

TO MIRO

Julienne Busic*

“Heroes are forged in conflict and friends in difficulty” is a phrase that perfectly describes Miro Tadjman, as he had intimate knowledge of both. However, even though he valued heroism, it was friendship that I believe was most sacred to him. Heroism could be fleeting, an impulse to action that passes in a moment, but friendship was an extended journey on an unforged path to an ever-distant destination. In other words, it is always becoming instead of just being.

My friendship with Miroslav Tadjman was like that. It began in 1994, when he came to Washington, D.C. with his father, dr. Franjo Tadjman, the President of the Republic of Croatia, and his delegation for the signing of the Muslim-Croat agreement in the U.S. State Department. I was an adviser then at the Embassy of Croatia, and I remember

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addressing him when we were introduced as General Tudjman. I somehow had thought he held that rank. He looked at me in surprise and then laughed heartily. "That's a little too high class for me!" he answered. "Where did you get that idea?" It was one of many ideas he cured me of. For example, that politicians and high government officials were by default arrogant, condescending, and corrupt. Miro was down to earth, self-deprecating, modest, and funny, really funny. I liked him immediately.

Throughout the years, and especially after I moved to Zagreb to become an adviser in the Office of the President, we worked together on several common issues, for example, President Tudjman, Croatia, and the Jewish issue, the Hague Tribunal investigations, and numerous others. But it wasn't all serious. I would tease him and call him "Alter Mann" (we both spoke fluent German) and he would address me in jest as "Gospo" (Madame) or "Milostivo" (Your Graciousness). Sometimes, when I would harp on a point he would rather ignore, a specialty of mine, he would say "Here she goes again!" which eventually overtook "Your Graciousness" as my designated title.

I told him not long ago that, after having given it a lot of thought, I had concluded that nobody loved Croatia more than the President and my late husband Zvonko. Both had made it the focus of their lives and both had died, each in his own way, from the sacrifices they made to protect it. He couldn't disagree. But Miro, too, had made great sacrifices that are often forgotten. As the son of a dissident, he had grown up being ostracized, criticized, discriminated against and barred from gainful employment, but he bore it all with dignity. "Learn to suffer without complaint" could thus also serve as his motto, because it represents what he believed: suffering enriches the soul of man in the end, and is the one and only source of knowledge.

After Croatia gained its independence, Miro was finally free to make great contributions, in politics as well as academia. In addition to the numerous books he has written in defense of the Republic of Croatia on a wide variety of issues, he served as the founder and director of the first Croatian Intelligence Service and, until his untimely death, as a member of Parliament.

In the last days of his life, we spoke regularly in connection with the English language version of a book that was extremely important to him, "Poaching in the Hague", his detailed analysis and indictment of the work of the Tribunal in the case "Prlic et al." I had been one of the project consultants, and the book was due to be published just as he entered the hospital. Because it was difficult for him to talk toward the end, we exchanged messages back and forth until it was no longer possible. None of them contained defeatism of any kind, only the stoicism by which we all knew him. In the last message I sent him, just two days before he was placed on the respirator, I wrote: "Here she goes again! I'm thinking of you and hope you're better today. We have a lot of work to do, man, so come home!" "He wrote back in his usual bantering style that "work isn't a rabbit...it won't run away!"

In the end, work was not a rabbit and didn't run away; it is our eagle who took tragic flight.....

Rest in peace, dear and irreplaceable friend!