



ICO VOLJEVICA

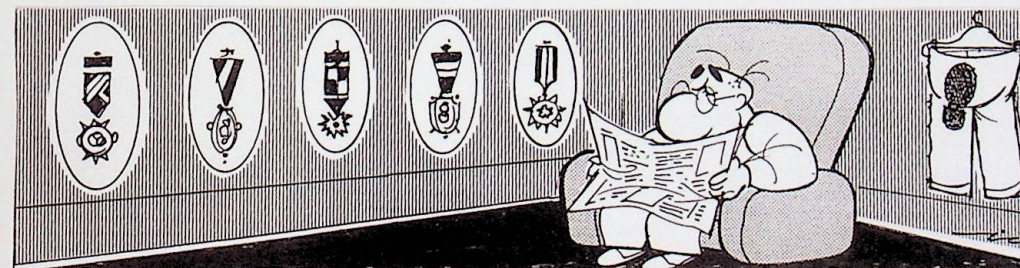
GRGA, S PROTOKOLOM I BEZ NJEGA

Galerija Forum, 11. srpnja 2022. - 20. kolovoza 2022.

Forum Gallery, July 11, 2022 - August 20, 2022

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Feda Gavrilović

Prvi sam put čuo za to ime dok sam bio jako mali, krajem 80-ih, kada mi je deda pokazao stripić u *Večernjem* uz riječi: „Gle, Grga Protokol!“ Pretpostavljam da nisam mogao previše razumjeti strip (osim ako nije bila neka apsurdna epizoda), ali ta riječ „protokol“, kojoj također nisam znao značenje, bila mi je urnebesno smiješna u kombinaciji s nečijim imenom. Već se tu vidi majstorstvo tvorca stripa Ismeta Ica Voljevice: u imenu svoga lika stvorio je metaforu birokracije koja samom zvučnošću može nasmejati i upućena čovjeka i trogodišnjeg dječaka. Iako je protagonistovo prezime brzo otpalo iz naslova (moj deda je, vjerojatno, još pamtio stripove iz 50-ih) i strip se počeo zvati samo *Grga*, lik je opstao od 1950., kada se počeo pojavljivati u tjedniku *Kerempuh*, pa do 2000., kada je na veliku žalost i sramotu hrvatske medijske scene ugašena njegova dnevna rubrika u *Večernjem listu*. Do smrti njegova autora strip je još izlazio u dvotjedniku *Vijenac*. U svakom slučaju, Grga je jedan od najdugovječnijih protagonista novinske (a posebno dnevnovinske) karikature u svijetu.

Ali, tko je Grga Protokol?

On je debeljuškasti gospodin koji je desetljećima komentirao prvenstveno politiku i javnu upravu, ali i društvo i međuljudske odnose. On je birokrat, ali i žrtva birokracije, poput Kafkina Josefa K. (često se ističe kako je izostavljanjem prezimena iz naslova naglasak stripa stavljen na čovjeka u sukobu s birokracijom, ali ne bih se u potpunosti složio s time – lik Grge je u cijelom vijeku svoga izlaženja sudjelovao u birokratskim procesima, sastancima i preglasavanjima, makar i s dna hijerarhije). Grga je građanin prodorna pogleda koji detektira sve društvene nepravde i apsurdne.

Lucidan komentator koji, ponekad i bez riječi, daje dijagnozu društva. Pučki tribun i duh ovog mjesta i vremena koje živimo.

Na samim počecima, u *Kerempuhu*, Grga je bio nešto mršaviji i šiljastiji, ali njegov ga je tvorac uskoro definirao kao simpatičnog lika velikog trbuha i nosa, okruglih naočala i lica koje s minimalnim likovnim intervencijama pokazuje brojne ekspresivne mogućnosti. Sama njegova pojava jednostavna je i duhovita, kao i njegovo ime. U toj ekonomičnosti izraza – i likovnog i narativnog – očita je karikaturistička vještina Ica Voljevice. Zanimljivost kod Grge je i njegova hibridna pozicija između karikature i stripa (na nju ukazuje povjesničar umjetnosti Frano Dulibić u pogovoru Voljevičinom strip-albumu izdanom 2018.). Naime, njegove su pasice ponekad bez riječi i ponekad u jednom kadru, ali nerijetko sugeriraju i neke sekvencije.

