

*joseph jean rolland*

*dubé*



*oil well*

*infoetry*

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JOSEPH JEAN ROLLAND DUBÉ

# OIL WELL

INFOETRY

*For Philippe Bézy.*

PICK YOUR WAY through the wreckage of the train station — shoals of broken glass — fallen girders — the torn, bloodstained garments of people killed by snipers and artillery fire. Choose something for yourself. Our gift catalogue includes everything from the practical to the sublime — we even deliver them to your door. A year ago, this country's voters elected their first parliament, an unprecedented exercise in democracy by the authoritarian standards of the peninsula. For the past two weeks, armies have waged bloody but inconclusive armor and artillery battles in bitter rivalry over the division of political power and the distribution of oil revenues. Just because you learned the hard way.

YOU HAD TO WALK through three feet of snow just to get to school — they get there on rollerblade skates. You had an AM radio — they have boom boxes. And now there's this thing called *edutainment* — high technology that makes learning involving, fun and exciting. What a concept.

WAR IS HELL, and its commemoration, while less lethal, can be just as bedeviling. The veterans, for their part, say they are well aware of the grim nature of the subject. They are not asking for a white-wash. Top sumo wrestlers weigh more than 300 pounds, with waists measuring up to 70 inches. In fact, some contend they are responsible for that nation's shortage of space. But with 9,215,430 square kilometers of land, there's no shortage of space in this one.

AS OUTSIDE POWERS press to settle their civil war and accept the permanent dismemberment, the war has been as ugly as any in history. Survivors tell of concentration camps, brutal guards, starvation rations, killing grounds, mass graves. Thousands have witnessed prison-camp selections, summary executions, decapitations, human beings thrown on bonfires. No international charges have been brought. No trials have begun. One day you'll want to capture every detail. One day you'll want to relive it a hundred times. One day you'll want to feel as if you were there. One day you'll want the sound to be perfect. One day something exceptional will happen.

FOR THE MOMENT, both sides have ample motivation for avoiding a head-on clash. Taking on the new government would be unpopular at a time when ordinary citizens are still in a celebratory mood. The working principle is to get away with as much as possible. Security officials accept that the forces need time to organize and acknowledge that during the occupation they were themselves unable to prevent all attacks. Not surprisingly, enjoyment can be derived from automobiles in a variety of ways. What is surprising is the fact that parting with your automobile can bring pleasure as well.

IS THIS ANY PLACE to drill for oil ? The great oil chase comes at the very time when a supply glut is depressing petroleum prices. Yet so vital is oil to the world's economy that companies must constantly hunt for vast new "elephant" fields to replace dwindling reserves. The risks are as great as the potential rewards. Among other hazards, the oilmen are having to cope with sclerotic bureaucracies, rebellions, civil wars and demands from angry tribepeople. Delivery speeds for all anxiety levels. Sometimes your shipment is an overnight panic. And sometimes it isn't. You pick the speed. You pick the price.

*Avril 1999, Shawinigan (Québec) Canada*