

## Бити Србин данас је срамота! (1998)

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*Некада смо били толерантни код куће и добродошли у свету. Данас нас виде као амбасадоре зла*



**Бити Србин ових дана је срамота. Када напустим своју све мању домовину, најчешће гледам у земљу. Пре неколико месеци, један српски пријатељ и ја посетили смо Мали. Али када су други туристи сазнали ко смо, постали смо главна атракција. Питали су нас: „Шта ви радите овде?“ У многим земљама које сам посетио у последних пет година, то је учтив начин да се каже: „Зар не би требало да сте код куће, где протерујете муслимане и гранатирате села?“**

Када смо били Југословени, моји сународници су путовали више него ико у источној Европи – били смо добродошли и са оне и са ове стране Гвоздене завесе. Као Срби, данас нисмо добродошли нигде. Одбијен сам у амбасадама Малезије, Ирана, Гватемале и Норвешке; службеници ми нису дозволили ни да попуним формулар за визу. Многи моји пријатељи више не могу да отпутују ни у једну западноевропску земљу. Нас виде као амбасадоре мрачне стране новог светског поретка: нетолеранције и етничког чишћења. Пре него што ме неки странац прихвати као пријатеља, морам прво да докажем да нисам чудовиште.

Хероји Другог светског рата, Срби су данас европски изгнаници.

# On Being a Serb

Once we were tolerant at home and welcomed abroad. Now we're seen as ambassadors of evil.

BY ZORAN CIRJAKOVIC

**I**T'S EMBARRASSING TO BE a Serb these days. When I venture out of my shrinking homeland, I find myself staring at the ground. Several months ago a Serb friend and I visited Mali. But when other tourists discovered our ethnicity, we became the main attraction. They asked: "What are you doing here?" As in many countries I've visited in the last five years, that is the polite way of asking: "Shouldn't you be back home driving Muslims from their homes and shelling villages?"

When we were Yugoslavs, my countrymen traveled more than anyone in Eastern Europe — welcome on both sides of the Iron Curtain. As Serbs, we are unwelcome most places. I've been turned away from the embassies of Malaysia, Iran, Guatemala and Norway; the clerks wouldn't even let me fill out the visa forms. Many friends have found it impossible to go anywhere in Western Europe in the past year. We are seen as ambassadors of the new world or-



Serbian President Milošević

der's dark side: intolerance and ethnic cleansing. Before any foreigner will be my friend, I have to prove that I'm not a monster. Heroes of World War II, today's Serbs are Europe's pariahs.

I can understand that. When my Bosnian Serb-cousins overran Srebrenica and slaughtered its menfolk, I was in Tangiers.

Feelings against Serbs ran high, and the worst part was that I agreed with our Arab critics. I don't condone what Slobodan Milošević has done in his pursuit of power, but collective guilt is hard to escape. So in Morocco, I pretended to be Bulgarian. That ended when conversation turned to football. The famous Bulgarian national football team is well known in Morocco, and I couldn't even name the starting players. I decided to pose as a Croat.

I am welcome some places. I could easily visit Libya or Iraq. Sanctions-busters stick together. I found Serbs admired in Sittwe, Burma, where the Buddhists oppress their Muslim minorities with near-Balkan gusto. In India, a party hack from the Hindu nationalist BJP party pronounced himself tickled to meet a Serb. In Greece, many of our Orthodox brothers have made Milošević a sort of honorary patriarch, and the indicted war criminal Gen. Ratko Mladic a latter-day saint. As a member of NATO, Greece is a little critical: the last time I vis-

ited, every Greek I met complained we were not hard enough on Muslims.

With friends like these, I might as well stay home. But home gets worse with each new outrage. I marvel at how many of my oldest friends have turned into raving nationalists. They're convinced that the world is wrong, that we are the victims, as if all the massacres were done by Bosnians and Albanians. As Yugoslavs, we had an oppressive communist regime, but we were reasonably tolerant of one another. As Serbs, we have bought the rhetoric — drilled into us by Milošević's media — on how to hate our neighbors. Croats are "rabbits" when we're chasing them, or "pigs" when they're chasing us. Muslims are "dogs" or "baby killers." Albanians are just "filthy rats."

I feel like a stranger in my own country. Sadly, Milošević has convinced most of us that if you're not a nationalist you must be a traitor. That's what I'm now called when I walk into some cafés in Belgrade. Old acquaintances greet me with disappointment on their faces: "Oh, you're still alive?" It makes me want to head for the border. At least abroad, I can understand why I am a pariah.

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