

## Tamas Dobozy / SAD PRESENTIMENTS OF WHAT MUST COME TO PASS

We had, for a period far exceeding our original schedule, been studying war. It's not that we were scared of the subject, but that it was so difficult to zero in on that by the fifth year we were holding longer and longer recesses between sessions, scared of what we might do to one another if we were again locked up in the debating chambers.

It was during this time that I met Heinrich Ganz, a scholar so totally composed of rumour he seemed to have spent his entire life living in advance of himself — entering rooms to find he'd already been there; rushing along to catch up to his own story; nodding when he was first introduced as if he knew, *just knew*, that this would be the moment when he seemed most familiar, and that after this he would grow weirder and weirder, until the day you turned and found yourself confronting a stranger.

Apparently, he had been born to German parents in Sarajevo, where he was raised and educated, and where, in the early- to mid-1990s, he had endured starvation, siege, and the death of everything he held dear as the snipers, politicians, and rockets transformed his city into a cemetery; and afterwards, unable to bear the memories, he had emigrated to America and resumed work as a professor specializing in the history of Nazi Germany (which was also my area). What I knew for sure was this: Ganz was tall and thin and wore wire-frame spectacles and spoke softly, and in the preceding years had taken a seat on as many subcommittees as would have him, where he gained the reputation of being “intelligent to the point of paralysis” — a statement that could as easily have applied to the committee as a whole, given that our reluctance to move ahead was in direct proportion to the quality of minds working on the problem.

Of course, I was to learn, by the time the committee dissolved (due to the efforts of people such as myself), that the reason I hadn't heard of Ganz prior to Ottawa — hadn't run into him at conferences

or seen his name in print — was not because he was exclusive to the classrooms of the elite college he'd invented, but because he was a fraud.

In that last quarter of the fourth year, Ganz and I were called in to the office of the Committee Chair, who at that time was professor Nils VanderHagen, and entrusted with delivering something of use — *anything at all* (by that point nobody could afford to be picky) — on the Nazis, with Ganz to tackle the question from the angle of the party and its members, and me to look at it from “the ground up” — which is to say from the point of view of the *victims*. VanderHagen said we should not be trying to reproduce some binary mode of investigation — the powerful versus the powerless, the oppressor versus the oppressed — but rather to proceed “dialectically,” to meet and reconcile our findings — to attempt, in his words, “a synthesis.”

Naturally, I could not have known then, looking at VanderHagen, either about the influence he would exert over the committee, or about his relationship with Ganz, though in hindsight the history is easy enough: VanderHagen was to prove the longest-lasting of committee chairs, but only in *the sum* of his various terms, since — what with the infighting, backstabbing, and secret alliances — the politics of the committee had become positively *Italian*, with chairs lasting no longer than a week, or, at best, two months, before being forced to resign (often to be re-appointed at the very next vote). VanderHagen, of course, was more successful than most because he never took anything personally, and was always prepared to court whatever faction was fashionable at the time, and accept all criticism with a nod and a smile so that everyone left his office with the warm glow of having *taught him* something — which was exactly what he counted on to get him votes the next time around, knowing as he did that most scholars prefer a sympathetic simpleton to a pig-headed visionary; and thus, flattering everyone's vanity, he served a record fourteen terms, even managing — despite enormous public outcry — to chair the “Conclusions Board” set up in the seventh year to dismantle the committee and churn out a number of “media packages,” whose vague language transformed our work from what it

had *really* been — six years of futility at taxpayers' expense — into what it had *never* been — “a body of knowledge that will influence foreign policy for many years to come.”

Looking back, VanderHagen's tactics seem transparent; but during the period I am speaking of I saw in him only an ineffectual man dissolving around the middle in a soft, middle-age spread, whose intrigues were only hinted at by the *stilted* quality of his dialogue with Ganz — as if the two men had written their lines in advance (and not, as most scripts of that kind are meant to do, in order to *persuade* anyone, but rather to increase our uncertainty and indecision).

Ganz objected to VanderHagen's assignment; he started by saying we were not the right people to undertake this study, given our personalities (I wasn't sure where he'd gotten his information on me, but I objected to this); then said there should be some third party put in charge of synthesizing our findings (not to confuse the issue, he assured me, but to enable greater objectivity); then rejected dialectics entirely, calling it an “outmoded form” that worked “adequately for the nineteenth century,” but was too implicated in those aspects of the past — antithesis, opposition — to do anything but reproduce the kind of “conflict mentality” we were supposed to be seeking alternatives to. VanderHagen smiled, saying these were exactly the observations and objections he'd expected from scholars of our calibre, and that we should proceed along our assignment keeping these very things in mind.

