

# Diplomat &

INTERNATIONAL CANADA



# Russia Rising

AMBASSADOR GEORGIY MAMEDOV SAYS RUSSIA WILL BE RICH AND RESPONSIBLE, DEMOCRATIC AND FREE. JUST BE PATIENT FOR A FEW YEARS. PLUS: A FEW SECRETS FROM THE SOVIET ERA.

CHRIS WESTDAL, CANADA'S FORMER MAN IN MOSCOW, SAYS IT'S TIME TO CUT RUSSIA SOME SLACK. ONE RESERVATION: "THE CONCENTRATION OF POWER IN ONE MAN."



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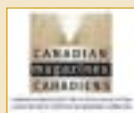
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## Russia rises as democracy fades

The world's largest country is back. And, as Ambassador Georgiy Mamedov says, it's a rich force to reckon with. "We have everything you have," he says, as he's explaining why the country's citizenry is rejecting the liberal values espoused in the '90s. There were, he says, some 30 million Russians living in "abject poverty" in "one of the richest countries in the world." They're more comfortable with the more constrained, but economically balanced, existence they now have.

With President Vladimir Putin being named *Time Magazine's* 2007 Person of the Year, and international observers calling the December election a "triumph of corruption," there's no doubt there are issues – and questions. What's happening to freedom of the press? When if ever will the country, a permanent member of the UN Security Council and a G8 giant, become a credible democracy? How long will Putin stick around and what steps will he take to allow himself to do so? Who are new Russia's friends – Iran? China? North Korea? What, exactly is Russia up to in the Arctic? Is it mapping territory Canada claims? Is the Cold War over, or is it just beginning?

Mr. Mamedov and I sat down and had a far-reaching discussion touching on all of the above. He defended his country's progress and pleaded for time to get it right. The latest version of Russia is only 17 years old, he noted, while Canada is 139. And Canada is "still seeking perfect answers for difficult questions" such as police brutality, corruption, how to deal with its Aboriginal people. For further thoughts on this issue, we feature the views of Chris Westdal in a text he adapted from his speech to the Canadian Institute of International Affairs' "Russia Resurgent" conference in November. Mr.



JENNIFER CAMPBELL

Westdal was Canada's ambassador to Russia until 2006 and is wholly optimistic about its future. He urges Canada to work on relations with Russia, a country he says has never been more legitimate.

Also in our Dispatches section, we offer a story about travel security – for horses. Like humans, horses cannot travel abroad (or even within Canada for that matter) without a passport. The domestic "passports" come from Equine Canada; the cross-border versions come from the Fédération Equestre Internationale, in Switzerland. Up front, there are a series of punchy quotes from Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, and there's an interview with departing Egyptian Ambassador Mahmoud El-Saeed. He will retire in March, on his 60th birthday.

In our Delights section, there's much else. Books writer George Abraham reviews the Mulroney, Chrétien and Blair biographies. Wine columnist Stephen Beckta tells you how to navigate the LCBO, and food writer Margaret Dickenson explains the importance of the side dish. Ms. Dickenson has won her third international award for her cookbook, *Margaret's Table – Easy Cooking & Inspiring Entertaining*. The Cordon d'Or – Gold Ribbon International Annual Cookbook and Culinary Arts Awards chose it as the "best cookbook on entertaining." In addition, for the third year in a row, she won "best published recipe" at the same event for a recipe which appeared in *Diplomat*. Our congratulations to Margaret on all her successes.

We also have a feature on the home of Turkish Ambassador Aydemir Erman and his wife Gulen and a travel story on the wonders of Kenya.

Jennifer Campbell is *Diplomat's* editor

### UP FRONT

Photographer Brigitte Bouvier braved the first snow of the year to get a shot of Russian Ambassador Georgiy Mamedov looking cold – and Russian – outside the imposing embassy on Charlotte Street. She had hoped he would wear a typically Russian hat, known as the ushanka. Instead, Mr. Mamedov surfaced with a beret-style chapeau. When she asked why he didn't want to wear the traditional headgear, he told her it wasn't cold enough in Canada to warrant such a hat. He would be ridiculed by his countrymen. Fair enough. Our cover package starts on page 10.



### CONTRIBUTORS

Christopher Westdal, author of "Russia has never had so much legitimacy"



Christopher Westdal retired from Foreign Affairs last spring after 34 years of public service, the last three as ambassador to Russia. His foreign service career began in 1973 when, he joined the Canadian International Development Agency. He served in India and Nepal (73-75) and was Ambassador to Burma and Bangladesh (82-85), South Africa (91-93), Geneva (UN, Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and Disarmament) and Ukraine (96-98). At headquarters, he was CIDA regional director for East Africa (78-82), DFAIT director general for international organizations (87-91) and was twice (76-78 and 85-87) seconded to the foreign affairs and defence secretariat of the Privy Council Office. Mr. Westdal sustains an interest in foreign affairs, particularly circumpolar cooperation and commerce.

Charles Enman, author of "May I see your Passport, Mr. Ed?"

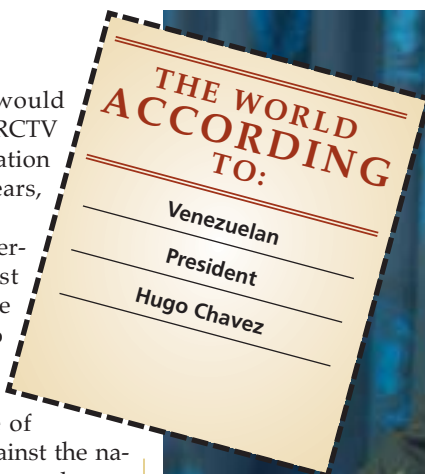


Alberta-native Charles Enman has been a journalist for 17 years, seven of them for the *Telegraph Journal* in Saint John, and 10 in Ottawa, where he has written for *The Ottawa Citizen*, other CanWest papers; for *Ottawa Magazine*, and other publications. He has a BA in philosophy, a graduate diploma in journalism, and a certificate in French studies from the Université d'Aix-en-Provence. His travels, which have taken him across Europe and parts of Asia, have been on a human passport. There is no truth to the rumour that the *New York Times* has called him "the great green hope of the Canadian novel."

**BBC News on December 29, 2006**

Mr. Chavez announced he would shut down the oppositional RCTV station, the oldest private station that had broadcast for 53 years, in March.

"There will be no new operating license for this coupist TV channel called RCTV. The operating license is over... So go and turn off the equipment," Mr. Chavez said. The channel was "at the service of coups against the people, against the nation, against national independence, against the dignity of the republic."



UNITED NATIONS

**Televised national speech on Jan. 8, 2007**

"We're moving toward a socialist republic of Venezuela, and that requires a deep reform of our national constitution," Mr. Chavez said after swearing in his new cabinet. He won a third term that ends in 2013. "We are in an existential moment of Venezuelan life. We're heading toward socialism, and nothing and no one can prevent it.

"I'm very much of (Leon) Trotsky's line — the permanent revolution," he said. "All of that which was privatized, let it be nationalized.

"The nation should recover its ownership of strategic sectors."

**From his Presidential Address on Jan. 13, 2007**

"We have decided to nationalize the whole

Venezuelan energy and electricity sector, all of it, absolutely all," Mr. Chavez said. "If someone wants to stay on as our partner, then the door is open but if he does not want to stay as our minority partner, then hand me the field and goodbye."

**BBC News on May 3, 2007**

"Private banks have to give priority to financing the industrial sectors of Venezuela at low cost." And if they don't, "it's better that they go [away]... that they turn over the banks to me, that we nationalize them and get all the banks to work for the development of the country and not to speculate and produce huge profits."

Of Sidor, the huge Luxembourg-based

steel company in Venezuela: "It has created a monopoly," he said, and is selling its products abroad at market prices. "If the company does not immediately agree to change this process they will oblige me to nationalize it... Sidor has to produce and give priority to our national industries... and at low cost."

**New York Times on May 27, 2007**

With little more than an hour to go late Sunday until this country's oldest television network was to be taken off the air, the police dispersed thousands of protesters by firing tear gas into demonstrations against the measure.



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**The Associated Press on June 1, 2007**

During an event with the visiting leader of Vietnam's communist party, Mr. Chavez said of the TV station closing: "international rightist, extreme-rightist and fascist movements are attacking Venezuela from everywhere – from Europe, the United States, Brasilia."

He targeted Brazil's Senate for approving a motion earlier in the day including a call for Mr. Chavez to reopen the channel.

"Nobody should interfere," Mr. Chavez said, accusing lawmakers in Brazil of "repeating like a parrot what is said in Washington."

"To those representatives of the Brazilian right, I say that it is much, much, much more probable that the Portuguese empire will again install itself in Brasilia than that the Venezuelan government will return the expired (broadcast) concession to the Venezuelan oligarchy."

**The Associated Press on Nov. 20 2007**

"Here are two brother countries, united like a single fist," Mr. Chavez said upon his arrival in Tehran, according to Venezuela's state-run Bolivarian News Agency.

"God willing, with the fall of the dollar, the deviant U.S. imperialism will fall as soon as possible, too," Mr. Chavez said after a two-hour closed meeting with Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the Iranian state news agency IRNA reported.

"The U.S. empire is coming down," Mr. Chavez told Venezuelan TV, calling the European Union's Euro a better option and saying Latin American nations were also considering a common currency.

"We have common viewpoints and we will stand by each other until we capture the high peaks. God is with us and victory is awaiting us," Mr. Ahmadinejad was quoted as saying by IRNA. He said he and Mr. Chavez would stick together to defend their "nations and ideals to the end."

**The Associated Press on Dec. 2, 2007**

President Hugo Chavez threatened Friday to nationalize the Venezuelan subsidiaries of Spanish banks Banco Santander SA and Banco Bilbao Vizcaya Argentaria SA, if Spain's king does not apologize for telling Mr. Chavez to "shut up."

Spain's King Juan Carlos on Nov. 10 told Mr. Chavez to "shut up" during a re-

gional summit meeting in Chile, where the Venezuelan leader had called Spain's former premier, Jose Maria Aznar, a fascist.

"The only way this is going to be fixed is for the king of Spain to offer an apology for having attacked the Venezuelan head of state," Mr. Chavez said.

Otherwise, "I'll start thinking about what actions to take," he continued. "Spaniards bought some banks here, and it doesn't cost me anything to take those banks back and nationalize them again, and put them in the service of the Venezuelan people."

**The Times of London on Dec. 4, 2007**

Defeated in his bid to hold presidency for life, Mr. Chavez said: "I am not withdrawing a single comma from this proposal — it remains alive." He promised to "continue in the battle to build socialism" in Venezuela, adding: "We are ready for a long battle."

Repeating the phrase he used after his failed 1992 military coup, he said: "We couldn't do it — for now."

—Compiled by Donna Jacobs



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## Educational EU

**W**hen the European Union reaches out to Canadians, it often does so through educational awards and contests.

The newest program is a children's drawing competition which was showcased at the Europe Day celebration at the National Gallery of Canada last May. Judges chose drawings by 12 elementary school children to create a calendar for 2008. The delegation founded the competition, which will continue this year, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome. Students aged nine to 11, from Thomas Darcy McGee Catholic School and Lakeview Public School, created drawings of what the EU means to them. Judges selected the winners based on originality, creativity, message, attention to detail and use of colour.

For older students, the EU delegation offers the Young Journalist Award, created in 2001. The idea is to recognize outstanding journalistic merit, or potential, among Canada's students. The goal, as the mission sees it, is to reinforce links between the people of the EU countries and Canada. Obviously, the idea is also to promote awareness of the EU among Canadian students.

Students submit, in print or broadcast form, a story about a current issue facing the European Union or about Canada-EU relations (this year's deadline is Jan. 25.) The three winning students go to Brussels, home of the largest permanent press corps in the world, for a one-week study tour. Students visit EU institutions in Brussels and the trip is paid by the European Commission.

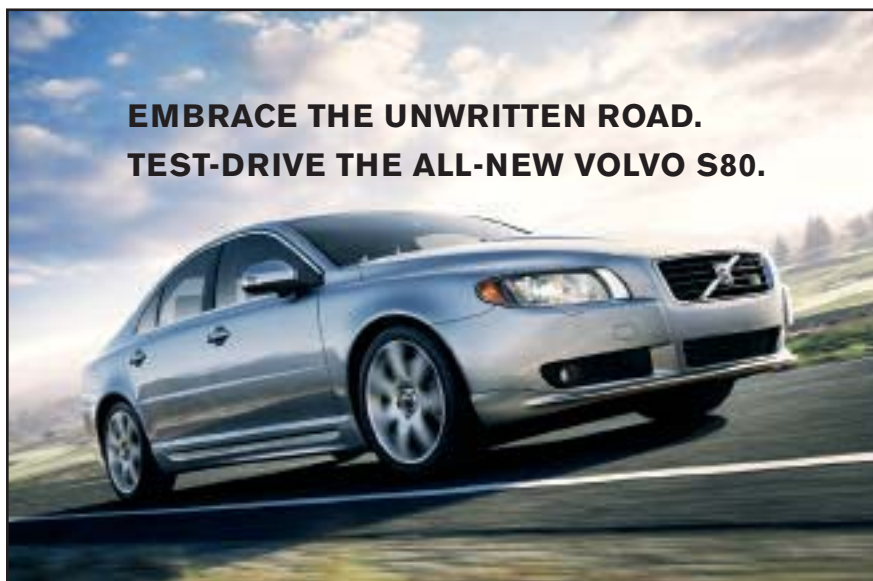


This picture by nine-year-old Susan Brennan of Ottawa's Thomas Darcy McGee Catholic School, appears in the EU's 2008 calendar.

Brian Innes, winner of the 2006 award, called it "one of the most intense learning experiences of my life." Danny Glenwright, also a 2006 winner, remembered hearing the Belgian prime minister speak to the EU parliament on the future of the EU. "It felt like a very important moment in European Union history and it was amazing to be able to be there to watch it live," Mr. Glenwright said.

Meanwhile, four Canadians per year are selected for a similarly educational trip to Brussels. The program is open to bureaucrats, politicians, academics,

journalists, trade unionists, teachers and those who work for non-governmental organizations. Applicants between the ages of 25 and 45 outline their field of study in their application. The program, in place since 1974, awards four people per year with a five- to eight-day program of meetings with EU officials at EU institutions in Brussels, Strasbourg and/or Luxembourg. Each visit is custom-tailored for the participant. Travel and hotel costs are covered and a per diem is paid to cover meals and incidentals.



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## Slovenia brings two EU firsts



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The territory of Slovenia lies in the south of Central Europe between the eastern margin of the Alps and the Northern Adriatic. Throughout history this territory has had a crossroads character, linking Central Europe with the Mediterranean and the Balkan Peninsula and Italy with the Pannonian Plain. Because of its specific location, this territory has always been included in the hegemonic interests of European civilizations.

