview.

"I was really frustrated and angry because I was a perfectly good Foreign Service Officer ... I felt like they were giving lip service to their spousal employment policy," she says, adding that she also applied for an LES (locally engaged staff) job in India, which is reserved for local staff and sometimes open to spouses. However, after finding out she would only be paid 300 rupees an hour, the equivalent of about \$5 Canadian, she chose not to take the job.

"I felt it especially egregious that it's my own employer, basically, who is offering me not to work at anywhere close to my wages, or even the Canadian wages, which were \$18 or \$20 an hour if you were supervising workers or something, but I just said no, I don't think I can do this. I will be too resentful."

While she did end up getting a four-month contract at the embassy, she says her position as a spouse left her feeling like a nobody.

"That was really hard. I'm sure it's hard for everybody, but it was particularly hard having been an officer and just how dependent I was on my partner and how excluded I was," she says, explaining that when things frequently went wrong with their apartment, she couldn't call the High Commission but had to ask her husband to submit an MRO.



FEATURE // REPORTAGE

Transmission

by Holly Jacobs

Transitioning at the age of 59 has unexpected benefits. You have the chance to do everything all over again for the first time.

Adapting to living in a new country includes learning about the people. Kate had the privilege of visiting a slum community in New Delhi while taking photos for CanAssist, an embassy-run charity.

“But I was the one who was at home, so I was the one who was dealing with all the issues, but I mean, it was a bit of a game of telephone because I would have to tell him what was wrong. And you’d have to remember, and by the time the guy came, sometimes the issue hadn’t been communicated. And I don’t know where the communications breakdown was, but it was one more thing for my husband to do. It made me feel like really second class because I couldn’t do this myself.”

Humans with the same needs and insecurities


In addition to the 1981 McDougall report, documents and surveys done by spouses in 2016 expressed the same concerns. The Canadian Diplomatic Family Network’s Dalby says it’s frustrating to look back and see that nearly a decade later, nothing has changed.

As to why the issue has been stagnant for decades, Dalby thinks it’s because the government doesn’t necessarily view it as an issue they are responsible for. Their relationship is with their employees and ensuring they do a good job, and that’s where their involvement ends. This leaves a portion of the Public Service still operating like it’s the 1950s, and many spouses, like the ones sharing their stories, feeling like second-class citizens.

But, Dalby is hopeful for change this time around, thanks to the newly created network.

“But now we’ve got the connections, we have the motivation, we have the skills, and I think that there’s going to be some people that will kind of have to listen if we have a critical mass of numbers and present ourselves logically.”

Sometimes, I feel like the yellow pegman used for Google Maps, flung into an unknown neighbourhood and expected to figure out the landscape of this new life with very little help. While my husband is guaranteed a job in every country we move to, my career trajectory is murky. While I love the adventure that comes with living somewhere new with my partner, every day is not about exploring but trying to build a meaningful life in a temporary location, a difficult task especially when there’s no support.

“I just would want to feel that I’m a person, I’m a legitimate human, who is the same importance as the employee,” J.G. in Senegal says. “I understand that workwise, I’m the spouse, and he is the one who works, but we are coming to our postings as two same-level humans with the same human needs and insecurities.” 

For those looking for more information on the Canadian Diplomatic Family Network, visit their website at cdfn-rfdc.com

Washington, DC, 2024

HOLLY JACOBS has been in public service for over 25 years and completed postings in London, Delhi (twice), Tehran, Beirut, and Ankara. In autumn 2024 she was being posted as Migration Program Manager in Ho Chi Minh City which will be her first as her authentic self.

One more check in the mirror. I can’t believe I cut myself shaving – halfway between the bottom of my nose and my upper lip. A tiny nick that sprouted a little bloody Charlie Chaplin moustache. Multiple layers of foundation and powder and I think I can still see it. That said, I can still see my beard shadow when everyone else insists that they can’t. One last check, make sure my skirt isn’t tucked into my underwear, that the wig is straight. Triple check the purse for my phone and the room key.

And ... go.

I step into the hallway and head to the elevator. I am starting to feel that confidence. I step in and see the girl in the mirror, the one who has shadowed me since I was four years old. The doors open and I stride into the lobby. The girl passes through the looking glass, living in that world she only dreamt of for so long. Out of the lobby and into the street. I am in Chinatown, on H street (I didn’t even know Washington had a

Chinatown). The heat has already started but I am lucky that my route is mostly in the shade. As I walk down 6th towards Pennsylvania Avenue I repeat Olivier’s advice in my head. “Be confident. Own the space. Eye contact.” My posture is better in spite of or maybe because of the low heels I am wearing and I realize that I am confident, I am owning the space.

The simple reality that feminine me is self-assuredly walking downtown in a foreign city is a source of joy and wonder to me. Other pedestrians pass by and no one seems to “clock” me. I am early and feeling good, so I stop to pick up an Americano (when in America...). The barista asks my name for the order – “Holly” – and a smile spreads across my face because it’s still new saying this and because it still feels so good.

I continue and turn left on Pennsylvania Avenue and suddenly the iconic Dome of the Capitol appears in the distance. Just a block or two and then I am at the Embassy.

Rosemere, Quebec, 1968

A toddler and a four-year-old are watching cartoons on the black-and-white television in the walnut console that dominates the living room. Mom and Dad are trying to enjoy a quiet moment before the day's activity begins. It is not to be. The door is being slowly pushed open and suddenly the four-year-old, their son, is standing beside the bed. He looks at them solemnly and says, "I'm a girl."

Washington, DC, 2024

I have been to many embassies and consulates before, and high commissions and permanent missions too. But never this one, the biggest and arguably the most important one we have. And never, ever before as the person I have always known myself to be.

I climb the steps and go to the receptionist under the watchful eye of security and tell them I am with IRCC, that I am here to visit S.

Later that afternoon we are watching guests arrive for tonight's reception. The DHOM (Deputy Head of Mission), who will be the first speaker, has let us know she will come down in about 10 minutes. The room is filling up nicely. It's World Refugee Day and it's Pride Month and the reception marks the launch of the Annual Report of Rainbow Railroad, a non-governmental organization dedicated to protecting the rights of LGBTQI+ refugees around the world and a key partner for our refugee program.

This is why I am here in Washington. I was asked to emcee this event and, since I was coming, managed to add a few more meetings to round out the day. It's been intense but good.

I check my phone and look over at the podium. Five more minutes. Earlier today we had scoped out the room and I had stood up there, imagining myself addressing 50 to 80 people, tonight's estimated attendance.

Public speaking of any kind used to be a massive anxiety trigger for me. Back in undergrad, a presentation to a seminar of a dozen classmates would paralyze me with fear. Sometimes I would take an Ativan which would take the jagged edge off but at the cost of leaving me feeling vaguely lobotomized and unsure of how it went after. Or during for that matter.

Somehow, I overcame that and gradually came to enjoy public speaking and storytelling and especially how the two were interwoven. I learned that I could speak to a large crowd and establish rapport. Even one that was initially hostile or suspicious. It's 50 per cent preparation, thinking through the script and the messaging and 50 per cent reading the room. This is a friendly room.

Burlington, Ontario, 1978

Mrs. Wilson surveys the 9th grade English class and sighs, thinking about the many years that remain between her and

retirement. This job does not seem to be getting any easier. Burlington has just been anointed as one of the wealthiest communities in Canada by annual income and also has the dubious honour of one of the highest vandalism rates. Bored rich suburban kids. "White Punks on Dope". This class is no exception. Even the kid who transferred in from the gifted program is worse than useless. Often reeking of marijuana smoke with bloodshot eyes, or bleeding and bruised from another fight out at "smokers' corner." She is skeptical about his regular absences on Wednesday afternoons to see a "specialist." One day, in exasperation she tells him "You'll be in jail or dead before you're 20." If she thought this would scare him straight, she is disappointed. Behind dead eyes, the once promising kid says nothing. But he is thinking, thinking that jail doesn't sound fun, but death might not be so bad. Better than the ritualized sexual abuse of conversion therapy every Wednesday or the intolerable pressure of gender dysphoria. There was no question of telling her or any other grown-up about what was happening. What would he say with no vocabulary and who could he trust with these terrible, shameful secrets?

Washington, DC, 2024

The DHOM has arrived and S gives me a nod. It's time.

I take a deep breath and remind myself that I have gotten good at this. I have done it a million times.

I have never done it in a dress.

At least this is my favourite dress. With brilliant blues (match my eyes I am told) and a good length and silhouette. I feel confident. I've felt confident all day.

I am also wearing a special talisman. A heavy silvery metal pendant on a fine silver chain. It's a little cast sculpture in the form of an Inuk woman standing legs slightly apart. She is wearing a parka and peeking out of the hood of the parka, cheek to cheek with her, is an infant. My father had travelled to Baffin Island for business back in the mid-1970s and bought it as a gift for my Mom. Wearing it now, I feel like mom – who passed eleven months ago – is with me. I feel her protection.

Ottawa, Ontario, 2023

After the pandemic, after losing people dear to me, I feel intense distress at the thought of letting any more time slip away. I am terrified at the thought of dying without having ever been me. I am also aware that the world has changed. Trans people exist and enjoy human rights protections. I return to work after two years Leave Without Pay and make a small addition to my email signature – "she/they". Those two words became a conversation starter: "I'm trans, trans people exist, and I am a trans person. The bald guy you've known for 25 years as Oscar is actually a redhead named Holly." Hold my breath and wait to see how people will

react. I have lived in terror of this moment my entire life and now I am orchestrating it myself. The reactions are beautiful and welcoming and this thing I have feared and hated forever, seen as a liability, has suddenly become a source of power. Dysphoria is displaced by euphoria.

