

GOOD GUYS

To start with, I wish to explain who, to my mind, the GOOD GUYS are. It is a rather multicolour group of people, with one common feature: They fought Milosevic's regime together. The people within the group vary in their assessment of Milosevic's rule. Most of them are of the opinion that Milosevic's wars were criminal undertakings, but there are also those, who are not very loud, that maintain that Milosevic's idea was good but he was not successful and for that reason he deserved to be pulled down.

In the course of the crisis of 1990-es, the thing that surprised me the most in my country – or better to say „in my countries“ since I lived in three of them within the last fifteen years without moving at all – was the lack of capability of pro-democratic forces to organize themselves against the dictatorship. I'll try to present the reasons for that - that is how I see those reasons. The reasons will be listed from without towards within, that is from raw autocratic forces to some of the psychological mechanisms that rendered the good guys to produce victory sooner.

Regime Guardians

External circumstances were such that evil individuals easily got together since they usually have large paranoid potential and have no problem to locate external enemy, thus constantly maintaining mutual relations relatively sustainably free of mutual aggression. Thus a group of those individuals that plan a certain evil doing has, by its psychological characteristics, already been organized and easily found the reason for its existence. Such groups easily find common language with armed groups belonging to the state, that are, by definition, paranoid and inclined to violence and authoritarian behaviour. In the countries that cannot boast with their democratic traditions and whose political systems have mostly been based on force, civil authorities had little or no control over their law-enforcement forces. On the contrary, army and police were above usual systems of civil control. For that reason ex-Yugoslavia never had any political structure that would control army or police. That is why there was almost no oppression control within those organizations, which was further augmented by extraordinary spirit of that group not to give away its secrets. It is true that such a behaviour is characteristic to more or less all the groups of state oppression, but is certainly very much expressed in groups that perform criminal offences with bad consequences for the state and for the individuals. Besides, the very state propaganda strongly stressed the

significance and righteousness of those structures, also providing the members of those machines with extraordinary prerogatives and powers – which they were very ready to defend, as it proved later. Still another group that has always been, at least in Yugoslavia but also in other East European countries, very much mixed with secret police, were the criminals, used as informers or as paid hit-men and bullies. Even Stalin himself, when once asked whether political prisoners could be treated better, like criminals were, replied that criminals are „socially closer to us“. Police recruited criminals for various dirty jobs, mostly done within the secret police department called „internal enemies“ or less, but significantly bloodier with political emigration. „Internal enemies“ were all those that maintained different political opinions and those that fought autocratic system. Besides direct physical threats, secret police of either army or civil provenience once used (they still do, but less extensively) various methods of spreading false news, deceits and discreditation of their oponents. Thus the secret police rather resembled people that keep retelling gossips, at the same time having their arms shoulder high covered with blood. Yugoslavia, before Yugoslav wars commenced, thus looked like calm, shark-infested sea waters.

Situation seems to be clear. One side is formed by armed paranoid patriots, psychopats and criminals, tightly bonded among themselves, and the other by nice and honest citizens, intellectuals, people that respect and listen to the soft voice of intellect. These two groups are facing each other and differ mostly by various degrees of of their organization; one is organized in an authoritarian way, the other in a democratic way. They are both struggling to conquer hearts and souls of the quiet majority, composed of citizens not really interested in relations within the society, either due to selfishness or fear or self-preoccupation or overwhelmed by feelings of helplessness or – in short – each due to his own reason. Here too the first group, mightily organized and fearful, has an advantage: It is much more comfortable to identify with a member of a mighty group, thus also becoming mighty, than thinking, talking and doing in the direction of making the world more comfortable place to exist in.