Iako su novinske karikature obično vezane za kontekst, odnosno društveno-politički trenutak koji komentiraju, kod Grge to, vrlo često, nije slučaj. Problemi kojima se on bavi uglavnom su univerzalni i tek po mjestimičnom korištenju nekih specifičnih riječi (kao što su „samoupravljanje“ ili „privatizacija“) možemo odrediti u kojemu je sistemu pojedina karikatura nastala. Jer, društvene mane uglavnom su iste – korumpiranost politike, neučinkovitost javne uprave, problemi infrastrukture, krize koje pogađaju socijalno najugroženije. Devedesetih godina tom su se katalogu pridružili i državno pogodovanje odabranim privatnicima, konvertitstvo i ratna razaranja. Novinar Boris Rašeta, pišući predgovor spomenutom strip-albumu, u toj vječnoj aktualnosti *Grginih* tema vidi i tragediju našeg društva – dokaz kako se ono godinama ne razvija i stagnira u kaljuži istih problema koji ga izjedaju.

Slažem se da Grgina gundanja nadilaze vrijeme, ali rekao bih – i prostore. Iako je izniknuo na našem, balkanskom tlu gdje loša vlast jako

dobro uspijeva, on je kritičar cijelog građanskog društva – birokratizacije i usložnjivanja rješenja jednostavnih (ili, barem u početku jednostavnih) problema. Globalni pogled otkriva slične nevolje s korupcijom i socijalnim nejednakostima u cijelom suvremenom svijetu. Grga je, tako, nasljednik brojnih likova koji ukazuju na tamniju stranu građanskog društva – likova iz Gogoljeve, Balzacove, Čehovljeve, Kafkine književnosti, ali i stariji rođak Dilberta, protagonista istoimenog dnevnog stripa Scotta Adamsa koji izlazi od 1989. do danas i koji kapitalizam komentira iz američke korporativne perspektive. Netko bi mi tu mogao uputiti prigovor kako je većina Voljevićinih stripova ipak nastala u socijalizmu, dakle zamišljenoj alternativni buržujkom društvu. Na to bih, pak, odgovorio da ni socijalizam kakav je postojao nije bio imun na bolesti građanskog društva, što zbog vanjskih pritisaka, što zbog individualnih ambicija koje su uzrokovala moralna zastranjenja.

Da je *Grga* još i danas univerzalno aktualan dokazuje i karikatura na kojoj jedan lik kaže: „Na Mars će doći ljudi!“, na što Grga odgovara: „Jadni Mars!“. Ima li boljeg komentara na prirodu zapadnog čovjeka, čija je najnovija manifestacija neostvariv i financijski ekscesivan projekt samopromocije američkog milijardera Elona Muska koji bi, tobože, trebao, evo svaki čas, započeti kolonizaciju Marsa?

Tužna činjenica našeg društva, koje je odlučilo preuzeti samo najgore tekovine kapitalizma, smrt je kulture, dio čega je i smrt novina. Jedna od posljedica tog umiranja je i gašenje *Grge* u dnevnom tisku 2000., kao i radikalno smanjenje broja karikatura u hrvatskim novinama danas. Boje li se vladari društva duhovitih uboda na svoj račun? Ili vladari tržišta pokušavaju optimizirati profit, ukidajući kulturne sadržaje i zamjenjujući ih lakom zabavom? Obje su opcije porazne za našu sadašnjost i budućnost. Što god da bio slučaj, Grga bi mu se nasmijao. Kako njega više nema, učinimo to mi za njega, onako kako je on to činio za nas desetljećima.

