

REMEMBERING

Nika Pinter*

A Time of Youth and Maturity

I would prefer to be writing to dr. Miroslav Tudjman about texts he has written instead of writing this text about him. It is difficult for me to write about him in the past tense.

It is also a challenge to summarize all the time we spent together in a few sentences, so I have selected some details that best characterize the nature and character of Dr. Tudjman.

We grew up and matured at the same time in the classrooms of the 5th gymnasium in Zagreb. We got to know each other. We have, had, common recollections about those days. As we continued to grow, we went in different directions.

Although our paths might have been different, they often brought us to the court building on Zrinjevac park where we would exchange a few words about what had happened since we had last met.

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It was early 1981, and a court proceeding against Miroslav's father was in progress at the District Court in Zagreb. He had been charged by the District Attorney's Office of "disseminating enemy propaganda" based on an interview he had given to foreign journalists. I had no details about the case other than what I had read in the media or heard on television.

At the time, I was the Deputy District Attorney. At the entrance to the District Court, we bumped into each other. He was arriving and I was leaving the court. Miro had come to visit his father. We stopped, exchanged greetings, and I told him I knew how hard this was for him, but it was not necessary to explain to him that there was nothing whatsoever I could do to help. He totally understood that a "lowly" Deputy District Attorney who was not working on the case had no access to the file, nor the possibility to influence the case in any way, gain access to the documents, or, even if I could have, be allowed to speak about them. He always understood everything about what could be done, what one wished to be able to do, and never expected the impossible.

So when we ran into each other after Zrinjevac in 1981, we would always exchange the conventional greetings.

Between 1990 and 2000 we had no contact at all; we simply had gone in different directions.

When the trials began in The Hague, we began more intensive contact.

He was always willing to provide a justification for every event, and the context in which it took place. He permitted us to translate, as part of the proofs during the trial, sections of his books "The Story of Paddy Ashdown and Tudjman's napkin", "Time of the Perjurer", and "The Truth about Bosnia and Hercegovina".

He was one of those rare persons in the political realm who understood the extreme seriousness of The Hague indictments. First of all, because of the possible, actually probable, stigma it would attach to the Republic of Croatia. He also recognized the implications it would have for the Republic of Croatia and Croatians in Bosnia and Hercegovina.

As an active participant in the political as well as military circumstances during the aggression against the Republic of Croatia, and after the war ended as well, he recognized the direction in which the court proceedings were going. He recognized that the proceedings were not intended to determine the truth, that is, the facts. He realized that the goal of the proceedings was the condemnation of the Republic of Croatia and its highest officials, that it was a political trial and not a trial of individuals who were responsible for actual crimes they had committed. Especially in relation to Croatians in Bosnia and Hercegovina and the Republic of Croatia. The judgements rendered confirmed his conclusions, and he anatomically dissected in his later books the political aspect and court judgements. He showed that the judgments were the antithesis of justice.

Working together with Dr. Tudjman was easy. He articulated the problem and left no dilemma about which piece of evidence was needed. His reasoned, well-integrated thought made him a pleasant interlocutor. No matter how serious the topics we discussed may have been, he would always spice up the conversation with a nice dose of humor.

The last messages we exchanged were about his illness. A few days before New Year's Eve, he told me he had a cold, and also that he and his wife, Vanja, had tested positive for the Covid-19 virus. In response to my message that I was sending him positive energy for a quick recovery, he answered: "What I need is negative!" That was his sense of humor, joking at that difficult time that what he needed was

a Covid negative test. On December 31, 2020, I sent him a message saying I was hoping he'd be ringing in the New Year at his vacation home on the island of Brač. He answered that he'd been in danger of having to go on a respirator, but that he'd managed to escape that scenario. Time would show that the respirator won.

“Pearls before swine”

In the writing of some of his books, I served as his “data base”. His drive to write was due to the criminalization of the Homeland War and the politics of the Republic of Croatia that were taking place. It was not a defense just for the sake of defense, but an insurmountable need to present the facts and, on that basis, reach a conclusion about the political, social and military circumstances in the difficult years between 1990-1995.

It was necessary to view the complete, not partial, context of events, and it was necessary to show how the international community behaved, and what the main players in world politics did and said about the events on the territory of Bosnia and Hercegovina. It was also crucial to show how the interests of certain Croatian politicians took precedence over the state whose interests they were representing.

It is of legal, historical and political interest to refute the allegations in the indictments of a broad and systematic attack and joint criminal enterprise because it is in the interest of the Croatian people in Bosnia and Hercegovina and even in the Republic of Croatia.

Dr. Tudjman spared in his books no effort intellectually or physically to integrate systematically all available and credible facts in order to illustrate that the judgement concerning the role of the Republic of Croatia and its highest political representatives was a well-planned, systematic falsification about the Homeland War and the role of the Republic of Croatia.

Although it could be concluded that this was a hopeless effort – since the facts described and presented in his books were ignored and blocked by a wall of rejection - I believe that time will show the significance and value of what he has written. Facts are inexorable and the passage of time does not influence them, regardless of the efforts to negate them.

I was fortunate and privileged that Miroslav Tudjman considered me a friend and a person of trust and reliability to whom he entrusted, in relation to the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the collection of analytic material which he then used in his books.

Dr. Tudjman did not lecture or impose his opinions; rather he collected and presented documents which pointed to the facts that refuted the untruths and half-truths that were omnipresent in the media and unchallenged by the politicians.

Dr. Tudjman possessed an enviable intellectual honesty. Relentlessly and tirelessly, he searched for evidence of the facts known to him. He knew he was unable to influence the interpretation of the facts. That was not his goal.