Herbert Rosenfeld gave, to my mind, the best description of why the wild types are so attractive. Listening to Goebel's and Hitler's speeches he recognized the mechanism of hypnotic effect of the leader who threatens the others with revenge and offers us protection provided we follow him. He compared that with the relation of a small boy and fearful aspects of the father that is capable of annihilating him, but does not do so – because the boy is obedient. Thus the boy feels safe since the father's fanthasized fury is directed towards the others. We can easily recognize here the problem of male castration anxiety. That makes for another reason why the women more often become fighters against dictatorship

and evil during critical social developments. Women rarely become leaders since xenophobic societies are generally also patriarchal and find it difficult to accept women as leaders. Finally, the place of a mother is in the house and not in the parliament while their children are crying at home alone. Since they lack male phantasies of omnipotent hero that leads knights in shining armours into decisive charge – which sensitizes males for patriotic ideas and politics – women remain immune to castration anxiety and command much less space where omnipotent heroism cures castration anxiety. Besides, women are more prone to taking care and being tender, which makes them more open to human feelings and respect for life. For that reason they are more capable of declaring that the king is naked, that crimes are crimes and not political inevitability.

Effect of the Group

Like it or not, the group has major effect on the individual. My impression is that even we, psychoanalysts, full of knowledge on the subject, when watching from the distance the two conflicting groups can easily distance ourselves, but caught between two conflicting groups, despite all our knowledge we have problems in maintaining our individual opinion – that very opinion we perhaps had had only a few seconds before we were pulled by the vortex of a group event. Authoritarian regime is inherently more capable of propaganda activities, since the values it supports are adoration of force and adoration of their own nation which are the most dominant features of authoritarian propaganda. Such a propaganda is initially very efficient and is capable of keeping a significant part of population hypnotised, in the state rendering them unable to see the true situation their society is in. Therefore the fighters against authoritarianism are, especially in the beginning, exposed to terrible pressure of the group as the traitors and haters and enemies of their own people. Propaganda effects last for years and are totally parallel to that Jewish story in which a village man spread gossips against the rabbi, and then repented and asked the rabbi to tell him how to repair the damage he had done. The rabbi recommended him to spill feathers from a pillow during a storm, and then to try to collect them. That is why the mark of traitor remains on the forehead of all those that fight authoritarian regimes, long after that authoritarian regime has been toppled.

The situation of ousting the whole group from the corpus of citizens they live with, brings separation fears about, and it seems to me that the participants of events are not aware of them. Individuals try to overcome that separation fear applying contempt or the feeling of their own superiority. Thus the good guys resemble their opponents that also had problems of the same nature. Being armed, dangerous and aggression prone made the good guys identify with the aggressor.

Another problem arose among the good guys during the nineties. Huge number, still unestablished, left the country. That gave rise to stormy feelings among their friends that stayed behind. Depression of being left alone, the feeling of being cheated and left alone to fight Milosevic's hangmen, was very difficult to bear.

Prospects of those preparing to organize resistance to oppression, as I have described them, are not bright at all. Still I am of the opinion that, although the patriots are dangerous, armed and aggression prone, that it is not a good enough excuse for lack of capability of the good guys to organize themselves. Having said that, I hope that, being a psychoanalyst, does not lead me to believe that responsibility of failing to resist the force lies not only with the bullies but also with the victims. Experience from a number of protests during Milosevic's reign proves that forces of evil easily become a Paper Tiger. Namely, once the good guys become desperate and succeed in gathering together sufficient number of followers, the bad guys retreat easily and show that they are also afraid – despite all the arms, armors, martial skills and inclinations. Conflicts of such groups remind of skirmishes of medieval armies in which the one that panics first is the one beaten to the dust. In the terms closer to us, it is the conflict of two groups that has group dynamics attack or flee. Regretfully, chances to topple Milosevic in such a way at the beginning of nineties were squandered.

This hypothesis will be illustrated by the fact that, at the beginning of nineties, a general call-up was announced all over Serbia. The response was twelve percent, in Belgrade six. Almost half of that number refused to fight Croatia, and the war in Bosnia was fought by gangs of pillagers from Serbia, then called para-military forces, that corresponded to Gestapo Einsatz Kommando units that carried genocide out. They consisted of football fans, prisoners and „unusual“ characters that normal people avoid meeting in the bright daylight in the most peaceful of times, not to mention them being armed during uncertain times.