Under foreign rulers and foreign centres of government from the early Middle Ages until the beginning of the 20th century, Slovenians lost much of the original ethnic territory they had once occupied. Nevertheless, in the seventh century, they had their own state called Karantanija. From the 14th century until 1918, the territory of Slovenia had the status of hereditary province in the Habsburg Monarchy, with its capital in Vienna. In the 16th century, ethnic Slovenians began to form themselves culturally into a nation.

In the middle of the 19th century, the nation established its "United Slovenia" political program. Because the Slovenian nation had failed to realize national-political autonomy within the Habsburg Monarchy, and because it believed its national development would be secured, it left the Austrian Empire at the end of the First World War, and established the Yugoslav state, together with the Serbs and Croats. The Slovenians were praised for their contribution to the victory over fascism and Nazism in the Second World War. In the new Socialist Yugoslavia, they had been promised to be an equal partner with other nations. In the last decade of

20th century, the Slovenian nation used its constitutional right to leave Yugoslavia, which had become an obstacle to its democratic, social and economic development.

Slovenian independence, proclaimed in June 1991, was followed by interna-

tional recognition in early 1992 and membership in the UN, the Council of Europe, the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization – the latter two in 2004. In its 17 years of existence, Slovenia did immense work to establish an efficient democracy and market economy.

Slovenia's preparation for integration into the European Union influenced all areas of its people's lives, starting with legislative and institutional adjustment and including fundamental changes in industry, trade, transportation and agriculture. Those processes would not have been possible without determination and widespread "EU-phoria" to become a

member as early as possible.

Accession to the European Union concluded one of the fundamental historical goals of the nation and all its major political parties. The change-over to the Euro currency on Jan. 1, 2007 and membership within the Schengen regime (of open borders among EU members) after Dec. 21 confirm that determination.

To cap this story, on Jan. 1, 2008, Slovenia will take the presidency of the EU Council, as the first of the 10 new member states to join in 2004 and the first Slavic country to do so.

During its tenure, Slovenia will follow the approach of former presidencies in leading the community of 500 million people.

Enlargement is one of the most effective EU political instruments to assure democratic reforms in candidate and potential candidate countries. Slovenia supports this process in accordance with the EU enlargement strategy when the candidate countries comply with the criteria. During its presidency, Slovenia will support accession negotiations with Turkey and Croatia and advocate a clear European perspective for the Western Balkans.

The Lisbon Strategy outlines economic, social, employment, energy and environmental dimensions designed to make the



After a history of foreign rulers, Slovenia (its picturesque coastal town of Piran pictured above) is reaping the benefits of becoming a member of the EU. This month, it takes on the organization's presidency.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION



EU the most competitive economy in the world. This program will continue under the Slovenian presidency. Investing in research and innovation, developing a competitive business environment, and adapting the social model to the needs of a competitive economy will be priorities.

Demographic changes, such as the aging population of the EU and the challenge of developing better cooperation between different generations, is something we must address. Therefore Slovenia intends to deepen the European discussion of youth and its perspectives. As well, Slovenia will make every effort during its presidency to further develop energy and climate change policy, aimed at achieving the EU's objectives of sustainability, competitiveness and security of supply. The goals of freedom, security and justice require dealing with migration, fighting organized crime and people trafficking, and combating terrorism, where the efficient Schengen regime will facilitate the high level of common EU safety.

In regard to transatlantic co-operation, Slovenia will continue intensive dialogue with Europe's overseas partners because partnership strength depends on balanced relations with Washington and Ottawa.

The EU has to prepare its joint trade study with Canada on existing barriers to the flow of goods, services and capital, to be concluded in the spring of 2008. We also expect transatlantic discussions about air services, open sky policies, climate change and energy.

The Middle East is an ongoing political agenda with special attention to the peace process. Meanwhile, the mutually accepted solution for Kosovo (Western Balkans) is of great EU interest. Discussions between cultures is one of the foreseen priorities for Slovenian presidency, as the year 2008 has been designated as the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue.

Our links through the EU allow all members to contribute to the common European future. Slovenia's international engagement since independence is going to culminate in the EU presidency. We are proud to be part of a mosaic of very diverse nations, languages and cultures and we believe that the EU Reform Treaty from Lisbon gives us enough space for fruitful development of diversity within this unity.

Tomaz Kunstelj is the ambassador of Slovenia.

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## Egypt's ambassador on new hopes for Mideast peace, the Muslim Brotherhood and learning Russian under pressure

Canada will be the last posting for Egyptian Ambassador Mahmoud El-Saeed who turns 60 in March and must retire on his birthday. He joined Egypt's foreign service at the age of 19 and, with the exception of a mandatory stint in the military and a short sabbatical in New York to complete his PhD, he has spent 40 years in diplomacy. He spoke to *Diplomat* editor Jennifer Campbell about his time in Canada, what he shares with Israel and why he speaks Russian.

**DIPLOMAT MAGAZINE:** You've been here for more than three years now. What do you see as your biggest accomplishment in that time?

**MAHMOUD EL-SAEED:** I think my biggest accomplishment is the expansion of relations in all aspects. The one that I'm proud of is the tripling of trade volume between the countries. There's been an astronomical increase in two-way trade. There's something like \$3 billion of investment from Canada in Egypt and almost the same amount coming here from Egypt. Four or five years ago, investment coming from Canada was only \$200 or \$300 million. The other thing we managed to do is raise the profile of Canada in Egypt very much. What I did was that I kept badgering ministers (from Egypt) to come. The first year, we had a delegation of business leaders – something like 30 of them – and two ministers. We invited journalists and the coverage of the trip was tremendous. The businessmen were so impressed by the possibilities and potential for further cooperation. The ministers made a two-hour presentation to cabinet. It was very well received and it started snowballing after that. Now we have an almost unstoppable stream of visits and delegations coming over. There are also delegations going there.

**DM:** What issue has most troubled you since you took the job? What's kept you awake at night?

**MES:** Honestly, there were a couple of things. One was the misperception of

the Middle East in general and Islam in particular. I tried to talk to the Egyptian and Muslim communities here to tell them that we, the overwhelming majority of Muslims, have to stand up and clarify what is Islam. We have to stand up to the extremists and we have to condemn them; we should not shy away or be on the defensive. We have to explain that terrorists don't represent Islam.

**DM:** What are your hopes for a Mideast peace agreement?

**MES:** I was born in 1948 so I was born on the birth of Israel. All my life, I've been living this conflict. I really hope by my retirement the problem also will retire. We are having some signs of hope for the first time in many years. There's a synchronization of the three sides: The Palestinians and the Israelis, and the United States, which plays a very important role. After Annapolis, we saw that there is genuine will by both the Palestinians and the Israelis.

**DM:** What role can Egypt play?

**MES:** We have always played the role of a facilitator and catalyst. We've had peaceful relations with Israel for a long time now but we also have a close relationship with the Palestinians. So we try to bring them together, to foster compromise. Emotions run high in the Middle East and history runs deep. People don't forget it – sometimes it's a burden.

**DM:** What's your take on the Muslim Brotherhood?

**MES:** The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt is a banned organization. We don't mix religion with politics. If you want to have a charity or an NGO or a social organization, that's fine but mixing religion with politics is not allowed. It goes against our culture, it goes against our history, it goes against our constitution.

**DM:** They're not allowed to run officially but they do.

**MES:** They do, they run as independents. They have almost 88 members of parliament which is about 20 per cent. It's not a concern. They always raise



the slogan that Islam is the solution. We press them to say what's the Islamic solution to the housing problem or the traffic jams, or to the agricultural policy. They would like to take Egypt to a theocracy. I always say these are the pains of the birth of a more open, more liberal society.

**DM:** What is Egypt's relationship with Tehran?

**MES:** Egypt's relationship with Iran used to be very close in the past, however, we haven't had full diplomatic relations with Iran since the Islamic revolution, for some basic reasons. We put in certain conditions for the resumption of diplomatic relations and unfortunately, those conditions have not been met. We have our views of certain international issues, like the nuclear file. In our contacts with Iranians, we try to explain several things. One, the absolute necessity to abide by all international agreements and protocols – for example the verification of all nuclear power plants. Number two: We say that definitely the region cannot take another nuclear power. We also make a point that this, in a way, is a by-product of the West ignoring that Israel has had nuclear weapons for so long. We ask for one standard in dealing with everyone. On the other hand, we insist that all countries are invited to use technology for the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

**DM:** One more question – why do you speak Russian?

**MES:** That has a story. I graduated from university at 19-and-a-half. Within a few months, I was drafted into the army, during the war in 1967. There were Soviet advisors who brought their own interpreters and there was a great deal of misunderstanding because Arabic is not an easy language and they'd had quick courses. The Egyptian military selected young draftees who had language skills and they gave us a crash course – six months, 12-hour days. If you don't do your homework, the next day you're in prison. For me, it was a big incentive because I was in the foreign service and I was learning a language. I kept it up with the Soviets until they were kicked out in 1971. It's a beautiful language. I keep it up. I practice with Georgiy (Mamedov, the Russian Ambassador).

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BRIGITTE BOUVIER

# 'Our global ambition is to be a normal state'

Russian Ambassador Georgiy Mamedov tells **Jennifer Campbell** that he knows his country is free – because he himself, as a diplomat, lives it everyday. But he pleads, 'give us time to get it right.'

**G**eorgiy Mamedov is a seasoned diplomat and trusted confidante of Russian President Vladimir Putin. He was Moscow's man in America, both when it was the former Soviet Union and after its dissolution. Indeed, when he was in charge of Moscow's American file, he used to tell the American ambassador to call him on Russian business in the morning and Soviet business in the afternoon. He remembers assigning briefing notes for Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin at the same time. In all, he spent 30 years dealing with Americans on arms control, 20 of them in Moscow, another 10 in Washington. In 2003, Mr. Putin sent him to Canada to deal with issues such as Arctic sovereignty and energy resource competition.

**DIPLOMAT MAGAZINE:** Mr. Mamedov, in the last two speeches you gave, you mentioned two personal connections. The first was that you're half-Muslim.

**GEORGIY MAMEDOV:** Yes, my father was born in Baku, Azerbaijan. I was born in Moscow. My mother was Russian. My father wasn't practicing. He was a card-carrying member of the Communist party and he was head of Soviet TV. He was a veteran of World War II and during the war he was parachuted into Italy and then he was promoted and was a member of our legal team at Nuremberg. This is where he and my mother got acquainted because she translated from German to Russian and he was a member of the Soviet prosecution team. Then, your humble servant (Mr. Mamedov) appeared in 1947.

**DM:** The other thing you said was that your grandfather was shot by Stalin.

**GM:** He was. The father of my father. He was in the military and Stalin purged the military after the war because he was afraid that their influence would undercut his authority. The war was over and he was from Azerbaijan and Stalin was very tough on his neighbours, Armenians, Azeris and Georgians. He was shot and killed and it made my father's life very miserable. It took some time for him to reestablish himself.

**DM:** Would you talk a little bit about how you represented the Soviet Union and Russia at the same time?

**GM:** It was after the attempted Communist coup in August (1991). (Mikhail) Gorbachev was momentarily in prison, then he was freed with the help of (Boris) Yeltsin. He returned but his relationship with Yeltsin was strained. Yeltsin represented Russia, and wanted to break out of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev's desire was to preserve the Soviet Union since he was president.

I was working for the Soviet foreign ministry and during the Soviet Union, all republics had their own small representations, like Quebec for example. So when Yeltsin was propelled to a position of preponderance, he wanted to make his foreign ministry larger than the Soviet foreign ministry. With the Soviet foreign ministry, I was in charge of American policy which meant Canadians and Americans and arms control and security.

The problem Yeltsin had was that he didn't have people. They approached me and asked me if I would mind working for Russia as deputy foreign minister. I

couldn't leave my job – it was too important – but I told Yeltsin that if I could combine them, I would do it, because I saw it as a bridge. We needed some continuity and I didn't want this foolish bickering inside. This was a proposal they couldn't refuse so they agreed and for a short period of time, I wore two hats. It was a lot of fun. My good friend, American Ambassador Jim Collins was, in the beginning, wondering how we'd do it. I told him it was politics. It was a very unusual situation, but we were both seasoned professionals so we took care of it.

**I MUST TELL YOU THAT  
HISTORY TAKES SOME TIME.  
YOU ARE 139 AND STILL YOU'RE  
SEEKING PERFECT ANSWERS  
FOR DIFFICULT QUESTIONS –  
POLICE BRUTALITY,  
CORRUPTION, ABORIGINALS.  
WE ARE JUST 17 YEARS OLD,  
WHICH IS PEANUTS COMPARED  
TO YOU. GIVE US A CHANCE.**

Even though the Soviet Union still existed, we were preparing for Yeltsin's visit to Washington. So I told him to call me before lunch and I will represent Russia. After lunch, I said, we will discuss relations between Gorbachev and George Bush, Sr. And this went quite admirably. The only problem came when we were preparing for (Secretary of State) Jim Baker's visit to Moscow and we had to prepare briefs for Gorbachev and Yeltsin. For most issues, like the Middle East, they were similar policies but on things like the domestic situation, they were polar (opposites). I still have the several pages (from those days) just to remind me that life is sometimes not simple.

**DM:** Discuss the survival of democracy in Russia.

**GM:** I lived in Russia. Before I was posted to Canada, I lived there for 20 years – it must be a record. I survived seven ministers and five leaders. I returned from my last assignment in the U.S. in 1982 and I came to Canada in 2003. I saw it all and I would say that

what we have now is absolutely incomparable to what we had then. I don't need instructions to meet with you, or even the prime minister. I have more freedom than (representatives from) some Western countries. They very seldom give me any instructions. They keep telling me I'm a seasoned guy and I know what to do. It's unimaginable.

I remember my last assignment in Washington – every move was controlled. Every meeting I had with foreign affairs was tightly controlled and I'd be shaking inside. Now, I feel completely free and for me, this feeling of internal freedom tells more about what's happening in Russia than any number of publications in the West. Yes, there are a lot of things that need to be changed for the better but we're dealing now with bare essentials. Our priority is now to re-establish the bare essentials to the socio-economic safety net which was crushed, destroyed, because the nation-state ceased to exist.

Yes, it was, in many respects deficient, inferior to Canadian standards, but it was something and ordinary people with their kids and their elders were accustomed to having cheap housing, free medicare, free education and childcare. So, they expected results.

One of the reasons why today, so-called liberal opposition is not very popular is not because of the KGB or Putin, it's because they didn't provide relevant answers to social-economic issues in the early 90s. They were at the head of the government and the net result was economic collapse in 1998. The (collapse) robbed ordinary Russians of all they had accumulated since the fall of the Soviet Union. You had 30 million people in 1999 when Putin came in, living in abject poverty in one of the richest countries in the world.

