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## CENSORSHIP AND SELF-CENSORSHIP IN POLITICAL CARTOONS AND CARICATURES FROM 1945 TO 2020 IN CROATIA \*

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### Abstract

*Research on censorship and self-censorship in Croatia is focused on political cartoons and caricatures in the period of communist system (1945–1990) until the breakup of Yugoslavia, and on the recent period of independent Republic of Croatia. The research provides documented examples of censorship and self-censorship that have been found in archives and literature and obtained from authors directly. During the period of Yugoslavia some authors bypassed censorship barriers in various creative ways, risking arrests and prosecutions, while in Republic of Croatia they risk their jobs and livelihood. This paper documents the stages and forms of the censorship and self-censorship through specific examples of political cartoons and caricatures in Croatia over the seventy-year period, with reference to recent global circumstances that indicate that the political cartoon is endangered.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Among many relevant definitions of censorship, *Encyclopedia Britannica's* is apt: "Censorship, the changing or the suppression or prohibition of speech or writing that is deemed subversive of the common good. It occurs in all manifestations of authority to some degree, but in modern times it has been of special importance in its relation to government and the rule of law."<sup>1</sup> Despite many variations and different extensions of content, this definition implies that censorship is "systematic control of the content of each medium of communication."<sup>2</sup> The complexity of various forms of censorship shows that by solely exploring different forms of control and prohibition, one would not get a complete picture of society in a certain time and space. In the foreword to her book *Monopoly on the Truth*, Radina Vučetić points out that in recent literature: "... censorship is viewed as a complex interaction of restrictive and productive practices. Today, therefore, more and more authors do not consider

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1 George Anastaplo, "Censorship," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed April 22, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/censorship>.

2 See the definition of Michael Scammell, who launched the *Index of Censorship* magazine in London dedicated to documenting censorship in the world. In: Michael Skamel, "Cenzura i njena historija" [Censorship and Its History], *Književna kritika*, no. 3-4 (1990): 55.

228 censorship as a purely repressive phenomenon, but through it they follow certain dynamics and changes in society. (...) The view on censorship in which only what is forbidden is observed, and not what is allowed, can never give the true image of censorship, nor of the society itself that is being questioned.”<sup>3</sup>

Censoring of caricatures refers in principle to political cartoons and the prosecution of their authors, cartoonists. One could say that in any country where cartoons have been published in the media, there were cartoonists who ended up in prison or lost their jobs. This has happened (and still is happening) in many countries since the nineteenth century, up until today.

Self-censorship is “the act or action of refraining from expressing something.”<sup>4</sup> Self-censorship can indicate the author’s awareness of the limit to which the government can be provoked, without this authority directly banning him or her from working. During the creative process, each author, consciously or unconsciously, makes a whole series of compromises that must be accepted by the audience. One of the most evocative statements about self-censorship during socialist Yugoslavia comes from cartoonist and animated cartoon author, Borivoj Dovniković: “We had no problems with censorship in Zagreb film or with the government. However, you need to know that we had, as we described it, a ‘police in your own brain’, so we knew what topics to avoid: this included anything against politicians, the Communist Party and the federal state of Yugoslavia.”<sup>5</sup> Midhat Ajanović confirms this, as well: “In Yugoslavia, the ideology of socialist realism in art was crossed very early, so that the censorship scissors were much less sharp than in other countries of the so-called socialist system. Instead of censorship, a kind of self-censorship actually developed in Yugoslavia, which in practice meant that the limits within which one could manoeuvre were more or less known. And more importantly, that these borders were largely accepted.”<sup>6</sup> Fear of prison sentences, psychological torture and the loss of livelihood led to self-censorship during Yugoslavia. More recently, in the Republic of Croatia, self-censorship is most often a consequence of fear of losing media sponsors or corporations that pay for advertisements, i.e. because of disrespect to powerful political parties.

One of the fundamental documents that opposes various forms of censorship and seeks to protect the right to expression is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948. In the Declaration, freedom of speech, media and religion are guaranteed to all as part of international law. In practice, this right is constantly violated in numerous

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3 Radina Vučetić, *Monopol na istinu* [Monopoly on the Truth] (Beograd: Clio, 2016), 14–15. All translations are by the author.

4 “Self-censorship,” *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, accessed April 20, 2023, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/self-censorship>.

5 Maureen Furniss, *Art in Motion: Animation Aesthetics* (London: Chapman University, John Libbey and Company Pty Ltd, 1988), 170.

6 Midhat Ajanović, *Animacija i realizam* [Animation and Realism] (Zagreb: Hrvatski filmski savez, 2004), 144.

ways, ranging from mild and sophisticated measures to extremely cruel regime restrictions. In Yugoslavia, the 1946 Constitution guaranteed freedom of the press, speech, association and public assembly, as well as freedom of scientific and artistic work (Articles 25 and 27), but Article 47 stipulates that it is illegal and punishable to use civil rights to change or violate the constitutional order. In democratic Croatia, since its proclamation in 1991 we have witnessed various forms of non-institutional censorship, as well as the indignation against it – as has been the case throughout the world over the past three decades.

