



ANDREW ON WEDNESDAY

The mind boggles

We know we are at the deep end of the pool when a political, social, constitutional and economic crisis starts ripping our Country apart.

Some are still alienated into believing that this can never happen to us because they feel that the economy is working smoothly and think that once the dust will settle we can get on with life, in other words, the illusion that we just need to ride out the storm.

And that is where we are going wrong.

If we had to try to contemplate what has happened in these jam-packed couple of weeks I cannot but cogitate the idiosyncrasies, quirks and foibles that characterize the way our Country is dealing with this predicament.

Let's start from the fact that this is a Government in 'shut-down'.

It is not functioning and there is a sense of distrust amongst the Cabinet members. This Government is struggling with trying to get to grips with what is happening, focused almost entirely on finger pointing and essentially absorbed in damage control.

I wonder what discussions are taking place at the OPM to deal with the myriad social issues, the infrastructural problems, investment, foreign policy, Constitutional reform and the rest of the matters this Country needs to sort out. To rub salt in the wound, Parliament has been adjourned (when we need them most to sort out the mess they have brought on us). Not sure either that Cabinet meetings are taking place which is another indicator that things are grinding to a halt. In not so many words, this is an inoperative Government, broken and defective with an allegorical 'dead man walking' who tells us in a televised monologue that he is resigning and making it seem like a Christmas greeting.

Notwithstanding, from where I stand, all this pandemonium calls for an election. Yes, people have disagreed with me on this because it is not the right time (I wonder when the right time is), because of the costs, the instability it creates and *bla bla bla* they tell me. But, in a democratic and normal Country a 'non-government' spells 'ALARM'. A PM who has lost his face with the Unions, Associations, academics, former-MEPs, party/activists, party delegates, Chambers and so many other social partners requires that he moves out of the scene immediately and takes with him all his team. If we are not careful this 'broken down government' will create vulnerability. For example, it potentially makes it easier for organized criminality to start slipping into the system when the institutions and their leaders are in limbo. Let's at least agree



that the fortress has been breached and coercive action is no-where to be seen. Yet, we're metaphorically, getting on with the banquet!

The Prime Minister, at this very serious and delicate political juncture we are in, prefers going off to meet the Pope at the Eternal City because it is OK that a Country goes into meltdown with one scandal after another. I can almost hear the strategists, 'act cool, calm and collected Prim as if it is all groovy normal' - but ordinary it sure ain't!

I'm flabbergasted and angry and more so when the first public activity the Prime Minister takes on after this hubbub is a victory lap with people clapping injudiciously who should really and truly be infuriated with what the PL and the Country has come to endure. To add to this extravaganza, the two aspiring leaders are hugging on stage like teenagers after a fracas with Joseph the reconciliatory in the middle of a huddle.

It seems that the demons have now turned into angels!

It is surreal. Back to the Victory Lap. I really cannot fathom facing one's supporters when 'your' former Chief of Staff (it took years to convince the PM to sack him) is allegedly implicated amongst other in, corruption, abuse of power, possibly murder or knowledge thereof and obstruction to justice. To add insult to injury we have three Ministers who are being investigated for

different reasons and several OPM officials being called in by the Police. Added to these are doubts on major projects like the Vitals agreement and the Electrogas power station. All of this knocks us off our feet and certainly does not merit praise. Muscat's speeches last Sunday were a slur. This Government is no longer legitimate, and the PM's role is equally untenable. It is not business as usual!

That we seek solace in surveys is as ridiculous as they come. As I once told someone at the OPM, 'democracy is not only about popularity, this is not the X Factor live show you know, it is about doing the right thing'.

This is compounded with another reality

In effect we have an Opposition that keeps tripping over its own feet. For example, whilst the Civil Society has done all the resistance on its own, with the PN trailing, it chooses to organize a fund-raising activity to buy new TV cameras while a national protest is going on - dazzling to say the least!

The Opposition is in utter consternation. The factions are there for all to see. People have not warmed up to Delia and at a time when we should be seeing a Party growing in stature we see nothing.

That is why I believe that an election will come in handy because it will give the new PL leadership the opportunity to clear its ranks and it will knock the Opposition off from its

plinth, get a new leader who is not tainted by suspicions and enmity and maybe they can start doing what they are supposed to do - lead the resistance.

If we do not take the necessary coercive action, we risk placing our Country on the brink of social and economic collapse - and this because once again we would have been more interested in 'il-jien milli l-ahna'. In the meantime, I remain hopeful, a little less than last week - but just about hanging on.

Political situation in Malta: We are at a delicate juncture

On Thursday 12 December, at 2pm, the Faculty for Social Well being is organising an Open Dialogue in the light of recent political events. The hallmark of a democratic nation is its ability to engage the voice of its people in a broad range of public decisions. If as a nation we are to address effectively the complex social and economic issues that confront us, then we are guaranteed broad democratic participation.

This event will include brief contributions by a number of community leaders, academics, activists, social operators, union leaders, journalists and politicians on how we can respond to what is happening right now in our community.

Date: Thursday, 12 December
Time: 2pm-4pm
Venue: University of Malta
Msida Campus (KSU Betsson Common Room)

"Ghandi xi Nghid"

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