And so Ganz immersed himself in studying the life of the Nazi party, spending the better part of those early months studying the regalia, ideology, personalities, and rites of the Nazis, while I, by contrast, followed up on the consequences of Hitler's rule, so that in that time I did nothing but peruse long lists and images and reports from the various fronts of World War II, the death camps, and final days in the bunker (including the suicide and immolation that was the regime's final exacting logic).

At the end of this “preliminary research phase,” Ganz and I began getting together to attempt the synthesis VanderHagen had

requested. I remember how it would go every morning: we would enter the hotel lobby at roughly the same time, both of us armed with folders full of papers, nodding a greeting over the complimentary breakfast service, selecting rolls and jams, grabbing napkins and cutlery, and then moving into the lobby and sitting down to begin our deliberations. We were only a week into it — both of us surrounded by stacks of books and files, sipping on coffees and staring hopelessly at the overwhelming mass of evidence — when Ganz got up, came over to the couch I was sitting on, sat beside me, and laid a hand as light as flyleaf on my forearm, asking: “Who is more correct: the one who studies evil from the perspective of the perpetrator, or the one who studies it from that of the survivor?” — so that by dusk we were bogged down in the problem that would prevent us — as it had every other sub-committee — from completing our mission.

Whenever I tried to get off the subject of this “correctness” (hoping that maybe we could just forget about it, pretend it didn’t exist, and thereby get the job done), Ganz would come around to the same point: “If you study this history from the point of view of Hitler and his thugs aren’t you in some way justifying the centrality of the Nazis? Remember, *they thought of themselves as central to history* — so we’d just be proving them right. At the same time, if you study it from the point of view of the people whom the Nazis murdered aren’t you in some way reducing those people to ‘victims?’, to objects defined exclusively in light of the effects of Nazism? I know you don’t agree with me, Henry, but I think it important that the committee understand the full implications of what you and I are doing,” he tapped on his temple with an index finger, “which, of course, is going to take some time.”

Shortly after this we began our daily walks along the Ottawa Canal, our white breath ascending the winter air — with me trying to figure out a way to overcome Ganz’s objections and complete our task, and him looking for a way to prolong our stalemate, not because he wanted to antagonize me (as I had thought then), *but to ensure a lasting peace* (a tactic that would only come clear to me much later) — two men standing there day after day, lost in thought above a frozen river, watching what clouds had come to pass.

Everyone had assumed it would be different. Back in 1997, when most of us received the letter from the Liberal government inviting us to participate in the committee (at full salary plus “distance and stress augmentation rates”), most of us were thrilled: eager to be airlifted out of the drudgery of teaching and marking, and to be given an entire floor in the recently built “Adjunct Information Centre” beside the Houses of Parliament, along with access to any and all data we required. It was a chance to do what we had dreamed of doing since graduate school. So we came winging into Ottawa with our robes and diplomas flapping, eager to arrive at answers and see our names attached to the most important (and well-funded) scholarly congress in the history of the country.

But within a few days we were already in trouble. I can’t remember which battle they were debating, but it had taken place somewhere in the Mediterranean prior to the advent of Hellenic culture. They had the evidence they needed: various stone tablets that described the conflict, and the reasons it had taken place, as well as lists of purported casualties; and had even flown in a world authority on the military history of antiquity to answer questions about troop sizes, weaponry, and movement in relation to terrain.

We watched in expectation as they brought their findings into the debating chambers, watched as staff carried in box after box of files, books, articles, and physical evidence, stacking them against the wall behind the semi-circular table where the sub-committee on “antique warfare” would hopefully inaugurate the first in a series of substantial policy recommendations.

And, with that, we were plunged into the fiasco — watching as the members of the sub-committee began interrupting and contradicting one another, saying that if they had agreed upon the present report, then why the hell was Colleague X saying that he had “issues” with the conclusion, and Colleague Y bringing in information they’d already agreed was irrelevant? The bickering went on for two hours before we began to shift in our seats, and the sub-committee, noticing our discomfort, stopped, looked at one another, and agreed to investigate the matter further and deliver conclusions very soon (we never heard from them again). Ganz, as far as I knew, was still on that committee at the time of our

collaboration on the Nazis, though he never spoke of it — never indicated that they might be arriving at, or *close to arriving at*, some kind of agreement.

And it was the same with every sub-committee since.

Over the course of the committee's six year term, it became usual to see scholars come and go, the old guard disappearing or dropping off, new members joining, growing disillusioned, also leaving. At the same time, some members celebrated their cynicism, not only abandoning all work for the committee but even all *pretense* of working, to sit around all day in the archives pursuing personal interests, or simply living it up on the wage-augmentation program, sampling the finest of Ottawa's many restaurants, bars, and hotels. There were some who'd even go so far as to say they hoped we "never resolved" the issue, because this lifestyle was "as good as it [got]," and they hoped to "milk it" for as long as the government "had their heads up their asses."