Washington, DC, 2024

I take the podium and lean into the microphone, "Good evening, everyone! Bon soir!" I say to the anglophone audience, Ottawa habits following me wherever I go. After a few more attempts and some helpful glass tapping from the floor the room finally goes quiet and all eyes are on me.

"Good evening. Bon soir." I repeat now with everyone's attention. "Welcome to the Embassy of Canada. We are very pleased to welcome you to tonight's reception to celebrate the vital work of one of our important partners, Rainbow Railroad. My name is Holly Jacobs. I am a trans woman. I've waited 55 years to say this."

I pause and savour the moment.

"Tonight, we will be hearing from distinguished speakers from the Embassy, from the United States Government, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, and from Rainbow Railroad themselves." Take a breath, quick room check. "Before we launch into the program, I would like to share something. My journey yesterday was quite stressful. I only received my passport at the very last minute the night before my flight. It was my first time flying post transition, as feminine me. Going through security. Crossing a border. First hotel check in. Feminine me is only seven months old. This felt scary." Brief pause. "And then I thought to myself, really? I am feeling stressed? I am travelling legally. I am documented. I have trusted friends at both my start and endpoint. I speak the local language throughout my journey. I have cash and cards and a hotel reservation. If I am feeling stressed with all of these privileges and advantages and predictability, what must an LGBTQI+ refugee feel? Undocumented, uncomprehending, destitute after paying their passage, forced to trust shady facilitators and destination unknown. How powerful must their motivation be and how awful their fear?" Audience scan. A sea of attentive faces, many nodding. That landed well.

I make some technical announcements including location of the washrooms (not inclusive) and that there is a themed cocktail available, the "Rainbow Rum Sidecar", the product of the research and creative dedication of S. And then I introduce the DHOM and step down.

Ottawa, Ontario, 2024

Sometimes the stars align. Two months after coming out I am approved for a six-month micro mission with the Public Service Pride Network Secretariat. I learn that I am one of only two trans executives (out of 9,000) we are




My dad bought this pendant as a gift for my mom during a business trip to Baffin in the 1970s. Mom passed away last summer, but wearing it I feel her love and protection.

aware of and, to the best of my knowledge, the only trans Foreign Service Officer. If there are others out there, we do not seem to be numerous, we won't need a big clubhouse. The work is absorbing and impactful and after the experience of addressing 75 Deputy Ministers on the issue of trans inclusion and acting as emcee on the first Canada-UK Pride Network Summit, I officially retract the letter of intent to retire I'd submitted just a few months ago. I have rediscovered inspiration. There is trail to break.

Washington, DC, 2024

The remaining introductions and interstitial bits between speakers go smoothly. The final speaker is a refugee from Central America, a gay man, who brings down the house, communicating his joy and relief, at finding a place he can be himself, and his commitment to helping other newcomers. I call for another round of applause for him and then I am wrapping things up, thanking everyone for coming and urging them to stay and network and enjoy the hospitality.

I am on a cloud. My entire life I could not have imagined doing this, even eight months ago I was terrified of stepping out my front door and braving public spaces as authentic me. I feel invincible and euphoric. I reach back through the years to all of those versions of me, embrace them, and tell them it will all be ok. 

Suddenly the four-year-old, their son, is standing beside the bed. He looks at them solemnly and says, "I'm a girl."

Exit Interview: Robin Wettlaufer

by Michael Creighton



No condition is permanent and there comes a time in every Foreign Service Officer's life where they move on – whether it's to retirement, promotion or greener pastures. How can we capture the knowledge, experience and wisdom they have acquired? Enter the Exit Interview.

A FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER SINCE 2002, Robin Wettlaufer moved up to the Executive cadre, where most recently she was the Director responsible for the Centre for Information Integrity and the Rapid Response Mechanism. I had the pleasure of serving on her team at the Representative Office of Canada to the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah where we navigated the challenges of both COVID-19 and conflict, coordinated ministerial visits, and connected with tech startups in Gaza. She was recently awarded the Meritorious Service Cross by the Governor General of Canada for her role in the evacuation of White Helmets civil defence volunteers and their families from Syria. You can – and should – follow her on X: [@alkanadiyya](#)

MICHAEL CREIGHTON is a Foreign Service Officer in the international assistance stream. He has been posted to Accra and Ramallah. He is fluent in shawarma-ordering Arabic.

Where are you from and where did you start?

I'm originally from Regina, Saskatchewan. I was first hired as an intern into the Japan Division, having studied Japanese in university. That was the first and last time I've worked on a stable country and a strong, like-minded bilateral relationship.

Where have you been?

I have served twice in Ramallah (once as Head of Mission, once as a junior political officer), nearly six years as Canada's Special Rep for Syria (based out of Istanbul), and a posting in Islamabad. While not technically a field assignment, I also served on the Sudan Task Force (first as an advisor to the Darfur Peace Process, then as a Deputy Director) – an assignment which had me on the road as much as I was in Ottawa.

Did you have the tools to succeed?

Our department often thinks of tools as technology. That's part of the equation, but in my experience, one of the most powerful tools we can leverage as diplomats is language skills. I have found that speaking Arabic has opened doors, helped me to better understand the societies in which I have been posted, and better connect with interlocutors. In that regard, I don't fully feel I have the tools to succeed. Arabic generally requires two years of full-time study to reach professional fluency. While I was lucky to get 10 months of training early in my career, I have had to push for a couple extra months here and there over the years, and I have spent many evenings and weekends studying to get where I am. Another solid round of language training would equip me with the language tools to be a better, more connected, and more effective diplomat.



Robin hiking from Taybeh to the Jordan Valley in the West Bank

Were you fully embraced for who you are?

I think so. The Foreign Service certainly isn't one-size fits all. We have our share of eccentrics. I don't know whether Foreign Service Officers are recruited for that, or whether our unique experiences overseas have shaped our characters – probably a bit of both. It's definitely not a dull crowd.

Throughout, I have found it to be a very supportive community. Colleagues have faced an array of hardships and have experienced both professional highs and lows in great measure. Few others in Ottawa understand this somewhat tumultuous but rich life in the same way. I have always felt the Foreign Service community celebrated my accomplishments and supported me through my lower moments.

Who helped you be successful and how?

I've had a handful of outstanding managers and mentors over the years, as well as some outstanding like-minded diplomats I've gotten to work with. I've also worked with some great teams – the incredible staff in Ramallah (including outstanding Palestinian local staff), the old Sudan Task Force crew, and the G8 team during our 2002 Presidency were a few standouts. My team working on information integrity and the Rapid Response Mechanism was also an astonishingly impressive crew. And, as someone who married a fellow Foreign Service Officer, I would be remiss if I didn't mention my husband – Ulric Shannon – who never fails to make me laugh, no matter how dark the world may seem some days.

What should we stop, start, and keep doing?

STOP Being quite so risk averse. Especially in a world as volatile as it is today. There are things worth doing that may not be slam-dunks and may incur a cost – that doesn't mean that we shouldn't try.

START Valuing expertise.

KEEP DOING Recruiting regularly. I was relieved to see this commitment from senior management, after years without steady recruitment.

Would you do it again?

In a heartbeat.

What would you tell a new Foreign Service Officer before they go on their first posting?

This vocation is unpredictable, frustrating, and rewarding in equal measure. Keep an open mind. Adapt as the sands shift beneath you. Avoid resting too long in the comfort zone of MFA corridors, and like-minded diplomatic circles. These are part of it, but you will learn more and build more influence if you cast a wider net. Diplomacy isn't just talking to people you agree with. Diplomacy is at its most crucial in engaging those you don't.

What's next for you?

In this business, we can be certain of only one thing: that there will be new challenges and new adventures to come. Watch this space! [bdp](#)



CHRIS DAGG joined the Department of External Affairs in 1966. After working on the Indochina Desk in External Affairs he was subsequently posted to ICSC Saigon in 1967–69 and then to Indonesia from 1971–74. While posted in Indonesia he was assigned to the Canadian delegation to the Paris International Conference on Vietnam in February 1973 and then with ICCS Saigon. He left External Affairs in 1974 and worked with INCO in Indonesia 1974–79, in Indonesia with CIDA and Guelph University 1980–87, and after 1987 at Simon Fraser University. He died in 2016. He had been preparing a study of Canada and the ICSC 1954–65 for the Canadian Institute of International Affairs.

Supervising a Peace that Never Was is available for free as an e-book through the University of Victoria's Centre for Asia-Pacific Initiatives.

FEATURE // REPORTAGE

The 1968 Tet Offensive in Saigon

AN EXCERPT FROM *SUPERVISING A PEACE THAT NEVER WAS*

Co-edited by Helen Landowne, Nick Etheridge, and Phil Calvert

Supervising a Peace that Never Was: Recollections of Canadian Diplomatic Personnel in Indochina, 1954–1973 is an edited volume of essays by former diplomatic personnel who were assigned to international commissions in Indochina to initially oversee the implementation of the Geneva Accords in 1954 (the ICSC) and in 1973 to ensure adherence to the Paris Peace Agreement (the ICCS). This collection of essays is intended as a primary source to illuminate a largely forgotten chapter in Canadian diplomatic history.