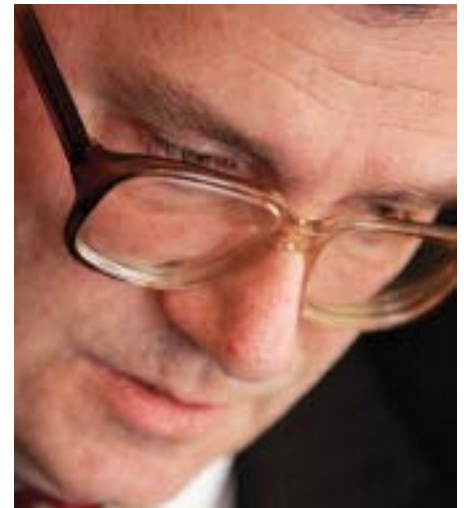
**DM:** You're saying we're asking too much too soon.

**GM:** Absolutely. I come from the academic community. I received my PhD in history and I must tell you that history takes some time. You are 139 and still you're seeking perfect answers for difficult questions – police brutality, corruption, Aborigines. We are just 17 years old, which is peanuts compared to you. Give us a chance. We're not teenagers because there's accumulated history and we're part of Europe like we're part of Asia and also want closer terms with North America.

I spent 30 years working on that relationship and my task was not to prepare



BRIGITTE BOUVIER



for war, it was to improve relations. And now, when I work with Putin and I propose ways to improve the relations, he never says no. We've had some arguments about Iraq and other things but they were always open. I wouldn't have dreamed of having an argument with Gorbachev during the Soviet Union. I would have been too scared.

Here's an example. We knew before George W. Bush became president that he was planning to go ahead with Star Wars and drop the ABM Treaty which was the cornerstone of all our arms-control agreements. We knew that and we had quite a debate. Some people argued that since he was undercutting strategic stability, we should freeze, stop negotiating. When the minister of foreign affairs said we should do opposite – that we should propose further cuts to nuclear weapons to Bush – (Putin) supported that.

Our first proposal to the new president was to cut our nuclear arsenal to four times fewer than we had. We didn't quite manage it – we had to settle on a higher number because Americans wanted more nuclear weapons – but the cut was the net result of our proposal. My president wants to have good relations with the United States and that's important for Canadians to know because some say we can work with Russia but we have to reckon the fact that Russian-American relations are deteriorating.

There's no such doomsday scenario. There are problems, and they were always there, but it's nothing like the Cold War. For 70 years, we were at each other's throats, for the last 40, literally, with nuclear weapons. Last time we wanted to go war was 1983. Now it's a different ball game. I can assure you that Russia is no longer messianic and is concentrated on

domestic issues, essentials. And believe me, the rest of it, reprivatization of oil and gas and more freedom to mass media, will follow suit. In your own history, there are chapters of oligarchs and labour unrest but with improvement in living standards and closer integration in the world community, it comes.

**DM:** What can you say about freedom of the press in Russia?

**GM:** Everything will come, including freedom of the press. I see the difference between today and when I was a Soviet student. After all, each human can judge only on the basis of his own experience. If you browse through the Russian Internet every morning, you will see much more biting criticism of Russian leadership, government, bureaucracy than you'll find in *Maclean's* magazine (which, in September, ran a cover story called Putin the Terrible).

But this world is also about competition. Even with the end of world war, you will never push Pepsi to say something extremely nice about Coke. We will compete with American oil and gas, with British aerospace and other things. Sometimes, during the competition, not all of the methods you use are above the board and I'm not as flabbergasted or (ticked) off by all these scary articles about Russia. Again, give it time. And also, the answer is not publishing biting responses saying look at what's happening in your own country.

The only real answer is to promote human-to-human exchanges. When there are vested interests, your relationship changes. Today, it's cheaper for us to travel abroad. It makes an opportunity for people to travel abroad and learn from others. One of the reasons I decided

to join the foreign service and didn't stick in academia was that there were opportunities to travel abroad. Now, if you have money, you will travel. It gives you a much broader picture of the world. I think the young generation will have the freedom to choose because they see things. When you have a siege psychology, hiding behind an Iron Curtain, this is a prescription for confrontation and disaster. You hear all kinds of scary tales about your neighbours – now they can travel and see. My son, who is now 35, will live in an absolutely normal country. We Russians are good learners. Sometimes it serves us ill because we are like a sponge. We very uncritically accepted Marxism which was not ours but a German product. Then suddenly we did something with Marxism that even Germans didn't dare do and the net result was very bad.

**DM:** Why does it take a generation to give media freedom?

**GM:** It took generations in the United States and Great Britain and Canada to create the kind of press you have today. We are no different from you. We are the same human beings and we will need some time to adjust after 70 years of totalitarian rule.

**DM:** But it seems there's a regression.

**GM:** I don't see a regression. There's a regrouping. Before everything was coordinated by the state. Now much mass media is owned by private citizens and it takes private citizens some time to get used to the new social responsibility that is bestowed on them by virtue of their newly accumulated wealth. They are not pressured by the state but they're first of all businessmen these days and they be-

lieve if they do something that a certain group of bureaucrats want them to do, it will be good for their business. When they come of age and understand that ownership means a social responsibility, I think you will see a different picture.

**DM:** What about Mr. Putin – now that he's won his "mandate", will he relax on this?

**GM:** He's more relaxed than you think. I know him personally. I don't see him nervous. Of course it wasn't pleasant for him to be pressured by Americans and others but he understands. It's the name of the game. It's about competition. Yes, of course, there are some people who are sincerely concerned about our well-being and our democracy but there's also a big game – a competition about how this, or other international problems, will be resolved. Some people believe that if you pressure Russia on elections, maybe Russia will be more forthcoming on Kosovo or Iran. The important thing to remember is that the people who want democracy and freedom the most are Russian. It's the way they want their children, eventually, to live.

**DM:** You mentioned competition. Let's talk about the Arctic. Is Russia mapping territory that Canada will want to claim?

**GM:** I think we're on the same page legally there. It's like a sports competition – we have a referee in the United Nations. We're both members of the convention. We introduced our application, you will follow suit. And it will proceed. Meanwhile, you have your Northwest passage, we have our Northeast passage. We don't have much to divide. All these offshore things, we can do it alone. We will need the technology of others. So far we are teaming up with Norwegians and the French but there is a niche for Canadians. Since we're both rich in energy resources, it's more about cooperation than competition. Everyone wants your or our energy resources. According to analytical forecasts, in some 10 or 20 years, either China or the U.S. will lack 500 million tons of oil. That's a huge number. And they will have to turn to us or to you because the Middle East can't cover all those needs. When I think about Canada and Russia and the Arctic, our economies are mutually complementary. When your prime minister went to Churchill, I probably was the first to send him a congratulatory note that he is spending \$8 million to improve Churchill's infrastructure. I visited Churchill twice before that and we



Ambassador Mamedov says he was quick to congratulate Prime Minister Stephen Harper on spending \$8 million on Churchill's infrastructure. He has discussed ways to broaden the range of goods shipped between Murmansk and Churchill with Manitoba Premier Gary Doer.

discussed with Manitoba Premier Gary Doer and with the mayor of Churchill, how we could broaden the range of goods from Murmansk to Churchill. We started this year with fertilizer but we're also quite prepared to bring some fuel for your Aboriginal population. If we were so concerned – I mean this pronouncement about defending sovereignty – I wouldn't be the one to tell my military attaché to approach your defence department to suggest we sell you some ice breakers with sub-machine guns. I'm dead serious. We have some – they're a little outdated but no one else is in the business. When the Americans had some trouble in the North, they leased our ice breakers. If we were concerned about confrontation with you in the North, do you think I, as an ambassador who's dealt with arms control all his life, would suggest this to you? I understand you don't have money for that or probably you'd prefer to build one yourself but we're quite prepared to do it. There will be competition and I know some of your companies would like to replace the French and Norwegians working with us but that's different. We have a common interest, also, to convince Americans to join this United Nations convention. They're the ones outside the tent. We're inside the tent. We have an arrangement with your foreign affairs to let scientists look at it first, and then we'll get involved. Meanwhile, my emphasis is on cooperation. Both Canada and Russia are

custodians of a very fragile ecosystem and if we don't do something in a hurry, I'm afraid no amount of icebreakers will help humanity, especially First Nations.

**DM:** What are Russia's strategic ambitions?

**GM:** Our most strategic objective is our domestic situation. To provide our people, at long last, with good living conditions. It means they also want to live peacefully and we must cooperate with the outside world to fight against terrorism and separatism. Like Canada, we're a home to more than 100 nationalities. I told you I'm part-Muslim. There are 16 million Muslims living in Russia – we are like a small Muslim country. So whenever we hear about extremists causing trouble in other countries, we are in the same boat. It's not our global ambition to become a superpower. What does superpower mean? Ask your prime minister. He thinks Canada is a superpower because of energy resources. Sometimes the criteria is having nuclear weapons. Well, theoretically we and the United States have enough weapons to annihilate the world in 15 seconds. But believe me, there's no satisfaction in that. Satisfaction comes from knowing that your children and your grandchildren will live in a normal country and be able to build their own destiny. Our global ambition is to become a normal, evolutionary state. Unfortunately, in the 20th century, we were besieged by different totalitarian demons



and exorcising them takes some time. We didn't have civil war after 1919.

**DM:** You said Russia is a European country, and Russia is an Asian country. Which predominates?

**GM:** Predominantly, the Russian elite was influenced by Europe but now it keeps changing because both Canada and Russia depend on immigration. Our immigration and yours doesn't come from London or Paris. Ours comes from central Asia, yours comes from Pakistan, India, Iran, Haiti. Everything is in motion. We're all in a state of demographic turbulence. So far, we're a European country. Our European legacy is greater than anything else. Our greatest writer, (Aleksandr) Pushkin, started writing his verses in French and then he switched to Russian. But this may change. We have the Muslim population and in the far east, we're receiving immigrants from China who come in the thousands.

**DM:** Is Russia going to ally itself with China?

**GM:** Ally is the wrong word. We must take into account the resurgence and growth of China. We must think of what to do with our Siberia and far east, which is very sparsely populated. Taking into account environmental and other problems, we need to have a close relationship with China. On the environment, the major polluters these days are the United States, China and India. Well, you will have to sort it out with the Americans – to bring them into Kyoto or post-Kyoto. We'll do the same with China and India. It's not an alliance, it's a complex. There will be a certain Pacific Rim, economic, environmental and social complex. We're all a small village. We can't have the luxury any longer of teaming up with Europeans. Our policy – foreign, social, economic and environmental policy – must be multi-faceted. It won't be the political or military alliance that some people are worried about with China.

**DM:** What's Russia's policy toward North Korea and Iran?

**GM:** The answer is we're neighbouring countries so we can't afford, like some distant country, to think in terms of either having diplomatic relations or sending in the marines. Sending in the marines is no option for us. We tried it during the Soviet Union with Afghanistan and that result was ghastly. Of course, if someone attacks us physically, which I don't fore-

see in any distant future, we will have to respond. But short of that, I think we have no other alternative but to negotiate with our neighbours. It may be difficult, we will pass some diplomatic ups and downs. But I don't see sanctions, or bombing someone, as an option, simply because we're living there. We would feel the reverberations. You feel it because you've lost 73 people in Afghanistan. Imagine us, losing 30 million lives in the Second World War and losing 20,000 during the unfortunate, ill-advised (Soviet) attempt in Afghanistan. For us, use of force is really the last resort. All these legends about Russia being as quick-tempered as the guys in the Wild West is absolutely rubbish. We will be criticized for not being decisive enough. People will look for some hidden rationale like trade with Iran or trying to make money. But it's very little money we're making in Iran. We can make all this money in trade with the United States or with France or with Canada. I won't name names but once, I had a guy from the American administration – one of the top people – tell me they were prepared to pay me in cash, several billion dollars, if we would cease our relations with Iran. It was a very American proposal and it wasn't made by a Republican, by the way.

**DM:** When was this?

**GM:** It was some time ago when I was in charge of relations with Americans. The proposal was made in Washington. It shows you a certain naïve approach. You can't pay somebody not to talk to his neighbours. Imagine living close to somebody and being told those are bad guys. It's not an option for us. For us, an option is, and will continue to be, asking Americans to open dialogue with Iranians.

**DM:** What are you doing with Iran and its nuclear reactor?

**GM:** You just heard from American intelligence that they don't believe there's any ongoing nuclear program in Iran and they can vouch for going back three years. It's quite a different tune from what they said (previously), that we're on the verge of the Third World War. I hope there is a sea-change in the American establishment. They've had enough Iraqs and even American intelligence understands that you must calm things down – create an environment to negotiate rather than threaten people with bombardments, wars and invasion. Yesterday, I had a call from a friend in the United

States who's high up – they're happy for the same reason I am. Given the current situation, there is no other option than to talk to Iran, Syria, etc. This is what we're suggesting.

**DM:** Tell me about your president. Will he remain in power forever?

**GM:** It will depend on the socio-economic situation – if it will continue to improve. According to the polls, whether you like Putin or hate his guts, everyone agrees he's popular. And he is – because of socio-economic changes since the year 2000 – since Yeltsin left. If this improvement will continue, they will also be leaning to him – people who will be in power will seek his advice. If the situation changes, his popularity will change accordingly. There's nothing magic about the name.

**DM:** But he has a lot of power at this point and it looks as though he's seeking more.

**GM:** Yes, he does because the early 1990s were chaotic and whoever (took over) from Yeltsin would have had more power or would preside over the dissolution of Russia. It was a very real problem. We had people in the Urals who wanted to create their own republic. We had people in the south who wanted to claim a free and independent republic over there. We were on the verge of dissolution of Russia.

Whoever came after Yeltsin, his test, if he was a responsible person, was to try to accumulate some more federal power because federal power was up in the air. He was there at the time when people wanted more cohesiveness, more clout with the federal centre, when people were exasperated that the new freedom didn't bring them any material goods whatsoever and destroyed the little safety net that they enjoyed under a totalitarian regime. So he had all the issues at once. He had a very tough eight years and I'm sure he's not dying to remain president for life because he is a smart guy. Whenever I had to deal with him on crucial issues – and relations with Americans are never easy – his instincts were always right. And I think his instincts will be right and he will find a place for himself in our political structure. Which it will be, I don't know. And all those who predict what will happen in Russia as if it's some kind of arithmetic, they don't know Russia. Russia is still very unpredictable and still in a period of transition. On various occasions, Russia will surprise you.

*Jennifer Campbell is editor of Diplomat.*

# 'Russia has never had so much legitimacy'

All risks aside, you've got to be optimistic about our other neighbour, the largest country in the world, writes Chris Westdal, Canada's former ambassador to Russia

I must warn you at the outset that I am an optimist. It may be true that a pessimist is a well-informed optimist. I prefer the notion that they've both got the same fate, but the optimist enjoys the trip. I'm inclined to enjoy life, despite the media's congenitally gloomy versions of what's newsworthy.

Indeed, our focus is so intense on bad news, with crises every hour, that we're practically incapable of recognizing our blessings, comprehending and appreciating all that's so good around us. The universe is generous; heaven is life on this still-gorgeous earth.