I don't know who among us suggested that we avoid getting bogged down with resolving one historical period and just move on in the hopes that resolving a later one might help us go back and finish up those we couldn't deal with the first time around, but it was a bad idea, since this only led to further irresolution, which only further snowballed into a crushing fatalism. We might, in the end, have been better off sticking to one era until we'd reached a consensus, and only *then* moving on. At the time I am speaking of, the press had just begun to murmur about "committee deadlock" and what would happen to the project if the Liberals lost the next election — so that most of us were experiencing a creeping anxiety that had yet to blossom into the full-on panic and flight of the last two years, but which, nevertheless, was strong enough to send us out for frequent brandies at the "Boiler Room" — a brassy fern bar down the street from the Adjunct Information Center — or Prime Rib at McMurtry's.

Ganz and I would walk for hours along the canal, staring across at Hull, Quebec, and commenting on the Museum of Man, and on the drunken, violent orgies that took place there every weekend, when

drinkers would leave the bars in Ottawa, which closed early, and head across the bridges, where the bars closed late, and where the booze flowed like water from burst hydrants.

“Many are thinking of quitting,” said Ganz one day, reaching across and touching my elbow as we stood by the wrought iron fence beside the Parliament, staring at a bunch of tiny houses built to shelter the city’s stray cat population. “Many are thinking of resigning before this whole thing explodes.”

I noticed that he seemed angry, and on the walk would continually drift away from me whenever I paused beside a store window, or lifted my trenchcoat to protect my face from the wind while I lit a cigarette. I’d look back to where Ganz had been standing and he would be already far ahead, moving in whatever direction the streets permitted. I’d yell to him but it was as if he didn’t hear, and just kept marching along, not altering his pace a bit, so that I’d have to run after him, often abandoning my cigarette, which meant that in lighting a new one we’d repeat the same pantomime all over again.

“What would they have us do,” he said, “fix on some definite program?”

“Well, we’re not getting anywhere *this way*,” I said, catching my breath, thankful that the glowing hand had stopped him from crossing the street, and that we were finally addressing what I thought was our problem — his and mine — as well as the committee’s.

“I had been hoping for better than this,” he said. “Weren’t you?”

“If we could just stop all this second-guessing,” I replied.

Ganz looked at me oddly then, not with anger, exactly, but with the expression of someone who has just realized that the person he’d been confiding in these last several months has not at all picked up on what he’d been saying; as if during that time he had expected his secrets to have become known to me, not explicitly, but through the nuances of tone and gesture, and hearing what I’d just said had brought him face to face with their incommunicability, his shoulders slumping as he again took on — alone — the full weight of this hidden knowledge.

That night, having gotten off the phone with my wife, and having poured myself a Scotch from the complimentary bar, and having walked out in my bathrobe onto the balcony of my suite to watch the falling snow drift over the canal, I reflected on the things that were preventing the committee from achieving its mandate, and decided that even working alone I would have been farther ahead of where we were now (nowhere). I sipped my whisky, then quickly gulped some. Like most of the other scholars, I'd had high hopes, and had come eagerly, sensing for the first time in my career that maybe here was a chance to do something other than "expand my field," or "add to the existing stock of knowledge on twentieth-century warfare": here was an opportunity to have an *actual effect*. And while I had been disappointed in my hopes for the committee, I discovered that night that I had yet to be disappointed in my hopes to contribute something to the cause of peace.

During the phone call, my wife had stayed quiet on the other end, not wanting to influence my decision, though this silence betrayed an expectation, her slow breathing like that of someone so close to what they've been hoping for — to what they're *desperate* to see happen — that she has to fight off sucking in a ton of air and screaming with all the force of her lungs — "Yes! Finally! Stop wasting time and get your ass home!" — for fear that her outburst will scare off the very thing she's wanting. Instead, my wife had said, "It's a good thing to think about, given how you've been describing the committee lately."

My call to her had been only partly influenced by the walk with Ganz earlier that day, for what had really intensified my disgust, and prompted the call, was instead the letter I found in my mailbox upon returning — signed by VanderHagen *and* Ganz — asking me to volunteer for "The Sub-Committee on Sub-Committees, mandated to regulate and police and prevent the fracturing of current sub-committees into yet further sub-committees . . . a disciplinary body of autonomous configuration which will work in freedom from established procedures pertaining to the rest of the committee in order to restore a sense of adherence and loyalty to the committee process as a whole."

