

**TEMA BROJA / TOPIC:  
LOKALNI MEDIJI I HRVATSKO PROLJEĆE 1971.  
LOCAL MEDIA AND THE CROATIAN SPRING IN 1971**

Povodom 50. godišnjice Hrvatskog proljeća, koje je 1971. doživjelo svoj vrhunac, a krajem iste godine i slom, na Sveučilištu Sjever u Koprivnici 6. prosinca 2021. godine organiziran je znanstveni skup »Lokalni mediji u Hrvatskom proljeću«. Zbog epidemiološke situacije skup je održan u online formi, a u ovom broju Podravine donosimo niz članaka koji su nastali na temelju podnesenih referata.

**THE MEDIA ECHOES OF THE CROATIAN SPRING AND  
TITO'S VISIT TO KOPRIVNICA IN 1971: THE CLASH OF  
SUSRETI AND GLAS PODRAVINE**

**MEDIJSKI ODJECI HRVATSKOG PROLJEĆA I TITOVOG POSJETA  
KOPRIVNICI 1971. GODINE: SUKOB SUSRETA I GLASA PODRAVINE**

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**SUMMARY**

*The town and municipality of Koprivnica did not actively participate in the reformist movement of the Croatian Spring until April 1971. The local Communist Party organisation leadership were toeing the rigid dogmatic Party line, exercising complete control over the local weekly Glas Podravine and Radio Koprivnica. This partly changed with the visit of Savka Dabčević-Kučar to the the Podravka factory resulting in a telegram of support sent to the Croatian Spring leadership. These events coincided with the launch of the youth paper Susreti ('Meetings'). Although only three issues were printed, Susreti caused a stir in the Koprivnica public life by opening a number of political and social topics and ideological taboos, at times in direct conflict with the Party officials. Due to a turn of political events, Koprivnica was in September 1971 chosen as the central destination of President Tito's tour of north-western Croatia, with the purpose of demonstrating that there was no »nationalism and chauvinism« in this area. The minutely organised event drew mass attendance, which for a time changed Tito's view of the Croatian Spring activists. Still, just a few weeks later Koprivnica saw an open suppression of Susreti contributors, who ended up banished from the public life for a considerable length of time. At the meeting of the federal Party senior*

*leadership held in Karađorđevo, the most influential local Party functionary Pavle Gaži eventually turned against the Croatian Spring activists, leading to a political and media upheaval in Koprivnica, which during the next few years lived through its »Years of Led.«*

**Keywords:** Croatian Spring, reforms, nationalism, local media, Susreti, Tito, Savka Dabčević-Kučar, Pavle Gaži

**Ključne riječi:** Hrvatsko proljeće, reforme, nacionalizam, lokalni mediji, Susreti, Tito, Savka Dabčević-Kučar, Pavle Gaži

## 1. INTRODUCTION: POLITICAL AND MEDIA SCENE OF THE KOPRIVNICA AREA UNTIL THE SPRING OF 1971

A detailed analysis of the political and media events in the late 1960s and up to December 1971 unequivocally shows that the Croatian national movement, dubbed the Croatian Spring following its model from Prague 1968, only marginally spread into the town and municipality of Koprivnica. In this industrial centre of the wider Podravina-Bilogora region there were no rallies or civic gatherings during 1971, such as would focus on the reformist policies of the Central Committee (CK) of the League of Communists of Croatia (SKH), in the eyes of the general public personified in the personas of the Central Committee's President Savka Dabčević-Kučar and member of the Presidency of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRJ) and the Executive Committee of the Presidium of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (SKJ) Miko Tripalo.

The local media, especially the weekly *Glas Podravine*<sup>1</sup> ('The Voice of [the]Podravina [region]'), would report exclusively the official position of the Koprivnica Municipal Conference (OK) of SKH or the mass political organisations it controlled. If no official position had been stated, the paper would take the suggestions coming from the "committee," which was a jargon term for the building housing the socio-political organisations in Svilaraska Street. As the year 1971 saw a public discussion on constitutional changes, articles on the need for decentralisation and strengthening the status of the constituent republics of SFRJ were a regular feature, this being the position of all the Communist Party groups (sometimes labelled factions) in the Socialist Republic of Croatia (SRH). In this context, the only public activity that had not been formally verified by the municipal Party leadership was the telegram of support sent from Podravka directly to Savka Dabčević-Kučar on 8th April 1971 about the need to urgently adopt the constitutional changes as the only way, in the wording of the telegram, of "empowering the working class to make decisions on the results of their work."<sup>2</sup>

