

## Editorial

# Learning the lesson

We are not featuring the 30-year-old events of Black Monday today to open old wounds. We are doing it to refresh people's memories and perhaps acquaint some younger minds with this incident for the first time. We are doing it because it is close to home; our home. We are doing it to show how people can triumph in adversity and to pay tribute to them.

Violence was commonplace in the 1970s. But it reached a peak on October 15, 1979. Strickland House in Valletta, where the offices of The Times and The Sunday Times are based, was gutted. The then opposition leader's home in Birkirkara was ransacked. His wife was beaten and his children, who ran to a neighbour's home via the roof, were terrorised. This was not just a coordinated attack on people and buildings. It was a challenge to democracy.

From that point of view the incident was a dismal failure. Although it was not the event that marked the end of political violence – only a change of government in 1987 managed that – Black Monday was the day when a significant enough number of Maltese decided that it would have to stop. It took longer than expected, it took unnecessary bloodshed and it took more than one untimely death. But the people got there.

The journey since has been onwards and upwards. It has not been without troughs or periods of disappointment and uncertainty, but it has consistently moved in the right direction. Against the odds, Malta became a member of the European Union and just four years later adopted the euro.

Were it not for these two happenings, Malta is likely to have been thrust into the financial abyss once the Lehman Brothers collapse just over a year ago caused the rest of the world's economic dominoes to tumble. One need look no further than Iceland for evidence of that.

But although EU membership and the adoption of the single currency provided the foundations for Malta to survive, it is this government that has been applying bricks and mortar to ensure it stays healthy.

It did this, primarily, by investing heavily to secure people's jobs where they have been vulnerable and by reaffirming its commitment to projects like the entrance to Valletta. There are, of course, things it has not done adequately enough, at times downright badly, and there is little doubting that morale in the country is a little low because of the economic situation which for some months has been biting.

At this juncture, however, people have to make a choice. They can either mope around, moan and ensure we are victims of the world recession, or they can roll their sleeves up, screw up courage and climb out.

The disgruntled Nationalist backbenchers have to choose too. At the moment the choice some of them have made is to further their personal agendas and bask in the limelight. This is doing nothing but causing unnecessary uncertainty which is harming

the national interest, particularly because the Labour Party has turbulence of its own to deal with.

What the country needs right now are team players who are prepared to discard their own grievances and serve the nation; people who will pull together and stick with a leader through thick (they did not moan when Lawrence Gonzi won them the election) and thin. If Black Monday served to teach us one lesson, that was it. And the results are there for all to see.

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## Comments

GiovDeMartino@Caroline Said (1 week, 6 days ago)

You are free to write about atrocities committed by the PN against Labour. Come on. Show your wisdom.

Victor Laiviera (1 week, 6 days ago)

"We are not featuring the 30-year-old events of Black Monday today to open old wounds." No, no, of course not! Perish the thought!

J Abela (2 weeks ago)

We are not featuring the 30-year-old events of Black Monday today to open old wounds. Le.... ma tarax! U halluna, tridux! Mhux avveniment ta' min jiftahar bih, anzi! But have the guts to call a spade, a spade u ma noqghodux induru mal-lewza. Ha naghmlu bicca xoghol Sur Editur: kull Germaniz li jigi Malta bil-vaganzi noqghodu nsemmlu l-Hitler u l-Gwerra! U noqghodu nilghabu ta' l-ors mieghu u nghidulu li dan biex nghallmuh! Deal or No Deal, Sur Editur???? Thabbilx rasek, jekk ma tridx twiegeb, ghamel int!

Caroline Said (2 weeks ago)

"We are not digging up all this dirt to keep anti-socialist sentiments on the front boiler at a time when the Nationlist camp looks like a fire alarm drill in a lunatic asylum. We want young potential PN voters to be made aware of the foibles of entertaining an alternative to another PN term in office." Publishing an old story about Socialists running rampage in the streets, hot on the heels of the current Opposition's call for public demonstrations (what a coincidence) it can only be a scaremongering tactic. I imagine in your capacity as an unbiased information source, and to maintain balance in your quest to keep young voters well-informed, next week you will be publishing an editorial highlighting past atrocities committed against socialists? And then perhaps, just perhaps, they will draw the conclusion that both sides of the political spectrum have their Days of Infamy to reflect upon.

Jean-Pierre Aquilina (2 weeks ago)

"We are not featuring the 30-year-old events of Black Monday today to open old wounds."

Sure?

GiovDeMartino (2 weeks ago)

SHAME on those PN members of parliament who are not, certainly not helping the government weather the storm. Their behaviour can very easily send us back to the Reign of Terror of the 70's and 80's. They are certainly playing with fire!

MSciberras (2 weeks ago)

An editorial that started out well, serving as a strong reminder of the horrific incidents that took place in 1979, degenerates at the end as an attack on the likes of Robert Arrigo and other PN backbenchers who have a right to express their opinions. It ends as a call to arms for the Nationalist party. Lets get one thing clear. Many of us think that Gonzi is an ineffective prime minister and it is our democratic right to think so WITHOUT BEING MADE TO FEEL WE ARE ANYTHING LIKE THE THUGS OF 1979, who no Nationalist gov for shame ever prosecuted. And I am horrified that you would use the gratuitous violence of 1979 to whip people expressing different views to line 30 years later. Oct 15th is a day of shame and remembrance for all, not just by those who share your political views. Yes we are grateful that we are in the EU and have the euro, In 1945 the British were grateful to Churchill for winning the war and still voted for Labour. Will you publish this comment I wonder???

P. Schembri (2 weeks ago)

30 years have passed, and yes it is an incident that should not have happened, and I'm sure will not happen again. But this editorial is nothing more than a jibe at those PN MP's and a frontal attack on the PL, something which Dr. Joseph Muscat has publicly apologised for! The editor opened the editorial stating that he doesn't want to open old wounds. Then why the article goes so deep in recounting that fateful day? Or the editor is trying to pull some emotional strings to help and assist the ailing PN government, regaining its lost popularity? I deplore all kinds of violence, but this editorial and article just made me feel that it wasn't soul searching at all, but a fine piece of propaganda!

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