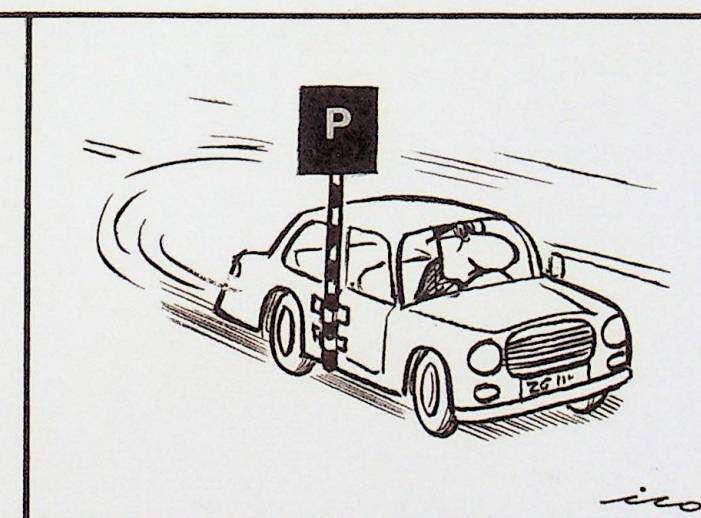
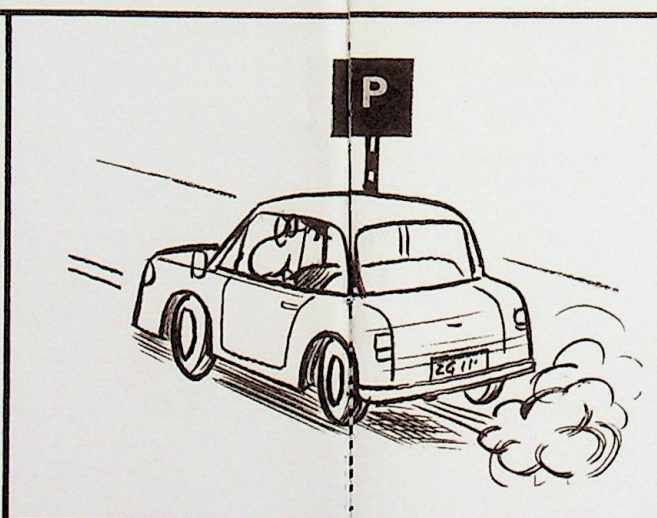
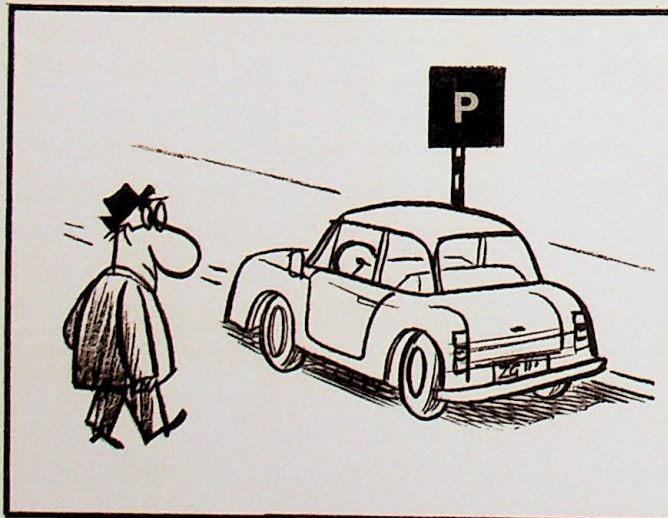
ISMET ICO VOLJEVICA rođen je u Mostaru 18. srpnja 1922., a umro je u Zagrebu 30. listopada 2008. Završio je gimnaziju u Sarajevu. Za vrijeme Drugoga svjetskog rata kao ilegalac pomagao je Narodnooslobodilačkoj borbi. Po završetku služenja vojnog roka 1947. započinje studirati arhitekturu na Sveučilištu u Zagrebu. Studij nije završio, ali paralelno s njime objavljuje karikature s kojima ulazi u povijest. Radio je i kao scenograf animiranih filmova u Zagreb filmu.