## THE HISTORY OF CENSORING CARTOONS IN CROATIA

In Croatia, one of the earliest texts that shaped public opinion through the press and in relation to the problem of censorship dates from 1840. It was published in the entertainment and educational journal *Croatia*.<sup>7</sup> During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the popularity of cartoons and caricatures grew through Europe, but restrictions on their content also increased. In the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, cartoonists were not allowed to ridicule the emperor and his family, or late members of the imperial family. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, cartoons and caricatures were popular for several reasons: their straightforward message (or mockery), the fact that cartoons could be understood by many illiterate or semi-literate customers (who were at the time in a huge percentage), and the fact that censors often did not understand the strength of cartoons, and therefore frequently censored texts while leaving cartoons untouched.<sup>8</sup>

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After the 1848 revolution led to demands for civil liberties in a large part of Europe, the result was the abolition of censorship in the Habsburg Monarchy. At the same time in France and Germany, there was a huge increase in the number of periodicals (around 200 newspapers were launched in Paris in a few months, and 90 in Berlin). During the same year 12 new newspapers appeared in Croatia.<sup>9</sup> However, this freedom did not last long. In January 1849 Austria began declaring repressive measures, and in April control of foreign press and soon censorship began to play a significant role again. In the 1880s, humourist magazines began to appear in Croatia, all with a short lifespan, among them, *Bič* (1883–1885) and *Satir* (1901–1902). Such publications were often affected by censorship.

Censorship continued in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes from 1921 to 1929. Opposition party papers were the primary targets of this censorship, but a variety of other forms of press was also affected, ranging

7 Editorial text, *Croatia*, no. 1-2 (1840), 1. For more about the magazine *Croatia*, see: Marina Fruk, "Hrvatski listovi na njemačkom jeziku u službi ilirske ideje" [Croatian Newspapers in the German Language in the Service of the Illyrian Idea], *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, no. 3 (2000): 433–446.

8 Catherine Horel, "Austria-Hungary 1867–1914," in *Political Censorship of the Visual Arts in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, eds. Robert Justin Goldstein and Andrew M. Need (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 108–109.

9 Vlasta Švoger, "Novinstvo kao javni medij sredinom 19. stoljeća u Hrvatskoj" [Journalism as a Public Medium in the Middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century in Croatia], *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, no. 3 (2000): 453.

from professional journals to humoristic magazines, such as *Koprive*, *Peckalo* and *Rovaš*.<sup>10</sup> In 1929, when King Alexander changed the name of the state to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, censorship started to serve the ends of unitarist politics, and censorship of cartoons continued. For example, some issues of *Koprive* were banned in 1933, 1936 and 1939.<sup>11</sup>

Radina Vučetić has argued that understanding censorship in socialist Yugoslavia is “inseparable from understanding the censorship and its mechanisms in the countries behind the Iron Curtain.”<sup>12</sup> The unpredictability of censorship during this period was due to the fact that the rules of censorship were not explicitly prescribed, and the ruling party constantly censored in various institutional and non-institutional ways. “The absence of clearly defined rules has, in fact, made the artist’s fear even greater, for what would be allowed one year would be forbidden next; what is tolerated in literature is not in painting; what was allowed to one artist, would cause another to go to prison, and it was precisely all these ‘fluidities’ of the censorship system that were present in Yugoslavia.”<sup>13</sup> The basic mechanism for press control was Agitprop (State Propaganda Information Institution). Katarina Spehnjak emphasized that:

Agitprop has a special place to control the media and publishing – from the ‘Agitprop’ the directives go to editors and publishing companies, sometimes in writing, and more often orally through ‘indebted’ persons. All media are state-owned, some of them explicitly in hands of Communist Party, while most of them operate under the cover of the People’s Front. The newspaper, the most important media at the time, was given the role of ‘teacher and organiser, not critic’, and suggested thematic coverage of certain problems and, in particular, the way of presentation.<sup>14</sup>

The problem for researchers persists today, because the vast majority of censored cartoons from the period of Yugoslavia was not preserved, rejected cartoons regularly sank into the archives of editors, and, in the end (most often due to the closure of the paper or magazine), all such material would be thrown away and destroyed.

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10 Ivana Šubić Kovačević, “Kontrola i zabrana oporbenog zagrebačkog tiska 1921.–1929.” [Control and Ban of the Opposition Zagreb Press, 1921–1929], *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest Filozofskoga fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu*, no. 48 (2016): 336.

11 Data according to analytical inventory of Hrvatski državni arhiv in Zagreb [Croatian State Archive, hereafter cited as HDA]. *Cenzura i zabrana tiska 1913.–1941*. [Censorship and Press Ban 1913–1941], Number of collection: HR HDA 1361, inv. no. 1-3524, HDA.

12 Vučetić, *Monopol na istinu*, 32.

13 Ibid., 34.

14 Katarina Spehnjak, “Vlast i javnost u Hrvatskoj 1945.–1952.” [Government and the Public in Croatia 1945–1952], *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, no. 3 (2000): 508.

## EXAMPLES OF CENSORED CARTOONS FROM THE PERIOD OF SOCIALIST YUGOSLAVIA

During the entire period of socialist Yugoslavia (1945–1990) censorship officially did not exist, yet it was constantly present, with variations in the level of pressure.<sup>15</sup> A small number of sources tell us about censoring cartoons. Apart from the fact that the editors did not keep their archives, censored texts as well as cartoons were destroyed due to the fear of compromising those who kept them. Rarely, a cartoonist kept an orderly archive of his works. Due to cartoonists' high productivity, they often did not include a date or place of publication, nor did they note whether a specific cartoon was rejected or not. Therefore, we are left to rely on data published in individual journals and publications, as well as data obtained from personal contacts with cartoonists.

