

CIVIC

The Commission says – BUT

By: Daliborka Uljarević

Brussels' newspeak has no phrase for "emperor is naked", but rather relies on a construction which translates to our language as "That's nice, BUT...". Which is why this report is generally positive, as it leaves us with a foggy promise that we won't be staying alone in the house with bullies for much longer.

The European Commission Progress Report has arrived. The document is too detailed for our broadest public, too boring and overflowing with the Brussels newspeak, too subtle for the crudeness of our reality, but nonetheless worthy of careful reading as our own X-ray report. It is an overview of our falsely patriotic, patriarchal, tribal, corrupt, undemocratic, revanchist, (war)criminal, misogynist, homophobic society where those who have created it in this manner are deceiving themselves that European clothing is all it takes to hide everything.

I am no patriot by vocation. There are others, higher than myself, who have taken the righteous title of the "fathers of the nation" together with an arsenal of phrases fit solely for local consumption, phrases which in that dreamland Europe would invite a medical report while here they still represent the highest expression of statebuilding consciousness, especially when spiced up by criticism of those malicious, frustrated and shameful critics of the Leader, the Party, second fiddles and supernumeraries of a theatre piece whose scenario has lost even the charm of unpredictability. It's been a while since patriotism here outgrew the bounds of intimate, complex feelings and became a profitable business, turning into its opposite.

Social schizophrenia is socially desirable behaviour, and the deviants like me who dare to say the same in Podgorica, Morinj, Brussels, Berlin, London, etc. are moreover accused of the lack of proper upbringing, because it's not nice and patriotic to talk badly about one's country abroad ?! I remain proud of the values and principles I have learned from my parents, and I refuse to identify the state with the Leader, his suite of arrogant powermongers and others who for the sake of their own interests have forgotten long time ago on decency, professional standards and public wealth.

Various pressures of transition deprived the patriarchal system from even the minimum of traditional values, but left it with the mechanisms of deception, force, divisions into those "for" and "against" the leader. The tribal system transformed into a godfather-party system, and connections and ample misuse of our money and goods replaced the ethical codex which once obliged the members of these clans, and inspired **Marko Miljanov** to write "Examples of Humanity and Bravery", which remain as mere slogans for occasion speeches.

The EU too is warning us about corruption ever since it began dealing with us, now with even greater concern, in addition to the well known weak administrative capacities and strong crime. But the most responsible and most powerful have no time to deal with that, they are too busy with the dissidents.

Women are still on the margins of the society, and if you want to discredit someone without an argument, label him a homosexual, lesbian or transgender person and you're done.

I overemphasise, intentionally, I know that the favourite monopolists on duty with a different opinion will rush to explain that we don't leave badly at all, that this is a society which holds regular elections and appoints its rulers democratically, that we are running on our way to Europe and no "radical intelligence" or "media Talibans" can stop us now, that the Leader is the best solution, because we don't have a better one. May he live forever, imagine the emptiness if by any chance he would one day disappear...

Geographically close, but essentially far from EU, we live in a state where the Leader is above institutions, he receives people on his canapé like once did his ancient ally **Milošević**, and his boundless grace and wisdom find a solution to everything, even to a protest of pupils from Cetinje, without anybody in his institutions feeling guilty or taking responsibility for the fact that for 45 days 320 pupils were out of school!? What matters is that the Leader scored another point. And that we understood that he can solve everything, if he wants to, and that he is an alternative to that EU with all its complications, insistence on the rule of law and stability of institutions, because his solutions are easier, faster, more effective...

But the things are slowly changing. The Commission, in its diplomatic way, noted that there are strong and detrimental political influences where they must not be even in traces. And for all of us this is the most important part of this Report which marks a tiny, but all important step away from the usual technical assessment. A year ago I insisted, regretfully, that the lack of political capacities has not been detected by the Commission, although this is the source of all other causes. On the road to EU the ones in Brussels are learning to see us better and understand more clearly, a development often dismissed as paranoia of the "shameful" ones.

These are hard times for the Leader. He has to fight rising appetites of the controversial party lords, parallel centres of power which seek and obviously get the perks for their fighting record, and filling out some questionnaire, establishing transparent procedures or giving credit to dissenters is not likely to cause adrenalin rushes... The Great Narrative is now over, the moment to transform the party and combat against those who in an orderly society become a dangerous burden has been missed. Now, everything takes more effort, wisdom, tolerance to others, vision and personal courage which also brings certain sacrifice. This cannot be supplemented by faking reforms or forcing the system to the breaking point, nor by showdowns with those who are openly saying that emperor is naked.

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The author is executive director of Centre for Civic Education (CCE)