Supervising a Peace that Never Was is edited by Helen Lansdowne (Associate Director of the Centre for Asia-Pacific Initiatives) and former foreign service officers Nick Etheridge (posted in Vietnam, Cambodia, Europe, and former High Commissioner to Bangladesh), and Phil Calvert (posted in Beijing and former ambassador to Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos).

The following excerpt is taken from the eighth chapter of the book. The section is made up of extracts from a letter by Foreign Service Officer Chris Dagg to his family in Vancouver, begun on February 5, 1968. Letter and photos by kind permission of Lindsay Dagg.



Chris Dagg in his hotel room at the Continental Palace Hotel, Saigon, 1968

Chris Dagg Writes Home from the Continental Palace Hotel

WELL, AS YOU HAVE NO DOUBT HEARD, the Vietnamese New Year came in with a bang. It has been a very interesting (and rather exciting) week but – I hasten to add – a very safe one, as far as I and the other Canadians on the delegation have been concerned. We have been confined to the Continental Palace Hotel throughout it all. For all sorts of reasons, this is known as the safest hotel in Vietnam. The prime dangers all week have been a) the danger of having to wear dirty socks for the third straight day; b) the danger of getting a worse Bridge score in my next game than I got on my last one; and c) the danger of being given canned ham in the dining room tonight, since we had canned ham last night, and the night before, and the night before that ...

As soon as it all began, we received orders from the Acting Commissioner (our Brigadier General, since Mr. Dier is away) to stay in our hotels, to stay off the streets, and under no circumstances to try to go to the office. This was, as I said, a sensible precaution, and in this business we obey orders ...

I'm sure that the press reports have been pretty gruesome and, indeed, the fighting here in Saigon was pretty intense.

But one must remember that Saigon is a city covering a huge area and that the fighting was confined to a very small proportion of it. The fighting was also of the "close order" type, i.e., around certain buildings and installations. There was certainly no indiscriminate shelling or mortaring.

The closest fighting was on the first night at 3 a.m., when the American Embassy was attacked. It's about 8 blocks away. Since then, action has been confined to certain American installations far removed from the hotel, and to Cholon, a suburb of Saigon some miles away. The only taste I've had of the action has been the increased number of booms that waft in my window from the outskirts of the city, and the sound of small arms fire on the first night. Through the telephone, though, and through press friends who have been roaming around, I've been able to keep in touch, more or less, with what's going on, and have found it a very interesting week, obviously. Rumours fly thick and fast, as ever, but usually by the end of each leisurely meal in the dining room we have – or rather, we think we have – sorted the rumours from the masses of information that manages to reach us. It all makes for a rather grim picture of the situation in the country as a whole, at least in the short



Chris Dagg at the Saigon Airport 1968. A Commission Boeing 307 Stratoliner in the background

term. I'm sure there wasn't anyone who wasn't surprised at the scale of the attacks. The loss of life in the immediate vicinity of some of the house-to-house fighting (and there was very little in Saigon, but a lot in Cholon) is bound to be heavy. It will be a while before the South and the USA can recover the ground that has, inevitably, been lost over the past few days. Through press people, I've heard some terrible stories about refugees; as ever, the poor peasant in the countryside gets the worst of it.

As is to be expected, Saigon is even more like an armed camp now than before. The streets are deserted of civilians most of the time, since they've been told over their ever-present transistor radios to stay home, and troops and police are everywhere. They have the remnants of the attacking force more or less bottled up, and they react quickly to any flare-up.

With the people told to stay home, the hotel has to struggle along on whatever food it had stored, and with whatever staff it can get in, so it's been a bit austere, but we can hardly complain. It's been one opportunity to meet some of the people in the hotel, and an interesting bunch they are. Many of them are press, and almost wholly non-US press: BBC, ITV (Britain), German radio, London Times, etc. (It seems to me that the management makes a conscious effort to keep American personnel out of the hotel. In any event, there are very few of them.) Frederick Nossal of the Toronto Telegram is here, and I've had quite a lot to do with him. He's a very pleasant and interesting chap.

We went to work today for the first time in a week. The backlog of stuff was depressing, but I didn't have a chance to get to it because I had to spend most of the day (or the half-day, as we only stayed until noon) trying to find out about the well-being of some of the Canadian missionaries, doctors etc, up-country. We have had no reports of any injuries to anybody Canadian.

There is a curfew in effect from 7 p.m. to 8 a.m., to keep the streets clear while the government forces try to flush out the remaining VC in Cholon. So, the streets are absolutely deserted, but the hotel is hopping, as everyone drops in on everybody else for drinks and to talk in order to ease the boredom. As we are the only

accessible diplomats in the hotel (the Poles are here, as are the Indians, but they aren't very sociable, especially to newsmen) and – as diplomats – the only people with a seemingly endless supply of good Scotch, we Canadians are very popular. Since all the Canadians also have Ottawa-supplied refrigerators in our rooms, and we actually have ice (which the hotel ran out of days ago) our popularity is assured. Since the press here are a pretty well-informed bunch, having been to areas of action, and are good company, as well, I don't begrudge them the Scotch they drink. At something like \$3.50 for a bottle of Chivas Regal, I could hardly complain, anyway!

It's hard not to be amused by the many ironies and anomalies that one finds here, especially at this particular time. The highest hotel in Saigon is the Caravelle, across a small square from our hotel. It has a famous bar on the roof, and the pastime of many "round-eyes" (westerners) in Saigon is to sit on the patio of the Caravelle bar and watch the war. From there you can see the bombing on the outskirts, and the flash of gunfire in Cholon, all for the price of a Scotch and soda. And then there's the huge British correspondent in this hotel, with his equally huge wife, who walk their two tiny white poodles in the square every night at the same time, regardless of what curfew has been imposed. The police who guard the (National) Assembly Building across the street thoroughly enjoy the spectacle. Then there's the fact that it's 11 p.m. and there's the sound of bombs on the outskirts, and I've just finished watching "Mission Impossible" on a friend's TV, and have had an American beer, and nibbled on imported Planter's peanuts. It's all so unreal.

(Six days later) Downtown Saigon is pretty well back to normal today. The streets are crowded again, and the black-market stalls are out. There are many more beggars on the street, though. But with something like 100,000 refugees in the city, that's not surprising. This afternoon, I took a long walk in the downtown area (in circles) with a friend, to stretch my legs. There's no evident damage, except at the US Embassy, and that is being repaired rapidly.

The airport is returning to normal. We went out there on Friday. Once a week (approximately), the commission plane – a charter aircraft that the commission has used for 13 years – flies from Saigon to Phnom Penh (Cambodia) to Vientiane (Laos) to Hanoi. There are several chaps going to Hanoi on this run: our courier; the Indians' courier; etc. Their baggage was, of course, marked with a tag reading "CIC2 – destination Hanoi." The expression on the faces of the American servicemen waiting at the airport when they spotted those tags was something to see! I'm sure they are still thinking it over. [bcp](#)

FEATURE // REPORTAGE

Shattered Lives

THE LGBT PURGE IN EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

by Svend Robinson

It was 1961, and Raymond Robert was excited about his first posting to Pakistan as Third Secretary, in the Department of External Affairs (DEA). Raymond was a young lawyer, with a D.Phil from Oxford. Around the same time, Jim Elliott was also posted there as Third Secretary on the Trade side.

SVEND ROBINSON served for over 25 years as a federal Member of Parliament from BC, followed by a decade as a diplomat with The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria. He was Canada's first openly gay MP, and led on issues of human rights, social and economic justice, and the environment. Svend lives in Cyprus with his partner Max and a collection of stray cats.

RAYMOND WAS GAY. He developed a relationship with a locally engaged Pakistani man, Anwar, who shared his residence as a cook. When the High Commission doctor reported suspicions of their relationship to High Commissioner Chris Eberts, Eberts called the diplomatic staff to an early morning meeting at his residence. According to Elliott, now retired, Eberts queried them about any signs that Robert may be gay. Soon after, Eberts ordered Foreign Service Officer George Hampson to tell Robert he was being recalled to Ottawa to take up a new assignment.

When Robert got back to Ottawa, he was informed by RCMP and DEA's security division DL2 (Defence Liaison 2) that he was being fired because he was gay.

Shortly after his firing on March 2, 1963, Robert, devastated, shot himself at the family cottage in

Gatineau. He left a note for his family asking them to transfer \$5000 to DEA to enable Anwar to travel to Mecca for the Hajj. Newly arrived Third Secretary Dick Seaborn was tasked with this. In a conversation with me earlier this year, Seaborn vividly recalled the effort he put into this task, and the joy of Anwar and his family in making the pilgrimage. Seaborn had no knowledge of the circumstances of Robert's tragic death until I told him.

Some years later, when Seaborn was in Washington, DC as cultural attaché, he and his wife were at a reception hosted by the Embassy following a concert by the Montreal Symphony. Seaborn's wife was approached by an elderly Montreal woman who identified herself as Raymond Robert's mother and she expressed the deep gratitude of his family for the respect and kindness Seaborn showed in honouring Raymond's final wishes.