I am stressing once again continuously present fact that secret police can, using their intimidation and false news spreading methods, confuse opponents of autocratic power and make them feel helpless, that regime moles can create confusion within the group of those that crave for democracy, but I'm still of the opinion that such a situation does not provide the complete explanation why those that love life find it difficult to organize themselves in the war against autocratic regimes. Saying that, I'm far from saying that those forces are harmless. At the beginning of nineties I participated in the project of educating therapists to assist victims of PTSD, financed by the Fund for Open Society. At that time elections at all levels were actual in Serbia. The NGO, as well as all those working for it were attacked as local traitors and spies of the West etc, which was not really

healthy having in mind the general patriotic atmosphere. Out of the blue, in the midst of the election campaign, the lawyer of the Fund for Open Society, the key-man of the Funds business running, appeared on Arkan's election list (for those that do not know: Arkan was the chief leader of para-military formations fighting in Croatia and in Bosnia). I must admit that my personal feelings were a mixture of rage, helplessness and fear, and not in that order.

Raw Force and Disregarding of the Rules

Raw force and contempt for rules is something that is simultaneously fascinating and attractive, but also fearful, and causes castration anxiety with males that consciously do not approve oppression as something positive, at the same time creating wish to overcome that anxiety without respect to any rules and norms. Women are much less prone to accepting that segment of propaganda, partly because their body much more readily recognizes its changes and also of accompanying emotions. Therefore they are more dedicated to simple emotional issues of the type of body changes during menstruation and pregnancy. Female body is also more expressive in showing the flow of time, unlike with the males with ever-present omnipotent heroic phantasies as a defence against castration anxiety. When getting old, and not only then, males fear loss of potency the most, proving the level of present castration anxiety. The other part of the problem is that we are talking about people with moral breaks, individuals afraid of their own aggression, leading us in another way to catastrophe of castration. Supporters of democratic changes belonged to the group of people generally less prone to violence and more inclined to listen to the discreet voice of intellect. It seemed that situation was created where two groups, one adoring violence and the other respecting reason and kindness, each on their own started narcissistically adoring their own group values, violence and destruction as opposed to reason and constructivity. Each autocratic group scoffs the rules of human inter-personal relations in their propaganda. The blessing of the authority that one can do whatever he wishes in essence destroys the tissue of social relationships, but also provides the message to each and every wild individual that he is free to disparage anybody save the leader. In the field it is modified in the way that you can do whatever you wish to the one who is weaker than you yourself. Thus we encounter inner world that is thorn between the triumph „I am the castrator“ and the catastrophe „I am castrated“.

And Now a Few Words on Good Guys

Awful financial situation established at the beginning of Yugoslav wars brought the greatest part of Serbian population to the verge of poverty, with some even

crossing it. Shock created by such a situation was even greater since Serbian population had until then lived at an economic level comparable with Spanish, Portuguese or Greek. Thus most of the intellectual elite, that part most supportive of democratic values, found itself in situation where survival was an issue. I'm trying to remember a Muslim proverb comparing human body with a fragile vessel – and so that part of intellectual elite offered itself on the market, trying to earn for living. Having better performances, they found their way out in developing their businesses and not in organizing struggle against nationalism. It seems that intoxication of one population strata, to whom it was clear that socialistic industry is no more than Potemkin's villages and who felt that they are achieving only a fraction of what they could have as compared with all the others, for the first time made pro-democratic groups certain of their own value. Regretfully, that self-admiration produced a reaction called 'minding one's own business', in essence selfishness combined with triumph over those with less education, as compared with socialistic times when all were equal, and some even more equal than the others. Clever people – by this I do not mean intelligence but inclination to thinking before acting – generally have problem with their wisdom. They would prefer to say what they have to say, the others to agree that what was said is the best, and that there would be no dispute that might test the ideas. Narcissism is generally present even with the clever, and it makes them very vulnerable.