What was Ganz doing, co-authoring this document? It seemed so totally at odds with his outburst earlier that evening — his despair at keeping the committee together (or that, at least, was what I *thought* he'd been saying). He must have known — unless he was naive beyond belief — that this letter would only further alienate people such as myself, already fed up with the bureaucracy stifling the committee, and give more fuel to those who were so bored by the easy life we lived that no opportunity for posturing, for creating trouble where none existed, went unexploited. It was as if the scholarly life was of so little significance — with its forgiving schedules, paid “research terms,” funded travel, and university club buffets — that even *pretending* it was important (even while you, and everyone else, knew you were pretending) was preferable to facing the truth. The letter was exactly the opportunity they were waiting for — a chance to show the world how indignant they could be — all to the effect of frustrating the committee even further.

And so I stood on the balcony and weighed my rage against the fear that resigning from the committee might harm my career, a conflict that lasted the half hour it took me — my wife's breath echoing in my ears — to realize that for four years I had been at war with my hope — which is to say at war with myself — and that, along the way, and unnoticed until now, this war had produced casualties: namely, my family — a woman and three boys who had seen their husband and father a total of three months in all that time, and whose sacrifice had been wasted on a project doomed from the start.

The next morning, I met Ganz in the lobby of the hotel, and there had never been a morning where the contrast between us was greater: me with my haggard, sleepless face, in rumpled clothes, the edges of papers sticking out of the cracks of my suitcase; Ganz with his sharply pressed pants, spotless white collar, sipping his coffee and looking through a folder that seemed much thinner than yesterday, as if he'd spent the night sifting through his research and paring it to the essentials (I counted maybe three pages, total, stapled to the top of the folder). “Looking a bit beleaguered there, Henry,” he said, smiling far too cheerfully.

"You're not," I replied, heading over to the tea caddy and tossing some breakfast on a plate and coming back to sit across from him, noting his quizzical glance at my briefcase. "I was thinking about our walk yesterday," I said. He looked at me as if yesterday had never happened. "C'mon," I said, "all that stuff you said in front of the cat houses?" I picked up my slice of buttered raisin toast and looked across the lobby, where people bustled between the staircase, the front doors, and the concierge desk. "I'm quitting." His eyes opened, and he closed the folder. "I'm going home."

"But why?"

I opened my mouth in preparation to speak, and then stopped and looked at him. He was staring at me with such sadness I couldn't believe it was the same Ganz who'd greeted me a few seconds ago. And he must have seen something on my own face, a look of surprise or wariness, because in a second his own features relaxed and he leaned back in his chair, putting one leg over the other, and then shrugged, as if he had no idea what my problem could be and couldn't care less. In response, I opened my briefcase and brought out the letter on the "Sub-Committee on Sub-Committees" and threw it down in front of him. "Did you help write this?" He nodded slowly and carefully. "Why? I mean really," I looked at the raisin toast in my hand and threw it on my plate. "You know the effect it's going to have? All that stuff you said yesterday. . . ?"

And then something entirely new came over Ganz, I don't know what, but a kind of helplessness that suggested not so much defeat as siege, the gaze of someone who has endured winters of sleeplessness and starvation, someone who no longer flinches as the shells burst against the upper floors of the building he's huddled in. "Can I trust you?" he asked, then leaned in and continued without my assent, "I've been working with VanderHagen since his third term. We were behind the 'Nominalization Project.'"

I sank back into the lobby chair, and made a weak grab at my raisin toast, my hand not rising more than four inches off my knee before falling back. The "Nominalization Project" had rocked the committee during its second year, though luckily the scandal had been confined to the Adjunct Information Center, and had only become apparent to about half the committee, many of whom joined



be fighting for. He had diagnosed the problem, and it was this: conviction, the blind, armored, undeterred trajectory of the certain, the single-minded, the *right*. And though he had put the answer in front of us again and again we had not seen it, going off blind, declaring war on him, on the committee, on each other, and, finally, on ourselves — thinking that we needed to overcome our indecisiveness, when we should have been thinking *delay, delay, delay*. It was a cynic's utopia, and one, I am sure, Ganz had arrived at through watching his city and people fall prey to a program and its execution.

I looked at VanderHagen once more before turning to go, his face still betraying that terrible lack, so I could only stare for a moment before turning away, knowing that I could not face Ganz's peace, which meant that the failure that day in the hotel room had not only been mine but his as well, since it proved that taking stands and demanding answers and setting goals were inevitable, which meant that war was too.