With all this in mind, we can conclude that the politics of the local political forums were not strictly anti-reform, but that the overarching principle was maximal caution, amplified by personal political calculations in view of the increasingly evident divisions within the SRH leadership, with an uncertain

<sup>1</sup> The *Glas Podravine* newspaper was first published in 1950, initially as a biweekly newspaper of the town and district of Koprivnica, before turning into an official organ of The Socialist Alliance of Working People of the municipality of Koprivnica in the 1960s, eventually in the early 1970s becoming "the weekly of the Commune of Koprivnica and Đurđevac." Even though this was not stated in the impressum, it was still owned by the municipal Socialist Alliance, while the publisher was the Koprivnica Information Centre, co-financed by the municipality, and also incorporating Radio Koprivnica. The director and the editor-in-chief at the time was Jovo Rojčević.

<sup>2</sup> *Glas Podravine*, 16th April 1971, "Dr Savka Dabčević-Kučar u Podravki", pp. 1-2. See also the chronology in Goran Živković: "Koprivnica i Hrvatsko proljeće", Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, Zagreb 2011, diploma paper, as well as Željko Krušelj: *Razvoj omladinske štampe općine Koprivnica*, Podravski zbornik '82, Koprivnica 1982. The telegram of support could also be understood as an act of welcome on her visit to the *Podravka* factory from 13<sup>th</sup> April, since the director general of this fast-growing company also held that radical changes of the economic system of Yugoslavia were necessary. It is indicative that in the same meeting of the Koprivnica communists "the proposition for Comrade Tito to remain president of SFRJ was supported," and "a note of protest to the Embassy of Sweden" was issued "on the account of the assault by Croatian emigrants on the Yugoslav diplomatic mission to Sweden, when the Yugoslav consul was murdered."

final outcome. This was nothing short of decades-old established political opportunism and fear of any changes. In this respect the Koprivnica communists, regardless of personal political preferences, stood closer to the dogmatic wing of the Party leadership of SRH. The fact remains, however, that until the December meeting of the senior Party leaders in Karađorđevo, the heads of Koprivnica communists took care to preserve the balance in their dealings with the sides in conflict. Ideologically, they were doubtlessly opposed to political and social changes. The president of the local communist organisation was Ivan Povijač, a typical old-school functionary, the secretary was ever-careful and indecisive Ivica Grgić, with their ideological ally Josip Bukovčan serving as the president of the inter-municipal Party organisation of the Podravina-Bilogora region.<sup>3</sup> This became evident after the crisis had reached its climax, in their sharp condemnation of the leaders and supporters of the Croatian Spring policies.

Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that in the key political moment for Koprivnica, namely the September visit of SFRJ President Josip Broz Tito, the interests of both sides coincided in their desire to leave an impression of enthusiastic mass support for the charismatic Yugoslav leader, and of the Podravina region, together with the whole of north-western Croatia, as a stronghold of political stability.

The pronounced political caution is evident from the informal procedure of the media coverage of the visits by a series of Croatian Spring activists to the Koprivnica area, with their activities typically registered without any emotional overtones or euphoric messages, and never followed by any commentary or long-term political analysis. Media reports on these public speeches, in addition to the usual praises of the local development plans, quoted only the ubiquitous ideological slogans, in support of following "Tito's line" and the ever-green party course of "brotherhood and unity." The only exception to this was in pointing out some concrete economic problems, such as also affected the companies in Koprivnica, characteristic of all the public speeches of the reformers.

If we accept the thesis that the Croatian Spring movement started in March 1971 with the publishing of the Declaration on the Name and Status of the Croatian Literary Language, despite being subject to strong political condemnation even on the part of some future reformists, it is apparent that Koprivnica, compared to some other regional centres, saw relatively few official visits and activities on the part of this political option, at least until December 1971.<sup>4</sup> The first of these came on 28<sup>th</sup> September 1967, when Savka Dabčević-Kučar, the newly-appointed president of the Executive Committee of the Parliament of SRH (i.e. the republic government) visited Podravka, focusing on the current economic issues and the expansion of Koprivnica food industry into the markets of SFRJ and abroad.<sup>5</sup> It was followed

<sup>3</sup> Because of their bureaucratic view on the social reality and blind faith in Marxist phraseology these functionaries were considered "commissars," typical of the early post-war period. However, a more influential political persona in the local framework was the first man of the Podravka factory, Pavle Gaži, a member of the Presidium of SKJ, who was on the level of SKH constantly balancing between the factions in conflict. At the meeting in Karađorđevo in the early stage he defended in principle the line of SKH Central Committee, to eventually defer to Tito's view of the Croatian Spring, at the end of this pivotal conference.