After the end of World War II, September 16, 1945, the first issue of the humoristic satirical weekly *Kerempuh* was published. *Kerempuh* was issued weekly until 1955, when it continued to be published as a monthly magazine until 1958.<sup>16</sup> There are several testimonies about the *Kerempuh's* work; all of them agree that there were topics that were forbidden for humor and satire (e.g. Tito, communist leaders, communist ideology, Partisan movement, etc.), as well as desirable themes for ridicule (e.g. Catholic Church and Cardinal Stepinac, Capitalism, King Petar Karadorđević, politicians from the Kingdom of Yugoslavia). Alfred Pal's memories are a major contribution to understanding of the functioning of print media in the first years of post-war Yugoslavia, especially in reference to *Kerempuh*: "When cartoons and texts were ready for printing, Fadil [Hadžić] would put them in a bag and take them to the Agitprop CK in Dežmanova street. There, Marin Franičević and others would review them and say: this can go, this can't."<sup>17</sup>

Although each republic within Yugoslavia had its own media control centres, fundamental requirements came from Belgrade, from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia – Administration for Agitation and Propaganda. Today, it is interesting to read the conclusions this administration drew, especially when it comes to cartoons. A meeting devoted to the "Questions of Our Cartoons and Caricature" was held on May 18, 1949. The following passage from the meeting notes reflects the concept of cartoon function at the time:

In full measure, Lenin's famous thought also refers to the cartoon, which reads: 'Art belongs to the people. It needs to enter its deep

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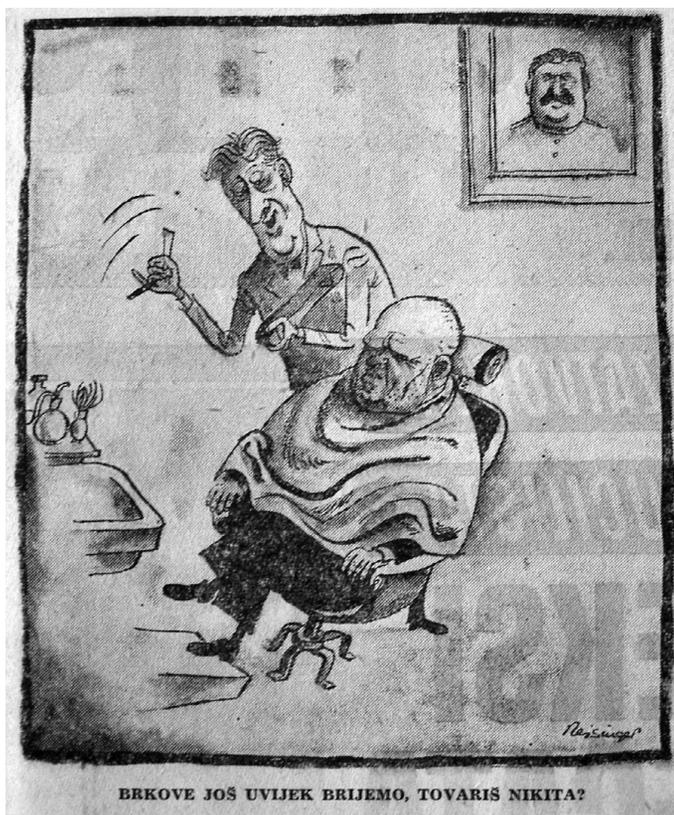
<sup>15</sup> Ivana Hebrang Grgić, "Zakoni o tisku u Hrvatskoj od 1945. do danas" [Press Laws in Croatia from 1945 until Today], *Vjesnik bibliotekara Hrvatske*, no. 43 (2000): 117–134.

<sup>16</sup> More about the significance of the magazine *Kerempuh* in: Frano Dulibić, "Kerempuh – karikatura i strip u prvim godinama socijalističke Jugoslavije" [*Kerempuh* – Caricature and Comics in the First Years of Socialist Yugoslavia], *Bosona*, no. 11 (2022): 125–135.

<sup>17</sup> Alfred Pal also remembers the banning of certain issues of *Kerempuh*, but this has not been confirmed by archival research so far. Collectors own all numbers. Bogdan Žižić (comp.), *Gorući grm: Alfred Pal – život i djelo* [The Burning Bush] (Zagreb: Durieux, 2011), 99–100.

roots into the centre of broad masses of the people. It needs to be understandable and dear to the masses. It should unite the feelings, thoughts and will of those masses and lift them up...’ Moreover, due to their symbiosis with journalism, cartoons and caricature have far greater possibilities than any other artform to fulfil the requirements Marxist-Leninist aesthetic puts before art as a whole. Properly understood, it has all the conditions of an immediate and powerful agitation propaganda tool in the fight for the new and against the old. It has all the elements of a strong lever to raise the socio-political awareness of the broadest layers of people.<sup>18</sup>

One of the most well-known cases of banning an issue of a periodical involved the popular weekly *VUS*, published on December 10, 1958, due to the caricature printed on the second page. This was a caricature depicting Khrushchev at a barber with a painting of Stalin hanging on the wall (**fig. 1**). The barber asks Khrushchev: “Are we still shaving the moustache, comrade Nikita?” Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev became prime minister of the USSR in March of that year. He was in favour of de-Stalinization, but failed to implement reforms, and the caricature alluded to the dilemma over whether or not to move Soviet Union away from Stalin’s politics. After the cartoon



**Fig 1.** Oto Reisinger, *Brkove još uvijek brijemo, tovariš Nikita?* [We're Still Shaving the Moustache, Comrade Nikita?], in: *VUS*, December 10, 1958, 2.

