

CIVIC

Occupation: Patriot

By: Daliborka Uljarević

What is patriotism? And who is it that's currently endangering the interests and identity of Montenegro? How to fight them and to ensure the prosperity of the state?

The cheap, circus-like patriotism ought to be opposed by civic patriotism, which is centred on citizens and their freedom

Since a while ago, through continuous and conscious propagandistic exploitation, the meaning of certain words and feelings has been lost in this country, even when these express our most intimate relationship towards the issues which (in)directly shape our personalities.

It is no wonder, then, that when we face serious challenges to our existence, instead of seeking accountability of those who brought us into such situations or reaching for concrete measures to overcome the problems, we find ourselves in the midst of inspired epics about dangers from the internal and external enemies, which could have been written by the most dour communist commissar.

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Maturity in problem-solving consists of the ability to identify the problem correctly, analyse the causes and select strategies that will lead to a sustainable solution. Yes, there is, of course, always the immature way of the ostrich – to sweep the unpleasant things under the carpets and to fight non-existing battles, whose magic ingredient is patriotism, as well.

Patriotism is a deeply personal feeling which is not to be boasted aloud, but demonstrated through deeds, through that honour which is as difficult to encounter here as it is easy to hear it being spoken about, and through courage of taking responsibility for our actions. Instead, patriotism here has been deformed and domesticated as a popular and profitable occupation, as an (extra)ordinary weapon to limit every attempt at democratic transformation of the state and to prevent us from focusing on crucial issues, obscured by the foam of nationalist waves.

This is why we need no other enemies from those we already have – those who too easily about important issues of identity, using it to score cheap political points and manipulating it to protect particularistic interests of the decision makers and controversial businessmen who show up to collect their dues. It is the best way to avoid responsibility for the scandals which are shaking the country to its foundations: to stage the old farce whose aim is to foment fears and draw public attention away from the existential problems in favour of some alleged threat to the state and the nation. This routine resort to the great themes of the national culture in order to obscure the reality does indeed lead to a situation where our statehood and national being are being threatened, but by those loud, self-declared local protectors of our interests.

Nothing is by chance. And the "patriotic story" is badly needed by someone, and consequently appears in its most anxious, loud and tasteless form. Among other, it is a great tool to nip in the bud a rarely promising intimation of an agreement between the three biggest opposition parties.

Montenegro has long been lacking a chance like this, and it is doubtful whether it will soon get such an opportunity again. This is why the only important questions should be: How to depose the parties in power before they cause irreparable damage, and how to lead the country towards genuine democratisation and Europeanisation?

After numerous unforgivable errors the opposition finally made a step forward in a document which should be signed in a few days by the leaders of the Serbian People's Party, New Serbian Democracy and Movement for Changes, with a purpose of binding them to act together in order to fulfill a vision of Montenegro as a "safe, united and prosperous" country, whose every citizen can count on assistance, support and protection, regardless of his or her differences. Even if these parties fail to run together for the elections, this document is of great importance, because of three things it stands for: mutual respect of differences in political opinion, unambiguous commitment to Montenegro as the only homeland to all of them, and the unwavering support for its integration into EU.

It is up to the citizens now to take up their own responsibility and contribute as much as they can, if not by actively participating, then by recognising and supporting valuable initiatives. There will be no change until every one of us has internalised the necessary social changes. We will remain in a space where some individuals still think critically, but their numbers will be dwindling. Action and solidarity on all levels are not of paramount importance. It is time for all of us to do something, without granting anybody unconditional support - instead, we must all carefully follow their deeds and judge according to the results. Only that way will the state of Montenegro be set on the right track.

The cheap, circus-like patriotism ought to be opposed by civic patriotism, which is centred on citizens and their freedom. The freedom is found in the hearts of men and women; if it dies there, no law, no constitution and court can safeguard it. Awakened citizenship is the only guarantee to depose this government and bring into power democratic, accountable forces.

How long will we still have to wait? How bad does it need to get until we wake up? Do you think that you will manage to avoid the troubles that are now the suffering of others? It is a pleasant, but illusory thought... it was also the motto of the one who in the end said: "When they came to take me, there was nobody left to protest"...

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