But I'm a humble optimist. Jack Matlock, President Ronald Reagan's ambassador in Moscow, put it well. He said he'd memorized two sets of famous last words. The first, "Alcohol has no effect on me." The second, "I understand the Russians."

I can't claim much such wisdom, but I will share some of my views about Russia's new, different, legitimate, unique and crucial federation – at home; in its many regions, with interests to be served and reasonably accommodated; in the world, as a permanent global player; and in the Arctic, where it is our permanent neighbour.

I'll speak to six propositions: one about the world, four about Russia in it and the last about Russia and Canada.

First, global power is diffusing with unexpected rapidity, with growth rates of BRIC economies (Brazil, Russia, India and China) and Bush neo-con catastrophes all beyond prior imagining. Middle Eastern, African, environmental and other pathologies notwithstanding, though, humankind is making some stunning progress technologically, economically and socially. Hundreds of millions are escaping misery. Moreover, functional multi-polar security architecture is in prospect, with no real need for quarrel among the major powers – assuming deft management, of course, of the problems that arise, as they often do, in the vacuums in the wakes of empire.

So my first command is... celebrate. It

would also be good for us to get a grip on our nerves about terrorism, an ancient scourge that feeds on feeble nerves. Whatever else it did, the massive crime of 9/11 blew the United States right off its moorings. Though it was no such thing, it was made into another Pearl Harbor – and it has done U.S. credibility about as much damage as the Japanese Air Force once did its Pacific Fleet, revealing a glass jaw ominously ill-suited to that wise fulfillment of global responsibility which once made powerful U.S. exceptionalism quite widely palatable.

Not only is the "city on the hill" not shining any more, though. Capitalist, communist China is working, astonishingly well, its economic model meeting with quite sufficient approval internationally, giving hundreds of millions the best Chinese lives in history.

Meanwhile, sharp limits in the capacity and the competence of those moved to fulfill perceived responsibility to protect internal victims of vicious regimes have been grimly exposed in Iraq and far beyond – so grimly, I think it clear, as to put paid to notions of remote interventionism and to usher in recognition of inevitable regional hegemonies.

Noteworthy as well is that, like it or not, whatever its relation to the actual state of human welfare (which has been improving dramatically, for the most part) the effective priority accorded human rights (and liberal democracy) in international intercourse has been perceptibly lowered.

All things are relative. These developments – multi-polarity, major power peace, more minding of one's own business and, of course, sky-high resource prices – suit Russia well, opening room for initiative and maneuver which Russia can exploit, despite its manifest weaknesses. Hence, Russia exhibits somewhat "bizarre self-confidence" (in the fine phrase of my former colleague, Jeremy Kinsman). I do doubt, though, that it will seem "bizarre" for long.

That's the first point. The next five are shorter.

Number two: Russia's dramatic progress under President Vladimir Putin – and the likelihood it will continue, through momentum (and not necessarily under Putin) – should be recognized, understood and celebrated. The potential of these tough, talented people, freed now of the deadweight of communist gibberish and barren empire, is, yet again, underestimated. Russia is a great bear. We should want it on our side.

Five-sixths of Hitler's German army was consumed on the eastern front. In that Great Patriotic War we know as World War Two, 10 of the 11 biggest battles were fought there too. We should never forget how much freedom Russians won there – or how little they themselves came to enjoy.

Third, we disputed the legitimacy of the Soviet Union and its congenital messianism and we spared no effort to "contain" it. But Russia now is entirely legitimate (a huge change, yet to be fully digested), warranting none of the antagonism inherent in "containment." Instead, Russia's legitimate security interests, rights and responsibilities need recognition and reasonable respect and accommodation. That means, by the way, neither a free ride for Russia nor any prejudice of low expectations with respect to its performance. It means simply that Russia should be held to no less – and no more – than the same standards expected of other permanent members of the UN Security Council – the United States, France, Britain and China.

Fourth, Russia's better angels are among the finest of their kind. Its worst, though, are comparably distinguished – and in no need, whatever, of baiting. Except for the rules of global intercourse, meanwhile, we can impose little on Russia. We should rather want to respect and deepen our engagement to serve common goals – and perhaps inspire emulation (in cases of any relevant, exemplary performance of our own).

Fifth, we should keep a little more faith in freedom. It's true, there wasn't really a revolution 16 years ago in Russia. People weren't hanging from lampposts. The music changed but the orchestra stayed much the same. The right to own property is revolutionary, though, and Russia's growing middle class, people who own Russia like they've never owned it before, amidst unprecedented prosperity with freedoms, are all great grounds for hope for Russian democracy. And let's keep a little faith in human nature, in Russian human nature too. If that faith needs fuel, I find a little Rachmaninoff works wonders.

Sixth, geography is forever (though ice, apparently, isn't). Russia and Canada command three quarters of the northern latitudes of the earth. In this world's biggest bilateral relationship, we should use all the freedom we never had before and seize our chance now to build unique, rich and rewarding relations, good for all concerned. We can build with political relations and cooperation in a multi-polar world, with investment, trade and commerce, and with art and culture and ideas.

The Arctic is where we find ourselves living between Russia and the U.S., leader of the western world. Our relations with Russia are inevitably going to be buffeted by Russia's relationship with the United States, so it's in our direct interest that those relations be constructive. I note that there is only one other country with an interest as profound as our own in good relations between Russia and the West – and that country, Ukraine, is also living between the two.

Let me mention just briefly my (not particularly original) worries about Russia's future. Many of them are reflected in the life expectancy of Russians, still in stubborn decline. All the problems that lie beneath that harsh statistic and all the problems in Russia's baggage, along with the certainty that its terms of trade will not always be so sweet ... well, I'm bullish about Russia, but sometimes I worry that all this might just swamp the place.

And then, of course, there's that unnerving concentration of power in one centre, in one man. Russians know, though, that if you want a little law, you need a little order – and, given all their fresh, raw experience of the cost of chaos, who are we to judge the priority they accord stability?

Who are we to know either the roots or the route of their progress? How can we say just when and how they might hand



Chris Westdal, middle left, stands at the Kremlin, shoulder-to-shoulder with Vladimir Putin, while he was posted to Russia as Canada's ambassador from 2003 to 2006.

power, come what may for Russia, over to new conceptions (like the notion of loyal opposition, say) and to immature, untested institutions (like, for example, credible political parties offering coherent alternatives). Just what do we think we know that Russians don't?

Internationally, I worry that Russia might succumb to the tactical temptation to jam fingers in U.S. spokes at every opportunity. In a zero-sum world, dragging more powerful players down enhances relative status, it's true, but not to anyone's real benefit. I'd much rather that Russia – and all powers – move and stay beyond and above all that, avoid unnecessary provocation, accommodate interests mutually, build human solidarity and help save the world.

I titled a talk I gave at Carleton University recently "Russia's back! New and Improved! As Different as Can Be!" Today's Russia is new. It's never been quite like this before. It's never had such constitutional democratic prospects before. It's

never had compounded seven per cent economic growth, with freedom, before. It's never had such freedom to travel, let alone Internet access, before.

And, crucially, it's never had such legitimacy before, meaning, in Russia's case, a whole lot: legitimacy as the world's largest state, of course; but legitimacy as well as a permanent global player; legitimacy as a nuclear-weapon state, sanctioned by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (and as bound, note, as any nuclear weapon state to try to respond to such a strategic development as, say, the arrival of an ABM system on the doorstep); legitimacy as a veto-wielding member of the UN Security Council; legitimacy as a colossal treasure-house of energy and natural resources; and legitimacy as an interested and influential actor in its own neighbourhoods – including the one it shares with us, here where we meet, on top of the world.

Chris Westdal was Canada's ambassador to Russia from 2003 – 2006.

# Dealing with Russia – in six new ways

**W**hen Russian Prime Minister Viktor Zubkov was in Ottawa Nov. 29, he got lots of practice writing his signature. He signed a total of six different agreements – everything from agriculture cooperation to deals with Canadian companies. Here's a primer.

## AGRICULTURE

**The parties:** Russian Ministry of Agriculture and Canadian Department of Agriculture and Agri-food Canada

**The deal:** They will promote bilateral cooperation in purebred livestock breeding, crop production, agricultural engineering and food production technology. They'll encourage trade in agricultural production and cooperation in veterinary and phytosanitary areas while expanding joint research in agricultural education, biotechnologies, biofuel production and bioproducts. They'll exchange information on agricultural production, risk management, crop insurance and support for domestic agricultural production.

**The bottom line:** The Agriculture working group of the Intergovernmental Economic Commission will continue working on such things by holding regular meetings with participants, including business people, from both countries.

## FOOD SAFETY, ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH

**The parties:** Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and the Federal Service of Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance

**The deal:** Both parties affirmed their desire to develop and strengthen cooperation in these areas by establishing "occasional" bilateral, technical working groups. They believe that this will lead to mutual desires to enhance food safety, animal and plant health, while avoiding trade disruptions. These groups will work together to exchange information that will help verify that only shipments certified by the CFIA are sent to Russia for import and likewise to Canada.

**The bottom line:** Working groups will be set up as the parties see fit. They'll include



Prime Minister Stephen Harper (right) and Russian Prime Minister Viktor Zubkov.

scientists and regulators as members and the first such group will look at fish and seafood products.

## FISHERIES

**The parties:** Department of Fisheries and Oceans of Canada and the State Committee on Fisheries of the Russian Federation

**The deal:** The parties will help develop technical, scientific, economic and enforcement cooperation of fisheries resources. They'll ensure that vessels flying the flag of their countries in the regulatory area of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) respect the quota, conservation and management measures of that body and they'll exchange information on infringements. They'll promote joint inspection patrols in the those waters and will encourage the implementation of the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement by NAFO.

**The bottom line:** They'll create a committee for bilateral cooperation on fisheries. The memorandum of understanding isn't binding under international law.

## ARCTIC AND THE NORTH

**The parties:** Ministry of Regional Devel-

opment of the Russian Federation and Department of Indian and Northern Development of Canada

**The deal:** They'll strengthen bilateral cooperation on Aboriginal and northern issues including environment and conservation, business links through investment in Northern economies, development of traditional Aboriginal economies and ways of life, scientific monitoring and research. The parties will facilitate direct contacts between governments, Aboriginal groups, academic and scientific institutions and the private sector.

**The bottom line:** The parties will hold bi-annual meetings to carry out the memorandum of understanding.

## NUCLEAR POWER COOPERATION

**The parties:** Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL) and the Federal Agency for Nuclear Energy

**The deal:** The parties to the memorandum of understanding will establish a framework for cooperation on research and technology development in the energy sector.

**The bottom line:** One of the possible areas of cooperation is the design of fourth-generation reactors now that "nuclear energy is experiencing global renaissance," the Russian officials said.

## TRADE FINANCE AND FINANCIAL SERVICES

**The parties:** Export Development Canada and Vneshekonombank of Russia

**The deal:** The parties to this cooperation agreement will promote trade and investment between Canada and Russia by providing appropriate financial services. The two sides will carry out investment projects, promote trade ties between Canada and Russia and expand cooperation in supporting export of Russian and Canadian goods and services to third countries.

**The bottom line:** Top priority projects will include power agriculture, coal mining shipbuilding, aircraft construction and infrastructure projects as well as environment protection services.

# May I see your passport, Mr. Ed?

Horses, like humans, need passports to travel internationally. Will the lead-up to Beijing 2008 mean long line-ups in passport offices for horses as well? Charles Enman reports.

If Elaine Davies of Kingston has her way, her horse Colombo will be going to the 2008 Summer Olympics. And if that's the case, he'll have to tuck an international passport into his saddle.

The 2008 Olympic Games next August in China will see the convergence of thousands of athletes, thousands of journalists, hundreds of thousands of tourists – and no few horses.

The Olympic Equestrian Events, which will be held in Hong Kong, on the mainland's edge, will see 200 horses arrive from around the world. The Canadian Equestrian Team expects to field a total of 12 horses for the three Olympic events, with two additional horses in reserve in case of illness or injury.

Mrs. Davies' horse, a 13-year-old gelding, is doing well so far. In October, he placed top among Canadian eventing horses in the Fair Hill International eventing competition in Maryland. Mrs. Davies and her husband Michael, the former owner of *The Kingston Whig-Standard*, plan to enter Colombo in the Red Hill Horse Trials in Tallahassee, Florida, in March, and in the Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event in Lexington, Kentucky, in April. With continued success in these trials, Colombo will bid fair to be part of the Olympic contingent in Hong Kong. (Other non-equestrian events will be held in Beijing and in several other major cities across mainland China.)

Eventing is one of three Olympic equestrian disciplines. The other two are jumping (in which a horse jumps a series of obstacles) and dressage (in which the horse performs intricate stepping manoeuvres). Eventing combines both challenges and adds a cross-country course. As Mrs. Davies says, "It's a triathlon for horses."

Like every competing horse, Colombo will have to go with all his verve and skill – but also with a horse passport.

Horse passports are in some ways like human passports and in some ways different. In Canada, they're competition



Colombo, a 13-year-old gelding ridden Selena O'Hanlon, may well be heading to Beijing for the 2008 Games. If he does, he'll have passport in tow.

documents that accompany a horse to any official competition, and make it easy to keep track of a horse's performance.

Unlike a human passport, they aren't necessarily connected to the crossing of national borders. Horses that compete only in Canada will still need a passport from Equine Canada, the organization that promotes horse sport here. These passports will require, like a human passport, a picture of the horse, besides a history of ownership, a record of prize money won, and a list of vaccinations received.

But to go to Hong Kong, or any event beyond Canada's borders, Colombo has to have an international passport from the Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI), headquartered in Lausanne, Switzerland, which is represented in Equine Canada's Ottawa offices.

A horse cannot have both passports. If it is competing internationally, it must

have an FEI passport. If it competes only in Canada, then the Equine Canada passport is sufficient.

Oddly, the FEI passport does not require a photograph. What is required is an outline diagram showing the identifying marks unique to the horse. In Colombo's case, there are two whorls (a kind of circular flow in the coat) on the right side of his neck, and another on the left. And of course, Colombo is also identified as a bay horse – his body reddish brown, with black on his mane and tail. Final identifying marks are his hind ankles, which are both white.

"These are very particular to Colombo, and you wouldn't expect to see the same markings on any other horse," says Colombo's trainer, Morag O'Hanlon, who works with the horse at the Davies' farm, known as Hawkridge, in Morton, a 30-minute drive northeast of Kingston.

Fingerprints, like the coats of horses,

have whorls, and the markings serve much the same identifying function that fingerprints serve for humans.

The owner cannot fill out the identification page. That must be done by a veterinarian, who must also certify the record of vaccinations and inoculations the horse has received.

Anyone who sees Colombo's FEI passport will know he's an exotic creature. He travels on a Swedish passport, though he was bought in Britain. A British rider had told the Davies, then looking for a stand-out animal, that Colombo was, as Mrs. Davies puts it, "an upper-level horse, a horse of real promise." Which he has happily proven to be in the five years they have owned him.