Grave in Montreal of Raymond Robert, former Foreign Service Officer, who killed himself in 1963 after he was fired by External Affairs for being gay

Raymond Robert was just one of the countless victims of what is now known as the LGBT Purge. The Purge struck with a particular vengeance in the DEA from 1959 to 1962, and continued far beyond that until at least the late 1970s. The toll it took on the Department was devastating. While we will never know the exact numbers, the head of DL2 during the height of the Purge, John Starnes, confirmed in later interviews that some 70 people were targeted during his tenure. Many more quietly resigned when confronted by RCMP security service officials with evidence of their homosexuality.

Former Assistant Assistant Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs (USSEA) John Holmes (and likely as well Douglas LePan), Ambassador David Johnson, and many other dedicated, talented gay Foreign Service Officers were fired, their knowledge and experience lost with them. John Watkins, former Ambassador and Assistant USSEA, was after retirement interrogated over many days by RCMP officers before dying of a heart attack in a Montreal hotel room during “intense probing.” For those at the top, close to USSEA Norman Robertson and to Lester Pearson, other posts were found. But the rest, like Robert, were given the choice of resignation or dismissal ... when homosexuality was a criminal offence, and a subject of shame with family and friends. Before they left, they were grilled or blackmailed to name names of other gay colleagues, and sadly many of them did so. (I write here of gay men, as records of any lesbian women victimized by the Purge are non-existent, and official documents of the time, be they RCMP, PCO, or DEA, are largely silent. Of course women faced incredible sexism and misogyny in the Department, not least being fired if they married).

The Purge was orchestrated and conducted by the RCMP Security Service, which was guided and encouraged at the highest levels of government, in the PCO, the PMO, and in DEA, as former GAC Historian Hector Mackenzie has eloquently documented in a recent article.¹ A secretive body called the Security Panel directed policy in this area and ultimately sealed the fate of individuals. That body was chaired by the Clerk of the Privy Council and included the Commissioner of the RCMP and the USSEA.

While policies implicitly barring homosexuals from DEA were in place with Cabinet Directives CD24 in 1952 and CD29 in 1955, later revised with CD35 in 1963, the RCMP Purge in DEA began in 1959 following a 1958 incident in Moscow involving a Canadian Foreign Service Officer who had a sexual relationship with a Soviet man. The Soviets entrapped him with compromising photos, but he immediately reported this to his Ambassador, David Johnson, himself gay. Johnson sent him back to Ottawa and under interrogation by the RCMP he named many names in the DEA and outside, including John Holmes, with whom he had an affair some years previously while posted in Moscow. He was then forced to resign.

The event sparked the RCMP, with support from the Security Panel and government of the day, to embark on a massive campaign to identify homosexuals, afflicted with “character weaknesses” or “human frailties,” not just in DEA and the Public Service, but in the Ottawa area, allegedly subject to blackmail by hostile Soviet intelligence forces. They created a new team, A-3, and set up a card index which grew to over 30,000 names of “sexual deviates” by the 1970s. Yet while there were several successful blackmail efforts directed at heterosexual Foreign Service Officers, not a single gay Canadian Foreign Service Officer was ever found to have succumbed to hostile blackmail efforts.

The Security Panel in 1960 enlisted the services of a Carleton University Professor, Frank Wake, in an effort to develop a technology, the infamous “Fruit Machine.” The Fruit Machine was intended to help identify homosexuals, so they could avoid recruiting them and fire those in positions requiring security clearances. While it never came to “fruition,” this outrageous experiment was supported by USSEA Norman Robertson as well as the highest levels of PCO and PM Lester Pearson. At one key meeting, officials including Robertson agreed that they needed to develop a “cover story” to hide the project from public scrutiny.

While the impact of the Purge was greatest during the intense period of 1959–62, it continued for many years thereafter, again with the full support of top officials in government, including DEA. The Royal Commission on Security (Mackenzie Commission) recommended in 1968 that homosexuals be barred from any rotational service in DEA – a dead end for any career.

During a comprehensive 1977 review of government policies on homosexuality in the

Public Service, then USSEA Basil Robinson argued strongly along with the RCMP and DND for policies barring all homosexuals from service in DEA. DEA Security heads at the time, Glen Shortliffe and John Hadwen, backed Robinson with outrageous statements, including Hadwen: “Certainly we do not want our ambassadors wearing lipstick and rouge, at least not abroad. And what are we to think of an ambassadress who does not wear lipstick or rouge?” Shortliffe grudgingly conceded that there may be some non-rotational posts in DEA which could be offered to a homosexual who was otherwise “a responsible person and a good candidate,” suggesting that “positions such as interior decorating” could be offered. No wonder then that during the 1960s and 1970s gays continued to lose their jobs in DEA, almost all of them recorded as “permitted to resign.” Some were quietly transferred to other federal departments. Some succumbed to substance abuse and mental health issues. Yet another toll of the Purge were the bright young Canadians who happened to be gay or lesbian who were lost to DEA because they knew that they had no future as diplomats. Recruitment documents were clear: there was no place in DEA for homosexuals.

It wasn’t until the late 1970s and early 1980s that a few brave gay Foreign Service Officers were prepared to be open about their sexuality and their relationships. One of the very first, Doug McCue, shared with me the story of his journey with Ryan, the partner he met in 1980 while posted to Trinidad. Doug arranged for him to join him in Canada on a student visa, and they lived together as a couple. In 1985, then Departmental Security Officer James Bartleman took away his security clearance. But when McCue confronted him personally and demanded that it be restored, or he would go public, Bartleman backed down. McCue’s Copenhagen posting was gone by then, so he went to Los Angeles, Ryan accompanying him as his “valet.”

While firings apparently ceased in the late 70s, homophobic and racist security briefings did not. Several retired Foreign Service Officers have shared with me stories of briefings by DL2 Security official John Von Kats, who at one point informed new recruits that there was no place in DEA for “Queers, Communists, or Separatists.” During briefings on more than one occasion he also made racist references to black African women as “chocolate bars” or “chocolate bunnies.” Up until the 1990s, CSIS, having taken over the security screening process from RCMP in 1984, engaged in deeply offensive and homophobic interrogation during field checks. Two former Foreign Service

Officers, gay partners, now retired, recalled to me how a friend of theirs was questioned by CSIS in the early 1990s during security clearance interviews, asking if she would trust them to be alone around her four-year-old son.

The Purge also took a huge toll on the lives of gay and lesbian Foreign Service Officers who wanted to enter into open relationships with a partner. Many of them shared with me the pain of knowing that they could not have a meaningful loving relationship because that would mean the end of their career. For those who were finally able to be open, their relationships were totally invisible and non-existent in the eyes of DEA. In 1992, an anonymous article was published in *bout*, “The Ghosts Among Us,” sharing in powerful words the reality facing gay and lesbian Foreign Service Officers. None of the FSD benefits, or pension and health benefits, were extended to gay and lesbian partners until finally in 1996 when Foreign Service Officer Stan Moore blazed the trail, along with Dale Akerstrom, in a legal challenge at Federal Court. Moore told the Court of how DEA offered to pay the full expenses of transporting his cat, Lady Jasmine, to his new post in Indonesia, but not a penny for his partner Pierre to join him there.



Foreign Service Officer Doug McCue and his partner Ryan, 1979, in Trinidad

The author with Michelle Douglas at the Norval, Ontario grave of former Ambassador John Watkins. Michelle was the former CAF officer who in 1992 successfully challenged in Federal Court the discriminatory policies of the military



1. Hector Mackenzie, “The Straight and Narrow Path: Policy Direction and Oversight of the Gay Purges in Canada,” *British Journal of Canadian Studies*, Volume 34, Number 2, 2022, pp189–216




Stan Moore (left) was the Foreign Service Officer who fought in the 90s for equal benefits for gay and lesbian FSOs; his landmark Federal Court victory led to an end to benefit discrimination in the Department of External Affairs and other federal departments

As a federal MP from 1979 to 2004, and the first openly gay MP in 1988, I fought for equality and justice for LGBT people, including in DEA, including moving to include “sexual orientation” in s15 of the Charter in 1981, and later in 1985 when the all-party Equality Rights Committee unanimously supported my Bill to include “sexual orientation” in the Canadian Human Rights Act (opposed by DEA at the time). While it would take another decade for that to become law, the Mulroney government did accept our key recommendation that s15 of the Charter be interpreted as including “sexual orientation” as an analogous ground, which led to a series of powerful legal victories including the key Haig and Birch decision of the Ontario Court of Appeal in 1992.

While Prime Minister Brian Mulroney replied to my question in Parliament in April of 1992 that the recent revelations of the Purge “would appear to be one of the great outrages and violations of fundamental human rights,” no action was taken by his government or succeeding governments for over 25 years, until Prime Minister Justin Trudeau issued a meaningful, heartfelt apology in the House of Commons to survivors of the Purge. I had the honour of serving on the Advisory Council on the apology, and shared tears in the House gallery that day with many survivors, almost all from the Canadian Armed Forces. Only a handful of former public servants (unknown how many of them were DEA), some 40 out of over 700, received compensation from a class action lawsuit and a personal apology for the impact of the Purge on their lives.

Indeed, a number of those in DEA impacted by the Purge informed me that they had no knowledge of the class action lawsuit or the apology. In addition to individual compensation, the class action settlement funds support the building of a monument in Ottawa to honour the struggles and history of 2SLGBTQIA+ people, to open in 2025, as well as Public Service training, permanent and travelling exhibitions at the Canadian Museum of Human Rights, and a commitment to share the historical records of the Purge (which has been a huge struggle to date).

