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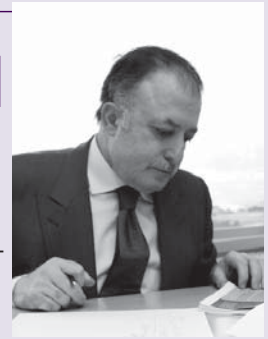
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MINISTER ZERO'S CHANCES OF SUCCESS IN THE REPUBLIC OF "NOT NOW"!



For a while now, Citizen Zero has been working and dreaming of having a say in the decision-making process and reform in this country.

He believed that there was a serious chance during the Chehab era, had it not been for the American-Nasserite feud, the coup by the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party, the circumstances leading to the Cairo agreement, and, and ...

He once again believed that there was a 'chance' through the Saudi-Syrian-American 'agreement' (toward and throughout the Ta'ef accord era) and of course had it not been for the distorted vision of the servants at the sultan's court and perhaps the Khaddamists and Canaanites and, and ... He again placed his bets on the era of Lahoud-Hoss, at least during the first months, which of course went to shambles due to the same gangs, this time including Murr and those who were vindictive against the followers of Hariri. The failure, to be more specific, was due to the "lobby of money and real estate".

Despite all that, or perhaps because of all that, Citizen Zero decided to become a minister. This time he was no longer an adviser, but a decision-maker. He faithfully believes that he can accomplish the miracle of reform from within instead of sitting at the sidelines. While he knows the mission is arduous, he does not believe that it is impossible. He is also well aware that the same system that crushed many before him who 'tried' or were tempted to 'try' and all those who tried to light a candle in the dark tunnel is a capable system. But Citizen Zero insists on change and -in the worst or best case scenario- on 'steadfastness and confrontation'.

He accepted appointment on a confessional basis - although he does not believe in it - because to him it is a mere formality. He was not at all pleased when the person who asked him the question smiled and said: thank God you did not remove your confession from your ID, or you would have had to seek the blessing of (the head of the confession) to consolidate your 'rehabilitation'... (ask Ziad Baroud for details surrounding the removal of religious affiliations from IDs).

He believes there is an 'opportunity' and a 'chance' for success and he will try. Minister Zero will observe a country that has eroded and a republic that has collapsed. He will observe zua'ama who regard themselves as emirs, each a master over his own emirate, but defenseless before foreign powers. He will tell himself 'I will try' because there is a so-called "national unity" government and we might succeed in 'building the state' before the roosters pluck each other, not only because of outside interference but because it is the nature of the beast.

As for why it all happened and as for why we are the way we are, "not now" we are told! Why did we have a 15-year civil war? Not now! Why did the Marxists and the Arabists discover the art of compromise and the perfume of petrol? Not now! Why did Syrian Nationalists turn into advocates and lecturers of the Lebanese entity and defenders of Syrian intelligence services? Not now! Why do those who proclaimed themselves

as workers on the path of 'development and reconstruction' regard themselves as crusaders instead of seeing themselves for what they are: servants in the sultan's diwan? Not now! Why did the officers of Syrian intelligence enrich themselves under the noses of their superiors? Not now! What ever happened to the unity of "path and destiny"? (وحدة المسار والمصير) Not now! What happened to the demarcation of borders, bilateral ties on an equal footing and "Syria get out"? Not now!

Why was Syria cursed in the Borj Square by the very same people who once supported its apparatuses and are once again complementing it? Not now! Why did Saniora kiss Condi on both cheeks? Not now! Why was the country polarized between 8 and 14 only to have the zua'ama tell us they were never divided and have always been the best of friends? Not now! Why were people killed? Not now! Why this deadly silence? Not now!

The roosters divided the coops, the hens and the eggs amongst them and are today in a "state of harmony".

In spite of all that, Minister Zero believes the "project of state-building" is still possible and that the states that were created after two world wars are still viable although they are ruled unilaterally by families. Welcome to an Arab world that takes pride in fossilized leaderships since the 60's and in the deterioration of its values. A model best represented by he whose pride was wounded, threatened to occupy Sudan



and cursed Algeria in defense of a football game.

But all this does not matter! Here is the Lebanese system, as usual, welcoming, with open arms, those who play the game, destroying the weak and the rebellious mercilessly.

When Minister Zero sat at his desk, his colleague, Citizen Zero, sent him a message with some lines taken from a book and an article about “The Myth of Sisyphus”:

But if the “alternative is ending the war” and if reform is not possible “unless it took place within a certain public political frame that drums up support around it...” and if it is not right to “measure suggestions about reform by the extent to which opponents of reform accept it ...” and if the formula, established at the end of 1992, was founded on “an exchange of recovering the country’s productive energy with receiving money from abroad and swapping the project for state-building with the harmonization of the powers of militias and foreign money”, then what kind of formula do we have today after the Doha conference and at the end of 2009? Then let the zua’ama/roosters have the “administrative decentralization” that consolidates their powers and let them advocate or oppose “abolishing political sectarianism” to present themselves as reformists.