<sup>4</sup> Dušan Bilandžić: *Hrvatska moderna povijest*, pp. 513-517, Golden marketing, Zagreb 1999. In the chapter on the Declaration the author singles out this event as the true "beginning of the national movement," since in this period which followed the fall from power of the powerful secret police chief Aleksandar Ranković not even the party sanctions against the signatories could suppress the urge to finally speak up publicly against the imposition of a whole range of unitarian concepts in the domains of culture and education. In the coming years Croatian media and scientific institutions would speak openly on many theretofore taboo topics, in a wave of liberalisation culminating in the 10<sup>th</sup> session of CK SKH in January 1970, when unitarianism was formally condemned, with the reformers receiving unequivocal support by Vladimir Bakarić. Ivo Goldstein, in his book *Hrvatska 1918.-2008.*, pp. 532-533, EPH i Liber, Zagreb 2008 details the growth of the national movement following the Declaration, with the intellectuals who had previously been sanctioned by the Party receiving a silent amnesty in no more than a year or two, enabling them to return to their posts at universities and cultural and educational institutions, which was accompanied by a growth of the entire publishing sector.

<sup>5</sup> *Glas Podravine*, 16th April 1971, 30<sup>th</sup> September 1967, "Savka Dabčević-Kučar posjetila Koprivnicu", p. 1. It is interesting that visit was only reported on in five sentences. At the same time a large part of the front page, as well as the entire page 2 were dedicated to the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Podravka, reporting from the festive gathering and citing the speech of the company director Pavle Gaži. Of all the statements made

by the arrival of Miko Tripalo, at the time the secretary of the Executive Committee of CK SKH, also to Podravka, on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1968. On this occasion he gave a lecture for the Party activists in the town Army Hall on the implementation of the economic reform.<sup>6</sup> Political topics were side-lined, except for Tripalo emphasising the growing need to rejuvenate the Party and give the young members a chance to take over the key positions. 1968 saw another visit by a prominent reformist, when in September president of the Socialist Alliance of the Working People of Croatia (*SSRNH*) Stjepan Ivić and president of Alliance of National Liberation War Veterans (*SUBNOR*) of Croatia Ivan Šibl attended the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the formation of the partisan brigade *Braća Radić* ('the Radić Brothers').<sup>7</sup>

An entire year had passed before the arrival of the next distinguished guest. This was Dragutin Haramija, who had just been appointed president of the Executive Committee of the Parliament of SRH, while Savka Dabčević became president of CK SKH, completing the formation of the core of the Croatian Spring. Haramija first paid a visit Podravka, which had become an unwritten rule. Then he went to see the Gallery of Naïve Art in Hlebine, an unavoidable destination of practically all politicians visiting Podravina, followed by the Recreation Centre of Šoderica Lake. Finally, he had a conversation on the topic of economic reforms with the representatives of the companies from the Koprivnica area. The news report does not indicate any political topics being discussed.<sup>8</sup> Haramija would visit Hlebine once again on 27<sup>th</sup> July 1970, "when as the president of SRH government he acted as a host at an international meeting of naïve artists."<sup>9</sup> From then on, until April 1971, when after the aforementioned telegram of Support the president of CK SKH visited Podravka, no Croatian Spring leaders visited Koprivnica and Podravina.

There are two major theories which could account for this apparent lack of interest. According to one of them, the Koprivnica functionaries would, without further questions accept all the ideas being served from the government in Zagreb, including the reformist ones, as urged by the decidedly nimble and ambitious director general of Podravka. It seems certain that the Croatian Spring activists seriously counted on him until the climax in Karadorđevo. The alternative and contrary opinion is that the leadership of the Croatian Spring concluded from early on that in this area they could not gain adequate political influence and focused their energies on political agitation in those municipalities which had expressed greater dissatisfaction with the dominant rigid positions of the Party, and exhibited a certain level of tensions between the constitutive nations.

Another plausible hypothesis is that in the Koprivnica area there was no organised group of activists that could systematically arrange such activities. The first signs of reformist worldview, which implied wide democratisation of all spheres of society, did not appear until the spring of 1971. These primarily took shape within the circle of young intellectuals and students, while any institutional appearance was limited to the Municipal Conference of the Socialist Youth of Croatia (*OK SOH*) and the publication of the magazine *Susreti* ('Meetings'). It is indicative that this group of like-minded people, which had not even achieved any reasonable level of ideological coherence, would be blocked from public work by October of the same year, even though there were no changes in the municipal youth organisation until the spring of 1972, in order to preserve the illusion of stability.<sup>10</sup>

at the gathering the highest prominence was given to those expressing the "biggest wish" of the workers of Podravka to be visited by "Comrade Tito" in near future.

