

democratic heritage, regimes which we never imagined could democratize, doing so but the transition, quite contrary to our previous experience, is overwhelmingly a non-violent one. And as a consequence of all that, the old Cold War has gone away, and with it the alliance politics and the fears of nuclear war that filled most of my life as a journalist (and perhaps a good deal of yours as an observer) for the past 40 years.

But is it really a changed world? Are we talking about a shift in behaviour so big that we now have to change the way we think about the world, or just a flash in the pan? A God-almighty big flash in the pan, but a flash in the pan nevertheless? We are now 12 years into this new era where democracy and rationality seem to be winning in most parts of the world (despite the Rwandas and Bosnias that fill the TV screens), but there are no guarantees. I *think* that I have reasons to be cheerful, but I have to admit that the long past extending from 1986 back until the year 1 dot doesn't lend us a great deal of encouragement.

I'll tell you a story. Some years ago, I was filming in Turkey, in Gallipoli. Most Newfoundlanders probably aren't aware of this but before our soldiers were sent to France in the First World War, they were sent to Gallipoli to help take Istanbul from the Turks. So we were filming in the Gallipoli Peninsula, along the old front line where the Royal Newfoundland Regiment had fought, and in the war cemetery and so on, for a television series.

We had a local Turkish driver, who was fairly used to Australians and New Zealanders coming there (you know, the ANZAC [Australian and New Zealand Army Corps] legend) — but he found it odd to see Canadians. So he asked us (I used to live in Turkey, so I speak the language), "Please explain what you're doing." And in between other things I explained that we were making a film about how Newfoundlanders, my people, had come 4 000 miles to kill his people. And he said: "It's all right, it was really the British Empire that killed them both." And it was.

I don't mean to say the British Empire was worse than other empires, but it wasn't spectacularly better, and that's what empires do. All of our history is filled with empires doing that, and even some democratic successors to empires doing that. For 5 000 years our history is of tyranny and of constant armed confrontation and war, together with slavery and oppression and what not. A very long and uniformly tragic past to stack up against the 12 years of moderately good news that we have just come through.

Foreign policy in that long past was fairly straightforward ... enormously complex in the details, but in principle fairly straightforward. You know that the world is constantly a dangerous place, that the weak go under, that 95 percent the states that have ever existed have been destroyed by war. So you keep your powder dry, you build your strength, you make alliances, you prepare for the