"I PLEAD GUILTY"

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By Viken L. Attarian, Montreal, 9 December 2008

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I would like to thank him for responding and making his voice be heard. He is certainly not indifferent.

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Here are my counterarguments:

1. Judging by the date of his comment, he has not read part III. All three pieces belong together and are meant to build the theoretical framework of analysis, from the more general to the more specific. Commenting on the whole before the work is complete is at best ill-advised. Mr. Avedis Kevorkian has made the same point that I am making. That would be like clapping, or in this case booing, after only one movement of a musical work is heard. If anything, it is a comment on the clapper and the booer, not the orchestra. Having said this, I would welcome Mr. Dikran Piliguian to build the counterargument to my position and to cite all the necessary examples and sources and let us have a good debate on the topic.

2. To the accusation that I have studied in Czechoslovakia, I plead guilty. The argument however that this somehow makes me a Stalinist or a Communist is more than flimsy. I have never hidden where I studied and in fact I have written about the experience in my blog. I have also studied (and taught) in France and have studied (and taught) in Canada (mainly Quebec, but also Manitoba). Does that make me a Gaullist or a follower of the Bloc Quebecois? Mr. Piliguian's argument would lead us to conclude for example that the numerous Armenians in various fields such as medicine, engineering, teaching and so on, who number in the thousands and have studied in Soviet Armenia and are now arguably in various positions of authority and leadership in the Diaspora are somehow all KGB moles and closet Stalinists. He is of course free to believe whatever he wants and I will defend his right to have that belief. But, if one agreed with Mr. Piliguian's line of reasoning, and along similar lines of argument, one should conclude that because someone studied in the US, for instance during the Vietnam war, that he/she somehow condoned that war, or worse even approved of the My Lai massacres.

3. Mr. Piliguian has obviously read what I write since he knows so much about me. My work is on public record, including my work for Armenian and non-Armenian human rights issues. I know who I am and what I have done and I have not changed much from the times I was in Czechoslovakia, or even earlier. At that time I was involved in defending the rights for freedom of expression of artists and writers in Communist Czechoslovakia. As a foreign student who enjoyed certain immunities (i.e. I could not be jailed, merely deported), I was involved in distributing the works of "banned" writers, which included Milan Kundera and Vaclav Havel, who later became the president of the Czech Republic after the Velvet Revolution. I can name names and give contacts that can

back up my claim. Since he has turned this issue into an ad hominem attack against me equating me to fascists and defenders of Castro, Chavez, Stalin and Lenin, I would like to ask Mr. Piliguian as to how many times he has personally risked his own personal future and under what circumstances to defend anyone's individual freedoms which he obviously so cherishes? I will publicly salute him if he can do so, because it would mean that we believe in similar ideals.

4. As for the comparison with Michael Moore, I feel extremely flattered although I think it is somewhat unjustified. Again because his argument is completely faulty. He says and I quote "as someone who studied in Czechoslovakia during the time when the country was under a brutal soviet fascist regime, Viken surprises me with his Michael Moorish nonsense that he spews". So the logic is as follows, I studied in a country during a time when it was under a "brutal soviet fascist regime" (giving him the benefit of the doubt for the exaggeration in the qualifiers) so that somehow makes me complicit, yet I surprise him by spewing nonsense worthy of Michael Moore. So if I am a Communist/Fascist and presumably so is Michael Moore in his books, why is he surprised? How is this connection made? The logical conclusion simply cannot be derived from the initial premise. I do not know Mr. Piliguian's field of expertise, but he cannot have studied mathematical logic.

5. Since he is attributing Leninism, Trotskyism, Stalinism and many other "ism"s to me, I can only conclude that this is for name-calling purposes. Any serious reader who knows his material knows how far apart these "ism"s are. In the eye of Mr. Piliguian, they might be equally reprehensible, but that would be like accusing a defendant in a legal case of one major crime, when he might be guilty of another (or not). One would not want to suggest that Conrad Black is guilty of first degree murder, although he might be guilty of first degree fraud. And no, this is not simply a matter for lawyers to know about. I would also suggest that he has not read my text carefully or completely enough, because any reader will immediately spot how I feel about Stalinists and Communist ideologues (or, in general, about any ideologues).

6. Arguing that the real reason for the collapse of the global free markets is because there was forced lending to non-credit worthy homebuyers would be the equivalent to suggest that

a) lower income individuals should not be borrowing, therefore, for example, institutions like the Grameen Bank should not exist and have somehow caused this global catastrophe,

b) the rampant financial risk "securitization" and issuing of dubious derivative instruments that were in turn "sliced/diced" into other types of financial paper and then resold for more profit into hedge funds and so on had absolutely nothing to do with what happened and,

c) great floods (financial collapse) are not due to the fact that we decided to do away with flood barriers (regulations) but are caused because of them. As they say in Armenian, varbed kogheh dan dereh kogh geh haneh - a good thief will make the victim look like the thief.

I will let the learned reader be the judge as to who would qualify as a fascist. I do not claim that Mr. Piliguian is one. Therefore I agree with him. He is neither a Liberal nor a Fascist.

He is however very angry. He should be. Keynes was proven right and Milton Friedman now stands as the "naked emperor". There is nothing that can change that reality.

One does not need to be a rocket scientist to guess which one of the above two was his favourite.