

CIVIC

The day after

By: Daliborka Uljarević

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What is our vision? What are the main issues on which there will be no compromise? What are the realistic solutions for the problems we identified a hundred times before? These are the issues that should be the subject of new, constructive debates, instead of mean, fruitless exchanges which only undermine the already fragile potential for changes, contributing only to personal promotions and maintenance of everything that stands in the way of our progress.

Via one foreign media we learned that the Prime Minister is thinking of retiring before the expiry of his term. No sign of life from the ever alert (pro)government moralisers who often remind us that it's not right to air our domestic affairs abroad, especially if they're negative. Maybe they think this is such good news that it ought to be broadcasted though all international channels?

It would have been fair of the Prime Minister to first mention it here in Montenegro, because it is something that concerns all of us. Like it would be precious for us to know what visions for Montenegro exist in his and the heads of others who decide or pretend to decide the fate of Montenegro. Or does it all come down to reshuffling internal party deals, cadres and interests, however well wrapped into "sacrifices" and "higher goals"?

There is no doubt that sooner or later **Milo Đukanović** will have to go, one way or another. But, like in every futuristic fiction, there is the key genre question: what will the day after be like?

It seems that the alternative dramaturgical machine does not have a very clear vision on that. And that could turn out to be just as problematic as everything we are justifiably and convincingly criticising right now in the Montenegrin context, especially if we know that DPS and Đukanović are preparing for that day.

Great expectations are a dangerous thing. And they are even more dangerous when they are hazy, impatient, impervious for approaches or ideas that do not fit the, lately popular, "bomber" approach. The nature and effectiveness of this approach deserve a chapter of their own.

Let us just say that without a clear strategy and a minimum consensus among those who think that this government is bad a run in a vicious circle will be continued with *ad hoc* criticism aimed at the empty space or at what has already fallen thus only contributing to the accumulation of dissatisfaction on all levels.

We need a serious, responsible approach to negotiating the backbone of a scenario that would entirely acknowledge the constraints of our present reality, instead of apriority rejecting anything that does not fit into an already defined, maximalist logical, political or any other framework. We cannot be content to say that this government will eventually collapse on its own like a rotten tree trunk, leaving others to take what they think they deserve, for this would be contrary to all social laws and historical experience. Nor can we stake everything on a single deviation of this government – its criminal record, and on a single card – the

trial in Bari, and disregard all of its war-criminal, fake-traditionalist, homophobic, gender insensitive, discriminatory, undemocratic side ready to overrun all laws and institutions for the sake of its party and personal interests.

This continuous repetition of history, whose lessons we are stubbornly refusing to learn, is too expensive and too painful, and it keeps us imprisoned in a circle from which we cannot break out until we decide to face the consequences of a senseless, ignorant attitude towards past, our own and that of our region. Facing the past cannot be conditioned by lustration. This is tackling the thing upside down – an effective process of facing the past can open up the opportunities for lustration: the most important is to establish the facts in order to prevent repeated violation of rights and continuation of crimes. And crime against victims is lasting as long as the justice has not been served. This is why the establishment of RECOM (Regional Commission for establishing and communicating facts about war crimes and other severe violations of human rights between 1991 and 2001 on the territory of former SFRY) is of such importance for Montenegro today. It is one of the pieces in a puzzle that should be our vision of the future. Instrumentalising this process and exploiting it for daily political interests and animosities, or worse, abandoning it completely, would be an expression of our impotence to thoughtfully, responsibly create a common life, drawing at least one process of systemic importance to its conclusion.

In a country where knowledge is in deficit, and ego in surplus, where it is all too easy to create antagonistic categories “us” and “them”, it is not difficult to get trapped in this radically polarised situation where we can barely see the wood for trees and are tying our own hands. Our skills will be measured by our ability to get out of the trap, not by the extent by which we get engrossed by it.

That is why this is not time to stoke conflicts and wave blanket labels, to be intolerant towards difference and rest on old laurels or boast of the length of years in combat. Many promising players have slipped just when they thought they were too strong and that they needed nobody, fighting back the inevitable. It is time to shape up those elements of the civic spirit that proved reliable. This requires a lot more knowledge, patience, risk and courage than all our efforts so far. The day after will not come tomorrow, but with a strategic approach we can ensure that it comes more quickly and, more importantly, that it doesn't become a failed opportunity, and that we use it to the fullest to Europeanise Montenegro.

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