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PERSONAL

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RE. SERBIA IN LOVE... (WITH MILOSEVIC)

In late May 1989, I went back to Belgrade for the first time after almost 20 years of voluntary exile from Yugoslavia's communist government. I returned to the U.S. after that weeklong trip with mixed emotions about the "progress" that was being made in that, back then still, communist society.

What follows is an excerpt from my original reports about Slobodan Milosevic written in 1989 and 1990 respectively. It was then that I first compared him to Tito, Hitler and Stalin. At the time, however, Milosevic was so popular in Serbia that I suffered the wrath of even my own family. Thus the need to explain and defend my stance in my Aug. 6, 1990 and Sep. 22, 1990 letters to them.



Bob Djurdjevic

P.S. I have found my relative naiveté back then about the U.S. "democracy" rather amusing - upon rereading my comments more than 10 years later. Today, I'd probably use the terms such as "freedom" or "liberty" wherever you see the term "democracy" in my original writing. Which must stay as written. After all, only George Orwell's Big Brother rewrites history to fit the present. As does his current reincarnation in the form of the New World Order. The Truth in Media founder must stay true - to the Truth in History, too.

SERBIA IN LOVE... (WITH MILOSEVIC)

By Bob Djurdjevic

Upon returning back to the U.S. from his first trip to his native Serbia in almost 20 years this writer wrote the following commentary on July 23, 1989:

“It seems to me as if the Serbs in Yugoslavia are now living in a time capsule. As if they are frantically trying to make up for the last 45 years of their history of which Tito’s (communist) anti-Serbian policies have deprived them...

In other words, the Serbs are in love; in love with their heritage, and in love with their new leader - (Slobodan) Milosevic.

That’s wonderful. And dangerous, too. Just ask a teenage girl...

By the way, that’s also how Americans felt about George Washington after the Treaty of Paris (1783) restored our own hard-fought-for rights of which a British dictator (George III, the king) had deprived them.

*Indeed, euphoria that follows liberation can be as intoxicating as the first love. **But ‘love is blind,’** as they say. And (without intending any harm to the handicapped) - **who wants to follow a blind person?**”*

ONE YEAR LATER...

PHOENIX, July 31, 1990 - During the 12 months since my “Marketing of Serbia” essay was written (on July 23, 1989 - see above), I have been trying to figure out if Slobodan Milosevic was a. was a Communist masquerading as a Serbian nationalist, or a Serbian nationalist masquerading as a Communist.

After my meeting with him last January (1990), I was leaning toward the latter possibility. But after my visit to Belgrade in June (1990), during which I saw what was billed as “the first opposition parties’ rally in 45 years” - after Milosevic’s sudden call for a referendum in late June; after his Hitler-like dissolution of the Kosovo parliament; and after his election as president of the ‘new’ Socialist Party of Serbia - I don’t think that there is much room for doubt left. He may be a genuine Serbian nationalist. But so was **Hitler** - a genuine German nationalist!

In other words, **Milosevic seems to be first and foremost a dictator, now masquerading as a democracy-loving socialist - so as to keep his job!**

“Serbia is still led by remnants from the Communist Party who have neither moral nor practical authority to carve ‘a place under the sun,’ for our people,” agreed (the late) Dr. Milorad Draskovic of the Hoover Institution at Stanford U.

[...] But the game is far from over. For one thing, Milosevic et. al. still control the media. Which gives them a powerful edge over the opposition. I witnessed myself a lack of objective reporting on Belgrade TV and in the daily newspapers about what happened on June 13 (1990). I was there, at the opposition rally. The main challenge that the opposition parties face, as I see it, is to get the media to tell their side of the story. Which will be difficult...

Second, we are yet to see a credible opposition leader in Serbia. If the right-wing extremists and the thugs they brought along to Trg Republike (a Belgrade square where the rally was held) on June 13 were to take over the government, we (the Serb émigrés) would stand to lose our homeland twice. Once to the Communists; the second time to the white Serbian supremacists. There are only two places where such people belong - in (the civilized) opposition, or in jail. Most of them probably the latter (*TiM Ed.: Arkan and his gang were among them, as I recall*). For, if they were to be elected, we would have one gang of hooligans replacing the other. [...]

