

Random Notes

*From the desk of Michael Willard, chairman of Willard.
Random Notes are written for a few special friends of Willard
(the agency and the guy).*



November, 2014

The Incredible Lightness of Being Europe



First, there are a few facts to remember: The great land mass of Russia has a shrinking population about the size of Bangladesh. It has an equally small and shrinking economy about equal to one large U.S. state, California.

About half the men in Russia die by the age of 60, alcoholism being one of the main reasons. Its economy is teetering on the edge of disaster. It doesn't really

make anything that can't be had elsewhere, including energy.

Instead of having imperialistic dreams about Ukraine, Georgia, the Baltics and elsewhere, why isn't the country building a healthy, prosperous future for its own people? It's a logical question, but it isn't the preeminent one.

Why in the hell do certain European countries—especially rather recent entrants into the European Union and NATO—ask how high when the Wizard of Odd, Vladimir Putin, says jump.

Having never been a proponent of Ukraine being in NATO, I changed my mind. Ukraine would have much more backbone and be more of an adherent to democratic principles than some Central East European nervous nellies.

That's a sea-change for me. I was against the expansion of NATO when Madeline Albright was then President Clinton's secretary of state. I felt it gave Russia an excuse to feel threatened, and really didn't afford those nations that much more protection.

You have to put yourself in the context of the times. The only way such an all encompassing military protection would really work would be if it could have been extended also to Russia, which would seem to be contrary to the whole concept.

From Russia's point of view, if everyone around its borders considers it the enemy and are in a military alliance to protect one another from the bear, of course Russia is going to feel threatened.

However, we are way beyond that point. Time moves on, and as the poem reflects, you can't cancel half a line. Given the current set of circumstances, it is time for European countries to step up to the plate.

For example, let's take Hungary. Prime Minister Viktor Orban has named Putin as a model to be emulated. Listen to his words: "We have to abandon liberal methods and principles of organizing society...because liberal values (meaning the U.S) today incorporate corruption, sex and violence."

Oh, give me a break.

Or, the prime minister of Slovakia, Roberto Fico. He likened the possible deployment of NATO troops in his country to the Soviet invasion of 1968. He dismissed U.S. President Obama's call for increased defense spending and said sanctions against Russia for invading Ukraine were "suicidal" and "nonsensical."

Oh, give me a break, II.

Then there is the Czech Republic where the defense minister sided with Slovakia and Hungary in fighting European sanctions against Russia. In the category of outrageous is Serbia, part of NATO's "partnership for peace". It invited Putin to Belgrade for a military parade to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Red Army's "liberation" of the city.

But we can always count on Poland, right? Nope.

Poland's Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz has ordered her new foreign minister to urgently revise its policy. She's concerned about "an isolation of Poland" (Wall Street Journal) within Europe that could come from setting unrealistic goals in Ukraine.

One is tempted to say with friends like this who needs enemies. It does seem that comparatively Ukraine would be a stalwart for what is right both in NATO and in the European Union.

All I know is that I wouldn't want to be in a foxhole with the Central European nations above.

An Evening to Remember



Presenting my new novel, "The Legacy of Moon Pie Jefferson", at a reception in Washington, D.C. last week hosted by my former colleague Kyra Cheremeteff. About 60 people attended, including old friends who worked with me in the Ukraine Market Reform program 20 years ago.

For me, it was a magical night. It was a reunion of good friends, and the making of new friends.

My former colleague at Burson-Marsteller, **Kyra Cheremeteff**, and her husband, well-known Arnold & Porter lawyer Tom Richardson, hosted a reception to celebrate the launch of my new novel, "The Legacy of Moon Pie Jefferson" in D.C.

About 60 people attended.

Among the guests were four members of my Burson-Marsteller market reform team in Ukraine from 20 years ago: Karen Diakun, Glenn Sapadin, Jason Penchoff and Deborah Plumstead.

Also on hand was Lewis Lord, former US News editor, and the fellow who hired me for UPI about 45 years ago, along with AP White House correspondent Tom Raum, who I started out with in journalism on the Tampa Times in 1967.

I was pleased to see various people from my B-M past when I lived on my boat and worked at the PR firm in Washington, as well as Andy Ridenour, a founder and former co-host of the NPR program "Mountain Stage".



Hosts Kyra Cheremeteff and her husband Tom Richardson, senior partner Arnold & Porter



Tamera Luzzatto, former chief of staff for Hillary Clinton, is flanked on right by husband David Letter, and on left by governmental relations specialist Jeff Duncan



Willard signing copies of "Moon Pie" to former Burson-Marsteller colleagues Katherine Krupka and Garth Neuffer



Lane Bailey, CEO of Advocorn, and Andy Ridehour, former co-host of NPR's Mountain Stage program



On extreme right, Lewis Lord, former senior editor of US News who hired Willard for UPI in the 1960s. Photo also is Ridehour, Lewis's son, Charlie, and his wife, Dee, who was also a UPI colleague of Willard's.

If you have not picked up from **Amazon** a copy of "Moon Pie" I would hope that you would. I think you will find this political thriller well worth the read. Maybe you will even want to write a short review of the book.



The Willard Reader

I invite you to check out all of my books, paintings and songs at The Willard Reader website located at www.michaelwillard.org

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