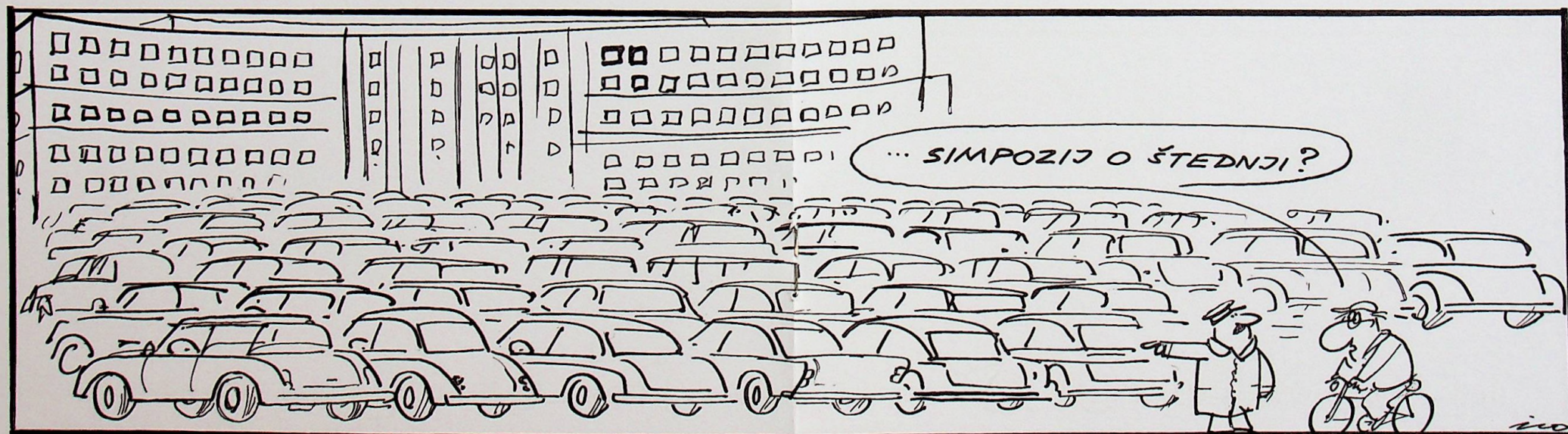
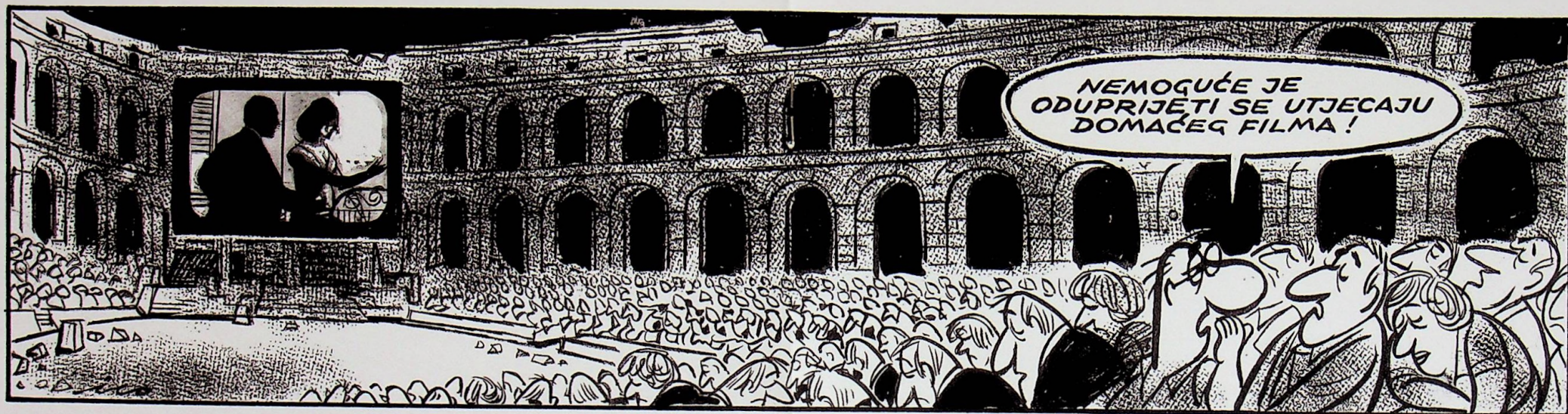
Uz ostalo, dobitnik je *Grand prixa* na Svjetskom festivalu karikature u Montrealu (1974.), triju nagrada Hrvatskog novinarskog društva (1950., 1965. i 1967.), Nagrade *Otokar Keršovani* za životno djelo (1980.), Nagrade grada Zagreba (1978.), Zlatne plakete *Vjesnika* (1984.) i Povelje ZAVNOH-a (1986.).

