

From Exile to King: A Transylvanian Twist

TRANSYLVANIA SOUTH—Few of us privileged to have grown up in this favored land can imagine what it was like to come of age in communist Romania. After all, this is a country whose Dracula is the national hero and boys like the youthful Andrei Codrescu kept a picture of Stalin by their bedside.

"I thought Stalin was my father and god," recalls Andrei, whose real father died when he was a baby. "It threw me off when people started celebrating when Stalin died."

Inspired no doubt by early memories of the great dictator, Andrei Codrescu will rule this year as king and despot of Krewe du Vieux.

King Andrei has traveled a long and twisted path from Transylvanian tyke to Carnival royalty. His home town of Sibiu (famous as the destination of the Pied Piper) had all the fairy tale castles of the European forests and mountains—and all the Romanian secret police of one of the most feared of all the Iron Curtain regimes.

"They had the best suits in the country," his majesty recalls. "They were taller than the average Romanian, they all had mustaches, and they sat around in dark basements reading German philosophy."

Recent reports of individuals matching this description seen sneaking furtively around the French Quarter seem to indicate the presence of NFL security minions (see following story) rather than an influx of Commie goons.

In this setting, young Andrei's impressions of America were somewhat, well, fragmented. "My grandmother said America was where dogs walk around with pretzels in their tails, and in school they had us stabbing wooden bayonets into straw dummies with 'Yankee' on them. But my schoolbooks had pictures of New York in them, and I thought the buildings were great."

Just like American children, King Andrei also remembers atomic bomb drills in school where everyone hid under their desks.

School in Sibiu was not without its upside: the precocious potentate's Russian and discipline teacher was the first in Romania to wear a mini-skirt. This event started Andrei on the road to a long history as a problem child who attempted to be kept after school on a daily basis.

If America at this time was a picture seen in the shards of a broken mirror, New Orleans was barely a silvery sliver on the mirror's edge. King Andrei's introduction to the Crescent City came courtesy of a translation of Mark Twain (one has to imagine a little of the dialectic effect was lost) and smuggled music.

In 1966, when our king was a teenager, Israel purchased freedom for him and his mother and relocated them to Detroit (enough to make one long for Transylvania, no doubt). The next year Andrei hitchhiked to New York City, where his earliest memories include selling his sperm at a sperm bank on 57th street, and getting mugged by muggers who made change.

His highness' first visit to New Orleans came in 1980, for Mardi Gras, of which he remembers very little except getting hosed down by the police on Bourbon Street. In 1983 he applied for a teaching position at LSU, which he received despite (or because of) being a trifle tipsy during his faculty reading.

Now a highly regarded author, teacher, founder of the journal *Exquisite Corpse*, NPR commentator, and French Quarter resident, King Andrei combines an outsider's perspective with a deep love of all the foibles and follies of contemporary American society. He has successfully "corrupted a lot of young minds in 18 years of teaching," and looks forward to caus-

ing further damage in his new, royal role.

A former marcher in the parade, Andrei's anarchist/royalist philosophy—"Like Huey Long: every man a king, and if every man is a king, you've got pure anarchy"—makes him ideally suited to be king of Krewe du Vieux. Indeed, Carnival reminds him of Romanian folk festivals, where "we had to revirginate for three days before the festival so we could have sacrificial virgins."

When asked if he had any words of wisdom for his adoring throngs, King Andrei arched his brow and said cryptically, "The monarch is the message!"

Terrorists Cause Parade Date Change

THE DEN—Due to the threatened activities of a shadowy group of terrorists, the dates of the Krewe du Vieux and several other less important Mardi Gras parades have been moved. Krewe du Vieux, originally slated for January 26, will now parade on January 19 at 7:00 PM.

The terrorist group, known by the initials NFL (thought to stand for Neolithic Fruit Loops or possibly Neurotic Flatulent Larvae), is apparently planning a major event in New Orleans on February 5. When this news reached City Hall, panic-stricken city officials reshuffled the Carnival line-up to avoid further offending the terrorist overlords.

Entreaties to the leader of the NFL, a hooded figure called bin-Tagliabue, to avoid conflict with beloved New Orleans Mardi Gras traditions fell on deaf ears. "Not Fuckin' Likely," was the retort.

A local cell of the NFL, ironically named "the Saints", was originally thought to be part of the February 5th plans. However, the bumbling ineptitude of these local operatives has apparently eliminated them from participation in these activities.