

Title:

The Caveman and the Alien

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Summary:

When Chancellor Kohl's party and Edith Cresson are suspected of gross corruption - these are labelled "aberrations" in an otherwise honest West. When NASA in collaboration with its UK counterpart blow a 130 million US dollars spacecraft to smithereens having confused the metric system for its pound/feet archaic predecessor - people nod their head in disapproval: "accidents happen".

Keywords:

Article Body:

When Chancellor Kohl's party and Edith Cresson are suspected of gross corruption - these are labelled "aberrations" in an otherwise honest West. When NASA in collaboration with its UK counterpart blow a 130 million US dollars spacecraft to smithereens having confused the metric system for its pound/feet archaic predecessor - people nod their head in disapproval: "accidents happen". When President Clinton appoints his wife to suggest an overhaul of the multi-hundred billion dollars US health system - no one thinks it odd. And when the (talented) son of the police investigated, rumoured to be hyper-corrupt Minister of Interior Affairs of Israel becomes a Minister himself, no one bats an eyelash. Yet, when identical events happen in the decrepit countries of Eastern, Central, or Southern Europe - they are subjected to heaps of excoriating scorn, to vitriolic diatribes, to condescending preaching, or to sanctions. It is, indeed, a double standard, a hypocrisy and a travesty the magnitude of which is rarely to be encountered in the annals of human pretensions to morality.

The West has grossly and thoroughly violated Thompson's edict. In its oft-interrupted intercourse with these forsaken regions of the globe, it has acted, alternately, as a Peeping Tom, a cynic and a know it all. It has invariably behaved as if it were holier-than-thou. In an unmitigated and fantastic succession of blunders, miscalculations, vain promises, unkept threats and unkempt diplomats - it has driven Europe to the verge of war and the region it "adopted" to the verge of economic and social upheaval.

Enamoured with the new ideology of free marketry cum democracy, the West first

assumed the role of the omniscient. It designed ingenious models, devised foolproof laws, imposed fail-safe institutions and strongly "recommended" measures. Its representatives, the tribunes of the West, ruled the phlebeian East with determination rarely equalled by skill or knowledge. Velvet hands couched in iron gloves, ignorance disguised by economic newspeak, geostrategic interests masquerading as forms of government characterized their dealings with the natives. Preaching and beseeching from ever higher pulpits, they poured opprobrium and sweet delusions on the eagerly deluded, naive, bewildered masses. The deceit was evident to the indigenous cynics - but it was the failure that dissuaded them and all else. The West lost Eastern and Southeast Europe not when it lied egregiously, not when it pretended to know for sure when it surely did not know, not when it manipulated and coaxed and coerced - but when it failed. To the peoples of these regions, the king was fully dressed. It was not a little child but an enormous debacle that exposed his nudity. In its presumptuousness and pretentiousness, feigned surety and vain clichés, imported models and exported cheap raw materials - the West succeeded to demolish beyond reconstruction whole economies, to ravage communities, to bring ruination upon the centuries-old social fabric, woven diligently by generations. It brought crime and drugs and mayhem but gave very little in return, only an horizon beclouded and thundering with eloquence. As a result, while tottering regional governments still pay lip service to the Euro-Atlantic structures, the masses are enraged and restless and rebellious and baleful and anti-Western to the core. They are not likely to acquiesce much longer - not with the West's neo-colonialism but with its incompetence and inaptitude, with the non-chalant experimentation that it imposed upon them and with the abyss between its proclamations and its performance.

In all this time, the envoys of the West - its mediocre politicians, its insatiably ruthless media, its obese tourists and its armchair economists - continued to play the role of God, wreaking greater havoc than even the original. While knowing it all in advance (in breach of every tradition scientific), they also developed a kind of world weary, unshaven cynicism interlaced with fascination at the depths plumbed by the local's immorality and amorality. The jet-set Peeping Toms resided in five star hotels (or luxurious apartments) overlooking the communist shantytowns, drove utility vehicles to the shabby offices of the native bureaucrats and dined in \$100 per meal restaurants ("it's so cheap here'). In between sushi and sake they bemoaned and grieved over corruption and nepotism and cronyism ("I simply love their ethnic food, but they are so..."). They mourned the autochthonal inability to act decisively, to cut red tape, to manufacture quality, to open to the world, to be less xenophobic (while casting a disdainful glance at the sweaty waiter). To them it looked like an ancient natural phenomenon, a force of nature, an inevitability and hence their cynicism. Mostly provincial people with horizons limited by consumption

and by wealth, they adopted cynicism as shorthand for cosmopolitanism. They erroneously believed it lent them an air of ruggedness and rich experience and the virile aroma of decadent erudition. Yet all it did is make them obnoxious and more repellent to the residents than they already were.

Ever the preachers, the West - both Europeans and Americans - upheld themselves as role models of virtue to be emulated, as points of reference, almost inhuman or suprahuman in their taming of the vices, avarice up front. Yet the disorder in their own homes was broadcast live, day in and day out, into the cubicles inhabited by the very people they sought to so transform. And they conspired and collaborated in all manner of corruption and crime and scam and rigged elections in all the countries they put the gospel to. In trying to put an end to history, they seem to have provoked another round of it - more vicious, more enduring, more traumatic than before. That the West will pay the price for its mistakes I have no doubt. For isn't it a part and parcel of their teaching that everything has a price and that there is always a time of reckoning?