And I have been wondering, ever since, what I would do if I saw Ganz again — say hurrying down some street, or in the back row at a conference panel, or even on the doorstep of my own home — and while I would like to think that I would chase after him, or shake his hand, or even put my arms around him for as long as he let me, I know, finally, that I am not sure what I would do, greet him or turn away. And that even this shame — of having the conviction but not the character to endure what is necessary — might not be enough to stop me from rejecting him. For in rejecting Ganz's state of mind I was also rejecting *him*, as we are all, finally, obstructed from embracing another without the interference of claims and imperatives — in a way no less final, no less cowardly, no less despairing than the rejection of VanderHagen by his wife and children.

As I drove away I reflected on how appropriately narrow the road was — how unlike the openness I had proved incapable of — as if there should have been a route other than the one that had brought me here, that led back to where I came from — something other than this broken asphalt and charcoal sky — along my inevitable return to the wars.

belonging to Ganz. The title was "The Virtues of Paralysis," and VanderHagen nodded as I started to read.

It took me ten minutes to get through the whole thing, mainly because I'd already figured out the thesis, and when I was done I carefully folded it up, as if it were the most sacred of letters, and handed it back to VanderHagen.

"It was his idea," he said. "Confusion, disorder, endless uncertainty; and thus debate; and thus factionalism as a way of keeping us from banding together to exercise our power. I don't know how many times he said it: 'War begins with decisions. War begins with taking a stand.'" VanderHagen shifted in his seat and brought the buttons of his bulging shirt in line with his belt buckle. "I don't think I ever fully understood what he was talking about," he said. "But I do know he had seen it in the place he escaped from: how men can stop at an idea, and how, when they do, ideas become acts of war. Blame, for instance, is one such idea." He glanced down the slope, "Maybe it would have been better for both of us if we'd been honest." And, having said that, VanderHagen looked up from the sea — with that same look I had seen on Ganz that day in the hotel lobby — the eyes finding only a sky deprived of blue, gone black, as if someone had scratched it out with a nail. And I realized that in returning to my family I had helped VanderHagen lose his, not because I had hated him but because he and Ganz — by which I mean people — had stood in the way of the abstractions I prized more highly than them: reputation, progress, a scholarly ideal, and the goals laid out by a "mission statement."

I stood almost involuntarily, and while I would like to think it was with the force of discovery, I know that it was rather with the force of shame, of coming all this way to interrogate VanderHagen, of having only realized then — in that garden facing the sea — that my knowledge had not been adequate to Ganz, that I had been looking for terminal solutions when I should have been looking for ways to obstruct them. He had wanted us to discover his plots — all of them, including the Nominalization Project — had wanted us to come undone, stumbling in confusion, unable to go on — as if this was the only way of achieving any sort of lasting peace: creating a situation in which conflict was impossible because nobody knew what they should

family, he took refuge in a large frame house near Sidney, Cape Breton Island, where I caught up with him.

VanderHagen was fatter than I remembered, almost bloated, as if his body were waterlogged, or as if all those insults and criticisms he'd swallowed while committee chair had finally stuffed him to the point of bursting, clogging up all his arteries and guts, so that with any movement I expected to hear a terrible ripping of skin. I had phoned him from Sidney, and he was sitting on the front steps, under a trellis of hanging wisteria, and sipping a beer in the afternoon sunshine when I pulled up.

"Hello, Henry," he said, getting up.

I shook his hand, surprised by the warmth of his grip, and then sat on one of the wooden lawn chairs while he went inside to get me a beer.

For a long time we talked about the island, and the house he'd bought and "fixed up" by himself during the last couple of years, and then about dwindling fish stocks, and about the re-election of the Liberals (not so amazing, really, since the Canadian right-wing — being perpetually divided by pig-headedness and poor leadership — still posed no threat to them), so that it was evening before I felt brave enough to ask the questions I'd come to ask.

Upon hearing the first of these (the only one that mattered), VanderHagen looked away, down the slope on which sat his house, my own gaze so intent on his that I could see the ocean reflected in his eyes, and then simply replied: "Yes, it's true," and said nothing more — did not add to or qualify or excuse the answer or the history it suggested. I found myself sitting in the chair under the wisteria and feeling the odd sensation of my questions washing away, like a wave crept up too far on the sand.

"The Nominalization Project," I whispered.

VanderHagen narrowed his gaze on the Atlantic as if he, too, finally understood that my question was more than the voyeurism of someone who has read an inflammatory article. He rose from his chair, indicated I should wait, and went into the house, returning with a pamphlet that he handed to me, a tattered bit of yellow paper folded six times, which contained an essay in a style I recognized as

The thing that finally made me look up VanderHagen was a belated article published in the back pages of a magazine — I can't remember which — suggesting that he and Ganz had been lovers, offering as proof several grainy photographs of the two men holding hands outside unrecognizable restaurants, and along the canal (I am fairly certain that the man identified as VanderHagen in one of those pictures was actually me), along with a number of ambiguous notes in what may or may not have been their handwriting. I stared at this article, remembering Ganz's embrace, then threw it against the wall in fury.