18 Branka Doknić, Milić F. Petrović and Ivan Hofman, *Kulturna politika Jugoslavije 1945.–1952. Zbornik dokumenata, Knjiga 2* [Cultural Policy of Yugoslavia 1945–1952. Collection of documents, 2<sup>nd</sup> book] (Beograd: Arhiv Jugoslavije, 2009), 125.

was published, the Russians protested through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Embassy in Belgrade, and this resulted in decision to withdraw the *VUS* from the market.<sup>19</sup> Since the issue was available from Tuesday evening to Friday when the decision was made, the circulation was almost sold out. Editor-in-chief Frane Barbieri and the author of the cartoon, Oto Reisinger, were summoned to a hearing at the District Court, but without consequences.<sup>20</sup>

In 1998, Josip Grbelja published his book *Censorship in the Croatian Newspaper, 1945–1990*. Grbelja's research cited numerous examples and variants of state censorship or direct supervision of newspapers by state services.<sup>21</sup> He cites several examples of press control and bans between 1952 and 1972, and in the context of cartoons and satire, Grbelja mentions the humoristic-satirical magazine *Paradoks*, which was published from 1966–1968. The problem was with double issue 4-5 from 1966. Grbelja writes that “the District Public Prosecutor's Office Zagreb, referring to Article 53 of the Press Law, by its decision, No KTR604/66 of 6 July 1966, temporarily prohibited the distribution of the *Paradoks* humoristic-satirical newspaper (double issue 4-5 of July 10, 1966).”<sup>22</sup> According to the Public Prosecutor's Office, *Paradoks* had published: “a series of writings and drawings that seriously offend morality, describing in a humiliating way the measures of economic reform, and in a tone that disturbed citizens, creating distrust in the taken measures.”<sup>23</sup> Editor-in-chief Pajo Kanižaj was detained for three months, and co-founder Lazo Goluža travelled to France abruptly to avoid prosecution. *Paradoks* then changed its editor-in-chief, but after 19 issues, it was abolished in 1968.

Today, it is difficult to understand why the cartoons published in the 1966 double issue of *Paradoks* (4-5) irritated the censors so much. Cartoonist Ivan Pahernik published a cartoon that plays with nationalism by depicting two characters capturing a “dangerous” woman is wearing a dress with a checkerboard pattern, alluding to the Croatian coat of arms; in the end they play chess on her dress. Zlatko Grgić drew a cartoon titled *Monkey Business* in which he ridiculed the employment of incompetent people through party ties. Finally, the caricature by Ante Zaninović *Cross section of an average Yugoslav* illustrates hybridity, i.e. the identity of the average Yugoslav as a combination of incompatible elements, a domestic Frankenstein, which ridicules the efforts of the Communist Party to create a perfect Yugoslav citizen (**fig. 2**). Together,

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19 Frano Dulibić, *Oto Reisinger: retrospektiva*, 2. – 28. rujna 2008 [Oto Reisinger: A Retrospective, September 2–28, 2008] (Zagreb: Galerija Klovičevi dvori, 2008), 47–49.

20 In court, Barbieri and Reisinger were asked if they had any objection to the issue of the magazine being withdrawn from sale, to which they said they had no objection and were released. Dean Sinovčić, “Oto Reisinger – šest desetljeća rada doajena karikature” [Oto Reisinger – Six Decades of Work by the Doyen of Cartoons], *Nacional*, no. 544, April 17, 2006.

21 Josip Grbelja, *Cenzura u hrvatskom novinstvu 1945.–1990*. [Censorship in Croatian Journalism 1945–1990] (Zagreb: Naklada Jurčić, 1998), 214.

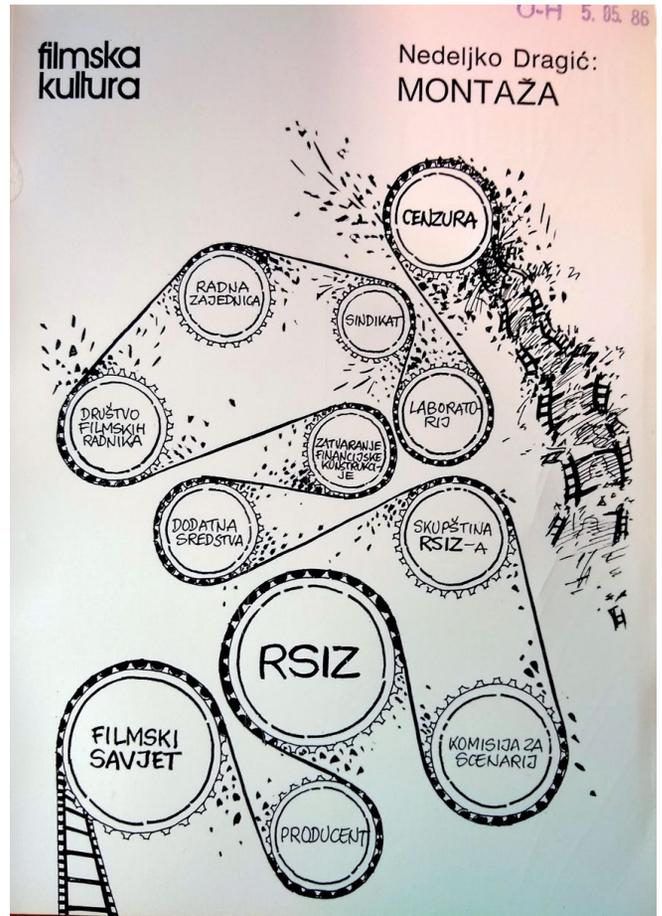
22 *Ibid.*, 137.