Why are the clever so sensitive when it comes to their wisdom? One of the reasons is that each positive characteristic within primary family is registered and starts being appreciated. Those inclined to thinking will have an advantage in that field over their peers, especially if their potentials coincide with the wishes. As time goes by and they progress in their education, or use their intellectual talents in another way, more and more they will enter into competition with other persons with similar capabilities. We are often inclined to overestimate our good characteristics and to experience our intellectual capabilities in a similar way as violence-prone individuals appreciate their capability for violence, since that is something they are best at. As mentioned before, competition gradually increases over time and people that tend to be intellectual become rather unyielding in their attitudes, have difficulties not only to compromise but also to accept that others sometimes have better ideas than their own. Thus we might more and more find ourselves, no matter how far we achieve our intellectual development, in the situation that somebody is better than we are. That brings about a feeling of envy that might develop into destruction of unpredicted dimensions, rendering thus the group that produced a creative idea unable to develop the idea to the best effect for the group and for the others. In short, they depend too much on the early idea that they are the most clever while competition becomes more and more serious,

producing a situation that differs very much from the initial situation, at the beginning of their education. Thus most of the intellectuals that become members of resistance to autocracy, eventually become autocratic since they can see only their own ideas as good, making themselves unable to assess values of their own and also the ideas coming from other people.

Anxiety caused by external factors inevitably brings about castration anxiety that must in its entirety be negated with the fact that we are the best and the most clever – once again forcing us into direct conflict with our political adversary. Good guys challenge that adversary to compare their capabilities, wisdom, cunning, that is to see who will be the first to win, who will be the first to castrate. As far as fellow-soldiers are concerned, feelings of envy over their capabilities are created, with all those defence mechanisms that envy uses and that render creative functioning of the good guys group impossible. Presence of admiration for the wisdom of bad guys can be shown as a proof for that statement, not merely as recognition that evil can also be clever but as admiration for omnipotent autocratic leader, proving that wisdom content is less important than the size of wisdom – to my mind having a lot to do with phantasies of creative and destructive penis potency and impotence.

Propaganda hits another good guys' structure – problem of patriotism. Good guys suffer constant pressure of being traitors of the group they belong to – not of an abstract group but of the people that went to school together with them, played with them in the sand and engaged into romantic relations with them. Feeling thus betrayed and disappointed in the value of the jewel of the youth, good guys start a game of mutual worship and contempt, eagerly waiting for the other to make a mistake and provide them with if only one moment of bitter righteousness that will soon only make them more desperate. Thus an atmosphere of mutual distrust is easily created, in which anyone's long term leadership cannot be accepted since the leader must behave exactly as we expect him to, and there is not much room for deviation from our imagined wanted route.

This group pressure can be partly alleviated by contempt and aggression towards the majority of followers of one's nation foolish ideas of grandeur, but fear of rejection lies below those feelings, making that also one of the reasons that opponents of foolish ideas find it difficult to join together, and if they do - they do it with fear.

There is a number of characteristics that make the good guys' group inherently less efficient than evil guys'. Groups of good guys find it difficult to get together around fulfilling an idea, since they are inclined to support their own varieties of

the idea in the way that resembles arguments of the righteous. Wisdom is the most appreciated value with the good, democratically orientated guys, and presents a parallel to violence among the bad guys. At least initially, bad guys easily organize around their own benefit, and accept organization of autocratic group, that is initially very efficient, much easier. On the contrary, good guys initially have chaotic organization due to serious problem of reconciling and accepting other people's ideas, and that might last for years. That might also be the reason for dictatorship regimes being, more often than not, toppled from without and not from within. Democracy and respect of differences are to be blamed for such groups' inertia.

