

‘The Barber from Peru’ Talks Tariffs & Pundits Roger Simon

By Roger L Simon

I phoned my—and [Groucho’s](#)— buddy “The Barber in Peru” to see how folks in his hometown of Peru, Indiana (not the mountainous land of Pisco Sours) were reacting to the Great Tariff Crisis. Previous conversations with the Barber [here](#) and [here](#).

“Hello, Barber. It’s Roger. Is this a bad time?.”



“For you? Never... But luckily it’s three in the afternoon and the shop’s empty. This is a working class town and it’s busiest before eight a. m and after five. Middle of the day, I

can drive myself crazy surfing the internet.”

“Speaking of which, have you been following the tariff craziness.”

“With all the stock market gyrations? You think I don’t have a 401k? I have to plan for the future when I can’t cut it anymore... that’s a joke...”

“Not bad.”

“Thanks... But I already have such horrible arthritis in my right hand I’m mainlining ibuprofen even if my doctor says it’s bad for the liver. But you know what? Unlike some of the so-called right wing pundits, I’m gonna give this tariffs business a chance for at least a week. Hot shots like that Ben Shapiro character were after Trump in less than fifteen minutes. Hard to believe he wasn’t laying for the president all along. We’ve got two political parties in this country—one lousy and one worse than lousy.”

“Hard to disagree.”

“That’s why I quit donating. Most of my clients have too. You get honest talk in the barber’s chair. Political solicitations are destroying email and texts, everyone’s saying. It’s endless, like The Sorcerer’s Apprentice. Worst are when they send you a survey as if they care about your opinion. You take ten minutes to fill out something no one ever reads and then at the end they’re asking for more money. And if you don’t donate, you get more texts saying either you’re going to lose some kind of honorary card no one could possibly want or listing a whole bunch of supposedly important people who have written you asking for cash and you have not responded, you ungrateful son of a you-know-what... What do you call that?”

“Passive-aggressive.”

“Right. Passive-aggressive. I remember. Who’s responsible for

this nonsense?"

"Political pros."

"You mean like James Carville? I used to like him years ago, thought he was funny, but now he's gone off the deep end, [calling everybody and his brother a Nazi](#). I guess he's doing anything possible to stay in the game."

"Bingo."

"My wife makes me switch him off every time he appears on TV. Same for Shapiro, that Candace woman, Rachel Maddow, Jim Acosta, anybody named Cuomo, Meghan and Harry, the list goes on. It's long. She sticks a Bible in my hand and tells me to go read it."

"Smart woman."

"Indeed. But to be honest I don't always stick with it. I'm a junkie that has to have my news fix. Sometimes I even go to the Daily Mail, that I know to be two-thirds lies. At least it's not the New York Times... But it's funny you called me because I was thinking of you last night, looking at videos from across the country of all those 'Hands Off' demonstrations. I thought #metoo was over."

"Hands off, me too. Another clever joke... I'm supposed to do that. You're the straight man."

"Got it. Anyway, seeing that Palestinian flag the size of Texas unfurled over DC must have —"

"Given me about 23 migraines?... At least that many. There hasn't been such mass brainwashing since the Cultural Revolution. Ninety percent of those lamebrains didn't even know Pelosi, Clinton, Gore and Obama, probably a zillion others on the left, were all for tariffs before Trump actually did something about it. Trump should deport the entire Ivy League to South Somalia... But I'm supposed to be interviewing

you, not the other way around. Let's go back to why I called. What does the barber shop gang think of the tariffs?"

"Depends on social class. The doctors and the lawyers, my [dentist who had his Tesla defaced](#) I told you about, hate it. The working class like it just fine. Like most of America. The folks that work in our neighborhood machine shop or the industrial supply place down the road have gotten the short end for a long time. And there are more of them than there are dentists..... Speaking personally, when I look around this shop at my equipment—scissors, shears, trimmers, combs, clippers, straight razors, brushes, even some of the chairs themselves—they're all from China, Malaysia, Laos, who knows where? I bought most of it on Amazon, I'm embarrassed to say. None of it's made in the USA anymore. It all works fine, more for less, and I know it's not important stuff like computer chips or medicine we have to get back here but to me, since it's what I do, it's kind of sad. A country that doesn't make its own scissors is sad."

At that point I felt a little sad myself because it was easy to see what he was saying was true. It made me irritated at all the people I had heard piling on Trump the last few days. Maybe if he expressed it as personally as the Barber more might go along with the program— but I suspected they would still probably want to kill him, or actually do it.

"As for Trump," the Barber continued as if he had read my mind, "a lot of these nutcases high and low are jealous of him, for his money, for his power, but mostly because he actually does things, unlike other politicians. He's already closed the border in a few weeks. Whatever that judge does is just window dressing. And he runs foreign policy because they can't possibly keep up even if his employees make mistakes, even if they try to turn them against each other. On most issues, most of our people have been with him all the way and remain so. But the haters are going to hate until the cows come home no matter what. I know that's an old expression

about the cows. You're the writer. Come up with a better one."

"I'm not, uh, feeling too creative at the moment."

"One other thing about tariffs. If you really want to change the playing field, make it even relatively even, you have to do it brutally, Trump style. There's no other way. Otherwise, you didn't really want to do it in the first place. You just pretended you did. It's meaningless."

"Bubbe meise."

"What the hell is that?"

"An old wives' tale, in Yiddish."

"I like it."

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