I am engaged by the Purge Fund to write an updated book on the history of the Purge, and welcome any contributions or stories from readers of **bout** about the impact in DEA. I can be reached at sjr99@hotmail.com.

Finally, a humble suggestion. To honour the memory of those in DEA like Raymond Robert, whose dreams were destroyed and lives shattered by the Purge, orchestrated at the highest levels of DEA over many years, Global Affairs Canada might establish a lecture series, or a scholarship for promising young 2SLGBTQI+ researchers sharing knowledge of our experience in Canada with those in other countries. Let us hope that others will learn the lessons of this dark chapter in Canada’s history, and enact policies that ensure full equality, respect, and dignity to all in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. 



VIGNETTES // À LA CARTE

The Hungry Diplomat

by Lisa Bitto

LISA BITTO is a political Foreign Service Officer and believes food is one of life’s greatest simple pleasures. She enjoys using culinary diplomacy to bring people together and has been known to create cookie distribution lists at work.

PIZZA. When you think of Italian food, do you think of pasta? Risotto? Bolognese sauce? Or are you like me and go straight to a vision of a perfectly baked pizza right out of the oven? If so, I’m here to tell you that you’re even smarter and better-looking than you thought.

IN MY FINAL YEARS IN BRUSSELS, I escaped to Rome three times. I needed the blue sky, the gelato, and the glorious food (which is often reproduceable in your own kitchen). And it was there that I was reminded that – depending on where you are – pizza can be other than a thin base with a poofy crust, red sauce, and cheese (Neapolitan or Napolitano.) Naples is the most famous of all for its pizza, as that’s where today’s evolved version originated. The Margherita pizza, invented by Raffaele Esposito in Naples in 1889, was named after Queen Margherita of Savoy, who was visiting the city. It’s the one with the puffy outer crust, tomato sauce, and some fresh mozzarella, often with a few leaves of fresh basil. It is really, really delicious. But you know, that’s really only the beginning.

Rome has two of its own kinds of pizza: one on focaccia that comes sliced into a square (pizza al taglio) and the other on a very thin round crust (Romana) that still manages to magically retain some chew. Sicilian grandmothers have their own too: it’s thick and baked in a rectangular

pan. Cross the Atlantic and you’ll find New York, Detroit, Quad Cities, and New Haven-style, among others. Pizza has truly transcended its roots and become whatever the local population likes, anywhere in the world. Check out the first two episodes of Chef’s Table: Pizza on Netflix and you’ll see two very different styles made by two amazing celebrity pizzaiolos, Chris Bianco and Gabriele Bonci.

Let’s start at the beginning. Pizza is essentially a flatbread baked with toppings. It was the food of the poor; easily, quickly, and cheaply produced, as well as easy to eat. You and I probably have similar default ideas of what the rest looks like (cheese, tomato sauce, likely a few toppings), but vast pizza-eating experience has taught me that it can be whatever you want it to be: cream sauce, no sauce, topped with no cheese at all, or as much as you can lift. Meat, vegetables, and even fruit are all possibilities. The only mistake you can make is putting corn on as a topping (I’m looking at you, Great Britain).



Pizza al taglia, Rome



My meatball pizza



The pizza at River Cottage, UK



My Quad Cities pizza

Yes, I said fruit can be a legit topping. And yes, when I say that, I'm including pineapple, no apologies. Hawaiian pizza, a Canadian invention by Greek-Canadian Sam Panopoulos in Chatham, Ontario, is delicious because it is a sweet and salty combination. Is it sacrilegious? Maybe (no, not at all). But I don't really care. One of my Italian counterparts and I at NATO had an endless argument about the acceptability of Hawaiian pizza; although the thought of a Hawaiian pizza caused him physical pain (he was from Naples), he did really love the debate. In the end, my grandmother was right, "good is what you like." Of course, you could also have a sweet-salty combo with more accepted fruit, like figs or pear. But let's be honest. The only person's opinion that matters is the one who is eating it.

And while sitting in a restaurant anywhere in Italy is a wonderful thing, you are perfectly capable of making a really good pizza at home. For real. One of the best parts of being back in Ottawa again is having an oven that is big and hot enough to produce a decent pizza crust and robust enough to support my beloved pizza stone, which has been liberated from its cardboard box prison after four long years. No matter what life brings, no matter how tough the day has been, I know I can come home and have something delicious with very little effort. The best part is that you have full control over what that something delicious is.

I recently bought an online bread-making course on BBC Maestro, taught by UK-based French master baker Richard Bertinet. The course is fantastic, and one of the best parts about it was the unexpectedly wonderful recipe for pizza. Pizza, made by a French baker in Bath, England. I now make it almost every week, starting the process on Thursday and baking it either Friday or Saturday, after it's had a long rest in the fridge. The instructions may look daunting, but it's really just explaining a few techniques that make things work a bit easier/better. [bdo](#)

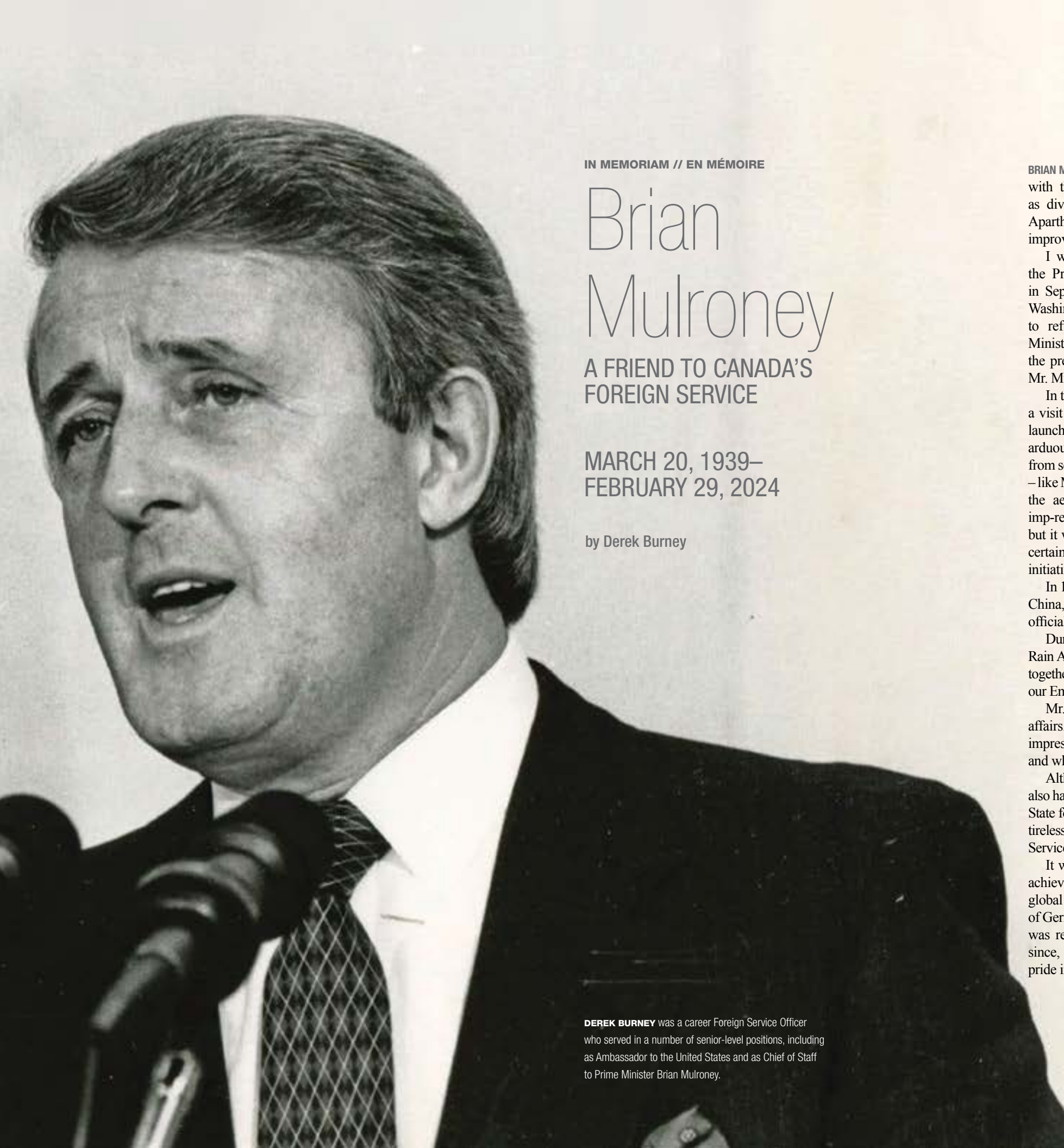
RECIPE // RECETTE

Richard Bertinet's Amazing Pizza

WARNING: you will need a scale for this recipe, which you can find online or in many grocery stores.