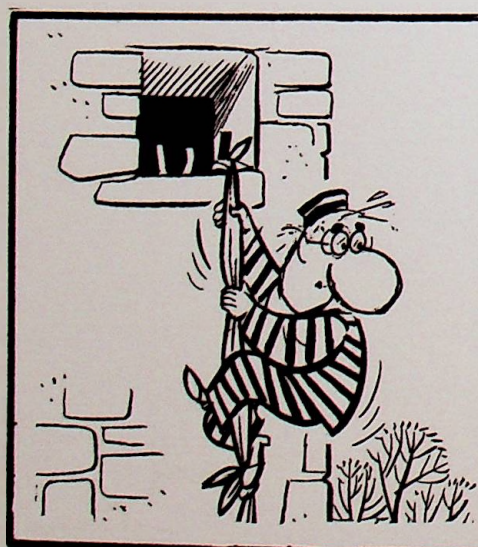
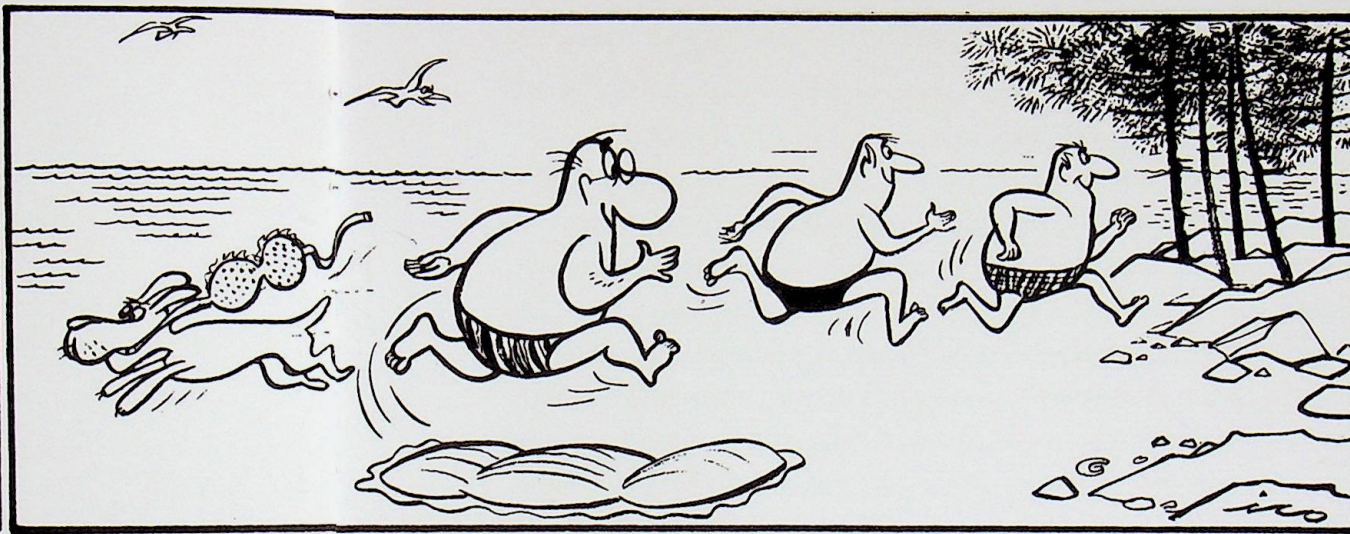
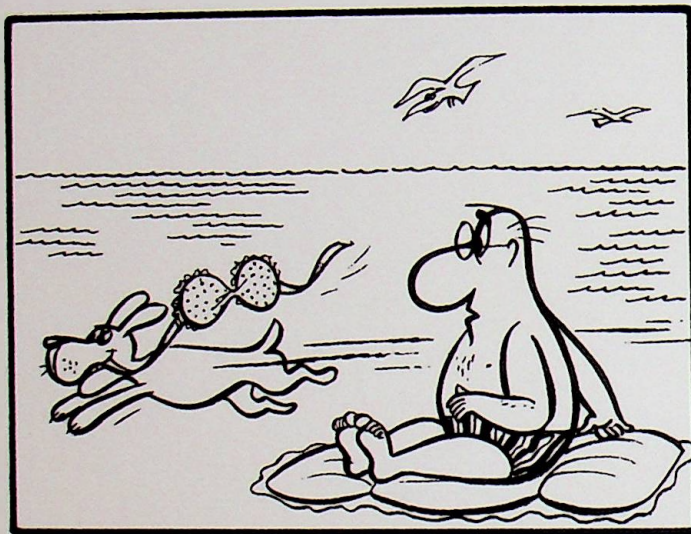
Lik Grge pojavljivao se u mnogim novinama. Najprije pod naslovom *Grga Protokol* u tjedniku *Kerempuh* od 1950. do 1955.; u *Globusu* od 1954. do 1955.; u *Vjesniku*, 1960., u *Narodnom listu* od 1955. do 1961., pa pod naslovom *Grga* u *Večernjem listu* od 1962. do 2000. Nakon toga Grga je izlazio u kratkovjekom dnevniku *Republika*, pa u dvotjedniku *Vijenac* do 2008.

