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Mića Jovanović de Bozinoff
BUSINESS AS ART OF LIVING

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Business as Art of Living is a skilfully combined autobiography and textbook for business students. Ron Kirk, a PhD student and an aspiring business man from a country no longer existing, or as the author Mića Jovanović de Bozinoff aptly names it, the Neverland, takes us on a journey of big risks and even bigger pay-offs; to a world where dining in private clubs is an everyday experience and sailing the Adriatic Sea is a pastime. To a world where life is an adventure, in which even Russian spies play a role.

Ron Kirk is twenty-something years young man, a graduate from a country far away, who comes to London with an aim to find his mission – his life mission and his business mission. We follow him in his rambles about the city as he, entranced by the metropolitan surroundings, contemplates on his future. While he might not know what the future holds for him, he is determined to succeed in business. Other than few business blunders that are few and far between, Ron seems to be

unsurpassable in his business dealings. His first company, the Emberstar Limited, makes a small fortune from trading copper at the London Metal Exchange. The omniscient narrator guides us through numerous business deals, which take Ron first throughout Europe and later also to the Far East. With each undertaking the reader learns a new business lesson. As the narrative progresses, we follow Ron from making his first profits, investing and enriching the earnings as well as struggling to keep them. However, the author reveals much more than just the business side of the “art of living”. At times, the book reads as a sailing manual and the reader is introduced to a very different way of living. To a life, where time seems to slow down and where the wind, not the individual, is the master of one’s faith. Part of Ron’s affluent lifestyle are also Journeys made with fast cars, private jets, villas on the Azure Coast and champagne bottles floating in the swimming pool.

The straightforward, chronological narrative is at times interrupted with

Ron's reminiscences of his childhood days. This is how an attentive reader learns that the Neverland is in fact the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and that Ron Kirk's father was among the advisors to the president Josip Broz Tito as well as an able manager with a strong work ethic. The father presented an important figure in young Ron's life and one can see that he admired and respected him. Due to Ron's connection to the former Yugoslavia we not only get familiarized with growing up in a socialist country but also learn about the socialist self-management system. Ron's attitude towards his homeland is best described with his own words: "the country that he had missed all his life, even when he stayed in it".

The value the author ascribes to education is evident throughout the book. There is a constant reference to the knowledge gained at universities. When Ron wants to substantiate his business dealings in theory, he enrolls in Ph.D. program at London School of Economic. He and other characters as well often recall lessons on specific topic when making decisions. Those memories nicely, in the story itself, connect the autobiographical part of this work to its textbook component. The content of the book is well complemented by illustrations, photographs and graphs.

Throughout the story the author inserts captions on business theory or insightful information on history of

trade, psychology, art etc. The first several captions succinctly explain the basics of business, for instance the explanation of business risks on pages 20 to 21. The placement of the captions corresponds well with the content of the main storyline and, at least at the beginning, gradually progress from the basic concepts to the more advanced ones. However, later in the book the cohesive thread of the concepts explained seem to be dependent only on the content of the autobiographical aspect of the work and the educational value of the textbook part becomes somewhat lost. For example, the oversimplified and dubious description of the relationship between profits and taxes on pages 128 to 130 or the outdated explanation of robotization and its impacts on work processes on pages 189 to 191.

The portrayal of the women and the absence of female business role models would seem to be the book's missed opportunity, especially since it is intended for students. While there is no lack of female characters, the great majority of them are depicted as passive objects. They are the "well groomed," creatures "with long legs, fine feet" (page 10), who pour drinks while Ron Kirk watches their "long, beautiful legs" (page 93). One has to wait to page 278 to meet the "stunning Stephanie Fisher", an experienced banker, and at page 292 we are introduced to Geneviève Paloux, the successful owner of a large law firm.

The author of the book, dr. Mića Jovanović de Bozinoff is the founder of the Megatrend University, one of the oldest private universities in Serbia, a professor, a published author, a winner of many awards, both national and international, and a somewhat controversial person in the Serbian public. As the narrator of *Business as Art of Living* he unapologetically reveals to the reader a selection of events from his past and the experiences gained. He, as well as his character Ron Kirk, lives his life to the fullest and possess a strong desire to live each moment to the maximum. The result is this fascinating tale, part true, part fiction, and an inspiration in the form of mathematical formula for density of life. The density of life is a creative way to prolong one's life and can be calculated by dividing the

sum of events by the age of each individual person.

The narrative flows naturally and it is very easy to get pulled into the world of great business gains or get lost in the descriptions of mistral blowing off the shores of the Croatian coast. What makes this book interesting are the narrator's impressions of the events, despite being somewhat romanticized. This autobiographical novel meets textbook for business students makes for an alluring holiday reading for students who would like to take a break from academic literature but at the same time wish to stay in touch with the subject of their studies, or for those looking for motivation in a form of a story of big risks and even bigger pay-offs.