1. Two days before you want to feast, combine 31 grams water (room temperature), 1 gram of yeast and 31 grams of bread flour in a jar and stir with a spoon to combine. Cover and let rise 3 hours on the countertop. You can also put it in the fridge overnight and remove 3 hours before you want to make the dough.
2. In a mixing bowl, combine the following: 165 grams of water, 5 grams yeast, 250 grams bread flour, 5 grams semolina, 5 grams fine salt, 8 grams of olive oil. Stir to combine, to make a fairly wet dough, adding a tiny bit of extra flour to keep things from sticking too much to the bowl and your hands.
3. Mix in a stand mixer for 4 minutes or about 12 minutes on the countertop by hand. Place back in the bowl, pour a dollop of olive oil over it, then rotate the dough so that the dough gets completely coated. Then cover, place in the fridge, and forget about it for 48 hours. You can use it after 24 hours, but I promise the extra rising time makes a better pizza.
4. To prep the pizza, divide the dough in half (you'll get two pizzas from this recipe; one pizza feeds two). Use either a bit of bread flour or some semolina (my preference) to keep the dough from sticking to the prep surface, which can be a pizza peel or a smooth wooden cutting board, preferably with a handle that you will use to shake the pizza in a smooth motion into the oven. Don't roll it out unless you want a flat crust. Rather, use one hand to press down the middle of one piece of dough, keeping the outside rim untouched. Do some gentle stretching of the centre (check out "pizza shaping" on YouTube for some great instructions). The pizza will end up about 13-15" across. Top as you like.
5. Bake at a high heat (between 500 and 550°F, depending on how hot your oven will go, either on a pizza stone, cast iron pan, or upside down cookie sheet. Set the timer for eight minutes and keep an eye on it; you want the cheese bubbling and the underside to be nicely browned. At eight minutes, check it for doneness. If not ready, turn it 180 degrees and leave it for another two minutes. If you've been careful with the pizza shaping, you'll see the crust gloriously inflate, turning into a cornicione or crown that you definitely won't want to waste.
6. Take it out of the oven, place onto a cutting surface, let rest a few minutes, and then slice into six pieces. Eat immediately. Unlike thick North American pizzeria pizzas which are optimized for delivery transport, homemade pizza is best right out of the oven and allowed to cool only enough to not incinerate the roof of your mouth.

NOTE: This is a great recipe to make with kids. You can also split the dough into four instead of two and let everyone top their own custom pizza.



IN MEMORIAM // EN MÉMOIRE

Brian Mulroney

A FRIEND TO CANADA'S
FOREIGN SERVICE

MARCH 20, 1939–
FEBRUARY 29, 2024

by Derek Burney

DEREK BURNEY was a career Foreign Service Officer who served in a number of senior-level positions, including as Ambassador to the United States and as Chief of Staff to Prime Minister Brian Mulroney.

BRIAN MULRONEY HAD A CLOSE and highly productive relationship with the Canadian Foreign Service ranging across issues as diverse as food aid for Ethiopia to helping dismantle Apartheid in South Africa and, most importantly, substantially improving relations with the United States.

I was one of the first public service officials to meet the Prime Minister soon after he formed his government in September 1984. One of his top priorities was to visit Washington and meet President Reagan as the first step to refurbish this key relationship. As Assistant Deputy Minister for United States Affairs at that time, I managed the preparation of the briefing book and then accompanied Mr. Mulroney, along with others, on the visit.

In the Spring of 1985, President Reagan reciprocated with a visit to Quebec City for the “Shamrock Summit” and the launch of Free Trade negotiations (the FTA). This was an arduous and courageous undertaking that involved officials from several departments – including notably External Affairs – like Michael Hart, Bill Dymond, and Colin Robertson, under the aegis of the Trade Negotiations Office (TNO). The impressive economic results of the FTA speak for themselves, but it was a “near run” thing on which success was far from certain. It was Mr. Mulroney’s boldest and most consequential initiative.

In 1986, I went with the Prime Minister on official visits to China, Japan, and Korea. On each occasion, he met Embassy officials and thanked them for their service to Canada.

During the Bush Sr. presidency, Canada secured an Acid Rain Accord, one involving key officials from the department, together with those from Environment Canada and members of our Embassy in Washington, like Ross and Laurette Glasgow.

Mr. Mulroney had a keen and sharp interest in foreign affairs. He was a “newsaholic”, read prodigiously, and had an impressive network of foreign contacts whom he consulted and who consulted him on a regular basis.

Although they had earlier been political rivals, Mr. Mulroney also had a close, collaborative relationship with his Secretary of State for External Affairs, Joe Clark, and together they worked tirelessly on major issues of the day, ably supported by Foreign Service officials.

It was an epochal period, not only were there substantial achievements on bilateral relations with the US but major global events – specifically, the first Gulf War, the unification of Germany, and the dismantling of the Soviet Union. Canada was relevant on all of these and more, as never before or since, and I am sure that the officials directly involved take pride in their contributions.

Mr. Mulroney was well served by many in the department. Just to cite a few:

- I know he developed a particularly high regard for the advice and judgment provided by Under Secretary Si Taylor.
- Don Campbell provided yeoman’s service on the FTA and went on to serve as Deputy Minister of International Trade and later Deputy Foreign Minister.
- Len Edwards and his team organized the G7 Summit in Toronto in June 1988 and did a first-class job. He too went on to serve as Deputy Minister of International Trade and then Deputy Foreign Minister.
- John Weekes impressively led the NAFTA negotiations to a highly successful result.
- When I served as the Prime Minister’s Personal Representative or “sherpa” for the G7 summits in London (1990), Houston (1991) and Munich (1992), I was diligently supported by Phillip Somerville, as well as by my Finance sous-sherpa, David Dodge.

There are many more I could cite and still others who undoubtedly have lasting memories of their own.

Perhaps the greatest tribute Mr. Mulroney gave to External Affairs was the number of Foreign Service Officers recruited by him for his office (the PMO). I was privileged to become his Chief of Staff in February 1987 and brought with me Brian Hambleton and later Jim Wright – two of the department’s very best.

Marc Lortie joined with me as Press Officer and Spokesman in the PMO deftly managing the daily rough and tumble of Canadian politics. On one occasion, when journalist Stevie Cameron asked him how many Gucci shoes the Prime Minister had in his closet, Marc came to me and wondered “What are we doing here?” “Tell her,” I suggested “that journalists have no place in the PM’s closet”.

Bob Grauer came to the PMO a bit later. He joined the Prime Minister on a visit to Winnipeg and ventured into a non-friendly political environment. Hecklers surrounded the motorcade using placards to hammer the hood and roof of the Prime Minister’s limo.

“Smile Bob,” the PM counselled.

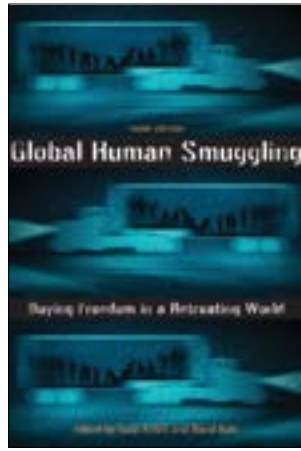
“Are you kidding,” replied Grauer. “We might get killed here.”

“No,” said the Prime Minister. “Just smile. That really cheeses them off,” only he did not use “cheese” as his verb.

Mr. Mulroney was a man of many parts, one being a biting sense of humour when the occasion merited.

As Prime Minister, he preferred crisp communications and direct action. He recognized that both were then stocks in trade for Foreign Service personnel. It was a non-woke universe – a time when ability, judgment, and results counted.

He was also a man with a proud record of distinctive achievements in global affairs and I know firsthand that he was appreciative of the able and consistent support he received from departmental officials in meeting those challenges. **bdp**



BOOK REVIEW // CRITIQUE DE LIVRE

Global Human Smuggling

Buying Freedom in a Retreating World

reviewed by Zal Karkaria

EDITED BY LUIGI ACHILLI AND DAVID KYLE

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THE NUMBERS ARE DIFFICULT TO GRASP. According to recent figures, there are, globally, over 280 million international migrants defined as those living outside their country of birth; 110 million people forcibly displaced due to conflict, persecution, and the like, up from around 40 million in 2009; and 169 million labour migrants. At the same time, several million people are smuggled across borders to places where they remain illegally.

In the face of these staggering figures, the attempt to control international migration via such instruments as visas, border checkpoints, walls, and patrols, seems almost futile. The mostly academic contributors to the edited volume *Global Human Smuggling* say as much, adding that these measures are also unfair and dangerous, fueling the smuggling of people via “irregular” means. They also convincingly re-frame the migrant-smuggler relationship as one of client and service provider, rejecting the simplistic construct of migrant as victim and smuggler as exploiter. Combined with the numbers quoted above, the book delivers an unequivocal message: people are creative, determined, and resilient. They are on the move for a better life and they aren’t going to stop.

Though migration to Canada is barely explored in the work’s 20 essays (the absence of a chapter on Roxham Road is an unfortunate oversight), they hold useful lessons for Ottawa policy makers as domestic support for relatively high immigration numbers erodes. Historically, this support was strong, based in part on the perception Canada managed immigration well. But huge increases in the number of temporary workers, international students, and asylum seekers arriving here combined with a shortage of housing and a deterioration in public services, has led to the perception that Canada has lost control

over the number of foreign nationals entering the country. The government is now taking measures to curb arrivals. *Global Human Smuggling’s* editors, Luigi Achilli and David Kyle would likely be skeptical of this turn. Barriers to legal migration, they argue, “create the conditions for some to try to cross borders outside state laws and programs at great personal risk”. In other words, despite the dangers or what the government tries, migrants are probably going to attempt to come anyway.

