

CIVIC

Supernumeraries and champions

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The success of water polo players belongs to them alone, and to their coaches, families, and that handful of truly dedicated supporters. The failure to find people in public institutions who will do their jobs and create champions is an indicator of a systemic problem, the lack of vision on the part of the “stars” from the beginning of this text and of the extent to which the political crew in power is held hostage by the interest of the Party and powerful individuals. To the detriment of us all.

Time and space are not abstract categories. They are made up, among other, of people with names and surnames, who bear responsibility for their (mis)deeds. This is equally the case with our political time and space which, granted, also resembles a theatre performance. We have our stars and starlets, second fiddles and armies of supernumeraries who contribute to the success or failure of the play.

Our stars are a frequent and inexhaustible topic. They are always talked about, every step of theirs is closely followed, discussed from many angles and the secret of their success carefully analysed. Second fiddles are falling stars or those who were not in the right place at the right time and were – on purpose or by a trick or destiny – forever put aside, eagerly waiting for those rare moments when they too can bask in the beamlights illuminating the stars.

But who are these supernumeraries without whom this performance could never have lasted this long?

We rarely think about them. Unjustly, we neglect their role, we deny them their glory, although some of them work as hard as any. And the system depends on these tiny cogs. One of them is **Dragan Drobnjak**, deputy minister of culture, sports and media, in charge of sports. He is at the same time, as it often happens with the gifted and the loyal, eternal president of the Commission for allocation of portion of profits from lottery games. Virtually unknown to the wider public, he is nonetheless an ambitious cog who spares no effort to rise to the company of second fiddles. And why would he, if the money doesn't come out of his own pocket. Some say that he is responsible for distribution of more than 20 million euros from the public Budget every year. He is certainly in charge of allocating 4 940 000 EUR for sports and 3 440 000 EUR to NGOs and other organisations of public interest. The law provides clear guidelines for distribution of these funds. But Drobnjak knows that the law only applies to enemies, and can be interpreted generously for the friends and brothers in arms, and it doesn't bother him. He is under protection of corruptible power and therefore has no qualms about admitting publicly and in writing violations of the principles of distribution of these, in the Montenegrin context, sizeable funds.

Why do we bother with supernumerary Drobnjak? And, why does he matter if there are so many others who cause even greater damage?

Because symbolically speaking Drobnjak is a paradigm of the defeat of our value system and absence of a genuine reform strategy. He is a living proof that Montenegro is not ruled by law, because if it were the prosecution would have dealt with him long ago. He also demonstrates that career advances in the state sector do not come as a result of professionalism, respect for the principles and continuous learning, but as a result of arbitrary use of public funds, contrary to the proclaimed European standards. If it were otherwise, he would have already lost his job.

I never did sports and my knowledge about it is within the boundaries of general culture. I still rejoice in every, however rare, success of our sports men and women, because this is a great encouragement, a sign that hard work can lead us to our goals regardless of the obstacles, and that somebody from these parts can make it big without the Party, the stars, the second fiddles and the supernumeraries.

Our water polo players made it very big last year in Malaga when they became champions of Europe. Drobnjak gave them 7.3% from the sports budget. I may be badly informed, but I haven't heard that we

have more champions of that ranking and I would be interested in learning who and on account of what received the remaining 92.7%.

Players of the "Primorac" club from Kotor made it even bigger, winning the Final Four of the water polo Euro league. Their salaries are 5 months late and only the yacht of the owner of the most expensive team which they defeated in the final costs 30 million euros. The same yacht which he drove to Kotor to try to understand what made these guys into champions. He must have been shocked even more at conditions in which they work. This year, "Primorac" got 1.15% of sports budget.

Five open-air swimming pools are being built in Podgorica, which until yesterday did not have a single one. And while the champions continue to train in a few badly maintained pools on the coast, these five will remain as a testimony that **Miomir Mugoša**, the baron of Mareza, delivers on his promises. Even when these are entirely senseless. Of course, the money doesn't come from his pocket either, so why shouldn't he build.

This is how the country of Montenegro rewards its champions. And cherishes its supernumeraries. It is very likely that on their trip to Rome, to world championship in water polo to "root" for our team, the supernumeraries and actors will spend more money than the European champion "Primorac" gets from the public budget for the whole year.

The success of water polo players belongs to them alone, and to their coaches, families, and that handful of truly dedicated supporters. The failure to find people in public institutions who will do their jobs and create champions is an indicator of a systemic problem, the lack of vision on the part of the "stars" from the beginning of this text and of the extent to which the political crew in power is held hostage by the interest of the Party and powerful individuals. To the detriment of us all.

Supernumerary Drobnyak is in that sense a symbolic reminder that we should not allow ourselves not to see the tree for the forest.

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