

# Goodbye, Cijevna!!!

Are we saying goodbye to Cijevna or can we defend it? The river which is like the sea to a third of Podgorica citizens may disappear because 14 hydro power plants are planned to be built on it in Albania. "Don't let Cijevna go" was the Varvari's message at the ABBA League game against the Red Star. Is roaring from the stands late, is Cijevna already apparently destined, is the public's warning of the possibility that an exceptional river may disappear only our swan song.

When July and August heat starts, the clear and cold river saves life and mind, clear mind. Many swam for the first time on its rapids and learned to float on the water surface. One of personal victories and a lesson one remembers the whole life. Even those who caught sciatica on Cijevna do not resign to the river becoming only a spring. Especially in the summer when it dries.

On many hot Podgorica afternoons in July and August, I looked for salvation myself in the stone canyon of the clear river. Or when the city bustle and problems blur your sight and cloud your mind, you run to Cijevna and slowly, with the sound of clear water, realize that you as well can find a solution and a way out of any trouble. Even in winter, when it is capricious, Cijevna is a special river.

The knowledge that we may lose such a jewel is somehow bitter, and it neuters any spirituality or irony, dries out sentences.

As Vijesti wrote, a number of hydro power projects is planned in the territory of Albania, the country where Cijevna wells and runs with a bit less than half of its course. Construction of small hydro power plants is planned on Cijevna water course in Albania, and part of its canyon in Montenegro was declared a nature park last year.

A friend whose ancestors moved to Podgorica from a place close to Tamara in Albania took me this summer to see the canyon. Everything was idyllic until we came across dredges upstream from Tamara. Locals upstream from Tamara were not happy with the development either. Several of them who have fishponds and build restaurants said that the works will drive away tourists who started coming to the Cijevna canyon. They will not feel benefits of power plants, they said; they will fill pockets of someone far from their place. When the river is packed in pipes, it will not be a river anymore, said an owner of a fishpond near Tamara that day. We watched the same story in Sead Sadikovic's features from Sekular and from several other places in the north of Montenegro. We told him that his opinion is shared by the neighbours living downstream in Montenegro. He shrugged his shoulders and replied with resignation: "No one asks us".

There is not comfort either in the words of a representative of the World Wide Fund for Nature who said that no one in the Balkans consults citizens, or their countries, in such projects and neighbouring countries do not warn each other, as is the case of Cijevna. The warning that such projects are not "green" is in vain ...

The planned construction of 14 power plants on Cijevna was a surprise to our Government and its Ministries as well.

While international conventions oblige signatory countries to involve each other in the process, Montenegro was not informed about the plan to build small hydro power plants on the Albanian part of Cijevna, which was confirmed to Vijesti earlier by the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism (MSDT).

The Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism asked the Albanian colleagues to provide information about construction of small power plants on Cijevna, in the territory of that country, as well as the complete documentation on the environmental impact.

The request to Albania was sent via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "MSDT requested completed documentation on environmental impact assessment so that the Montenegrin public and experts could assess a potential impact on ecosystem, biodiversity respectively on the river", said the Ministry.

Podgorica citizens love Cijevna, it means life to many, particularly to those living next to it, who irrigate their estates from the river. But even before this intention to pack the river in pipes existed, sand was ruthlessly extracted from its canyon, its course was altered, its shore concreted over, fish stock destroyed. What is omitted by dredges is welcomed by poachers using electricity. Dozens of restaurants have been opened on the river shores, and their wastewater goes into Cijevna. So, we did not cuddle the life-bringing river in the past either. But the threat of it disappearing is unacceptable to think of.

The Romans brought drinking water from Cijevna to Duklja through a 15 km long water supply system. The water supply system had two aqueducts, over Ribnica and Moraca.

The construction of around 3.000 small hydro power plants is planned in the territory of the Balkans. Such projects are associated with interests of individuals and the people close to the Government, not only in Montenegro, but in the region in general.

As reported by the satirical portal Njuz Net, the Greek Government decided that the mythological Styx River will be put in pipes and transformed into a derivative mini hydro power plant. According to the Greek mythology, the Styx River forms a border between the underworld and the world of the living, and the Greeks are now speculating which occupation Charon, the ferryman who ferried the dead to Hades, will re-qualify to. Erasing differences between the underworld and the world of the living, in this fake news of the Njuz Net, is commented by the Greeks as a new opportunity for developing tourism.

The title of this column is rather a warning scream for all of us to do what we can to avoid saying goodbye to Cijevna. Hence, it is not a surrender!

We can repeat "Don't let Cijevna go" as a mantra all we want, but pipes have been delivered to swallow the river ...