Achilli and Kyle assert that there is no universally accepted definition of the term “human smuggling”. They argue that media and political discourse describe smugglers less via their “logistical skills” or in legal terms, than through moral judgments that view them as nefarious operators, exploiting vulnerable, ill-informed migrants for profit. In contrast, the various contributors to their book present research soundly rejecting the notion of the migrant as victim. Over and over, in examples from Gaza to Ecuador to North Korea to Mexico, the authors illustrate how smugglers provide in-demand expertise in manoeuvring people around the barriers to migration that governments have imposed.

IRCC Migration Officers see this in their day-to-day work: visa application packages submitted by paid agents on behalf of would-be migrants hoping agent know-how can increase their chances of obtaining a visa. Though these packages are often of poor quality and applications rejected, the common view that naïve applicants are being “duped” by unscrupulous agents lacks nuance. Would-be migrants recognize that they likely stand almost no chance of obtaining a visa without outside support because of the rigorous requirements Canada

The book delivers an unequivocal message: People are creative, determined and resilient

imposes on them – so why not give agents a try? Officers (including myself) often decry this reliance on agents, but it’s difficult to argue with the thesis, repeated by multiple contributors to this book, that it’s high barriers to safe, legal migration – such as the impossibility for many of obtaining a visa – that drive applicants to these agents in the first place.

Risks are higher for migrants attempting to breach land and sea borders. Many essays trace the gradual “hardening” of borders through history, particularly along the US southern boundary. As recently as the 1990s, Mexican “smugglers” were little more than locals familiar with the border landscape, assisting fellow countrymen for a fee to supplement earnings. But as border enforcement increased, so too did the sophistication and organization of smuggling operations, spurring yet more severe enforcement tactics by border officials in a self-perpetuating cycle that failed to curb illegal crossings. Instead, the problem is displaced. As smugglers professionalize, migrant journeys become more costly – and more dangerous. As a young Gazan reflects in the book’s final chapter, “What is there to be afraid of? I know people say going with a smuggler can be bad, but it’s better to try it and see than just stay here and wait to be killed by an airstrike.”

With Canada’s migration consensus in peril, it’s understandable that the government is attempting to reign in immigration

With Canada’s migration consensus in peril, it’s understandable that the government is attempting to reign in immigration. But numbers may not be the problem, so much as the perceived failure to manage them effectively. Welcoming thousands of international students into strip-mall colleges offering bogus diplomas, for example, was hardly the foundation for a credible immigration program, as Canada’s immigration minister has more or less admitted. But Canada – like many Western countries with aging populations – needs people. And if we don’t manage the numbers properly, people are going to be knocking at our door regardless, though it will be via unpredictable routes that Canada can’t manage.

The days of Fortress Canada are gone. Even with formidable geographic barriers, irregular migrants make their way to Canada with the help of professional smugglers, and agents. In addition, mobile devices and social media allow smugglers to advertise their services and, once hired, connect clients to their agents along migration routes; migrants, in turn, use social media to trade information, download maps, contact smugglers, and pay fees from their phones. This communications and information flow can’t be stopped. Governments, including our own, are slow to acknowledge this reality. A quick read of even a few chapters of *Global Human Smuggling* would provide policy makers within the migration space with a useful counter-perspective to enforcement-focused solutions. IRCC Migration Officers – who have fewer and fewer opportunities to meet applicants because of processing pressures – could learn a great deal about the complex economic, social and security motivators driving migrants to move.

The criminalization of migrant smuggling, the book argues, simply drives activity underground. It’s also unfair – the International Organization for Migration states that “the availability of migration options is partly related to the lottery of birth.” With odds like these, it’s not surprising that human smuggling thrives. [bdp](#)

Even with formidable geographic barriers, irregular migrants make their way to Canada with the help of professional smugglers and agents

Freelance prestidigitator **A AALTO** is grateful to Ingmar Bergman and his knight Antonius Block in *The Seventh Seal*. The top and tail of this puzzle came to him in a dream, demonstrating that Limburger with kimchi before bedtime is not a great idea. The title comes from his favourite New Yorker cartoon caption: "Obscure chess move: King's pawn to Albuquerque, New Mexico". With thanks to Mrs Aalto for all her help.

ENTERTAINMENT // DIVERTISSEMENT

Obscure Chess Moves

On board with A Aalto

IN A SPECTRAL REALM running parallel to ours, a man sat at a stone table under an ancient oak, a chess board in front of him. He looked not entirely unlike Humphrey Bogart and not entirely unlike Scarlett Johansson. His aura combined the knife-edged malice of Agatha Christie with the warm bonhomie of Henning Mankell. He had John Candy's waistline, Wilford Brimley's moustache, and Bette Davis' eyes. They weren't using them anymore.

The man pushed a pawn forward. Out of the misty treeline strode a smiling figure in a white three-piece suit and broad-brimmed hat, twirling a rattan cane. He stopped in front of the table, looked down, and said, "Dutch Stonewall defence? How quaint." The seated man replied, "White linen? Not your usual style. And what's with the walking stick?" "They say that white is the new black. Even Time has to recognize the passage of time. And have you ever tried to check a scythe as carry-on?"

The seated man said, "So you've come for me?" The figure in white nodded, "But no hurry. Let's finish your game." He sat, pulled an hourglass out of the air, set it down, and moved a bishop.



MEANWHILE, IN OUR WORLDLINE, Hairy Harry January stood in the hot sun at the Chess in the Park Extravaganza, talking on mobile to his friend Shamus Dikk, “I am waiting for Maxie and Moxie Slye, these twin dames who work for me from time to time. They want to meet here to tell me why they are not delivering on their latest heist, a Fabergé rutabaga for which I have an interested buyer.”

He was watching a chess game on the green, not on the usual board but laid out 10 metres square with people in costume playing the pieces, their moves being called by captains on either side. Adding to the spectacle, one team was all clowns in full makeup and huge shoes, while the other was mainly women in tuxedos carrying Tommy guns. “Shamus, this is a grudge match between two of the toughest gangs in town. The clowns are run by Commander Chaos, the whiteface anarchist. Calling the shots for the dames is Bertha de Kuhl. Her gang controls the East Side.”

Harry noticed that Bertha’s line-up had a woman as king and a man as her consort, who kept singing “I’m Just Ken” until Cillian Murphy ran out and clocked him. As pieces were captured, they didn’t go quietly. The women were not shy to put the clowns down in a hail of gunfire, while the clowns had an interesting line in deadly cream pies. Fortunately the players were holograms, who disappeared in a flash of light. Except for one mime, who seemed to be protected by an invisible box.

Harry heard a cheery greeting behind him and turned to find the twins. He closed the call with Shamus and said to the sisters, “You are late”. One of them – Harry though it was Moxie – replied, “It’s true that the early bird gets the worm.” The other completed, “but the second mouse gets the cheese.” “What? Never mind. Where is my rutabaga?” They pointed in unison at the chess match, where both teams were ganging up on the mime. “We buried it out there last night for safe keeping. But the city came in early this morning and laid out the chessboard on top. Now, with our marks removed, we can’t tell where it is. And the field is watched constantly by all the gangs – it isn’t just Bertha and the Commander in this tournament – so no-one can sow landmines or other surprises. We may have to wait until Sunday, when it’s over.”

Harry said, “This is not a happening thing. My customer leaves at dawn tomorrow for Europe.” The twins consulted. “There might be a moment after the last game today when everyone is heading to the pavilion for the reception. We can maybe delay the arrival of the guard’s night shift for a while, but there’d only be time to search one square. And we don’t know which one.”

They looked around the park for inspiration. A determined-looking file of army cadets marched along the path under the banner “Onward to Saanich”. They stopped in mid-stride and broke into a quick Zumba before moving on. Maxie said, “Wasn’t expecting that.” Moxie replied, “Nobody expects the Saanich expedition!” Harry said, “Look, we need someone who is here last night when you are digging. The soldier boys, or that bunch of Elvis impersonators and dachshunds in matching

raspberry-sequin overalls – not so much.” Maxie said, “Whoa, who’s the stud on the pogo stick?”

Harry shaded his eyes. “Hey, that’s Manitoba Jones. I hear he is doing undercover security for the Extravaganza. We should talk to him.” The denim-clad figure hopped rapidly closer. A last mighty bounce propelled him into the branches of the oak shading them, where he stuck and had to be helped down. “Say hey, Harry, good to see you!” “Likewise, Manny. Look, we need help on something that happens last night near the big chess board. You around then?” “I was in the hospital being surgically extracted from a liquorice piano. But I know someone who might have seen something.” He pointed down the line of trees to a clearing. “See that tent? A fortune teller lives in it full time, stays up all night as far as I can tell. I’d try there. But now duty calls and I must be away.” Remounting his stick, he headed off, delayed only momentarily by skidding off the path into a lily pond. The twins face-palmed.

The trio approached the tent, its silk panels covered with esoteric symbols. Outside was a sign offering a full range of mystic services. Maxie called out, “If anyone in there can do telekinesis.” Moxie added, “Please raise my hand.” Harry whispered, “Stop that. We are asking for help, best not to start with a razz.” They went in and were surprised to find an overweight young man with a bushy moustache and piercing eyes. wearing a turban and board shorts, and sitting behind a chess table. He gazed at them from kohl-rimmed eyes and said, “Seekers after a lost treasure, I perceive. How may I help in your quest?”