23 “Štampa” [Press], o. c. OJT. KTR 604/66, July 6, 1966, Fonds Iljko Karaman, HDA; according to: Grbelja, *Cenzura u hrvatskom novinstvu*, 137.



Fig. 2. Ante Zaninović, *Presjek kroz prosječnog Jugoslavena* (A Cross Section of the Average Yugoslav), in: *Paradoks*, no. 4-5 (1966), 31.

Fig. 3. Nedeljko Dragić, *Cenzura* (Censorship), in: *Filmska kultura*, no. 157-159 (1986), 137.



along with the sexual explicit of the cover, these provocations led to the decision to ban the issue of *Paradoks* and withdraw it from the sale.

Despite the liberalisation of society and the permission of various content in the media during the 1980s in Yugoslavia, censorship was still present in different ways. One example of mocking the persistence of censorship is the excellent cartoon by Nedeljko Dragić for the magazine *Filmska kultura*, published in 1986. Cartoons as a medium perfectly served Dragić in his efforts to expose a large number of problems that challenge film production, with censorship as the biggest, most critical problem. The cartoon was used as the metaphor for the projector through whose gear wheels the film tape runs through. Dragić depicted a series of gears with names on them (in an imaginary projector) through which the film tape must pass (screenplay commission, producer, financial construction, trade union, laboratory, etc.), sometimes getting stuck just a little, elsewhere sticking a bit more. Finally, the last gear, which represents censorship, mercilessly grinds the tape and destroys the film. This is a rare example of a cartoon that simultaneously reflects liberalisation, because we see that criticism is permitted in the form of the cartoon itself, but also reflects the political context in which films passed through the scissors of censorship, up until the breakup of Yugoslavia (fig. 3).

The Split-based humoristic-satirical magazine *Berekin* was launched by the cartoonist Tonči Kerum in 1979. *Berekin's* satirical content relied on what

Fig. 4. Ico Voljevica, *Najbolji su Albanci iz peći*  
(The Best Albanians are from the Furnace),  
in: *Berekin*, no. 18 (1987), 28.



was considered characteristic of Split, i.e. a Mediterranean type of humour. However, its content often attracted the attention of the censors, and *Berekin* was included in the list of public prosecutor's notices in Croatia in 1983: "The section for information and publishing activities of OK SSRNH Split was proposed to 'make a discussion of the socially unacceptable content of the humoristic-satirical magazine *Berekin*' (new issue), because it contains 'offensive and vulgar texts and cartoons'."<sup>24</sup> In 1987, *Berekin* shook the censors even harder. On November 6, 1987, the District Court in Titovo Užice banned the 18<sup>th</sup> issue, but the ban took effect after the entire circulation of the issue was sold out. The reason for the ban was a caricature depicting two Serbs, stereotypically depicted in national clothing, standing near a bakery furnace. One of them is saying "the best Albanians are from the furnace" (all written in capital letters, **fig. 4**). The word *peć* [furnace] is ambiguous in Croatian and Serbian: On one hand, it can refer to the town of Peć (in Kosovo), and, on the other, to a furnace; understood in this second meaning, it provocatively suggests that "Serbian people are anti-Albanian," as Miroslav Ćopić wrote in the Belgrade newspaper *Politika*.<sup>25</sup> On November 7, 1987, the Split-based newspaper *Slobodna Dalmacija* published a short text entitled *Prohibited Berekin and subtitled Prohibited Distribution of the 18<sup>th</sup> Issue of Berekin for Writings and Illustrations that Insult the Reputation of the SFRY, the Assembly of the SFRY, the Presidency of the SFRY and its Representatives*.<sup>26</sup> Ico Voljevica's cartoon published in *Berekin* was the result of the political tensions of the time. It is a provocative political cartoon, politically incorrect, but it still points out the tensions

24 Grbelja, *Cenzura u hrvatskom novinstvu*, 189.

25 More about that case: *Ibid.*, 207.

26 "Zabranjen Berekin" [Forbidden Berekin], *Slobodna Dalmacija*, November 7, 1987.

between Serbs and Albanians, and indicates that this problem had not been solved yet. As so often is the case, it was easier to ban the cartoon than to deal with the problem.

## A COMPARISON OF CENSORSHIP OF SINGLE-PANEL CARTOONS IN SOCIALIST YUGOSLAVIA AND CAPITALIST CROATIA

Borivoj Dovniković's replies to the question, "What was it like in socialism, and how it is in capitalism?" in the following way:

Today in capitalism (in Croatia) there are several permanent satirical cartoonists, while other cartoonists create their works as amateurs. On the other hand, in their essence cartoons have experienced their true nature – freedom of expression. There are no restrictions on the choice of the target and the limit of satire, although this is also dependent on the owner of the magazine. We were aware of the limitations in socialism: we should not have attacked or ridiculed political leaders and the social system. No editor ever returned any of my cartoons to me. And Ico Voljevica confided to me in the 1990s and told me that out of the ten proposed *Grga* cartoons, the editor returned four of them.<sup>27</sup> This, of course, is not a journalistic manner, but it is a fact that such things happened. Stipe Šuvar never refused my finished cartoon for his monthly.<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, Oto Reisinger confirms that the democratic multi-party system of Croatia did not change the situation for cartoonists much, and that his caricatures were sometimes rejected in the new Republic of Croatia because the editor would say: "It wouldn't be nice to offend minister."<sup>29</sup>

"Perhaps today there is nominally greater freedom, and the author can be much more independent in the choice of topics and freer in terms of expression, but even today it is not easy. In the old system, there was political censorship, while today there is hidden political and much more economic censorship, censorship happens because of certain topics, if you step in the sphere of the economy, due to the people who sponsor and finance the media", explains Nikola Plečko, who publishes cartoons daily, and sometimes has his cartoons rejected.<sup>30</sup> In other words, if you have a critical and satirical approach towards

27 *Grga* cartoons, made by Ico Voljevica (as well as Pero by Reisinger), were very popular cartoons (political and everyday social satires) that appeared in several daily newspapers seven days a week, and were produced for over more than four decades (from the 1950s until the end of century).