Albumi s pasicama ovoga dnevnog strip-komentara objavljeni su 2004. (*Grga – svakodnevno 50 godina*, izd. Huna, s tekstovima Dražena Matošeca i Tonka Maroevića); 2007. (*Grga Protokol*, izd. Art9, s predgovorom Veljka Krulčića); 2018. (*Grga – 70 godina*, izd. Top mag, s tekstovima Borisa Rašete i Frane Dulibića), i kao malo izdanje povodom 60 godina Grge, 2010. (izd. Strip-centar Tino, s tekstovima Tine Ćurina i karikaturistove kćeri Denane Voljevice Čičić).

Na izložbi su prikazane pasice Grge, iz fundusa Muzeja grada Zagreba.







Feda Gavrilović

The first time I heard that name was when I was very little, at the end of the 1980's, when my grandpa showed me a comic strip in *Večernji List* and said: "Look, Grga Protocol!" I assume I couldn't really understand the comic (unless it was an absurd episode), but I found that word "protocol", whose meaning I also didn't understand, hilariously funny in combination with someone's name. This already points to the comic's creator Ismet Ico Voljevica's genius: through the name of his character, he created a metaphor of bureaucracy whose resonance alone can make both a knowledgeable man and a three-year-old boy laugh. Although the surname of the protagonist was soon dropped from the title (my grandpa probably still remembered the comics from the 1950's) and the comic was named only *Grga*, the character survived from 1950, when he made his first appearance in the weekly newspaper *Kerempuh*, up until 2000, when his daily section in *Večernji List* was halted, a truly sad and disgraceful event in the Croatian media scene. Until the author's death, the comic was still published in the bi-weekly *Vijenac*. In any case, *Grga* is one of the longest-living protagonists of newspaper (especially daily newspaper) caricature in the world.

But, who is *Grga* Protocol?

He is a plump gentleman who has for decades commented primarily on politics and public administration, but also society and interpersonal relationships. He is a bureaucrat, but also a victim of bureaucracy, like Kafka's Josef K. (it is often pointed out the omission of the surname from the title puts emphasis on the battle man vs bureaucracy, but I do not completely agree with that — during the comic's entire lifespan, *Grga*'s character participated in the bureaucratic processes, meetings, and outvotes, even from the bottom of the hierarchy). *Grga* is a citizen with a piercing gaze who detects all of society's injustices and absurdities. He is a lucid

commentator who, sometimes without uttering a single word, gives a diagnosis of society. The people's tribune and spirit of the place and time we live in.

At the very beginnings, in *Kerempuh*, *Grga* was somewhat thinner and pointier, but his creator soon defined him as a likable character with a big belly and nose, round glasses, and a face which shows numerous expressive possibilities with minimal artistic interventions. His appearance alone is as simple and witty as his name. This economical expression — both artistic and narrative — clearly shows Ico Voljevica's caricatural skill. *Grga* is also interesting thanks to his hybrid position (art historian Frano Dulibić points this out in the introduction to Voljevica's comic album published in 2018) between caricature and comic strip. Namely, its panels were sometimes wordless and sometimes in one frame, but also often suggested a series.

Although newspaper caricatures are often connected with a context, i.e. a socio-political moment they comment on, with *Grga*, that is often not the case. The problems he deals with are mostly universal and only the random use of some specific words (such as "self-management" or "privatization") hint at the system in which the caricature was created. Because social flaws are more or less the same — political corruption, ineffective public administration, problems concerning infrastructure, crises affecting the most vulnerable members of society. In the '90s, this catalog was joined by the state's favoring select private businesses, conversion, and war destruction. In that eternal actuality of *Grga*'s topics, journalist Boris Rašeta, in his introduction to the above-mentioned comic album, also sees the tragedy of our society — proof that it has not evolved for years and it stagnates in the cesspool of the same problems that consume it.