When Colombo was imported to Canada, the Davies had to send the passport to Equine Canada for a formal change of ownership and inclusion in the Equine Canada database.

A new FEI passport costs \$345.55, and a purchaser must first have an Equine Canada sport licence for herself.

That's expensive, but horses are expensive. Already this year, the Davies have spent more than \$40,000 on Colombo's maintenance and moving him to competitions.

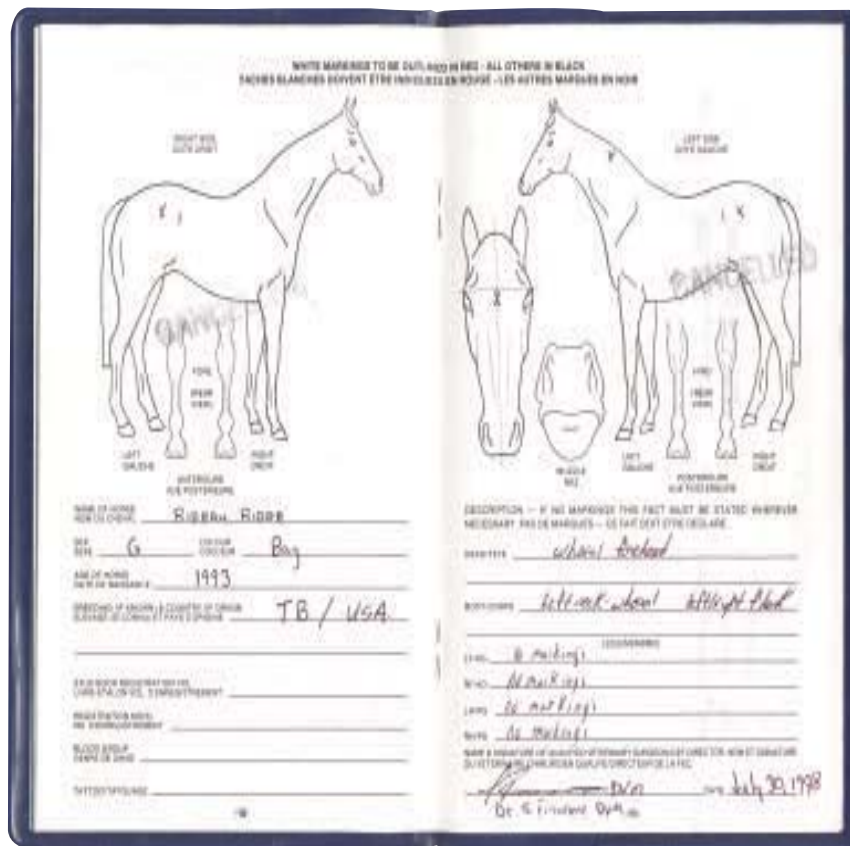
"If you send a horse to the Olympics and go yourself, you can imagine how costly it can be – but it's a passion," Mrs. Davies says.

Moving a horse about the world is not easy. If the Davies are taking Colombo to a North American event, they will use their own truck and trailer.

The main challenge there is keeping the horse at the right temperature and keeping him properly hydrated. The temperature can be regulated by opening or closing windows in the horse trailer, and by putting blankets on the horse or removing them.

Hydration is a matter of keeping the horse drinking enough and eating enough moist food. However, in trailers, horses tend to eat and drink less. So trainers give them a little extra salt in the days before the trip, to encourage them to drink.

Horses are finicky and may refuse water that has an unfamiliar odour. The Davies and Ms. O'Hanlon try to avoid that problem by taking along enough water from the stable to provide for the duration of the trip. They have an additional trick – they put a copper penny in the bottom of the water bucket, which slightly taints the water, so the equine palate pronounces every mouthful, from



An Equine Canada passport for competition within Canada.

whatever source, familiar.

In a trip of several days, they will stop each night at 'bed and bale' places, which have stables for horses and bedrooms for handlers and owners. Though generally known only to horse people, they are widely available across North America.

If Colombo goes to the Olympics, he and his handlers will, of course, fly. Many airlines, including Air Canada, allow horses to travel in cargo holds along certain routes, though they must be put aboard in special stalls.

If Colombo and his team fly out of New York, say, his preparatory training camp will be as close to LaGuardia Airport as possible, to minimize the total traveling time on flight day.

On a long trip, a horse risks developing shipping fever, which is an infection of the lungs and pleural cavity. This can result from dehydration (which impairs the mechanisms in the lungs which fight germs) or simply from the head-high posture that a tied-up horse must maintain (which prevents the gravity-accelerated clearance of mucus from the airways). Most cases are mild and, with antibiotics, a stricken horse will often recover in time for competition.

Horses do not usually develop jet lag, but the FEI suggests that they arrive several days before competition to allow full rehydration to take place.

Mike Gallagher, the chef de mission of the Canadian Equestrian Team, estimates there are 35 to 40 horses that are candidates for the 12 spots on the Olympic team.

The FEI says 200 horses in all will travel to Hong Kong.

There are currently 132,104 horse passports registered in FEI's database, but a smaller number, 37,249, are registered to compete and travel this year.

The FEI has offices in 134 countries.

Last year, there were 1,954 international equestrian competitions around the world. The top five host countries were France (with 249 international events), Germany (179), the United States (162), Australia (94), and Italy (88).

The largest transportation of competition horses ever will take place in 2010, not at the Olympics but at the FEI World Equestrian Games in Lexington, Kentucky. Roughly 1,000 horses are expected to compete.

Charles Enman is an Ottawa writer.

# Kai Low from Missouri

A 1930s journalist sets up shop in Shanghai – and warns the world of the rising threat of a bellicose Japan

By George Fetherling

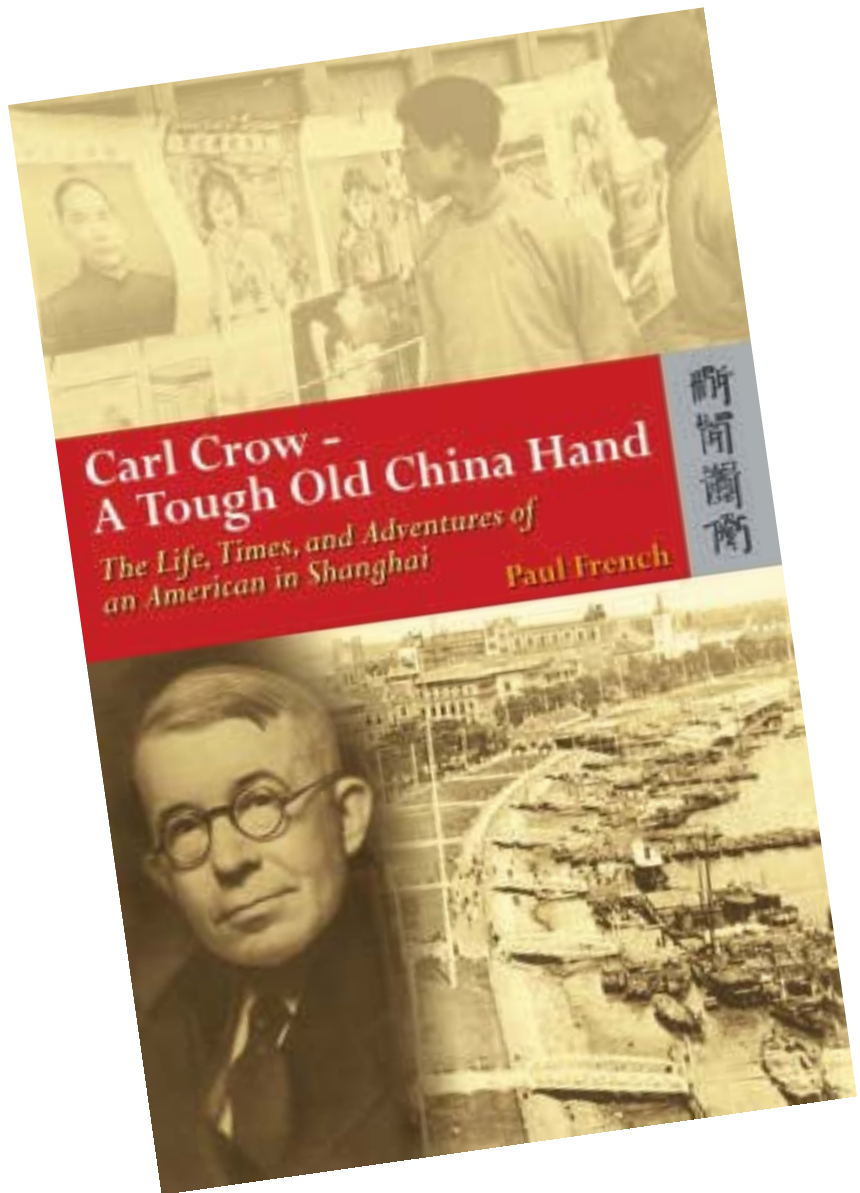
A generation ago people were busily writing guidebooks—misguided guidebooks—explaining how American business could elbow its way into Japan’s retail economy. That idea has faded now, supplanted by a similar dream of breaking into the Chinese market instead. For example, we have seen *One Billion Shoppers: Assessing Asia’s Consuming Passions* by Paul French and Matthew Crabbe (Penguin Canada, \$41.95) and more recently *One Billion Customers: Lessons from the Front Lines of Doing Business in China* by James MacGregor of the *Wall Street Journal* (Simon & Schuster Canada, \$18.99 paper). Perhaps unwittingly, most such writers (Mr. French and Mr. Crabbe being exceptions) are following in the footsteps of an American journalist and entrepreneur named Carl Crow (whose Chinese name was Kai Low). Exactly 70 years ago, when China’s population was only 40 per cent of what it is today, Mr. Crow published *Four Hundred Million Customers*, which urged Americans to take advantage of the rich commercial opportunities in China. His timing was both dreadful and fortunate. In 1937, America was still coming out of the Depression. But it was also the year that China was finally invaded by Japan, becoming an urgent presence on front pages in the west. The book became quite a famous one and is still known to anyone interested in Shanghai of the between-the-wars period. I myself am such a person. When the yoga instructor says “Go to your happy place,” I transport my mind to Shanghai about 1935, a city so free of authoritarian moralism that one visiting U.S. evangelist said, “If God lets Shanghai endure, He owes an apology to Sodom and Gomorrah.”

Paul French has now written a biography of the book’s author: *Carl Crow—A Tough Old China Hand: The Life, Times, and Adventures of an American in Shanghai*, published by Hong Kong University Press and available in North America from UBC Press and University of Washington Press (\$35). The picture it paints is that of someone who might almost have been a Sinclair Lewis character if Mr. Lewis had ever written a novel about

American Babbitts in China. That is, he was a go-getter, a Rotarian in outlook if not in actual affiliation.

Mr. Crow was a graduate of the journalism program at the University of Missouri, the oldest one in the U.S. Other alumni of Missouri had gone to East Asia seeking work, and in time Mr. Crow was lured there as well by the old-boy network that had developed. He was nearly 30 when he took up his responsibilities as

an editor on the China Press, one of Shanghai’s three English-language dailies. En route there aboard ship, he met a fellow passenger who told him how he went broke trying to transplant to China an idea that had made him prosperous in his native Calgary: opening a chain of cheap restaurants (as though China lacked inexpensive eating-places). Mr. Crow’s idea was more successful. As Mr. French explains, “Like most people



who arrive in China with some sort of business plan, Carl Crow had an idea to change the way things were done." He wanted to alter the reading habits of the tens of thousands of foreigners, the citizens of the 14 western countries (or rather, 13 plus Japan) who lived in Shanghai's International Settlement and French Concession under the extraterritoriality agreements of the time, making up a cosmopolitan community right in the centre of what was or would soon become China's largest metropolis.

Simply put, he wanted to put out an American-style newspaper to compete against the British-style ones run by a Fleet Street diaspora, for like most Americans at the time, Mr. Crow was profoundly anti-British. His "reading of Chinese history led him to draw parallels between the so-called 'unequal treaties' China had been forced to sign under the threat of British gunboats and Britain's treatment of colonial America by [a forerunner of] gunboat diplomacy that had been used to limit the ambitions of those favoring independence." For while over the next quarter century he learned a great deal about China, and conveyed it to the west through a long series of perfectly readable books, he never unlearned the United States. "All Americans", he wrote, "were poor and were made daring by the conviction that they were destined to become wealthy." He was not being sarcastic.

As luck would have it, six months after Mr. Crow came ashore in Shanghai in 1911, the empire collapsed and the Chinese republic was born. The recentness of his arrival did not prevent him from explaining these tumultuous events to readers overseas (for his work appeared in many U.S. papers as well). "The Republic of China is less than a week old now," he wrote, "but in that time it has begun to set its house in order. It has equipped itself with electric lights, and in the business-like atmosphere of the place, an old style Chinese official would look as out of place as a sedan chair in New York." He covered the First Republican Convention, which he likened to "an old-fashioned Methodist revival meeting." He did not intend this to be taken negatively. He was from Methodist stock himself. He interviewed Sun Yat-sen. Indeed, he began to ghost Mr. Sun's autobiography (the project collapsed). Later he would take credit, as was his custom, for turning Sun away from socialism.

After being in-country only two years,



After being in China only two years, Carl Crow, above, published his first book, *The Traveler's Handbook for China*, which became the standard guide.

he published his first book, *The Traveler's Handbook for China*, which became the standard guide. His third book, in 1916, was *Japan and America*, for to his credit he was among the first wave to warn of Japan's military and political designs on China and indeed the rest of Asia. During the Great War, as during the Second World War, he did work in official propaganda. Reading Mr. French's narrative, it is difficult not to speculate whether Mr. Crow was in fact an asset of the American intelligence establishment. That seems a plausible reason for him to have left Shanghai for a position as business manager of the *Japan Advertiser*, an English paper in Tokyo. Reading of his stay in what he considered the enemy camp, I couldn't help but recall the Jimmy Cagney film *Blood on the Sun* about an American journalist in Japan in the 30s: a somewhat Crow-like figure who sets out to get the goods on the real intentions of "the Nips".

While Mr. Crow was in Tokyo in 1915, a German diplomat bootlegged him a copy of the "Twenty-One Demands", the then still-secret document that outlined Imperial Japan's scheme for subjugating China. Mr. Crow claimed that it was he who made it public round the world, though there were many other claimants to the scoop, several of them more far

plausible than his own. Soon he was growing weary of newspapers (though he would help found the *Shanghai Evening Post* in 1929). In Mr. French's words, "As Crow moved from being a journalist to being a businessman, he began to become increasingly interested in consumer behaviour, the development of consumer culture and its impact on the wider society." By 1918, he had figured out how to fulfil the financial destiny to which he was entitled as an American. He set up China's first American-style advertising agency, the first with such innovations as billboards and ads using attractive young Chinese women in western-style clothes to sell consumer products. The company was a hit from the very beginning and led finally to *Four Hundred Million Customers*, a long-lived bestseller in its day. The book was published the same year as a Crow work that had what now seems the arrogant title *I Speak for China*. What he meant was that he spoke in defence of the China that had been the object of Japanese military encroachment for the better part of a decade and was now engaged in a full-scale war. Later, when the Sino-Japanese War got subsumed into the Second World War, he reached his greatest importance, for he had been right all along. He was part of the China lobby that included the overwhelming charisma offensive of Madame Chiang Kai-shek. "Crow was instantly won over by her charms and after meeting her, famously noted, 'Madame's body was born in China but her mind was born in America.'" That was a compliment, you see.

