

THE Political Kleptocrat

by Dorin Tudoran



“Communism is Soviet power plus the electrification of the whole country,” proclaimed Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. He was wrong. “Communism is in conflict with human nature,” thought Ernest Renan. He was right. Don’t believe me? Then listen to Frank Zappa: “Communism doesn’t work because people like to own stuff.”

“Communism is not love. Communism is a hammer which we use to crush the enemy,” thundered Mao Tse-tung. He was cynical, but he was right, too. “I don’t really view communism as a bad thing,” cogitates Whoopi Goldberg. She is cynical, too, but she is not right.

“For us in Russia, communism is a dead dog. For many people in the West, it is still a living lion,” wrote Alexander Solzhenitsyn. He was right. “Who is more to be pitied, a writer bound and gagged by policemen or one living in perfect freedom who has nothing more to say?” asks Kurt Vonnegut. He is confused, right?

“The crusade against communism was even more imaginary than the specter of communism,” said A.J.P. Taylor. I don’t know about that. Let me think. “Communism destroys democracy. Democracy can also destroy communism,” believed André Malraux. I don’t need to think about this—he was right.



“Let’s not talk about communism. Communism was just an idea, just pie in the sky,” confesses Boris Yeltsin. You’re kidding me. “Communism is the corruption of a dream of justice,” wrote Adlai E. Stevenson. He was partially right. And, by the way, while the dream is gone the corruption stays and gets more widespread every day.

Plenty of things are wrong with post-communist countries. However, nothing is worse than the corruption, which tops them all. Professor Robert Klitgaard is right about the formula for corruption: “monopoly + discretion – accountability.” That’s precisely how the somber communist ideocrats turned into filthy rich kleptocrats.

Kleptomania is a mental illness. Kleptocracy is not. A kleptomaniac “does not take objects for immediate use or for their monetary value.” A kleptocrat does. Kleptomania is individual. Kleptocracy is both individual and

collective. It is hard to believe that a group of kleptomaniacs could create a political party, steal elections and use national resources as personal bank accounts. Kleptocrats can. Kleptomaniacs are disorganized; kleptocrats are superb organizers.

Is the political kleptocrat the quintessential player produced by the painful, long hangover of the post-communist era? [Read](#)