28 Kristina Olujić, "U svojoj devedesetoj godini najstariji sam aktivni karikaturist na svijetu" [At the Age of Ninety, I Am the Oldest Active Cartoonist in the World], interview with Borivoj Dovniković, *Nacional*, February 1, 2020, online edition: <https://www.nacional.hr/u-svojoj-devedesetoj-godini-najstariji-sam-aktivni-karikaturist-na-svijetu/>, accessed July 17, 2021.

29 From a conversation with Oto Reisinger in June 2008 for the purposes of the retrospective exhibition in Gallery Klovićevi Dvori, held in 2008; *Oto Reisinger, Retrospektiva* [Oto Reisinger: A Retrospective], Galerija Klovićevi Dvori, Zagreb 2008, 49.

30 Mladen Obrenović, "Ko je protjerao karikaturu" [Who Banished Caricature], *Al Jazeera*, accessed March 18, 2022, <https://balkans.aljazeera.net teme/2014/8/22/ko-je-protjerao-karikaturu>.



Fig. 5. Nik Titanik, *Guranje nosa* (Sticking the Nose In), rejected 2007.

the corporations (or their owners) who pay for advertisements in the media, they will terminate their contracts and the media will be left without a source of finance. The fact that the problem of censorship, and even more self-censorship, is constantly present, and that it is not only a matter for historical research, is shown by the gatherings on this topic that are occasionally organized in Croatia. For instance, a roundtable titled *Self-Censorship in Socialism and Today*, which primarily dealt with the field of literature, was held in Pula in 2013 as part of a book festival. The questions raised on that occasion speak for themselves: “How rigorous was the infamous communist censorship in the era of Yugoslavia, and how much is it

really just a problem of the past? Are the societies and cultures that replaced communism perhaps affected by a more dangerous (self) censorship than the one that existed in the last phase of the communist regimes?”<sup>31</sup> These issues permeate all areas of culture, from cartoons and journalism to literature and film (fig. 5).

The caricatures of President Tito and President Tuđman by excellent portrait and political cartoonist Petar Pismestrović, are a superb example of censorship and self-censorship (fig. 6, fig. 7). In correspondence we had in 2021, Pismestrović described how he drew Tito’s cartoon for the weekly *Kviz* in 1973, and many years later, in 1990, Tuđman’s for the newspaper *Vjesnik*:

Fig. 6. Petar Pismestrović, *Tito*, 1973, rejected by the editor in chief of the magazine *Kviz*, first published in Austria 2013.



Fig. 7. Petar Pismestrović, *Tuđman*, 1990, rejected by the editor in chief of the daily paper *Vjesnik*.



31 Marko Stričević, “Je li gora YU-cenzura ili hrvatska autocenzura?” [What is Worse: YU-Censorship or Croatian Self-Censorship?], *T-portal*, December 6, 2013, accessed March 22, 2022, <https://www.tportal.hr/kultura/clanak/je-li-gora-yu-cenzura-ili-hrvatska-autocenzura-20131206>.

My Tito cartoon was rejected on the grounds that Tito can only be drawn by selected artists. To caricature Tito was even less desirable (than an ordinary portrait). In a period of change, I drew President Tuđman as a cowboy returning from America. That caricature was rejected because it insulted the character of the president. I didn't know that the law protecting the character and actions (of a leader) also applied to Tuđman. Now, whether it was censorship or the fear and arbitrariness of the editor-in-chief, it is difficult to say... It was the same mentality as during Tito's rule.<sup>32</sup>

## THE CENSORSHIP, ABOLITION AND DISAPPEARANCE OF POLITICAL CARTOONS IN THE LAST THREE DECADES

Are there differences between censoring political cartoons, their disappearance, and abolishing them entirely? What connects them? It is clear to everyone what censorship and self-censorship are, and that they occur at different levels even today, and will continue to occur tomorrow as well. The cancellation of political cartoons happens because editors-in-chief around the world believe that cartoons are no longer desirable content, especially in print media. The reason for the disappearance of cartoons is not the lower popularity of cartoons or the cost of their publication, but above all the discomfort of editors-in-chief and publishers who are afraid of offending the centres of power. The disappearance of political caricature occurs through the synergy of self-censorship and the abolition of the regular publication of cartoons in certain media; this process of disappearance is also often accompanied by the view that cartoons as a form of expression are a thing of the past, and that they have been replaced by memes and other artistic forms. It is obvious that all three mentioned components have contributed to caricature losing its basic support (printed media), and that it has not yet sufficiently adapted to the internet. The disappearance of cartoons and caricatures from the media is evidenced by the numerous statements by cartoonists in the media or in texts they occasionally publish.