ONE WEEK AFTER THAT...

Excerpts from a fax to a potential employee from Serbia, also a relative:

PHOENIX, August 6, 1990 - Earlier today, I had a long telephone conversation with BJ (TiM editor's 'brother' in Serbia). He told me that I stood alone in the family with my views about Serbian politics. Even my sister, he said, was supportive of what Slobodan Milosevic has done. [Later on, my late father also chastised me over the same issues].

As my "employee-to-be," you should know that "standing alone" - is not an unfamiliar position for me. Just ask Jon, Nancy, Doug... etc.

In fact, that's how the people who are ahead of the trends are perceived - by definition!

[quoted the above July 1989 excerpt here]

Upon hearing me object to Slobodan Milosevic's closing down some Albanian newspapers (in Kosovo), BJ asked me today I would approve of certain California papers' right to continue publishing their views if they were advocating their state's secession from the U.S.? Or that of Ireland from the U.K.?

"Of course, I would," I replied. (I would not necessarily agree with them but)"what do you think that 'freedom of speech' means?"

"Well, not in the Balkans, it doesn't," BJ said.

Speaking for myself, I am getting a little tired of hearing that democracy is just fine “except for the Balkans”-theme by some of my Serbian friends and relatives. Either you’re pregnant or you’re not! Either you’re civilized, or you’re not.

If Serbia were not (civilized), it would not matter one iota if Slobodan Milosevic, or Brana Crncevic (back then a close aid to, and supporter of, Milosevic), or some other turkey was its leader, would it? They would not, and should not, deserve support of any democracy-loving people.

Speaking for myself, if I were to support the closing down of the Kosovo parliament and that of the Albanian newspapers, I’d feel worse than the scum with which we are dealing... and we are dealing with the scum, I realize. But I want to feel like a proud Serbian-American, not like a scum worse than the scum!

“Democracy is the worst political system,” said Winston Churchill, “except for all other political systems.”

P.S. By the way, I do not think much of the anti-“non-Serbian” hatred propaganda which the Slobodan Milosevic/Communist-controlled “Politika” (Serbia’s biggest daily paper) seems to be whipping up day after day, either. In fact, it makes me sick... Have the Serbs not learned yet that it is in wisdom, not in emotion, that their salvation will be found? [...]

SIX WEEKS AFTER THAT...

Excerpts from a speech at a staff meeting (actually a copy of a slide used at the meeting):

PHOENIX, September 22, 1990 - Given all these hassles that I seem to find myself mixed up with, even with my family, I spent a fair bit of time today trying to figure out what it is that makes me different from my Serbian family and/or friends. Here are some conclusions, in order of priority (as I see it, anyway):

1. I am first and foremost and INDEPENDENT THINKER.
(therefore, a philosopher and a writer)
2. I am a HUMANIST with devotion to DEMOCRACY.
(therefore, ruthless about any violations of human rights)
3. I am also an INDEPENDENT BUSINESSMAN.
(therefore, a person with politically conservative views)
4. I am a proud AMERICAN - by choice.
(therefore, loyal to my oath of allegiance)
5. I am a proud SERB - by birth.
(therefore, committed to glorifying the best Serbian virtues)

Given my above order of priorities, as I see them anyway, I not fully appreciate why a good Serbian-American friend of mine concluded, upon unsuccessfully trying to unite the Serbian-Americans, that, **“Serbs are incapable of relating to abstract ideas.”**

They can relate to a **person** whom they admire and follow. They can relate to a **physical matter** which they also cherish and are willing to die for (such as their “land,” or “Kosovo”). But they seem unable either to grasp, or to embrace such notions as “freedom of speech,” or “democracy,” for example, for which millions of Americans, including Serbian-Americans, have died.

If the above conclusion makes me “estranged” from my own people - so be it! I have sworn to, and I am willing to give up my life for democracy and freedom of speech. But I am not prepared to do so for the likes of Tito, Milosevic, Hitler or Stalin - all of whom have exploited their peoples’ emotions and naiveté.

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