



Weekly Briefing

**Montenegro social briefing:
Is the return of dangerous ideologies in
Montenegrin society on the scene?
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Is the return of dangerous ideologies in Montenegrin society on the scene?

Summary

The recent controversy in the Montenegrin parliament, during which a minister questioned the existence of genocide in Srebrenica, has provoked a series of condemnations from both the domestic and international public. However, the problem for Montenegrin society is the fact that the government itself, and probably a good part of the Montenegrin public who voted for the ruling parties, share the opinion of its minister. It is a defeat of civilization values in Montenegro. In order for Montenegrin society not to stumble, it is necessary to hear the voice of the intellectual elite in condemning such statements.

Introduction

The preoccupation of the Montenegrin social scene in March suddenly went in the direction of harsh condemnation of the Montenegrin government and its Minister of Justice, Human and Minority Rights, who told in the Montenegrin parliament that he did not know whether genocide took place in Srebrenica in 1995 or not. This has rightly diverted attention from the current economic and other problems in which Montenegro finds itself, because it is a thought that is in line with the dangerous ideologies that have dragged humanity into the abyss in the past.

Condemnation by the domestic and international public

After a hypocritical statement by the minister that he would recognize the genocides in Srebrenica, when it is unequivocally proved (despite the fact that the International Court of Justice in The Hague has already called it genocide), the same minister said that the international court had lost its legitimacy. This is not surprising from the former legal representative of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC), a religious institution whose representatives in Montenegro were often known to the public for promoting war criminals to heroes.

However, this did not go unnoticed by the domestic and international public, which criticized such views expressed in the Montenegrin parliament. Condemnations came from all sides, starting with civil society organizations, social activists, some political parties (mostly opposition)... Associations of genocide victims demanded an apology from the Montenegrin minister "for denying the genocide in Srebrenica". There was no apology. Also, some foreign embassies came forward condemning any denial of the genocide. The US Embassy to Montenegro called the Montenegrin government to admit that there was genocide in Srebrenica. The German ambassador seems to have expressed a very worrying view that recent events such as controversial attempts to name streets by war criminals, desecrate mosques and relativize the Srebrenica genocide, have made him increasingly concerned about the direction Montenegro is currently moving as a state and society. The European Union, through a spokesperson for the European Commission, sent a very sharp message that the EU rejects and condemns any denial, relativization or misinterpretation of the Srebrenica genocide.

The government has shown its true face

Despite such calls from international officials, the Montenegrin government ignored the call, saying it only respected Montenegro's continuity of international obligations, as well as the decisions of all international institutions. But, quite unnecessarily, the government added that it "does not want to, nor can it change the decisions of international courts, but also to declare some nations genocidal and others holy." With this populist stance, the government tried to further relativize not only the crime but also the statement of its minister, trying to present the condemnations of his statements as an attempt to attribute genocide to the Serb people. The government has perfidiously neglected the essence of the problem.

It is not human to remain silent, deny or relativize any crime and genocide that happened, no matter who participated in it. Denial or silence of crimes that have manifested themselves in any form, and especially in the form of genocide, cannot be a matter of consent or relativization. There cannot and must not be a public debate about whether something that the international court has declared as genocide is really genocide or not. Moreover, neither legal recognition of genocide nor legal condemnation is so important as it is important to condemn, as human beings, the attempt to systematically destroy civilians (regardless of skin color, religion or nationality) in one territory as an anti-human and anti-civilization act. By this act, the

government declared itself ultra-right, revisionist and clero-nationalist. It is also worrying that the most radical part of the government has significant public support. The question is, how did Montenegrin society get to this point?

Perhaps part of the mental numbness towards the ideological dangers of the ideas subtly placed by the new government in Montenegro can be found in the doing or not doing of the previous government headed by the Democratic Party of Socialists. Although this party issued a declaration on Srebrenica, which was adopted by parliament in 2009, it did not specify that it was genocide and there were no lustration of those responsible, which welcomed people like the Minister of Justice to abuse it. Also, the public outrage over corruption and other social problems that branched out during the previous government is only one of the factors that can push the average citizen towards extremism and acceptance of ideologies such as fascism. This is confirmed by Rob Riemen in his work "The Eternal Return of Fascism". Exploring the phenomenon of fascism points precisely to the skilful use of dissatisfaction and resentment by fascist ideologues. The policy of indignation, as well as other policies aimed at provoking anger and fear, the need for scapegoats, xenophobia and the like is something that the new Montenegrin government, or at least some of its representatives, is not far from.

With such statements, politicians clearly send the message that the free-thinking mind in Montenegro is not welcome. Also, the previously mentioned author explains the revival of fascism through a review of well-known literary works¹. This dangerous ideology in new forms is often disguised by false promises to introduce freedom and greatness. This is exactly what the situation in Montenegro reminds us of. Although half a year has passed since the parliamentary elections, the main media message of the new government is still: "Freedom has arrived". This "freedom" is often aided by religious fanaticism and exclusivity, which has also recently been the case in Montenegro. In such freedom, not only the Minister of Justice, but also the President of the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights is a homophobe and a denier of the Srebrenica genocide. It seems that a good part of Montenegrin society is in a spiritual crisis, a crisis that is present, it seems, outside the borders of Montenegro, and especially in Europe.

¹ Especially through a review of the messages of the novel "The Plague" by Albert Camus.

Call a spade a spade

Rob Riemen claims that fascism has started all over the world again, and most of all in Europe, where is its cradle. And it will not disappear if we deny it, nor will changing the name change the facts. In Europe, the name fascism is denied by new names: right-wing extremism, radical right, etc, which does not mean that fascism did not appear. You just have to call it by its real name. Moreover, all parties that covertly nurture such dangerous ideas, almost without exception, have the word "democratic" in their name. Together with the church, they have produced people like the Montenegrin Minister of Justice and Human and Minority Rights, who is slowly but surely undermining the idea of humanism and universal values of truth, beauty, justice and love of life. Thus, formally democratic and essentially undemocratic political structures destroy those values that are the origin and basis of democratic civilization. Support for such structures by part of the civil sector, or by parties called civic, shows the depth of the moral stagnation of Montenegrin society.

It seems that Montenegro has stumbled on a path of civilization. In support of this claim are the facts that genocide is denied, and at the same time, the Montenegrin parliament did not adopt the Law proposal on the Prohibition of Fascist Organizations and Symbols. After the end of the Second World War, Albert Camus and Thomas Mann realized that the bacillus of fascism remained virtually present in the body of mass democracy and that we must oppose it, because it leads to despotism and violence. The hope remains that humanity and consciousness will overcome dangerous diversions.

Montenegrin society, if it does not want to stumble and fall into the jaws of previous civilizational crises, must oppose by the consciousness of the enlightened elite, which is not so loud for now. The intellectual elite must stand in defense of universal values. Unfortunately, a good portion of those who confidently consider themselves intellectuals seem to be defenders of national or religious ideas, as well as the extremisms that go with them. In 1927, a French philosopher noted well that intellectuals could not prevent evil, but their role was important because they could delegitimize it². The occurrence of silent fascism must be pointed out. Therefore, any denial or relativization of crimes against humanity should be condemned. The strength of the intellectual is in disagreement and unrest, and in exposing all that is inhumane.

² Julien Benda in his "The Betrayal by the Intellectuals".