

Seven European Commands

By: Daliborka Uljarević

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The question of whether this government can meet the seven conditions is a major one. If they could, and if they had the willingness to do that so far, we would not be given these conditions at all. Rather, we would have been offered the date for the start of negotiations with the Opinion. In a number of areas, the commission itself has noted that there is no political will. Yet, neither in the immediate surroundings of Montenegro, nor in a broader context is there a more stable government. Therefore, the most logical conclusion is that this government does not have the capacity to democratize and Europeanize society, and that its rhetoric has been exhausted.

A month ago, on the sidelines of a meeting in Brussels, I had a long and eventful conversation with a senior official of the European Commission. Our conversation about the problems that burden the Montenegrin society revealed that we still see then in very different ways. My key objection was related to approach of the Commission and its representatives to the analysis of the state of affairs, and to their tendency to deal with the consequences rather than with the actual causes, to deal with technicalities and not with the content, to compare us to those countries in the region that have higher capacities to resolve the problem while avoiding the potentials of Montenegro to deal with those issues from within.

In its 2009 Progress Report, the Commission has shown that it knows us better. In this regard, the Commission has made a significant step forward. This had certainly given rise to new expectations. Driven by that new spirit, I have attempted to point to him the level, which I considered essential, but which was often disregarded. At the end of this open exchange of opinions, my interlocutor, with a smile on his face, said the following: "Wait until you see the Commission's opinion. Believe me, you will not be disappointed!"

The Avis has arrived and I was really not disappointed. Of course, the Commission has, quite diplomatically, in its specific linguistic expression, formulated this document. It was done in a way so that everyone could have piece of the cake. Yet, not even the sweet talk of Brussels can conceal the two clear messages that have been sent: 1) that, so far, you have more or less been doing your homework to the minimum required level, which we have properly noted and praised; you have crafted an illusion of the process, and you have adopted a number of rules that you apply with difficulty or with reluctance, 2) we have not forgotten what we expect from you and now we deliver these requests to you in the form of seven conditions, and we literally give you a roadmap, that you should not detour from in order to get closer to us.

By doing so, the EU has thrown hot chestnuts into our hands, thus leaving all the responsibility to us. And that burden is too heavy society as feeble as the Montenegrin one, a society that still relies heavily on the leaders and not on institutions and rules. How to deal with this challenge?

The notion of responsibility is long inexistent in Montenegro. Its place is filled by collective irresponsibility, which operates from the lowest to the highest levels. That is, everyone is irresponsible as much as possible in the given situation. So, the one at the top cannot hold those at the bottom accountable because such a behaviour would open up the issue of his or her own sustainability. Hence, we end up running in a vicious circle that can not be broken without serious political change or at least a serious shift in the current constellation of political forces.

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This circle of responsibility extends to all of us, who need to think about our next steps; the steps that follow the initial euphoria caused by the Commission's Avis. It is hard to break the strong conformist chains, which lock up a significant number of people living here. Yet, breaking these chains is necessary and it has a healing effect.

The process of deep reform has been initiated, although it seems that only a few of those who, tormented by the lack of dynamics at the domestic level, and haunted by nothingness, still believe in the possibility of a different and better life. A further step should be to change the habits of the monopolists of power and their blind followers, because such a group becomes the main constraint and the major obstacle to our road to the European Union, in which loyalty to the country is by no means equal to loyalty to the ruling ones.

By giving us these seven conditions to fulfill, the EU has given us a great chance, but we are the ones who have to make the best out of it. In some cultures, number seven has magical qualities, and it denotes perfection, effectiveness and fulfillment. Be it coincidence or not, but if we do not fully meet the seven conditions we cannot exist as a healthy and functioning democratic society.

Are we ready for that?

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