By then he was a considerable public figure in China and a celebrity in the west. It was testament to his position that he was chosen to negotiate the release of a group of foreigners, including the sister-in-law of John D. Rockefeller Jr., kidnapped by a leading warlord in 1932 from the Blue Express, the train that ran from Beijing to Shanghai. He performed the task supremely well. The incident is the one that inspired Josef Von Sternberg's wonderful film *Shanghai Express* (in which Marlene Dietrich utters the imperishable line, "It's taken more than one man to give me the name Shanghai Lily").

For someone who had been agitating against the threat of Japanese aggression for so many years, he seems to have been singularly unprepared for its manifestation in the streets of Shanghai. He was busy writing a report about Colgate toothpaste, one of his numerous big U.S.





Paul French, author of *Carl Crow - A Tough Old China Hand*

clients, when on Black Saturday 1937, the Japanese began shelling the foreign concessions. His office was destroyed and he got out by the skin of his teeth, resettling in New York where he wrote books with renewed vigour. The titles of some of them show the currents in his thinking at that time: *Foreign Devils in the Flowery Kingdom* (1940), *Japan's Dream of World Empire* (1942), *The Chinese Are Like That* (1943) and *China Takes Her Place* (1944).

There were many others, including, for example, *The City of Flint Grows Up* (1943), a panegyric about all the good that the auto plants of Buick, one of his former clients, had done for Flint, Michigan. He died in 1945.

Virtually every page of Mr. French's book betrays the carelessness of his prose, and the copy-editing is wretched throughout. My favourite error concerns a female Canadian spy who was sent to "ferment trouble". You've got to be careful with that stuff; it can get you drunk. He does, however, make productive use of Mr. Crow's books and unpublished papers, and he knows a great deal about Shanghai, including little details of social history that add to our picture of the place as it was in those days. For example, the city was—is—in a pestilential location. At grand dinner parties thrown by westerners in the '20s and '30s, Chinese servants would go round the dinner table spraying a kerosene mixture on the ankles of the guests as a prophylaxis against malaria-bearing mosquitoes.

George Fetherling's most recent book is *Tales of Two Cities: A Novella Plus Stories* (Subway Books).

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# Après moi, le deluge

Mulroney, Chrétien and Blair were tough acts to follow

By George Abraham

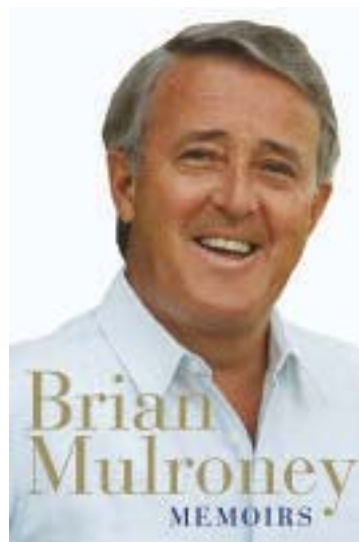
If journalism is instant history, the fates of Jean Chrétien, Tony Blair and Brian Mulroney hang in the balance. Media reports about these three long-serving prime ministers have focused mainly on the foibles and scandals that marked their time in office, including their inability to have much of a say in who would succeed them. Paul Martin, Gordon Brown and Kim Campbell did their predecessors few favours, unlike U.S. president Gerald Ford who is credited with starting the rehabilitation of Richard Nixon from history's trash bin.

Prime Minister Campbell's reported assertion that "soon the Mulroney years will all be forgotten," is hard to credit. Mr. Mulroney's place in history – something he was acutely aware of while in office – is more assured that the short-lived Ms. Campbell's, although what it will eventually look like could well be determined by a public inquiry into his financial relationship with the shady Karlheinz Schreiber.

Our three book selections provide highly selective perspectives on the Blair, Chrétien and Mulroney years. All three leaders were bitter that – despite their comfortable election victories – the press gave them a hard time, appropriating the role of official Opposition in the process. While the Canadian books are written by the former prime ministers themselves, the third author is a man who probably defined Mr. Blair's public persona more than the British leader did himself.

**Alastair Campbell, *The Blair Years: Extracts from the Alastair Campbell Diaries*, Random House, 2007, 757 pages**

Unlike many other spokespeople who front for presidents and prime ministers, Mr. Campbell became a media subject in his own right, most recently in the Hutton Inquiry which looked into the dossier intended to justify British support for the invasion of Iraq in March 2003. Whether his job was explaining the NATO mission in Bosnia, his government's kowtowing to the U.S. desire to invade Iraq, the mad-cow cull, or the handling of internal government scandals, "chief press secretary" seems a



rather lowly title for such an important player. He describes his job as "one of the shittiest in the world," and Mr. Blair fought to keep him onside, calling him back from retirement to help Labour win a third term in office.

It is also clear from Mr. Campbell's account, that optics often determined policy in the Blair government. Mr. Blair sided with his press aide if Mr. Campbell criticized a minister for stepping out of line. Northern Ireland secretary Peter Mandelson was sacrificed in January 2001 simply because Mr. Campbell

decided it was expedient. Everything had to be scripted and articulated in advance, much of it with the prior blessing of the PM's official spokesman.

While *The Blair Years* offers few surprises, it pulls its punches on the feud between Mr. Blair and his successor and previous chancellor of the exchequer, Gordon Brown. Although the diaries contain frequent references to the conflict, with the author often called upon as a go-between, the book is sparing in new detail.

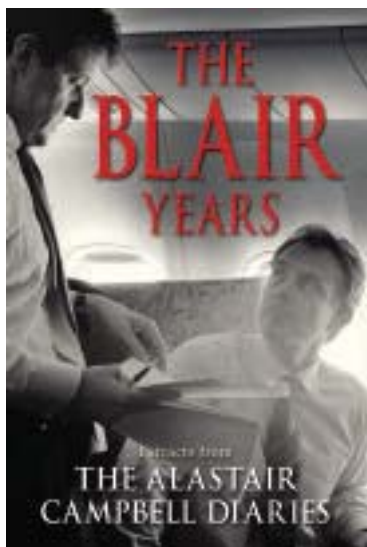
But it is unsparing about journalists. Looking back on his 10 years with Mr. Blair, the former journalist offers this: "It is my respect for the media that has shrunk, and my respect for politics that has grown."

**Brian Mulroney, *Memoirs*, McClelland and Stewart, 2007, 1,015 pages**

That the former prime minister has been forced to defend his good name against the word of a man with a reputation as sullied as Mr. Schreiber's could spell disaster for his recollections of his nine years in office. Rather than be judged by his painstaking memoirs and his record in office, public memory has proved fickle. He is being judged over what he did or did not do for the \$300,000 – he now says \$225,000 – that the lobbyist gave him. This is tragic because Mr. Mulroney never saw himself or his country as bit players and counted himself in the same league as big hitters such as Ronald Reagan.

Like Mr. Blair and Mr. Chrétien after him, the Conservative leader who gave Canada both the GST and NAFTA struggled with the decision of whether to run for a third term. In July 1989, his journal notes that he has not yet decided whether to run again in 1992-93, but by early 1992 is convinced that, "If ever I blink the slightest and indicate I will not, the entire bureaucracy would freeze, the leadership races would be on, discipline would be impossible, and I would be incapable of carrying on over the next crucial 12 months."

He was proved wrong on each of these predictions. The memoirs record the fact that there were hardly any tak-



ers for his job within his own party. It was business as usual within government after his exit and his own legacy appeared to be in question until a new brand of conservatives assumed power in early 2006.

Jean Chrétien, *My Years as Prime Minister*, Alfred A. Knopf, 2007, 407 pages

Compared to the sprawling diaries

**IN RETROSPECT, IT DOES LOOK LIKE HIS DECISION TO STAY OUT (OF IRAQ) WAS MORE NUANCED THAN APPEARED AT THE TIME AND DRIVEN BY THE BELIEF THAT CANADA IS A "KEEPER OF PEACE THROUGH MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS."**

(note the page counts for comparison) by Mr. Mulrone and Mr. Campbell, this is a more modest undertaking. There is none of the grandstanding and its low-key tone is perhaps reflective of the author himself. Mr. Chrétien claims that he "deliberately chose to undersell and outperform rather than oversell and underperform." He also offers insight into his troubled relationship with his successor, Paul Martin, almost from the get-go in 1993. The vibes were never good and "Paul Martin, Jr." never reconciled to working under the "little guy" from Shawinigan.


Typical of Mr. Chrétien's style was this question he posed to Mr. Blair in September 2002: "If it's democracy that

the Americans want to establish in Iraq, why are they doing it with the support of the king of Saudi Arabia?" He argues that he could have supported the Anglo-British decision to invade Iraq, while declining to provide troops, but that would have been "politically and intellectually dishonest." In retrospect, it does look like his decision to stay out was more nuanced than appeared at the time and driven by the belief that Canada is a "keeper of peace through multilateral institutions."

Given the frustrations that all three leaders faced in their final days in office, one wonders why the political instincts that previously served them so well deserted them when it came to managing a smooth transition. The successors to both of the Canadians went down in flames. In Britain, Mr. Brown has already had to back out of a desire to earn his own independent mandate. The moral: Voters don't take kindly to pretenders who try to undermine prime ministers from within.


George Abraham is *Diplomat's* contributing editor.

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## A touch of Turkey in Rockcliffe

By Margo Roston



DYANNE WILSON

The home of Turkish Ambassador Aydemir Erman and his wife Gulen has undergone extensive renovation but architects preserved its original character.

I told Ambassador Aydemir Erman and his wife Gulen that I had tasted Turkish coffee before, but they still had to coach me in the niceties of their country's national drink. First, the coffee came with a glass of water to cleanse the palate. The Ermans also suggested drinking it with a little sugar. Along with a delicious piece of lemon and almond cake, all served in the elegant reception room at their Rockcliffe residence, the morning coffee break was delightful.

The renovated Georgian-Revival brick home is set on upscale Crescent Road and was built in 1928 and designed by Toronto architect Ferdinand Marani for Hugh McBean Hughson, son of lumber baron W.C. Hughson. At one time, the property of the New Zealand government, the Turkish government bought the

brick mansion in 1999 as part of a property exchange for the Canadian chancery in Ankara. Then the Turks got to work on plans to expand the residence on the 4,500-square-metre lot. The home itself is now one-third larger, with 28 rooms and 11 bathrooms.

The Ermans, who arrived in Ottawa in 2002, were intimately involved with the renovation, living in rented Rockcliffe digs until 2005. The embassy, working with architect Barry Hobin (among others), and with input from Rockcliffe Village experts, worked out a plan to maintain the integrity of the property. Amongst other features were specially made bricks designed to seamlessly match the original brick façade.

The interior now has two large wings, one a large reception room that extends

from the back to the front of the building, the other a multi-purpose hall that transforms from a dining room that serves some 80 people for lunch into a conference room that can accommodate more than 100 people.

It's a home built for entertaining. The couple holds large dinner parties once or twice a month. They also have weekly luncheons and frequent cocktail parties, all handled by a full-time staff of five and any extra help required for the event. The cook and his wife live in one of the two staff apartments in the house.

When the Ermans want to entertain more intimately, there is the original dining room which seats 14, and a den; both facing the courtyard and the sloping lawn.

"People like to come and see the residence," says the ambassador, including



DYANNE WILSON



Clockwise from left: Mr. and Mrs. Erman relax with their long-haired Dachshund named Coffee. The dining room can seat as many as 80 people. Turkish accents such as this plate, and these bottles, appear throughout the home.

close to 1,000 people who attend the country's Oct. 29 national day reception.

Although they serve a variety of food, Mrs. Erman usually offers Turkish specialties, including eggplant with chicken or fish.

She shopped in Turkey for many of the home's treasures. Most of the hand-woven wool and silk carpets that cover the hardwood floors come from Hereke, a town near Istanbul. Their designs derive from 19th-century versions made for

palaces and given as gifts by the sultan.

The cream-coloured walls work as a background for the carpets, art works and the Turkish porcelain and silver pieces that dot the house. Included in the large collection of paintings are two photographs by Ottawa artist and photographer Jennifer Dickson, part of a series of Turkish scenes.

There are also handmade Kutahya ceramic plates, decorated with red tulips, a reminder of their origins in Turkey. Entry-

way tiles come from Iznik, a village that has been producing tiles and tableware since the second Ottoman Empire.

When it's time for privacy, the Ermans retreat to an apartment upstairs with a kitchenette and even a small laundry.

The couple will be leaving Ottawa sometime soon, but with the satisfaction that the residence "functions just as we planned," says the ambassador.

Margo Roston is an Ottawa writer.



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# How to win bonus points with your dinner guests

**W**hen it comes to planning the main course, deciding on the principal element is the easy part of the equation. It's more challenging to decide on the accompaniments to be served with whatever you've chosen as the main attraction. Accompaniments should not only be appropriate, but they should enhance the main element, adding a touch of dazzle and finesse to the entire plate. The decision is indeed strategic.

Regular standbys may be convenient and perfectly acceptable, but they won't necessarily generate a spark of appreciation. Accompaniments do offer an opportunity for the host to collect "bonus points," as I like to say. Guests notice and are excited to see something beyond the ordinary – yet tasty – on their plates. I actually like to surprise my guests by presenting them with an unknown experience.

Quinoa and buckwheat groats usually do the trick at our table. These products are readily available at health-food stores, can be cooked in advance, refrigerated for up to three days or stored frozen for months. Either of these cooked items is delicious when tossed with sesame oil, black sesame seeds, salt and crushed black peppercorns. Or, for a winning recipe, toss one or the other with currants, chopped hazelnuts and chives, then drizzle with a mustard-herb vinaigrette before adding salt, crushed black peppercorns and a pinch of sugar. Both are served at room temperature which is a great advantage when you're rushing to assemble a dinner party of individual plates. The subtle nutty flavour of these dishes works well with poultry, lamb, pork and game.

Delightful combinations or pilafs of wild or white rice excite the palate while the sticky nature of sushi rice lends itself to the fabrication of enticing stacks. A careful balance of herbs, spices and other ingredients can elevate "sweet" or regular mashed potatoes to a gourmet level. Yes, it is often a matter of taking the ordinary and making it extraordinary.