What made me angry was not that Ganz may have hit on me — I couldn't have cared less — but the fact that this is what our efforts on behalf of the committee had come down to, this final word: a homophobic article in a newspaper that linked our failure to some reactionary notion of "sexual perversion." I couldn't think of a conclusion more at odds with what we'd been trying to do: to create a space free of such exclusionary modes of thought, a way of proceeding that led not to blame and hostility but to acceptance. And I wanted, then, to find Ganz and VanderHagen, and not so they would refute what I'd read, but rather confirm it. For although I did not realize it at the time, I think I must have had an intuition of what Ganz had been trying to tell me during my final months on the committee, though I believed I needed to know they'd been lovers simply because it would have somehow mitigated what they'd done, made it look less like an act of sabotage than the attempt of lovers to create a scene of disorder in which they could hide out, under the radar.

While my attempts to find Ganz were failures (he'd disappeared the minute the media onslaught began, leaving not one contact or phone number that anyone could remember — or *wanted to* remember, since association with Ganz was professional suicide), tracking down VanderHagen was easy. He had retired shortly after the findings of the Conclusions Board, and, following that, had been divorced by his wife, who took sole custody of their four kids (my guess was that she'd either read the aforementioned newspaper article, or that VanderHagen, knowing his secret was finally out, had had no choice but to come clean with her). And so, disowned by his

Naturally, all of this — in between my regular rounds of teaching, researching, publishing, and traveling — took some years, so that by the time I'd finished the lengthy article I was writing — exposing his empty background, and tying his influence to VanderHagen and the corruption of the committee in general — it was too late, because the press had already done my work for me. And in the spring of that year I found myself with an essay that was six months too late, obsolete beside the editorials and articles that may not have gotten to the information on Ganz before I did, or may not have presented it as eloquently as I, but had published it first, which was all that really mattered. And I spent the next year on the sidelines, watching as the committee, along with select Liberals, got shredded in the newspapers. VanderHagen had it the worst, of course, as his intrigues were exposed and the media descended on him, digging up every extant memo or email or letter he'd written and publishing them with lengthy "interpretations" by noted scholars who regarded him as "a virus in the system" whose sole purpose had been to mess up the channels of communication, confuse the issues, and more or less cripple the committee. I couldn't help but feel justified in having had the foresight to abandon the committee before it had gone under, and made sure that everyone on faculty knew it, noting with relief that many of the younger colleagues were now openly seeking my advice on a number of "administrative" and "professional" issues.

Some years went by before I saw anyone from the committee again, since many of them disappeared after those terrible last months, some into early retirement, while others hid away, cocooned in the bare minimum of faculty duties, coming into work to teach their classes, attend one or two mandatory meetings, and vanish before anyone had a chance to ask questions. Eventually, of course, the media attention petered out, and the Liberal government set up the "Conclusions Board," and VanderHagen — in an act of public contrition — produced his negligible revisions, which nobody paid attention to, and then the whole thing vanished, in an instant, as the media shifted to other scandals.

testing ground for fascist notions of organization and commitment, as well as for the purposes of personal advancement). I began with an article, commissioned by the journal *Practice* (a forum for A.A.P. members), a quasi-editorial in which I related my “personal experiences” on the committee; and, then, when that proved popular (with letters coming in from places far beyond the usual circle of A.A.P. converts), a series of articles in which I continually stressed bureaucracy as the “eventual downfall of the organization.”

And it was one of these responses that got me looking into Ganz’s past. It was nothing serious, just a few short lines from a scholar in Indiana, in a letter otherwise filled with vacant praise for the work I was doing. “You are dead on in regards to Heinrich Ganz,” it said, “who worked here, briefly, as a sessional, before moving on to God knows where. He was continually tying us up with requests for greater administrative ‘openness’ and ‘faculty democracy.’ I’m not sure where he went afterwards, and, to be honest, wasn’t quite interested, since we were all so happy to see him leave.” What surprised me was not the sentiment of the lines, which echoed my own, but rather the fact that Ganz had worked at this dinky institution, The University-College of Middlevale, and worked there as a *sessional*, since all the rumours had never presented Ganz as anything but a scholar at the top of his profession — from the moment he finished his prize-winning dissertation, to his short tenure at a Yugoslav university prior to the outbreak of war, to the moment, post-emigration, when his services as full-time professor had been the object of a “bidding war” between several small but elite American colleges.

