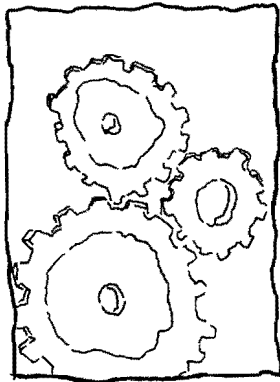

Natasha and the Peacemakers



ONE of the very last decisions of our former Prime Minister, Pierre Trudeau, was to approve the establishment of an institution called 'The Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security'. Inspired by this project, Mr. Koozma Tarasoff, from Saskatchewan, the chairman

of the Ottawa Branch of the 'Canada-U.S.S.R. Association', suggested the creation of a 'Centre for East-West Dialogue' in Canada. He received a letter from Mr. Trudeau from which he quoted the following to a meeting of the Sub-Committee of the Standing Committee on External Affairs, on May 3, 1984:

'In order to ensure that your very thoughtful contribution is properly considered as the designed work for the government-sponsored centre is carried out, I have passed on your paper to the officials most concerned with the creation of the centre. I hope that it will be possible to establish an institution with the creativity and practicality which you envisage.'

Mr. Tarasoff's 'creative and practical' proposal would be housed in the Chateau Montebello in Quebec. There, as Mr. Tarasoff put it, officials of the United States and the Soviet Union could 'meet together, relax, eat and talk.' The running of this peace makers' club would cost around three million dollars a year; but in order to provide guests from Moscow with the luxuries they are accustomed to, it would be necessary to renovate the Chateau at a cost of 'perhaps seven million'. It would be a 'hands-off structure funded by the government, yet independent.' If I understand correctly, this means that the taxpayers should pay, but they should not expect to have a say in what goes on at the champagne-and-brie parties. Mr.

Tarasoff envisages wise men assembled there, who will, in an unbiased, unprejudiced manner, clarify issues that threaten world peace because they are being constantly and systematically obscured by the Western media — things like the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the shooting down of a Korean passenger airplane, or the incarceration of Andrei Sakharov.

And yet, despite these wonderful intentions, Mr. Donald W. Munro, M.P., protested the presence of Mr. Tarasoff, and his colleague Mr. Lewis M. Leach of Ottawa, before the Sub-Committee when it next met (June 26, 1984). He argued that members of a 'group with such a record should not be given access to our parliamentary proceedings.'

The record of the 'Canada-U.S.S.R. Association' is quite colourful; but Mr. Munro had one particular item in mind: the exploits of the President of the Association, Mr. Michael Lucas of Toronto. Just five days before the appearance of Messrs. Tarasoff and Leach before the Sub-Committee, Mr. Lucas had become the centre of a very interesting news story.

It all started two years earlier, on June 29, 1982, in Prague, Czechoslovakia. A group of Canadian students had arrived the previous day on a tour organized by the International Student Exchange of Urbana, Illinois. They were given a guided tour of the ancient city. Upon their return to Canada, one of them, Mr. Ronnie Evanoff, complained to Mr. Lucas that their Czech guide had 'used every opportunity to throw extremely bad light on the Government, on the Communist Party, and on the whole aspect of Socialism in the C.S.S.R.,' thus doing 'a tremendous lot of harm to the cause of peace and understanding.' On January 17, 1983, Mr. Lucas wrote to Mr. Jiri Sysel, Head of Overseas Department Five of the Czechoslovak Tourist Agency, ('Cedok'). He asked him to 'look into the matter and draw the proper conclusion'. He identified the guide as one Anastasia.