My repertoire of accompaniments also includes cooked vermicelli noodles tossed with a slightly sweet and spicy hot sauce; pasta tossed with pesto or



MARGARET  
DICKENSON

herb-garlic butter; cooked vegetables (virtually of any kind) drizzled with a good quality sesame oil or glazed with herb-garlic butter. For tricks that always impress, use mini-vegetables of various colours

and shapes, roasted vegetables, mushrooms of all kinds, sprigs as well as little bouquets of fresh herbs, drizzles of sauces, edible flowers and clusters of fresh red currants.

When ethnic recipes are on the menu, they will always seem more authentic when served with appropriate side dishes (for example, rice with most oriental food; Korean mixed vegetables and noodles with bulgogi).

The choice of accompaniments, their colour, size, shape, texture and flavour all deserve careful consideration. It may take time and some experimenting before you achieve success so take a photo or at least do a sketch to record your creation, and attach it to the recipe for future reference. This way you avoid reinventing the wheel when you forget how you did something.

When I'm developing a recipe, I don't consider it completed until the plating or "food styling" has been done. I want

final results to be comfortably predictable. Regardless of the occasion (a family meal or when entertaining), I strive for confidence which comes with those predictable results. Of course, substitutions and modifications can be made, but only after you establish a critical point of reference.

Accompaniments must be given the attention they deserve. The enticement offered by a main course plate is influenced by how, where and in what quantity elements are presented to the diner. A comparison could be made to that of an artist's canvas; however, avoid filling all the space. Plates that breathe are definitely more inviting. That way, guests can better appreciate and savour each component.

Margaret Dickenson is author of the international award-winning cookbook *Margaret's Table - Easy Cooking & Inspiring Entertaining* and is creator and host of *Margaret's Entertaining Minutes* on Rogers TV. See [www.margaretssenseofoccasion.com](http://www.margaretssenseofoccasion.com) for more.

## DELUXE SWEET POTATO CREAM

Makes 2 1/3 cups or 575 mL (4 servings)

2 lbs (900 g) sweet potatoes

3 tbs (45 mL) butter

3 tbs (45 mL) finely chopped fresh chives

1 1/2 tsp (8 mL) peeled and grated fresh



Sweet potato cream adorns a plate of lamb

LARRY DICKENSON

ginger root

- 1/2 tsp (3 mL) finely chopped fresh garlic
- 2 tsp (10 mL) Dijon mustard
- 1/2 tsp (3 mL) raspberry vinegar (or red wine vinegar)
- To taste salt
- 1/4 tsp (1 mL) (Indonesian) hot chili paste (optional)

1. Scrub sweet potatoes clean; with tines of fork, prick skins in several places.
2. Bake until soft. As soon as potatoes are cool enough to handle, remove and discard skins.
3. While sweet potatoes are still warm, mash flesh (or press through a "ricer") to form a smooth purée. (Note: If the "mashed" purée is fibrous, using a heavy rubber spatula, rub the purée through a coarse mesh sieve.)
4. In a small skillet over medium heat, melt butter. Add chives, ginger and garlic; cook until chives soften slightly.
5. Stir chive mixture into sweet potato purée. Add Dijon mustard, vinegar, salt and if desired, hot chili paste; blend well with a fork/rubber spatula/spoon. (Note: Do not use a blender as the potato mixture may become too soft and/or gummy.)
6. Serve warm.

**ORIENTAL MANGO RICE**

Makes 4 2/3 cups or more than 1 litre (6 to 8 servings)

- 4 cups (1 litre) cooked long grain rice
- 1 tsp (5 mL) finely chopped fresh garlic
- 1/3 cup (80 mL) chopped fresh coriander leaves
- 3 tbsp (45 mL) Honey Mustard Mayonnaise\*
- 2 to 3 tbsp (30 to 45 mL) sesame oil
- To taste salt
- 1 1/3 cups (325 mL) diced (1/3 inch or 0.8 cm) fresh mango (flesh only)
- 1/4 cup (60 mL) toasted slivered almonds

1. Toss together rice (hot, cold or at room temperature) and garlic. Add coriander leaves and toss again.
2. Whisk together Honey Mustard Mayonnaise and sesame oil; drizzle over rice mixture and toss.
3. Fold in mango. If necessary, season with salt to taste.
4. Just before serving, fold in almonds.

\* To make 1/2 cup (125 mL) of Honey Mustard Mayonnaise, whisk together 1/2 cup (125 mL) of mayonnaise, 2 tsp (10 mL) of Dijon mustard, 1 tbsp (15 mL) of liquid honey and a pinch of crushed black peppercorns. Store this mayonnaise refrigerated for up to a couple of months.


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# William Neilson Hall's 'conspicuous bravery'

By Laura Neilson Bonikowsky

The Victoria Cross is awarded "for most conspicuous bravery or some daring or pre-eminent act of valour or self-sacrifice or extreme devotion to duty in the presence of the enemy." The dry words of the inscription don't live up to the stories of courage behind the Commonwealth's highest decoration for bravery.

Able Seaman William Neilson Hall, the son of escaped slaves, was the first Canadian naval recipient, the first black and the first Nova Scotian to win the VC.

He served in the Far East aboard the HMS Shannon in June 1857 when the Sepoys of the Indian Army mutinied, their insurrection fuelled by resentment against the colonizing British and sparked by rumours that their Enfield rifle cartridges were greased with the fat of pigs and cows. Contact with them would destroy the Mohammedan's purity and the Hindu caste.

British warships were dispatched to India, the Shannon to Calcutta with orders to send men overland to Cawnpore, an important post on the Ganges River, and Lucknow, the capital of Oudh state. The "Shannon Brigade" embarked Sept. 2. It suffered many losses during the arduous



LAURA NEILSON BONIKOWSKY

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journey, dragging eight ships' guns with which to reclaim the garrisons. Each gun had a team of six men; each man was numbered, beginning with the officer in charge. If one man were killed or wounded, the next assumed his position, and so on. The system avoided confusion and kept the gun firing.

In Cawnpore, the commander, Major-General Sir Hugh Wheeler, confident in the loyalty of his Sepoy troops, left the post lightly guarded by British soldiers. On June 5, his confidence was betrayed when the Cawnpore 2nd Cavalry mutinied. The Sepoys, with greater numbers, quickly gained the advantage.

The British arrived too late; the Sepoys had killed every white person, believing it would deter the British from retaking the city. The Shannon group was joined at Cawnpore by Lt. Gen. Sir Colin Campbell and his Highlanders. The two groups turned toward Lucknow, 72 treacherous kilometres away, where the British had retreated to the residency (the British garrison).

The Lucknow garrison, under Chief Commissioner Sir Henry Lawrence, was surrounded by rebels. The British force was ready for battle and put up a good fight, but held down by the Sepoys, with the city's narrow streets under rebel control, escape was impossible.

As the relief columns advanced, the Sepoys' attacks intensified. The relief force reached Lucknow in November. Sir Campbell had to take the outer walls, then fight through the streets to reach the garrison. He launched the main attack from the southeast, where jungle disrupted the mutineers' line. After successfully advancing into the city, a detachment disengaged from the main force and moved west.

On Lucknow's west side stood a huge mosque, the Shah Najaf. As the British advanced, a deadly hail of musket balls and grenades poured from the mosque. The British had to take the mosque, but with a six-metre wall blocking them and without scaling ladders, they first had to breach the wall. They dragged the guns to within 350 metres of the wall, banging shell after shell

at it, making little impact. The guns had to be closer.

The sailors dragged the guns up, sustaining heavy casualties. The wall was loopholed in such a way that the gunners were safe from fire at certain points, but every shot from the big guns recoiled them back into the fire zone. Soon only Seaman Hall and one wounded officer were still standing. Seaman Hall, now the gun's Number One, kept loading and firing, dragging it back after every recoil, over and over. Finally, the wall was breached sufficiently to allow some Highlanders to open the gate.

For his heroic actions that Nov. 16, 1857, Able Seaman Hall was awarded the Victoria Cross. He served in the Royal Navy until 1876, then retired in Horton Bluff, N.S., where he lived until his death in 1904.

Laura Neilson Bonikowsky is the associate editor of *The Canadian Encyclopedia*.



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**THIS PAGE:** 1. Israeli Ambassador Alan Baker and his wife, Dalia, far left and right, hosted a reception at their Rockcliffe home Nov. 21. It featured Israeli wines and helped raise awareness of HIPPY, which stands for Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters. The program, originated in Israel, is now in nine countries and helps 22,000 families by teaching parents to be their child's first teacher. Organizers hope to bring it to Ottawa. Also shown, from left, U.S. Ambassador David Wilkins, Judith Maxwell, friend of HIPPY, and Susan Wilkins. (Photo: Andrew Geddes) • 2. Portuguese Ambassador Joao Silveira Carvalho and José Conde Rodrigues, Portugal's secretary of state for justice, look over a program for a concert held Dec. 2 at the University of Ottawa. Portugal handed over the presidency of the European Union to Slovenia in 2008. (Photo: Bob Diotte) • 3. The Slavic diplomatic hospitality group visited Jason Duval's Sussex Studio Nov. 28. From left: Dimce Isailovski, Macedonian painter and keynote speaker, Kati Kangro-Hallik (Estonia), Mr. Duval, Dalia Baker, Celetina Skeljo (Croatia). (Photo: Ulle Baum) • 4. Former deputy minister of Foreign Affairs Peter Harder received the Order Of San Carlos, grand officer rank, from Colombian Ambassador Jaime Giron Duarte Oct. 24. Mr. Harder retired from Foreign Affairs last year and now works at Fraser Milner Casgrain LLP. (Photo: Danilo Velasquez)



**THIS PAGE:** 1. The British Council sent three Canadian students to the United Nations climate-change conference in Bali, Indonesia. From left, Katrina Genuis of Edmonton, John Constantine of Conception Bay South, Nfld., Azra Shivji of Toronto, with Rebecca Zalatan, of the British Council. (Photo: British Council) • 2. David Lee, representative of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office, hosted a Pink Tea fundraiser Nov. 7 for Breast Cancer Action Ottawa. Shown: Yumiko Tsunakawa and Honduran Ambassador Beatriz Valle. • 3. Local women modelled at the Pink Tea event. (Photos: Frank Scheme) • 4. MP Bill Blaikie was named parliamentarian of the year at *Maclean's* second-annual awards evening at the Chateau Laurier Nov. 21. (Photo: Brigitte Bouvier) • 5. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (middle), Minister of Labour, with U.S. Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao and Michael Wilson, Canada's Ambassador to the U.S. They discussed common international issues, prior to Mr. Blackburn's visit to South America. (Photo: Neshan Naltchayan) • 6. Six non-resident ambassadors presented credentials Oct. 30. Shown: Phiane Philakone, ambassador of Laos, with Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean. (Photo: Rideau Hall) • 7. A Finnish concert held Nov. 7 featured accordionist Johanna Juhola and violinist Pekka Kusisto. They're shown (from left) with Raija Patokallio, Finnish ambassador Pasi Patokallio, and Sweden's ambassador to Canada, Ingrid Iremark. (Photo: Bob Diotte)



## How to navigate the LCBO

I often get asked by friends and guests at the restaurant which wines they should buy from the Liquor Control Board of Ontario. My answer is usually the same... I don't know. The truth is, I don't spend much time in the LCBO, and when I do, I ask for lots of help to get the best stuff on the shelves. But here is a bit of a primer that will help you understand our large, bureaucratic alcohol-selling institution that has a virtual monopoly on all of our vinous joy.

Know the layers: All LCBO stores have a selection of "General List" products (for example, Yellowtail Shiraz, Masi Valpolicella and Soave Bolla) alongside the regular selection of vodka, gin and rum. For the most part, the wines that are on these shelves are made in huge quantities by large multi-nationals and are not the most exciting products on offer in the province. But when you are up at your cottage and need a couple of bottles to get you by for the weekend, the rural store will likely have some standbys from this list. Mine are Clancy's Red from Peter Lehmann (Barossa Valley, Australia \$18.15), Whitecliff Sauvignon Blanc (Marlborough, New Zealand \$14.95) and Henry of Pelham Riesling Reserve (Niagara, \$14.95).

The next rung up are "Vintages Essentials." These wines are usually very solid, well-made wines that are continuously available in all stores with a "Vintages Corner" (a section devoted to the Vintages program of less-regular brands). Some of my favourites are the Perrin Reserve Cotes-du-Rhone Red



STEPHEN BECKTA

PHOTO: PAUL COUVRETTE

(\$14.95) and Taylor Fladgate 10-Year Old Tawny Port (\$33.95).

Next is where we get into asking for help: Vintages products. These are wines that get released every two weeks, in various quantities and qualities. Many sought-after products sell out within minutes in a display that reminds one of Russian bread lines. Others languish on the shelves until they are put on sale (very rare). I encourage you to ask your product consultant (every Vintages outlet has at least one, if not five), who will actually have tasted most of the wines on the releases, for their advice.

In some cases, especially when it comes to very expensive wines, you will need to rely on third party reviews, vintage charts and what my old boss refers to as "pedigree." These are wines from certain wineries that are, year and year out, consistently great. Many of these wines are released through the "Classics Catalogue" four times per year and are usually really special, but they almost always come with a hefty, special-occasion price point to match their uniqueness.

The way to find out about upcoming Vintages and Classics releases, as well as smaller, "exclusive" product launches, is to sign up to Vmail at <https://www.vintageslatest.com/Register.jsp>. If you want to track down a spe-

cific wine from a past release, go to [www.lcbo.com](http://www.lcbo.com) and do a search. They have a great system where they tell you which stores have how many bottles. Just be aware, though, that if the database reads less than six bottles, it might be gone by the time you get there. Meanwhile, if the wine you want is in Toronto, for example, get to know your local product consultant and he or she might be willing to ship them up to your store for you.

At the restaurant, we get most of our wines from small import companies that deal in the consignment program under the LCBO umbrella. I buy from them because there are reordering possibilities and they offer direct delivery, but mostly because I can taste the wines before buying them. Unfortunately, this doesn't work as well for consumers looking to stock their cellars at home or to buy for that special dinner party that they are throwing. This is because these consignment wines come only by the case and are rarely shown to the public to taste before buying. A few companies are starting to realize that the public, beyond restaurants, are great customers and now have portfolio tastings once a year. For example, Hobbs and Co. ([www.hobbswines.com](http://www.hobbswines.com)) and The Vine ([www.robgroh.com](http://www.robgroh.com)) both do it.

Happy shopping!  
Cheers!

Stephen Beckta is owner and sommelier of Beckta dining & wine.

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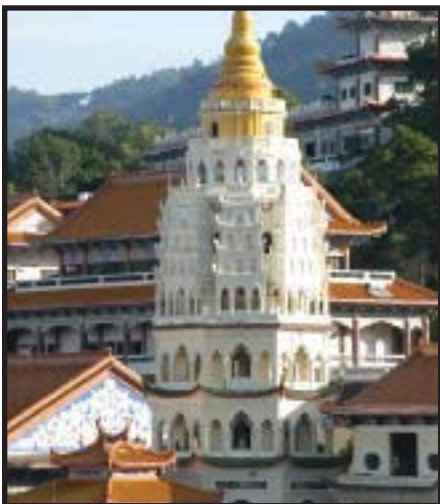
# MALAYSIA - TRULY ASIA

This report by Malaysian High Commissioner Dennis Ignatius is the first in a series of travelogues that bring editorial and advertising content together as components of this new Destinations feature.