For the next several months Ganz became my obsession. And I began scouring various faculty directories, conference attendance sheets, scholarly databases — to immediately discover that nothing in his rumoured background — neither the college where Ganz was supposed to teach, nor the awards he’d purportedly won, nor the professional associations he was said to share — actually existed. Not one of them. And when I tried looking into his Yugoslav background my search was even more fruitless, as it was impossible to access the places where he was said to have studied and taught and published.

number of retirements, and the recruitment of several junior colleagues who treated me as you would a bit of fragile, fossilized brain. I was also dealing with shame. These new faculty members, as well as the old ones with whom I'd lost touch, looked at me as if I were a refugee, someone who had managed to survive an ordeal only by running away from it, or by being chased away. And I know that many people ran to their telephones and email, communicating with those scholars still left on the committee, wondering why I had abandoned such a lucrative position; and that they must have received replies that were as uncertain and disbelieving as their initial queries, since I could tell by the way they sidled by me in the halls, by the deference of their hellos and goodbyes, that they weren't sure whether I had returned out of failure or because I knew something about the committee — about its practices, its failure to have yet produced a single meaningful report — that they did not. And maybe it was their attitude — a mixture of caution and sarcasm that made me feel lonely, unaccepted, and desperate to counter any suggestion that I was a reject — which forced me to get in touch with the “Alliance for an Alternative Peace” — not, I am ashamed to say, because I really wanted to bring down the committee (I would have happily forgotten about it), but because I wanted it to look as if I'd quit not out of fatigue but ethical integrity.

The A.A.P. had sprung up in 1996, shortly after the inauguration of the committee, and was composed, at least initially, of those scholars who had not been selected to take part in the work. Those who had applied but whose CVs had been found wanting. Almost immediately they got together and began publishing critiques of the procedures by which the committee agreed to govern and police itself (some of which, upon rereading, I found amazingly prescient). Their numbers — and general credibility — had been bolstered by recent big-name defections from the committee, whose coming on board lent weight to their accusations.

I made my reasons for joining very obvious from the start: I was still committed to the abolition of war, deplored the waste of time and money and effort represented by the committee (and especially scholars like Ganz — who had been on my mind constantly since that last day — who were obviously exploiting the committee as a

I was so shaken by that episode I found myself checking every corridor, scanning the insides of elevators, looking over my shoulder on the street — so worried that Ganz was following me — ready to step out from around a corner or doorway and trap me in another embrace — that I almost missed my train. It was only at the station that I realized I was not really running from Ganz, but from what I might do to him if he caught up to me. In other words, I was running from myself, and it was only with some effort that I managed to get to the bathroom and wash my face before it betrayed any more of what I felt.

During the ride home to Toronto — past miles of flat farmland, and Lake Ontario, and the hundreds of beech and maple trees still showing the splintering harm of the ice storm of a few years ago — I pored over my scuffed knuckles, reflecting on the fact that Ganz had twice gone out of his way to make me quit, and yet, that morning, it had seemed that he'd only wanted me to stay. On the letter to VanderHagen I had listed my reasons for resigning as "personal," but that was not really true, since my fears were all professional in nature: on one hand I worried about what staying with the committee, and being associated with its almost certain failure, would do for my reputation; and, on the other, about what quitting would say about my character. I was frightened to stay, frightened to leave.

And even after I'd returned home and thrown my arms around my wife, and hugged each of my three sons in turn, I was still — there is no right word — *haunted*, by both Ganz and myself, and that scene in the hotel room. I realize I must have been in shock, still feeling violated by the turbulence of that emotion, and that this feeling probably led to what happened next: my investigations into Ganz's life, and the start of my attacks on the committee, in the company of those other scholars and politicians and reporters who also saw it for the waste of time and money it was.

Half a year went by, however, before any of that happened. During this time I was occupied with reintegrating myself with a faculty I had been absent from for four years — during which a whole term of headship had come and gone, along with a departmental review, a

been settled if we'd just use different sounds, as if the problem was the ugliness of English pronunciation. "Listen," he said, stepping close to me (I forced myself to stand my ground), "listen to this." And he bent in close to my face and stopped, still at a loss, and then, in a moment too quick to push him away, he put his arms around me and pressed the side of his head to my chest, so that the two of us were frozen in imitation of mother and child, an image marred only by the fact that my arms were hanging limply at my sides, as if I was less shocked by his sudden action (though I was) than caught between emotions, neither prepared to embrace nor deny him (which was exactly where Ganz wanted me: at the edge of something that was both restraint and violence — a moment of contradiction). We stayed like that until the emotional conflict — and the stasis it implied — terrified me into pushing him away. "Get out of here!" I said, fighting my panic.

