

CIVIC

After Tito, a tito?

By: Daliborka Uljarević

For the beginning, every one of us should first decide what kind of life we want: as subjects or as citizens – a life in which we will talk fearfully about all deviations our society is rife with, waiting for somebody else to “do the job” for us, or a life in which we will stand up for our own and others’ rights. There is a world of difference between the two – the first appears more comfortable, but I truly believe that one sleeps better if one chooses the second.

Today is 29 years since **Josip Broz Tito** died.

On that day, one five year old boy went up to his father and asked, worried: “Dad, what are we going to do now?”. In retrospect, the collective paralysis that drew such a question from a five year old appears unreal and terrifying.

I believe that in our, perpetually divided society, this date gives rise to very different feelings – like with many other issues, we have failed to reach a consensus on this matter.

Anniversaries simply bring reflections on the times past, even a subconscious desire to sum up the results and compare. There are many, and especially the armies of those who did not find their place in this unfinished transition business, who will say that life was wonderful before. They will remind you that there was order, one could count on hard, honest work to bring better future, that titles were based on knowledge, that their relations to other people were healthier, happier and more transparent, that everybody had an equal chance in the society and a sense of being able to reach one’s goals if you only wanted them enough and worked hard enough. There are also those who will remind you that the freedom of speech, whenever it meant criticism of the system, came at a very high price, that the society was closed for dissidents and that the party controlled every segment of the life of its citizens, and the economy was doomed to fail because it ignored basic economic principles. And so on... But one cannot live on memories, even if sometimes they make a good refuge from our everyday reality.

The key question is: where is Montenegro today, 29 years after the death of a man who was so worshiped that we even named our capital city after him?

Some generations in Montenegro do remember neither Tito nor his times. There is nothing strange about it – evolution proceeds and we all move on.

Some generations only know of **Milo Đukanović** and his retinue – i.e. as far back as their life and political memory reaches, there is only Milo and Milo’s times. That is strange, because the mirage of revolution (we never had a real one) did the trick, we are running in a vicious circle that has already swallowed many of our years, quality of life, chances for a better future, while strengthening the post of the leader, fears and uncertainties.

We were always short on civic courage, just like in the “good old Tito’s times”. The lack of a genuine (r)evolutionary process brought us the change of curtains, but the cult of the leader proved resistant: it survived all ideological, political and other overturns, defying the spirit of change and relying heavily on the techniques of government which are blind to the idea of a common good.

Theory informs us that civic courage does not arise of its own accord: it requires certain fundamentals and essentials of democracy, in the sense of the rule of law and a certain level of political culture. Simply put, in order to fight for a right we need to know that we are entitled to it and be ready to use our voices. Pivotal social changes have been built on that notion, followed by sometimes merely symbolic social actions.

Just think of the black woman **Rosa Parks** who in 1955, riding on a city bus in the American state of Alabama refused to stand up and give her place to a white person, which was the law at the time, and thus sparked the struggle against racial segregation. In this particular case, as the dispute unfolded, the Constitutional Court annulled this and similar laws, making citizens equal before the law regardless of the colour of their skin. Today, president of the United States of America is **Barrack Obama**.

Therefore, properly channeled civil disobedience is one of the sources of democratic order and a necessary engine of a transition in a society aiming to acquire a democratic character. We have to bear this in mind at all times, and especially when we feel that our rights are in danger. And we have to start acting, every one of us, because it's up to us!

This is in a way part of the answer to that five year old boy who is now thirty-four and prone to locally entrenched depressing views asked me a few days ago, as worriedly as 29 years ago when he stood in front of his father: "What are we going to do now?".

For the beginning, every one of us should first decide what kind of life we want: as subjects or as citizens – a life in which we will talk fearfully about all deviations our society is rife with, waiting for somebody else to "do the job" for us, or a life in which we will stand up for our own and others' rights. There is a world of difference between the two – the first appears more comfortable, but I truly believe that one sleeps better if one chooses the second.

They say the vision of the "greatest son of our peoples" was summed up in a motto: "To live is to build yourself creatively into the time and space in which you exist".

What is your vision? Which is your choice?

Do not miss the chance to do the right thing. For yourself and for those who right now cannot do it.

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