

CIVIC

## Conscience on sedatives

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**The beginning of change will come when everybody leaves their own shadow, shakes off the humbleness and purges self-deception, when we face the populist ideology and wake up as individuals ready for concrete action and a life worthy of a human being.**

**What are the clamps that keep you from going, not waiting for others, to articulate legally and politically the principle of citizenship by being what you are and not what you're expected to be? Are they really worth it? Or are they just sedatives for your conscience?**

In a country where the criminal is less guilty than the state which spurs him towards crime, it is hard, but all the more necessary, to talk about the principle of citizenship, of civic courage or disobedience as the modern foundations of political struggle in transforming the existing regime into a contemporary state.

Here breaking the law is hardly ever punished any more, unlike the ever more frequent and vicious lashings at the display of disloyalty to the system which engenders the crime in the first place, protecting the power-mongers who believe that the system exists to be on their disposal and forgetting that they are only a cog in the machine. That's why the state prosecution never answers citizens' questions about its work, about the status of certain cases which occupy the attention of the public for months on end or about the signs of an all-encompassing political influence over the profession. That's why the police rather engages in public debates with the dissidents instead of investigating and processing crimes and criminals. That's why the officials who are supposedly the carriers of the process of European integration are the first to show indifference to the courts and court decisions.

Logically, what follows are variations on a farce with a known ending, for the rules are not based on the principles of justice but on revenge and covering up the real crime. This radicalises the society, suppresses the all present aggression and feeds destructive individuals who are easily convinced to threaten, on behalf of somebody else, a human rights researcher, or beat up a director of a daily, attack a child of an opposition leader etc. – it's always different, and it remains the same. After the initial few scenes, the plot unravels according to a known scenario: relativisation, trivialisation and oblivion, without the case being solved, and with the threatening message clearly imprinted on the victims and the observer's mind. The worst is that we are getting used to it, we take the abnormal as the necessary, underestimating the aims of those who inspire the crimes and who wish to limit and suppress the potential of any personal or wider rebellion, and by the same token, change.

In this context many believe that there is no point in a scientific analysis of our political reality, they fall back on vague predictions and give up on strategic action. But the impotence of this approach forces us to go back to critical reassessment both of ourselves and of others.

Here there has never been a change in the authoritarian political culture, the cult of the leader and the despotic rule, and no technological progress on the road to the union of orderly, democratic states that is the EU can erase that.

It is also quite probable that no change will come to the long anticipated October, Orange or any other revolution and we should give up on this fairy-tale version of events, and get down to realistic solutions. It is much more sustainable, even if it doesn't seem like that to the impatient ones and those who are powered by adrenalin rather than ratio, to slowly build up a critical democratic public which does not accept the pre-chewed versions of reality, than to dream of changes that somebody else will execute for us. Because they won't! And why would they? Why would anybody else in the EU

get upset because of the rubbish we spread all around us and clean it up instead of us, if even we are reluctant to do it?

Still, the arrogance of the ruling coalition is one of the best indicators of the beginning of its end. That's why we see every so often nervous reactions on the part of powerful individuals, of the system they (don't) control or their friends in the ranks of the parallel power centres. And that is a good sign, even if their eruptions are terrifying. They indicate that they might be losing the grip, that the minority that was once easy to suppress and punish is now growing, as evident in those sporadic outbursts of civic resistance where you would least expect it. In order to keep up the resistance and encourage it to spread further and give a shake to the system, we need a free, critical public as the foundation of a modern political community. This public ought to be composed of free individuals who are ready for sacrifices but thirsty for the beauty of a life which requires courage, spirit, intelligence, conscience, passion and dreams.

The culture of bent necks and obedience for the sake of some short term benefits should be replaced by the culture of non-acceptance which is best described by the famous Polish writer and dramatist **Witold Gombrowicz**, when he writes "You have spent your entire life on your knees. Now try something different! Stand up!".

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Nothing can change the pattern of rule so much and so thoroughly as democratic mobilisation of the members of a community founded upon principles of citizenship which leads to the basic political good that the state can provide – security, regardless of the differences of characteristics, beliefs or choices. And a modern state is only possible if all of its citizens believe that they have equal chances, if they recognise and accept the state as their own political community.

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