Harry’s eyebrows went up. “This freaks me out. How are you knowing why we are here, before we even say?” “What use would I be to you if I couldn’t look deeply into the mysteries? Oh, and I happened to see these young ladies digging out there last night and now you come in all worried-like? A simple enough deduction.” He took off his turban, invited them to sit and offered them foaming cups of “the best fluorescent fungus latte in town”. They declined and looked relieved when he didn’t insist.

Harry gave the mystic the abbreviated version, avoiding distracting elements such as how they had acquired the egg or why it was buried in the park. He spoke instead of a dying grandmother whose final wish was to see her prized ornament from the old country just one more time before donating it to a home for indigent wolverines. The twins were in tears. The mystic clapped softly. “Bravo, bravo. A truly impressive piece of ... utter garbage. I actually do have some powers, you know. These ladies are thieves, you are a fence, you are doing this entirely for your financial gain, and hoping to pull the wool over my eyes. I should toss you out on your collective ears. But among the things I also know is that the man you stole from swindled the rutabaga from its rightful owner, who is indeed a dying grandmother in Ruritania, and the man who hired you is her grandson. So I will help you. But I’ll make you work for it.”

He pulled a battered briefcase out from under a paisley cushion and removed two documents – a series of questions and a small blank chart.

QUESTIONS

A Which country hired a world chess champion as a diplomat for many years, essentially to play chess internationally?

- Cuba
- Argentina
- Uruguay
- Brazil
- Venezuela

B In which country’s chess variant can captured pieces be flipped upside down and replaced on the board to play for the capturing side?

- Mongolia
- Georgia
- Western Samoa
- Turkey
- Japan

C From what country did the origin of the word “checkmate” (“shah mat” meaning “the king is helpless”) come?

- India
- Lebanon
- Oman
- Persia
- Peru

D From what country was the world champion in mid-2024?

- Norway
- China
- Finland
- Russia
- Qatar

E In which country did Bobby Fischer beat Boris Spassky in the 1972 championships?

- Iceland
- Sweden
- Denmark
- Ethiopia
- USA

“These were the final-round questions for the Extravaganza’s chess trivia contest. The completed chart would show how each of the five finalists answered them. It is up to you to fill it in.” Harry sputtered, “But how does this help us find the rutabaga?” “Patience, patience. In *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, Alice finds herself on a giant chessboard and goes all the way to the far end, where she becomes a queen under the rules of chess. By one of those odd coincidences that pop up in these puzzles, your lost vegetable is buried in the same square as the one from which she started on the black side of the board. Encoded, that square is D1-A4-E1-E1-D4-E4 C3-A2-B2-D3.”

“OK,” said Harry, “but how are we supposed to decode this message?” “That gets us back to the chart. Once you have filled it in, each currently blank square will have a country name in it. Each square can also be identified as the intersection of a letter (A to E on the left) and a number (1 to 5 along the top). Link the intersections (like A3) with the first letter of the country name found there, and you will be able to read the message.” “But how do we know what country to put in each box? None of us is a chess expert.” You don’t actually need to know the answers. You can solve the puzzle using these clues.” (See next page.)

Harry sighed. “You cannot just walk out there and show us, eh?” “No, you don’t deserve it. You are intelligent and capable people who could achieve great heights, but instead you choose to work the shadows.” Moxie piped up with, “Eagles may soar.” Maxie closed, “But weasels don’t get sucked into jet engines.” The mystic laughed. “Oh, and part of the price is sending

CHART

QUESTIONS	PLAYER’S GUESSES				
	1	2	3	4	5
A					
B					
C					
D					
E					

CLUES

- Players 1–3 got three countries right; player 4 got one right (China for question D); and player 5 got all five.
- Each question was answered correctly by just three players.
- Players 1 and 3 guessed Cuba.
- Player 2 guessed Argentina and Western Samoa.
- One player guessed Uruguay and Sweden.
- Players 2 and 3 guessed Iceland.
- One player guessed Qatar and Ethiopia.
- Japan is correct.
- Players 1 and 2 guessed Persia.
- Player 3 guessed Peru and Norway.
- Player 4 guessed Turkey and India.

10 per cent of what you get to that wolverine sanctuary. Think of it as looking after your own.”

Harry and the twins made shorter work of the puzzle than they expected. Once the chess matches had finished for the day and the parks crew had cleaned up the accumulated piles of spent bullets, fedoras, red rubber bobble-noses, poisoned lemon meringue, and other detritus from the board, the three swung into action. The twins sashayed over to the pavilion and strolled through the open doors into a tall atrium. It was filled with fans claiming unlikely boardgame achievements. A word with the band and the sisters broke into a torchy rendition of “Chess Nuts Boasting in an Open Foyer” that riveted the crowd and blocked the doors.

Meanwhile, Harry donned a parks uniform, took a shovel to the designated square and began to dig for the ruby-encrusted treasure. It was a big square. He paused to wipe his brow and leaned on the shovel. In the distance, the sun was setting. He watched as a 1930s mobsters’ sedan and a classic clown car chased each other around the nearby track, the passengers exchanging obscene gestures, loud insults, and louder gunfire. A lone figure on a pogo stick bounced into their path. Both cars broke off to chase him instead. Harry shrugged and went on digging.

The man with Betty Davis eyes conceded, toppling his king. “Well played. Even if you did consult Karpov when you thought I wasn’t looking. I’ve folded the tent – for now.” The figure in white harrumphed and said, “Talking about clever moves, kudos on hiding those quixotic forays of yours. Took me forever to pick up your trail. But then, I have forever, don’t I?” Looking for a moment not entirely unlike Max von Sydow, the other man said, “It meant I could make a real difference for real people. You wouldn’t understand. Anyway, now’s the time?” “Yes. Right now.” He sniffed. “Your mother’s made dumplings.”

Can you duplicate the trio’s feat and provide the decoded message? Submit your answers to boutdepapier@pafso.com. Not necessary to win, but can you fill in the chart and answer the five trivia questions? **bout de papier** will award a book prize signed by A Aalto to the submitter of the first correct answer drawn from a hat on April 15, 2025. [bdp](#)

BOOK 'EM DANNO

Answers

Milfoyle’s message spells out **A LA RECHERCHE DE TRUMP PERDU**, which clearly links to the book **LOSER?** and its author Beauregard Warbeck. The full correspondence of last words is below.

	SPEAKER		LAST WORDS
R	Nostradamus (an accurate prediction)	6	Tomorrow at sunrise I shall no longer be here.
I	Isaac Newton	19	I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore and diverting myself now and then in finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than the ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.
Q	Leonardo da Vinci (compared to what?)	22	I have offended God and mankind because my work did not reach the quality it should have.
D	Jazz drummer Buddy Rich, asked by a nurse prepping him for surgery, “Is there anything you can’t take?”	11	Yeah, country music.
W	Jack Layton	12	My friends, love is better than anger. Hope is better than fear. Optimism is better than despair. So let us be loving, hopeful and optimistic.
J	Chico Marx	16	Put in my coffin a deck of cards, a mashie niblick, and a pretty blonde.
O	Leadbelly (Huddie Ledbetter)	18	Doctor, if I put this here guitar down now, I ain’t never gonna wake up.
Z	Emperor Augustus (to an audience of courtiers)	25	Have I played the part well? Then applaud as I exit.
N	Poet Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux, to a man who asked him to read his new play	20	Do you wish to hasten my last hour?
F	JS Bach	13	Don’t cry for me, for I go where music is born.
A	Voltaire, asked by a priest whether he renounced the devil and all his works	7	Now is not the time for making new enemies.
H	Composer Christoph Gluck, asked if a tenor or a bass should sing the role of Christ in his opera	2	If you wait a little, I shall be able to tell you from personal experience.
U	The Marquis de Favras, French royalist, reading his death warrant (picky, picky, picky)	10	I see that you have made three spelling mistakes.
P	Charles Gussman, radio/TV announcer	4	And now for a final word from our sponsor ...
L	WC Fields, a known sceptic, found reading the Bible on his deathbed	1	I’m looking for loopholes.
T	Oscar Wilde	9	This wallpaper and I are fighting a duel to the death. Either it goes or I do.
E	The Duke of Valencia, former Spanish PM, asked by his priest if he forgave his enemies	3	I have none. I had them all shot.
M	Benjamin Disraeli, declining a visit from Queen Victoria	5	No, it is better not. She will only ask me to take a message to Albert.
Y	Karl Marx (paradoxically)	23	Last words are for fools who haven’t said enough.
G	Playwright Pedro Muñoz Seca, to his firing squad	14	I am starting to believe you are not intending to count me among your friends!
K	George Orwell (at 46)	24	At 50, everyone has the face he deserves.
X	Werner Heisenberg	26	When I meet God, I am going to ask him two questions: Why relativity? And why turbulence? I really believe he will have an answer for the first.
V	Puppeteer Jim Henson (appropriately)	17	I feel like I’m in good hands.
C	Union General John Sedgwick (ironically)	8	They couldn’t hit an elephant at this distance.
S	Bob Hope, asked where he wanted to be buried	21	Surprise me.
B	Jimmy Buffett (consistent with his life)	15	Have fun.

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