"I apologize," he said. "It's important that you stay." His words were odd, as if he no longer believed what he was saying, or as if my pushing him had jarred something in his brain, a small door that opened on a view of the future he had no choice but to face, a future that was, despite all his best efforts, as indelibly part of him as the past.

And then, as he took a step towards me, I stepped into him as well, and hit him with my fist, as hard as I could, in the face. The impact rocked him back on his heels, and he collapsed to the floor, right onto his back, lying there with his eyes open and staring at the ceiling, his nose flattened at an odd angle against his left cheek. The force of my swing had carried me forward, so that I was slightly bent over his body. Though instead of pulling myself up I stayed crooked and slowly brought up my hand, still closed in a fist, and saw that everything I had done for the committee, all the lip service I had paid peace, was a sham, and turning back towards Ganz saw that he was already squatting, trying hard to get to his feet, the blood running from his nose settling in the line set by his lips.

He looked at me, stricken, and backed out the door, his face contorted as though he were less interested in revealing *his* emotions than on forecasting how *I* would look — years later — having arrived to the knowledge Ganz spent all that time trying to deny.

“By stripping ninety percent of the committee of their rights?” I yelled. “By creating some kind of shadow government? By bogging us down in months and months of wasteful clean up?” I stood over him.

He put his hands out to either side and looked up at me in a pose I had not seen before (and have seen only one more time since), the effort of a man who has not achieved the martyrdom he’s been aiming at, who knows that his defeat will not bring to light the sacrifice he’s made, nor advance the cause he’s fighting for, but who needs to make the effort anyway — since anything else will only bury his cause under another layer. “You’re right,” he said, without conviction, and when I stepped away, my briefcase banging against my thighs like an iron apron, and turned back, I saw that he was holding that pose, staring at where I’d stood as if I were still there, above him — as if there were still time to say what he should have said before our talk turned into a disagreement.

I went from the hotel to my office and typed up my resignation, and from there walked down the long steps to the Office of the Secretariat, where I selected an envelope from the wall shelf, slid the resignation in, and addressed it to Nils VanderHagen.

I bought a train ticket next, and spent the evening in a restaurant off the committee circuit, then browsed for a while in book and music stores, and afterwards went back to my room to pack.

It was seven o’clock, two hours short of my departure, when Ganz showed up at the door; and though I had been expecting him I found I still wasn’t prepared, so that when he entered I stood in the middle of the floor with no idea what to do: throw him out or thank him for having made my decision so easy.

He looked terrible: his tie limp and loose around his neck like a wrung-out snake; his jacket rumpled, with the wrong buttons in the wrong holes; his shoes covered in mud and grass; and a bottle of cognac sticking out of the pocket of his overcoat, which was covered in leaves and twigs as if he’d just risen from a forest floor. “I heard.” These were his first words. I nodded. “You misunderstood me,” he said, gesturing behind himself. “We were not talking the way we should have been,” he said. Then he gave his head a shake, as if to confirm that language was our problem, as if everything could have

together in a three-day clean-up operation — involving the deletion of several hundreds of emails, the shredding of numerous documents, the complete reformatting of certain hard drives — in order to prevent the disheartening news from reaching the rest (and, most importantly, the public). We never really determined who had set the Nominalization Project in motion, but the idea (gathered from several fragments of anonymous emails and letters) had been to assemble an “inner elite,” a small group of hardworking and tightly-knit scholars who would determine the course the committee would take, and keep their activities hidden from the remaining members, who would be farmed out on bogus research activities or special sessions (“Nominal Sub-Committees”) where they could bicker their hearts out without impeding the actual work being carried out under their noses, all with the intention of speeding up the committee’s work so that we could achieve our mandate that much faster. Luckily, someone (and this agent was still unknown) had leaked the news, allowing us to stop the plan before it was implemented.

“You did that?” I said. Ganz nodded, lifting his eyebrows at me as if he expected sympathy. “But why?” I asked. “You know how much time was wasted on us restoring the protocols?” He bit his lip and peered down into his coffee cup, as if he’d just made a huge mistake and was catching hell for it. “Who else was involved?” I shouted. Ganz shrugged. “You know how long it took us to clean up that mess?”

I stared hard at Ganz, noticing that his arrogance was all caved in, as if in confessing to me with such pride he had expected me to be proud as well, perhaps even to have congratulated him, as if his designs were so obvious to scholars of our intelligence that he shouldn’t have had to spell them out. But, instead (and this is only apparent in hindsight), he was disappointed, having realized his mistake in thinking I could make this leap of faith, and that it was too late now to explain the real purpose of his manoeuvres without making any such explanation look woefully ad hoc. So he stumbled over his words: “You were supposed to discover it . . . to create a peace!”