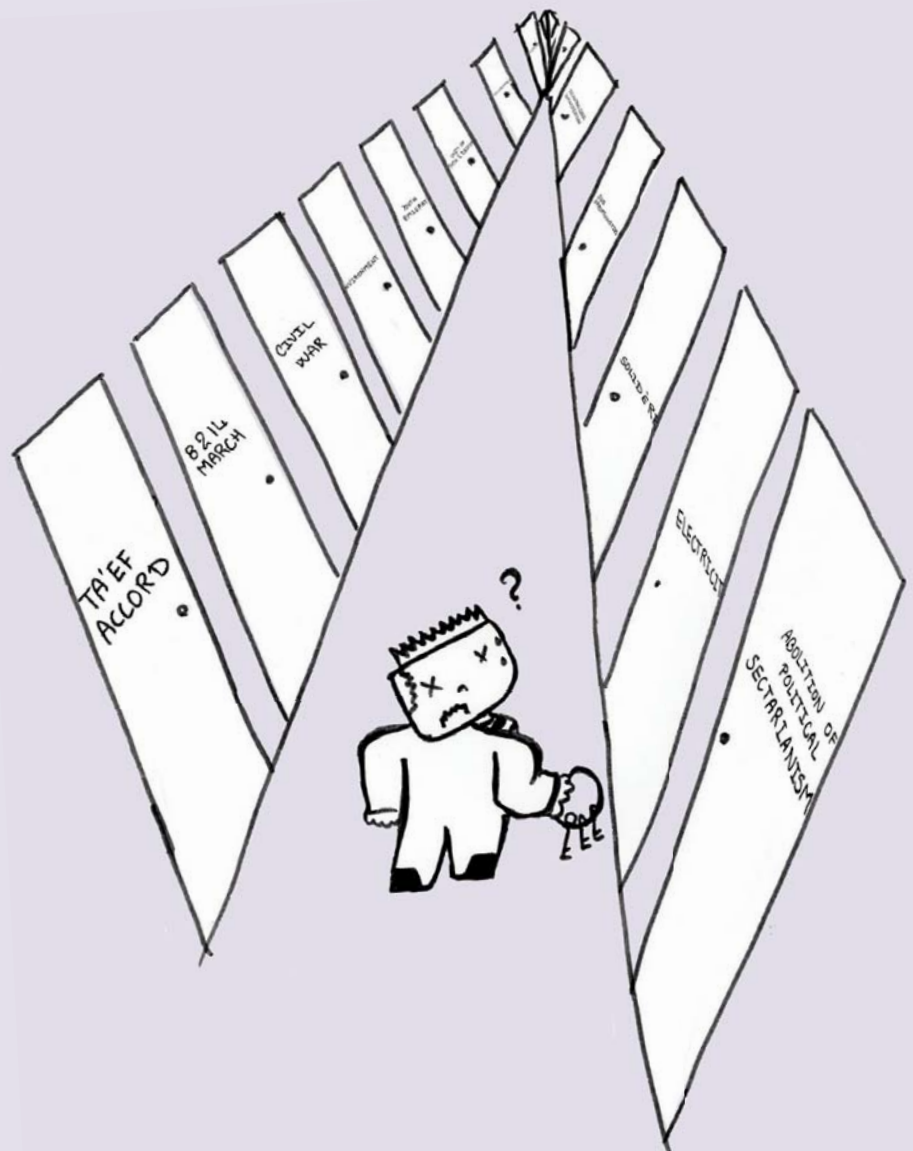
From here comes the interest in Sisyphus’ ideas as he climbs down the mountain only to start over. And this is a tragic moment when the hero realizes that there is no hope. But “there is no fate that cannot be surmounted by scorn,” he tells himself. When Sisyphus acknowledges the futility of his task and the certainty of his fate, he is freed to realize the absurdity of his situation and

to reach a state of contented acceptance. Although he does not believe in IGO’s slogans of a “quick fix” and “islands of integrity”, he says to himself ‘tomorrow I will contribute to aligning the train’s path so it does not go to the abyss’. Tomorrow, ‘I will improve my ministry’s performance’, he tells himself. Indeed, what is so wrong with being satisfied with “steadfastness and confrontation” when it is not possible to do more than what has been done or what will be done?

Tomorrow Lebanon’s roosters will attack, tomorrow external powers will incite Lebanon’s roosters and tomorrow external powers will appease Lebanon’s roosters. Among one rooster and another, Minister Zero will walk on eggshells knowing that the chances of success and failure depend on the interests and moods of the roosters and those who control them. Tomorrow Minister Zero will be “disowned” before the crowing of roosters.

Minister Zero of course knows all this, but wants to try nevertheless! And as Camus says: “All is well,” indeed, “that one must imagine Sisyphus happy!”

Jawad N. Adra



1- *The Chances of Avoiding the Crisis and the Conditions to Overcome It- A Personal Experience in Reform (Charbel Nahhas)*
 2- *Albert Camus*