BY DENNIS IGNATIUS

One of the nice things about the foreign service is the many opportunities to visit fascinating places. In my 36 years of foreign service, I have visited such sites as the Great Wall of China and seen the famous terra cotta warriors of Xian. I have driven across the mighty Andes, gone sightseeing around Lake Baikal in Siberia and hiked up Machu Picchu. I have walked along the shores of Galapagos and watched huge sheets of ice falling off the face of the Perito Moreno glacier on the southern tip of Argentina. As fascinating as all these places are, I still hold dear some of my favourite holiday places in Malaysia. I guess I



PENANG



MABUL ISLAND

have always liked the sea. There's something about the sea that I find soothing and restorative. Among my favourite getaways are the islands of Penang, Langkawi, Sipadan and Mabul.

**Penang**, the great Pearl of the Orient, is rich in history and has long been a fascinating fusion of East and West. Founded in 1876 by Sir Francis Light, it was once defended by Arthur Wellesley (the future Duke of Wellington) and was a favoured destination for the likes of Somerset Maugham, Joseph Conrad, Rudyard Kipling and Noel Coward.

Today, Penang is one of Asia's most attractive tourist destinations, known for its cultural and religious diversity, its fusion cuisine and great beaches. Penang is also known for its unique temple architecture and old colonial buildings. Although Penang is a modern city, it has managed to retain its old charms. There are many competitively priced small hotels, scattered along the island's beaches, that have great service and amenities. Some of the older ones, like Golden Sands and Casurina, have developed their own following of devoted international clients who return year after year.

I have spent many wonderful days in Penang – on the beaches, cycling along the coast, hunting for antiques in Georgetown, exploring and photographing the many historic and cultural sites and savouring its rich fusion cuisine. No matter where you are from, you will feel right at home on the island of Penang.

Penang will host the 6<sup>th</sup> Club Crew World Championships (dragon-boat racing) in 2008 and several Canadian teams will be participating. The event offers a great opportunity for Canadians to visit Penang.

Another favourite is **Sipadan Island**, a tiny oceanic island in the Sulu Sea. Ever since Jacques Cousteau declared it “an untouched piece of art” and raved about the diversity of marine life around Sipadan, it has been a major scuba destination. It's rated as one of the top dive destinations in the world alongside the Galapagos Islands and Truk in Micronesia. The World Wildlife Fund also rated Sipadan as one of the world's best coral areas.

The island is actually the peak of a massive undersea mountain range. The rich marine life include barracudas, moray eels, the playful clownfish and hundreds of other species. Sea turtles are so abundant that you run into them all the time. At the “Hanging Gardens” of Sipadan, the coral formations are a riot of spectacular colour. A visit to Sipadan is always a great adventure whether or not you love scuba diving. It is also one of the most tranquil places on earth.



THE BEACHFRONT AT BERJAYA LANGKAWI

In order to preserve the marine environment, accommodation is no longer allowed on Sipadan. Visitors can, however, stay at **Mabul Island** which is about 40 minutes away by boat. Mabul island is a delight in itself. It is home to the Bajau Luat, the world's only tribe of nomadic sea gypsies who spend their lives on the water. The Sipadan Water



PARADISE HOTEL IN LANGKAWI

Village Resort is the place to stay. Built on stilts and carefully laid out on an existing reef, it offers splendid water cottage accommodations, wonderfully-

prepared Asian and continental cuisine and the experience of living on the water. The resort's international staff are very helpful in ensuring you make the best of your stay and enjoy the marine environment to the fullest. It is a little out of the way but it's definitely worth the time and effort it takes to get there.

**Langkawi**, situated just where the Indian Ocean narrows into the Straits of Malacca, is another of my favourite destinations. The Langkawi archipelago, a cluster of 99 islands, is a place of legend and dense tropical forests. The main island has been carefully developed into an international-class resort without losing its distinctive characteristics. One of the hotels on the island, the Datai, has been set right in the rainforest with tree-top rooms and idyllic chalets on the forest floor. Its beaches are among the most pristine in the world. Though the hotel has world-class service, replete with a range of traditional Asian spas, it is very private and secluded. It's a great place to get away and rest and recuperate. The Berjaya Beach & Spa Resort is another great hotel.

Langkawi is also full of activity and there is always a festival or carnival going on, including the "Le Tour de Langkawi" (one of the best cycling races outside Europe and the richest in Asia), the Royal Langkawi Regatta (sailing), the Wilderness Challenge Langkawi (an adventure race around the island involving kayaking, rail running, swimming, ropes course, mountain biking, etc.) and Langkawi Mackerel Run (a fishing tournament taking advantage of migration season of pelagic fish, especially mackerel, passing Langkawi waters in November). In my view, this is one of the best island getaways there is.

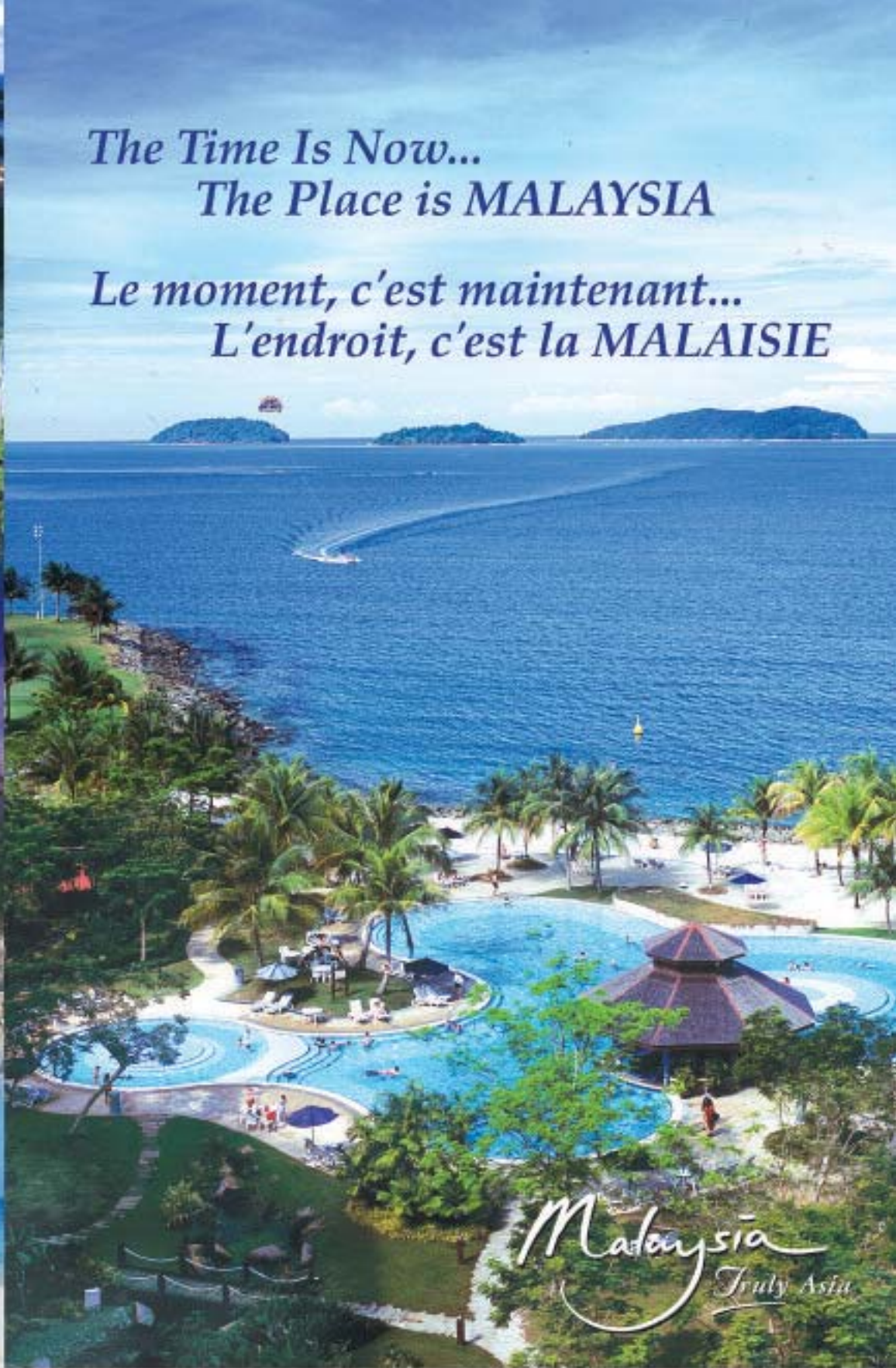
Malaysia, the 16<sup>th</sup> largest trading nation in the world, is easily accessible and very visitor-friendly. Visitors from most countries do not require visas. It is perhaps the most cosmopolitan country in Asia and English is widely spoken. There are amazing travel bargains available for Canadian travelers. Malaysia is truly Asia.

*Dennis Ignatius is the high commissioner for Malaysia.*



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thatched roof. Screened “windows” let in light. The tents are furnished with fine teak – there’s a king-sized bed, wingback chair and a comfy day-bed on the porch for lazy afternoons with a book. The washroom in the tent is separated by a canvas wall. The shower is outside, surrounded by an arched bamboo wall. Showering in the open air is an unexpected treat.

Each day, campers may take in as many game drives as they like. There’s a 6 a.m. drive, another at 3 p.m. and then another at 9 p.m. which takes place with large flood lights. An afternoon drive – from about 3 to 7 p.m. – turns up all the beasts one hopes to see. There are elephants, gazelles, impalas, zebras, and wildebeests by the tens of thousands. There’s a lone ostrich, a trio of mother giraffes, each with her own baby. A pride of 18 lions lazes about in the way of domestic cats. They don’t seem bothered by the jeeps, which at times rival them in numbers, closing in to steal a look.

The 6 a.m. drive is billed as the best time to see animals when they’re most active. It affords a look at exotic birds, hungry, loping hyenas and another trio of lions – this time three females with a half dozen young cubs, which gambol about like any sensible kitten does.

Even after seeing reams of wildlife and soaking up all the camp’s pampering, including enjoying lazing about a small swimming pool and taking advantage of one of the many spa services, it’s tough to leave, especially knowing the kind of hour-long drive that awaits. The plane, inexplicably even smaller than the one on



Clockwise from top: Boniface, trusty driver for the Karen Blixen Camp. Lions relax much of the day, just like their domestic cousins. The terminal at the Kichwa Tembo airstrip is this hut in the distance.

the incoming leg, arrives on time but is packed. The pilot sticks his head into the open door at the back of the noisy aircraft to tell new passengers there will be four stops this time. It’s windy, pouring rain, your stomach is not quite right and there are no washrooms on board.

But then you fly over the villages, and the friendly Masai wave. They have nothing but the land and each other – and they’ve made your trip of a lifetime that much warmer.

Jennifer Campbell is *Diplomat’s* editor.



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## At ease with the animals

It's easy to be steps away from wildlife wonders in Kenya's Masai Mara

By Jennifer Campbell

**T**he flight from Nairobi to the Kichwa Tembo airstrip on the Masai Mara could take an hour — if it were non-stop. Stops, however, are plentiful on these puddle-jumping flights from Nairobi to southern Kenya. The stops add an hour or so to the flights, but give planeloads of safari-bound tourists a tremendous birds-eye introduction to the wonders of the Mara.

The Masai Mara is a large park reserve in southwestern Kenya. It's basically the northern continuation of the Serengeti, and it's named for the Masai people who work the land, and the Mara River that divides it.

At stop Number 1 on a typical flight, there's a sight that daily delights scores of tourists. Inauspiciously set on the side of a dirt airstrip is a small shack with a corrugated tin roof that looks like it was dropped out of the sprawling slums of Nairobi — but for one distinction: a hand-painted sign on the wall of the shack that declares, "Duty-free shop." Bright red Masai scarves and blankets hang on the outside, and tourists slip out of the aircraft to take pictures of what surely must be the most photographed, and perhaps most dubious, duty-free shop on the planet. What customs duty you're saving isn't clear, but visitors soon realize that the Masai use "duty-free" at tiny outposts across the landscape.

It's one of many unique things seen from the tourist flights, which also offer great views of the small Masai communities, built in circles out of mud huts and bamboo. Flying, which costs little more than driving, also gives a sneak preview of endless wildlife of the plains. Thousands of strange-looking wildebeests — seemingly an awkward cross between a buffalo and a donkey — travel in a monstrous herd at stop Number 2, and three elephants saunter across the airstrip at Kichwa Tembo, the final stop. (The outbound flight had four stops, each on a short, dirt airstrip.)

Boni, short for Boniface, a friendly face at the final stop, is the guide for the Karen Blixen Camp. (Karen Blixen was a Danish author best known for her book *Out of Africa* about her experiences in Kenya.) Boni announces that his dusty Land Cruiser has lost its "U-joint" on the



Wildebeests, a zany-looking seeming cross between buffaloes and donkeys, are plentiful on the Masai Mara in September when they make their migration to Tanzania.

journey to the airstrip, so the drive to the camp will be extra bumpy. It's not clear whether the joint in question would have made any difference but it's soon clear how and why it fell off. The drive takes an hour. The distance? Seven kilometres. The road is like nothing seen in the Western world — its colossal ruts and rivers of rocks the size of human heads are just a few of the obstacles. Boni is non-plussed. He makes the drive twice a day. Still, among the tourists, jokes about the benefits of no traffic make the rounds.

But the drive proves worthwhile. Karen Blixen Camp, one of the least expensive of those accessible via this airstrip, is paradise. A large, open-air building with a thatched roof, hardwood floors and fine, upholstered furniture is command central. Here, guests check in, eat wonderful three-course meals, and share cocktails. The service at this resort, none-too-crowded in late September, is impeccable. In the mornings and evenings — or whenever they like — guests sit on the verandah here and watch the hippopotami who live in the

river that runs alongside the camp. But they heed the hand-painted signs along the riverbank that say "Don't go beyond this point!! Beware of hippos & crocodiles." Hippos kill more humans than any other animal in Africa. Although they're vegetarian, they are violent when defending territory. Get between them and their patch of river and their massive jaws could slice you in two. They stay in the river all day, but roam up on the banks to eat grass in the evenings, so the camp manager insists visitors go nowhere after dark without a Masai escort.

Guests have a bell on their "tent" keys and ring to call a spear-wielding escort to get them to and from the restaurant after sundown. All staffers — and there are 30 or so — seem to have a story about being chased by a hippo. They've lived to tell the tale because of the Masai escorts, who, upon hearing a bell, invariably appear out of the darkness within seconds.

Each of the camp's 21 tents is like a cottage. Raised from the ground, the canvas slides under wood floors to keep the bugs out and it all fits under a waterproof

(continued on page 43)

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