

# Tito's grandson seeks return of Communism

*Belgrade, April 9 (IANS/AKI)* Thirty years after the death of former Yugoslav communist stalwart Josip Broz Tito, his grandson and namesake Josip Broz has begun the uphill task of resurrecting his grandfather's ideals.

Tito, who created a multi-ethnic Yugoslavia after World War II, ruled unchallenged for 35 years until his death on May 4, 1980.

After a split with Moscow, Tito skilfully developed a system which was described by the West as "communism with a human face".

But 11 years after his death, the country got divided, with six former republics becoming independent states. Today, Tito is revered by a few, hated by many and all traces of his rule have been practically obliterated.

There was hardly a city in the former Yugoslavia whose main street wasn't named after Tito. Today there are only a few streets with Tito's name.

His 63-year-old grandson, nicknamed Joska, is the son of Tito's elder son Zarko. He has decided to reverse the course of history and to resurrect his grandfather's ideals. He is collecting 10,000 signatures needed to register his own Communist Party.

"I hope we will complete it by the end of May and our goal is to join parliament after next election," Broz said in an interview with AKI news agency.

One of the problems he faces is that Tito was a Croat and many Serbs perceive Joska as such, despite the fact that he declares himself a Yugoslav and has lived all his life in Serbia.

Asked what motivated him to embark on what seems an impossible task, Broz said: "I'm not suffering from leadership ambitions, but I felt compelled to act after seeing the sad state of the country."

Another motive was to "preserve respect and a memory for everything grandfather has done", he said.

Serbia is grappling with 750,000 jobless, and the average monthly wage has fallen below 300 euros. The country's foreign debt has tripled to 30 billion euros since democratic change followed the popular revolt that toppled former strongman Slobodan Milosevic on Oct 5, 2000.

Many in the country depend on a free hot meal in government-run "popular kitchens".

Despite criticism of his strong-arm rule, most people in the former Yugoslavia believed they lived more comfortably in Tito's era.

Economists said it would take Serbia up to 20 years to achieve the living standards it had during the 1980s. "In Tito's time we lived like normal people and today people not only go hungry but have nothing to offer to their children," Broz said.

"It can't go on like this for long. I'm afraid of unrest, protests, perhaps even another Oct 5, though I wouldn't like this government to end that way," he said. "I don't know any ordinary people with whom I socialise who has a good word for this government," Broz said.

“They have sold everything in problematic privatisation deals and our children will pay off the debt.”

Despite the fact that he led a luxurious life, Tito left no assets to his children and his family never enjoyed any special privileges.

Joska was thrown out of high school for unruly behaviour and ended up in a forestry school. He had worked for most of his life as a forester and for the past eight years he has worked in the catering business.

Drawing a parallel with today’s political elite, Broz said “many of them have beefed themselves up and provided their families for generations to come”.

“But times have changed and the clock can’t be turned back.

“Therefore, we are not advocating a rigid form of communism, but social justice, dignity and opportunity for all, revival of economy, primarily agriculture, and reliance on our own resources.”

Asked whether Serbia should join NATO, Broz said it was an obsolete organisation which had lost all relevance with the abolition of the Warsaw Pact.

“Besides, why should we join a military organisation that brutally bombed us?” he said, referring to NATO’s bomb attacks in Serbia in 1999.

As for the European Union, he says: “Look at Romania and Bulgaria, what have they gained by joining the EU? Do they live better? In Tito’s time we were the European Union for them.”

Broz says he’s encouraged by the fact that many young people are flocking to his party.

“People are disillusioned and hardly 50 percent turn out to vote.

“All parties on the Serbian political scene are more or less the same, relying on lies and deception, and we want to offer an alternative to the abstainers,” he points out.

Tito was least popular among Serbs, but thousands of people from Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia visit his grave every year in the “House of Flowers” in Belgrade.

“Once we set up the party in Serbia, we will do the same in other republics,” Broz said.

“I’m getting calls from all over former Yugoslavia every day and people are waiting impatiently to join,” he added.

Few take him seriously and see him as a real political challenge. But Joska Broz, who closely resembles his grandfather, carries on.

–IANS/AKI

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