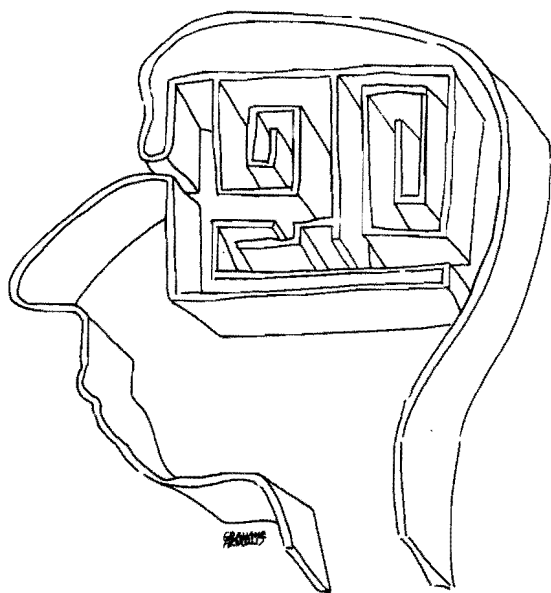
On February 15, 1983, Mr. Sysel wrote back regretting that so far he had been unable to draw the proper conclusion, because no guide by the name of Anastasia was employed by his agency. Would Mr. Lucas provide him with more detailed information?

Mr. Lucas promptly obliged. After some quick sleuthing he determined that the guide's name was not Anastasia but Natasha. He communicated

this further nugget by mail, February 26.

On March 11, greatly relieved that he could now wash his hands of the unpleasantness, Mr. Sysel replied that his agency was innocent of employing any such character; it was Sporturist that organized the Canadian students' tour, and who had hired Natasha. Therefore he was handing all correspondence to Mrs. Vlasta Krizova, the Deputy Manager of Sporturist.

Confident now that the proper conclusion would be drawn, Mr. Lucas turned his attention to other matters. But while the case was closing for him, it was of course just opening for Natasha Bayerova, a twenty-eight-year-old Prague newlywed, the wretched Jewish girl who had so dangerously harmed the cause of peace and understanding. Just to be sure that the guide would be punished, Mr. Lucas sent copies of his correspondence to Mr. Emil Ondrus, at that time in charge of the Canadian desk of the



Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Mr. Ondrus had been Second Secretary to the Czechoslovak Embassy in Ottawa, a post usually held by a member of the Czechoslovak Secret Service.

The affair turned into a combat between the nasties, who immediately ordered an investigation, and the decent people who even today may be found in shady corners of the institutions of what President Reagan has so aptly called 'The Evil Empire'. These latter slowed procedures so as to give Natasha a chance to save herself. They also

leaked copies of Mr. Lucas' letters, so that they eventually reached the *Globe & Mail* in Toronto, which, commendably, published news items and an editorial on the matter in May and June of last year. One such person — understandably Natasha is unwilling to reveal his name — called her to find out what had happened. He drew the conclusion that Natasha was okay, but that there might be something wrong with Mr. Lucas (who, by-the-by, was born at Humenne in eastern Czechoslovakia). According to Natasha, speaking later to an interviewer from *Zapad* (a Czech bi-monthly published from Ottawa, in its issue for December, 1984), this good Communist 'became quite agitated about the fact that there are still some bastards who would not spare the effort of writing three times across the ocean to destroy an innocent human being.'

The girl panicked. 'I asked around what kind of food inmates of our gaols were getting, and how often they get beaten up... Also, very cautiously, I asked lawyers what are the legal consequences of what I had allegedly done. None of the information I received was optimistic.'

With the results of their research in hand, Natasha and her husband decided to flee. The decent people took three months to push the papers through the bureaucracy, and with the help of other decent people the young couple were able to purchase a seven-day trip to Yugoslavia. It cost them twenty-two thousand crowns, or about a year's salary for a shop attendant. It was to be their 'honeymoon trip' — for though they had applied to take a honeymoon journey to Paris earlier, it had been only 'half-approved' (i.e. Natasha could go this year, and her husband could go the next).

'I had to leave my parents and all my friends,' Natasha told *Zapad*'s Otto Ulc. 'I lost my country, I lost Prague, a city I loved deeply, and where I had a job in which I was very happy. Mr. Lucas made me lose my parents and friends. Not only am I deprived of their physical presence, but they are afraid to write to us. My husband's career as a sociologist is in ruins.'

The bus to Yugoslavia passed through Austria. The couple, travelling together for the first time, got out there.