I agree *Grga*'s grumblings transcend time, but I'd also say — and space. Although stemming from our, Balkan soil where bad government

thrives well, he is a critic of civil society as a whole — bureaucratizing and complicating solutions to simple (or, at least simple in the beginning) problems. The global perspective reveals similar troubles with corruption and social inequalities in the whole modern world. Grga is thus the successor of numerous characters which point to the dark side of civil society — literary characters by Gogol, Balzac, Chekhov, Kafka, but is also the older cousin of Dilbert, the protagonist of the eponymous daily comic by Scott Adams, published from 1989 to this day, and which comments on capitalism from the American corporate perspective. Some might object that most of Voljevica's comics were created in socialism, therefore an imaginary alternative to bourgeois society. To that I would reply that not even socialism as it existed wasn't immune to the diseases of civil society, in part due to external pressures, in part due to individual ambitions which caused moral deviations.

The fact that *Grga* is still universally current is also proven by the caricature in which one character says: "People will come to Mars!", to which Grga replies: "Poor Mars!". Is there a better comment on the nature of Western man, whose newest manifestation is the unfeasible and financially excessive project of self-promotion of American billionaire Elon Musk who is, supposedly, starting the colonization of Mars any minute now?

The sad fact of our society, which has decided to adopt only the worst legacies of capitalism, is the death of culture, part of which is the death of the newspaper. One of the consequences of that dying is the scrapping of *Grga* in the daily press in 2000, as well as the radical cutting down of the number of caricatures in Croatian newspapers today. Are the rulers of society afraid of witty jabs at their expense? Or are the rulers of the market trying to optimize profit by removing cultural content and replacing it with light entertainment? Both options are disastrous for our present and future. Whichever the case, *Grga* would laugh at it. As he is gone, let us do it for him, like he did for us for decades.

ISMET ICO VOLJEVICA was born in Mostar July 18, 1922, and died in Zagreb October 30, 2008. He finished the gymnasium in Sarajevo. During World War II, he helped the National Liberation Front as an illegal. At the end of his military service in 1947, he began studying architecture at the University in Zagreb. He did not finish his studies, but at the same time, he started publishing caricatures, which made history. He also worked as a set designer of animated films in Zagreb Film.