One example of censorship in the last three decades is related to the work of Srećko Puntarić, one of the most experienced cartoonists in Croatian print media. He drew a medieval tower with a king and a court jester, who remarks that there are still a few medals left and asks if anyone else who doesn't get it? Nothing seemed controversial to Puntarić until he heard that the editor-in-chief had been fired because of this cartoon. The controversy stemmed from

32 From correspondence with Peter Pismestrovčić, held in June 2021, whom I thank for all of the information and cartoons he provided. About the problems caused by his caricatures, see more in: Ivor Fuka, "Zaboravljene karikature olovnih vremena: 'Franjo Tuđman se bunio što mu crtam kriva usta'" [Forgotten Caricatures of Leaden Times: "Franjo Tuđman Protested that I Was Drawing His Mouth Crooked"], *Lupiga*, May 4, 2021, accessed June 3, 2022, <https://lupiga.com/vijesti/zaboravljene-karikature-olovnih-vremena-franjo-tudjman-se-bunio-sto-mu-crtam-kriva-usta>.

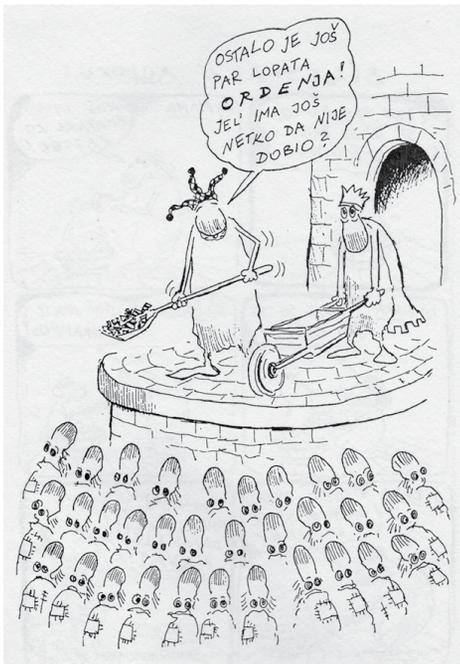


Fig. 8. Srećko Puntarić, untitled, in: *Hrvatski obzor*, 1998.

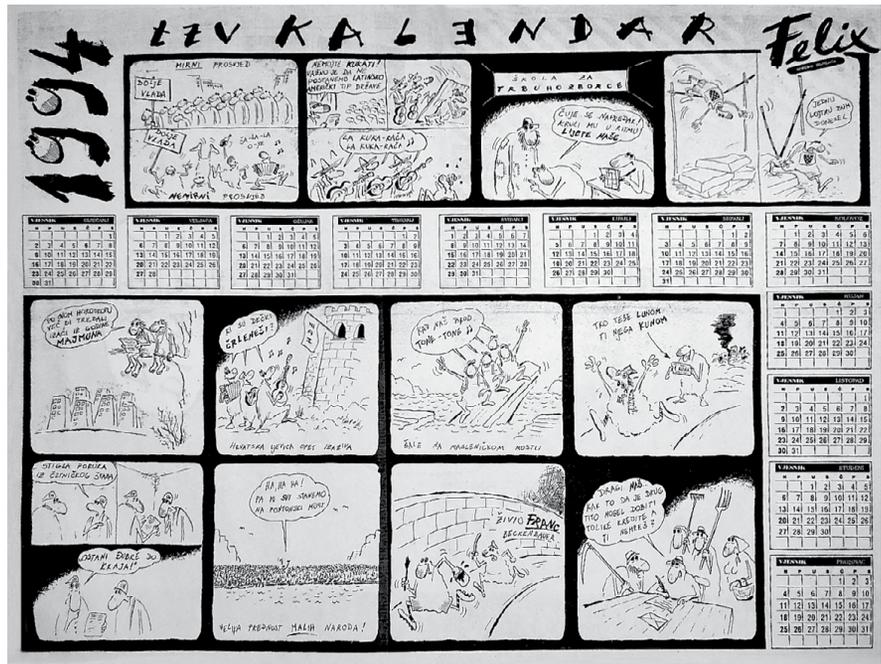


Fig. 9. Srećko Puntarić, *Kalendar za 1994* (Calendar for 1994), in: *Vjesnik*, January 1, 1994.

the fact that the cartoon was accidentally published at the exact time when foreign delegations were receiving medals from President Tuđman in the Presidential palace (fig. 8).

Another unique example is a calendar for 1994 featuring twelve of Puntarić's cartoons. In 1993, Puntarić's cartoons were rejected twelve times by the daily newspaper *Vjesnik*. On the last day of 1993, the editor Krešimir Fijačko announced that the calendar for 1994 would include these cartoons, and explained why they were not originally published: "Frankly, we thought it was too harsh, or that it was not the right moment (which is a nicer expression for lack of courage). And then we mustered up the courage and decided to use these cartoons in a manly way. Admittedly, we still are not publishing them, but will only show them to the readers of our New Year's issue of *Vjesnik*, so that they can see why we did not publish them last year."<sup>33</sup> This is a witty example of editorial self-criticism, which explicitly states that the timing of publication is one of the most important components of the power of political commentary by cartoons. Sometimes it's enough to move away from a certain topic for only a month, when it doesn't even have half of the effect compared to the *right moment* for the topic that the cartoon satirizes (fig. 9).