My impression is that all these explanations are not sufficient to throw light on all the aspects of the problems of good guy's organization. Namely, as our experience painfully proves, our internal problems hinder us the most. In essence, disrespect for other peoples' ideas and resolute defence of our own ideas is the reason for difficult organization of the good ones. They defend their own ideas by attacking others as heretics. Thus we find ourselves in a situation that democratic forces must first establish democracy within their own group, or, better to say, efficient democracy capable to harmonize slightly different ideas with the others, and to bring a compromise about. Dictatorships produce seductive shortcuts that are permanently visible with the others, while defending ourselves from our own omnipotent wishes. Others easily become sinners because – why shouldn't the good guys have omnipotent wishes?

Our experience from the times of Milosevic and later from the times of democracy, is that all those democratic intellectuals possess a characteristic that says: Mine is better than anybody else's, and I can accept that there are those that are better than me, but not in my field. Let us try to create a profile of a virtual politician of democratic provenience, being trapped by overestimation of his own capabilities. It is an intellectual, in Serbian case relatively well known in his profession, with a long track record of dissident behaviour either in democratic or national sense - in various relations of those two. That gives us a person that already in early years of his professional carrier differs in notoriety not only from his peers but also from older and more appreciated colleagues. Fame is not easy to bear as we know, and if one adds to that a spice of oppression without serious consequences, the person starts respecting himself and his own opinions perhaps in a bit of exaggerated manner. Oppression creates a halo of a romantic hero, of someone who is right and who is persecuted because he sees wider and further than others do. If persecution does not break the hero, he becomes very attached to his own ideas since they help him survive uncertain and dangerous reality. Thus he finds it difficult to reject or alter any of those ideas, he feels insecure as if giving in with one idea

will cause avalanche of rejecting the whole system. Rejecting it all and switching into anonymity has its own benefit – serene reality and security. That puts him back into the world of common people and causes guilt feelings of betraying himself, makes him feel weak and wretched. Thus our hero oscillates between Scile and Haribde, that is between the triumph that brings narcissistic gratifications and creativity, and secure anonymity, better to say equality with the others, that brings boredom and depression.

Good guys generally have doubts in the value of their views, thus oscillating, at least in psychological sense, between wishes. In essence they do not have blind belief in themselves and their own powers. Due to their psychological characteristics, generally also owned by the majority of their followers, they are not suitable for fast and unscrupulous reactions in times of crisis, especially if they are not in power. Once they come to power, the power they feel in themselves and they actually have in hands often make them more than similar to their undemocratic predecessors. On the other hand, feature of doubt in correctness of their own ideas makes them more suitable for long fights, since they are more flexible than their undemocratic adversaries. Of course, that slows down their reactions, but also makes them more capable of recognizing possible future influence of their own actions.

It seems that the situation is contradictory. We described a person that is capable of thinking taking into account certain doubt in their own ideas, but also a person of morality of the type ‘do I do this because of my grandeur or for the good of the others?’. Once two or more persons of this type get together, suddenly a group of good guys acquires unyielding behaviour, each of them fearing that their self-admiration will be uncovered. We know more than well that being stubborn and unyielding are means we most often choose when we feel uncertain in the motives of our own behaviour. They behave in such a way seeing themselves in other people, projecting their own doubts in themselves to other leaders of groups similar to theirs. Their followers start behaving as righteous, and here we are with a new triumph of autocracy. It is experienced as dangerous to accept other peoples’ ideas, thus losing all the power and sinking into anonymity. That fear resembles fear of the weak bullied by the strong, only physical strength is here replaced by the power of mind.

Those are uncertain times when righteous arguments among the good guys begin. Bad guys’ propaganda has its own hand in this. As we know, propaganda targets our features of envy and omnipotence type, encouraging projection of all the evil onto others. However, good guys are ashamed of their own bad feelings. When competing in the field of wisdom and creativity, when in the company of those

that are similar by capabilities to us, a fear that we are not good enough appears and where we doubt our kindness, quality and righteousness, a paranoid situation inevitably develops: Constant checking who is righteous and who has sinned on the road of righteousness and kindness. Generally, uncertain times provide opportunity to get an insight into all the extremes of our psyche. Those extremes are often not something we have expected to find within ourselves.