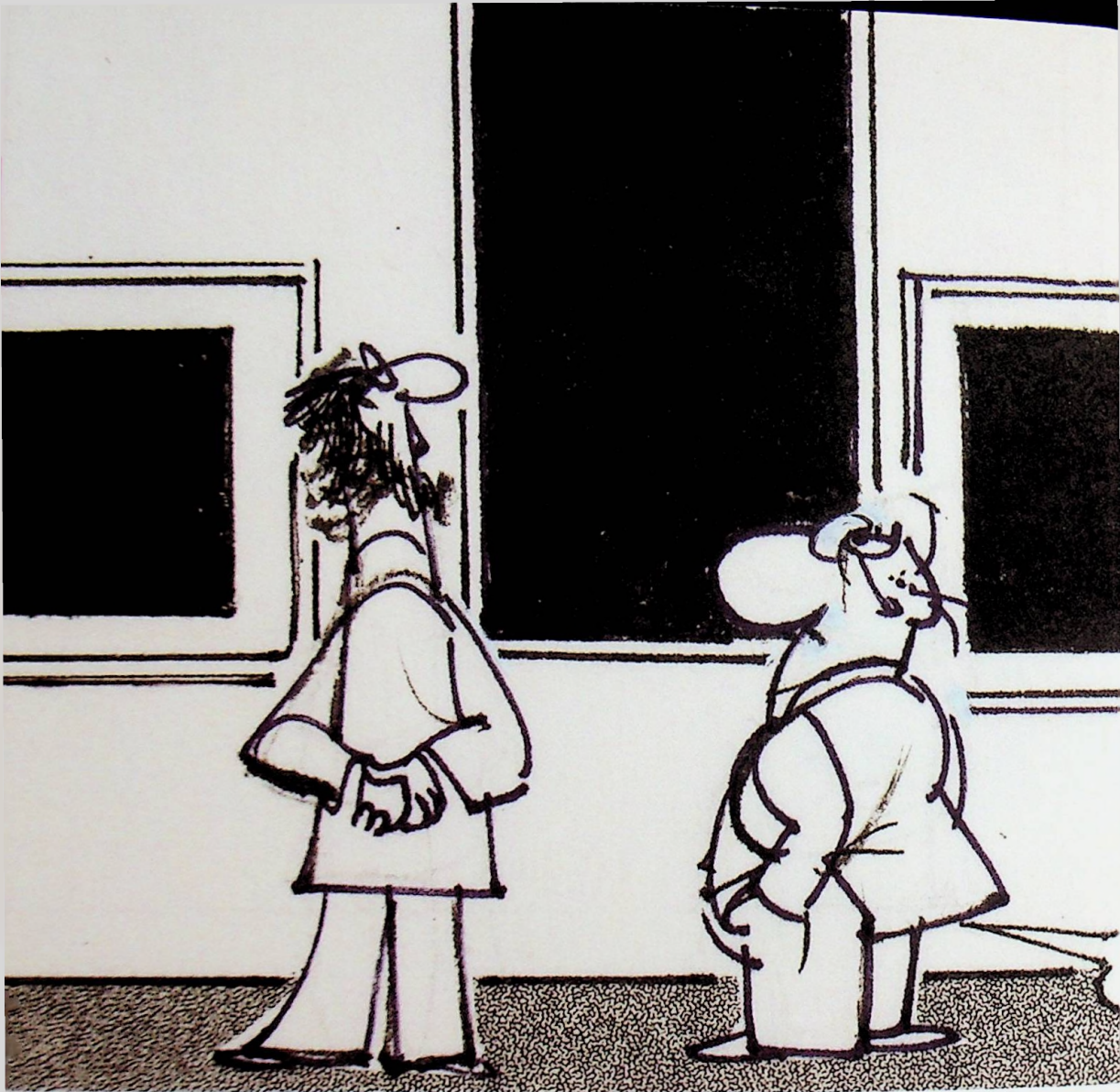
His awards include: Grand Prix at the World Festival of Caricature in Montreal (1974), three awards of the Croatian Journalists' Association (1950, 1965 and 1967), the Otokar Keršovani Lifetime Achievement Award (1980), Award of the City of Zagreb (1978), *Vjesnik's* Golden Plaque (1984) and the Charter of the State Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Croatia - ZAVNOH (1986).

Grga appeared in numerous newspapers. First under the title *Grga Protocol* in the weekly *Kerempuh* from 1950 to 1955; in *Globus* from 1954 to 1955, in *Vjesnik* in 1960, in *Narodni List* from 1955 to 1961, and under the title *Grga* in *Večernji List* from 1962 to 2000. After that, *Grga* was published in the short-lived daily *Republika*, followed by the bi-weekly *Vijenac* until 2008.

Albums with panels of this daily comic-commentary were published in 2004 (*Grga — Svakodnevno 50 godina* [translator's note: *Grga — Daily for 50 Years*], publisher Huna, foreword by Veljko Krulčić); 2018 (*Grga — 70 godina* [translator's note: *Grga — 70 Years*], publisher Top mag, with texts by Boris Rašeta and Frano Dulibić), as well as the small edition to mark 60 years of *Grga*, 2010 (publisher Strip centar Tino, with texts by Tino Ćurin and the cartoonist's daughter Denana Voljevica Čičić).

The exhibition features panels of *Grga* from the collection of the Zagreb City Museum.





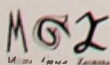
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 Hrošje Vilhar, ravnatelj / director VODITELJ GALERIJE, KUSTOS IZLOŽBE I AUTOR PREDGOVORA / GALLERY
 MANAGER, EXHIBITION CURATOR, AUTHOR OF THE FOREWORD: Feda Gavrilović DIZAJN KATALOGA I
 PLAKATA / DESIGN OF CATALOGUE AND POSTER: Ivana Vulić LEKTURA / PROOFREADING: Mateja Fabijanić
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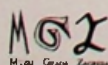
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Forum Gallery, July 11, 2022 - August 20, 2022