In 2019, Petar Pismestrović shared on social network his concern about the position of cartoons in the media, prompted by Patrick Chappate's article about the decision to no longer publish political cartoons in *The New York Times*:

It's sad what's happening in the NYT – as fellow cartoonist Patrick Chappate writes – a newspaper that occasionally published my work and was an example of freedom of expression, at least for us in Europe. This is just proof that cartoons are really a *dangerous*

33 Krešimir Fijačko, "Felix Nova Godina" [Happy (Felix) New Year], *Vjesnik*, December 31, 1993.

*medium* in danger of disappearing. Obviously, in some countries, the opponents of the critical word have taken positions and become so strong that they can do what they want, even expel cartoons from the pages of newspapers. Why? The pretext that times have changed and there is no money for cartoons is just an empty excuse. Cartoonists have never been adequately paid for their work and could only live off their work, but not get rich. Behind everything there is obviously politics that interferes with public opinion and that, like an octopus, has spread its tentacles and is crawling into every pore of society. They think that they need to get rid of the unsuitable ones who are still spoiling their image, among them are obviously cartoonists, perhaps first of all. In the end, when there are only *acceptable cartoonists*, it will definitely be the end of critical thought.<sup>34</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The examples presented in this chapter confirm that the problem of censorship in various forms is constantly present. What is particularly worrying is the fact that the cartoons that have been created in democracy are gradually disappearing from the media – this points to the growing shortcomings of democracy, both in the example of the cartoons in Croatia and globally.

240 Since the 1990s in the Republic of Croatia, the influence of cartoons and caricatures in the media steadily weakened, in accordance with the decline in circulation of print media to which the cartoons were linked. Moreover, cartoons are published less and less in the remaining print media. At the same time, there are fewer and fewer cartoonists, especially those who deal with political cartoons. Therefore, in the last twenty years, it is almost impossible to find an example of cartoon censorship, except for some examples of editorial self-censorship. Caricature is a tool that calls for a critical reflection of reality, and this includes all social topics as well as the questioning of previous values or authorities. But without true questioning and critical reflection, the media lose their stance and principles, and feed exclusively on sensationalism and spectacle. Patrick Chappatte's words seem to confirm this: "If cartoons are a prime target it's because of their nature and exposure: they are an encapsulated opinion, a visual shortcut with an unmatched capacity to touch the mind. That's their strength, and their vulnerability. They might also be a revealer of something deeper. More than often, the real target, behind the cartoon, is the media that published it."<sup>35</sup> At a time when the complex relationship between

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34 Published on Pismestrović's Facebook profile, under the title: "Moj komentar uz tekst Patrika Chappatea, vrijeme nesloboda ili kako ubiti karikaturu" [My Comment on Patrik Chappatte's Text, the Time of Unfreedom or How to Kill a Cartoon and a Caricature], June 11, 2019.

35 Patrick Chappatte, "The End of Political Cartoons at The New York Times," *Chappatte Globecartoon*, June 10, 2019, accessed June 21, 2020, <https://www.chappatte.com/en/the-end-of-political-cartoons-at-the-new-york-times>.

freedom of expression, hate speech and responsibility for freedom of public expression is insufficiently considered, democracy suffers, and the possibility of a critical understanding of democratic realities is absent. There is no doubt that the political cartoon is an *endangered species*, but more and more examples indicate that it will survive in the form of online political cartoons. Such online political cartoons are present across the internet, and it is only a question of time as to when they will regain importance.

Another key question is whether the disappearance of cartoons from the media is caused by the avoidance of responsibility by editors and cartoonists, or whether it is part of the trend of cancel culture.<sup>36</sup> The organizer of an international caricaturist competition, The Euro-Mediterranean Centre Librexpression, which focused on the topic of “Cancel Culture and Political Correctness” raised this question: “Where will the new taboos of political correctness take us?” The text accompanying the competition highlights a key question in its title: *Can cartoons survive?*<sup>37</sup> This is a question that no one can answer, not even those who think that cartoons will survive on the web. Of course, this is related to the issue of the global censorship in all areas of human activity. On October 20, 2019, almost all newspapers in Australia were published with blacked-out lines at their front pages as a protest by journalists against censorship. On March 31, 2022, *The Guardian* published an article entitled “‘Out of Touch’: Children’s Authors Describe Increasing Censorship of books on diversity.”<sup>38</sup> In May 2022, journalists of RTV Slovenia went on strike due to pressure on journalists, violations of professional standards, damage to their reputation in the public, and, most importantly, because the public interest is increasingly endangered. One can only hope that Slavoj Žižek’s prophecy will not come true: “We are moving into a new, controlled society worse than old totalitarianism.”<sup>39</sup> The disappearance of political cartoons could be the first warning sign.

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36 “What’s arguably even worse, is that cancel culture and social media outrage is making editors afraid of satire, reducing the number of paid spaces cartoonists have to publish their work, or watering down the cartoons that are published. Both not good for the profession.” Tjeerd Royaards, “Cartoons and Cancel Culture,” *Cartoon Movement*, September 3, 2021, accessed June 21, 2020, <https://blog.cartoonmovement.com/2021/09/editorial-cartoons-and-cancel-culture.html>.

37 “Cancel Culture and Political Correctness: Can Cartoons Survive?,” *Voxeurop*, September 15, 2021, accessed June 21, 2020, <https://voxeurop.eu/en/cancel-culture-and-political-correctness-can-cartoons-survive/>.

38 Libby Brooks, “‘Out of Touch’: Children’s Authors Describe Increasing Censorship of Books on Diversity,” *Guardian*, March 31, 2022, accessed June 21, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2022/mar/31/childrens-authors-describe-worrying-trend-of-censorship-of-books-on-diversity/>.

39 “‘We Are Moving into a New, Controlled Society Worse than Old Totalitarianism’ – Zizek on Google leak,” *Azerbaijan24*, August 17, 2019, accessed June 21, 2020, <https://www.azerbaycan24.com/en/we-are-moving-into-a-new-controlled-society-worse-than-old-totalitarianism-zizek-on-google-leak/>.