WHAT happened back on that summer day in 1982, that jeopardized the peace and security of the world? This is what:

'The Canadian students arrived in Prague on a Wednesday,' Natasha remembers. 'In the evening, between eight and nine p.m., they heard a lecture on socialism, and then they invaded the Prague night clubs. I got them the next morning at nine o'clock, most of them under the influence. They asked me the standard questions about wages and labourers and university profs, or how much money my superior makes... Or, what does it mean to become a member of the Communist Party. Or, what about censorship, travel abroad, availability of apartments, &c.' To these standard questions Natasha gave the standard answers she had been taught in the special courses that tourist guides must attend.

After two hours of sightseeing, the girl got rid of her Canadian charges and, off duty, hoped to hitch a ride to the town of Teplice, where she intended to visit her mother. In Czechoslovakia, as in Canada, it is not difficult for a slim, attractive girl to hitch a ride. As it happened, the Canadians were on their way to East Berlin, their next stop, and their bus would pass through Teplice. Pleased with her performance, they offered her a place on the bus. It was a warm summer day. The off-duty guide spoke a charmingly accented but fluent English, and she was more relaxed than when, a few hours earlier, on duty with a bullhorn, she had spoken more primly. The Canadians were young and male. This time the girl told the Canadians the truth as *she* saw it, not as she was supposed to see it.

But as Pilate said, What is truth? For Mr. Lucas and the members of the 'Canada-U.S.S.R. Association', truth is *Pravda*. It was just last year that the Association organized and hosted a tour of Canada for Mr. Victor Koryakovstev of the Soviet All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions and his numerous entourage. As that true believer told the *Toronto Sun*: 'I can believe one hundred per cent in the accuracy of what I read in *Pravda*, and I can say the same for *Izvestia* and *Trud*.'

Natasha was not only off duty, but off her guard. She *trusted* these new friends from the distant land of the maple leaf.

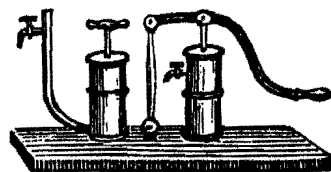
DURING their appearance before the Subcommittee of the Standing Committee on External Affairs, Messrs. Tarasoff and Leach kept harping that 'we have different conceptions of what the facts are'; they insisted that the question of the

treatment given to Sakharov, the question of the anti-Semitic propaganda campaigns in the Soviet Union, the question of the war in Afghanistan, &c., are not questions for our own, Canadian, moral or political judgement, but rather 'a matter of one society not understanding the functions and systems in another society.'

As long as we do not understand the functions and the system of Communist Czechoslovakia, for instance, our concept of the fact that Natasha had an unofficial chat with Canadian students in which she told them what brand of underwear the Emperor was wearing, will make us condemn the way she was treated. However, as soon as we learn to understand those functions and that system, we shall arrive at a new concept of the same fact, and will want to see the girl punished. It is all a matter of understanding functions and systems. Sending people to gas chambers would be wrong in Canada, but it was quite all right in Nazi Germany. And that is certainly true: no S.S. man was ever punished, in Nazi Germany, for killing the Jews.

If Mr. Tarasoff's estimate for Mr. Trudeau's Institute for International Peace and Security is correct, our re-education should only cost seven million down, and three million a year.

JOSEF SKVORECKY



FENG-SHUI: Chinese dictionaries give no definition of what is to be understood by *Feng-Shui*. No native treatises expound it upon scientific lines. *Feng* is 'wind', *shui* is 'water'. Wind is what cannot be seen, and water what cannot be grasped. 'Wind and water' is the term, therefore, for the occult powers which are always bearing down on human life... Much of the violence of the people in Canton, Tientsin, and Peking against foreigners and Christianity is due to the erection by Roman Catholics of lofty cathedral buildings, which upset the *Feng-Shui* of the whole district. The objection to railways, with their cuttings, tunnels, embankments, and signal-posts, is of the same nature. The first railway in China, from Shanghai to the port of Wu-sung, nine miles away, was purchased and destroyed by the Chinese, on the plea that the speed of the train destroyed the *Feng-Shui* of tens of thousands of people on both sides of the line. — Edwin Joshua Dukes in *Hastings' Encyclopaedia of Religion & Ethics* (1912).