<sup>6</sup> Idem, 20<sup>th</sup> January 1968, "Prijelaz na intenzivnu privrednu politiku", pp. 1-2. Tripalo's speech in the Army Hall was published verbatim, while his conversation with Pavle Gaži and the municipal officials was only reported in a short article.

<sup>7</sup> Idem, 14<sup>th</sup> September 1968, "Danas smo jedinstveniji nego ikad", pp. 1-2.

<sup>8</sup> Idem, 19<sup>th</sup> September 1969, "D. Haramija u Podravini" and "Stručnjake treba nagraditi", pp. 1-2.

<sup>9</sup> Idem, 24<sup>th</sup> July 1970, "D. Haramija – domaćin", p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> The author has in the past years been speaking to many participants of the events of 1971 from the Koprivnica area, confirming the existence of highly contradictory positions, mostly arising from their respective positions and interests at the time. Most of them are even now not willing to discuss this in public, usually replying something to the effect of "I can't really remember that." Although Croatian independence had the effect of rehabilitating the idea and the supporters of the Croatian Spring, the active participants in the events from

A rare moment which made the ideas of the Croatian Spring appear on the rise was a formal reception of new members into the League of Communists. This event came after the months of apparent stagnation in membership, pointed out to in *Glas Podravine* among others, even amounting to a drop in several party cells. The newly launched *Susreti* also published a rather long list of these cells, in April 1971, including some in large companies, not receiving a single member for years. This prompted Podravka to publicly disclose that on 16<sup>th</sup> June 26 young, mostly highly educated members were received to the Party.<sup>11</sup> It was reported that Miko Tripalo had also been invited to the formal reception, as a member of the Executive Committee of the Presidium of CK SKJ, and a symbol of the Croatian Spring ideas. The ceremony of handing over Party membership cards, together with the mandatory red carnations, was organised on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1971, although it was officially greeted not by the announced Tripalo but Ante Josipović, also a member of the Executive Committee of CK SKH. The local weekly reported that the membership cards had been handed over to “fifty new members,” of which 29 in Podravka, followed by the secondary schools with 17 young members.<sup>12</sup> The Army Hall of Koprivnica was filled to the last seat, a special cultural and artistic program was organised, and almost all the more important local officials were present.<sup>13</sup> This positive atmosphere was politically completely understandable: the Croatian Spring activists this way demonstrated a “party renaissance” on the wings of the new political ideas, and for the conservatives this was evidence that the membership rate is not decreasing, and that the young are accepting the proclaimed goals of the Party.

The restrained media approach was also a rule for the visits and public speeches by the representative of the dogmatic Party wing. These were easier to provide media coverage on for the journalists of *Glas Podravine* due to their familiar political phraseology and recycling of old ideas. This is where the cautious editorial approach of the local weekly came to the fore, punctuated by a danger of more obvious political alignment, as the climax of the current crisis would remain unpredictable until the autumn of 1971. It should be noted that of all the republican officials the greatest informal influence in Koprivnica during this period was exercised by Jelica Radojčević, a member of the Executive Committee CK SKH. Since the 1950s, when she had been appointed by the Party to Podravina, she had been the most powerful politician in Koprivnica. Until the end of her career she remained an advocate of firm-handed methods and dogmatic Titoism. She was considered a mentor to the local Party officials. These include primarily the above-mentioned Ivan Povijač and the Municipal Assembly president Stjepan Kapusta, as well as the director of the Bilo-Kalnik wood industry Josipa Bukovčan, who at the time of the Croatian Spring also held the important position of the president of the Inter-Municipal Conference of SKH of the Podravina-Bilogora region.

Jelica Radojčević demonstrated her intact influence on 28<sup>th</sup> August 1971, when she held a speech to a gathering of students from Koprivnica, in the context of the expulsion from the Party of the economists and university professors Marko Veselica and Šime Đodan, on the dangers of “Croatian nationalism and chauvinism,” and about attempts to break the “unity of our peoples and our country.” She concluded that in Podravina there had been no such incidents at the time, and that we must all be aware that in terms of development and employment the region possessed “great potentials.”<sup>14</sup>

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Koprivnica are not treated that way even half a century later. A psychological explanation for this is that most of the citizens have distanced themselves from political activism, while a part of them obediently pursued the official rigid policies that followed the Croatian Spring. Another fact that should not be disregarded, as then persecuted Tomo Brinc points out, is that the children of his persecutors today have “radically different worldviews and politics from their fathers,” so that “rekindling old conflicts makes little sense now.” Another problem is absence of previous scientific studies analysing the events in Koprivnica and Podravina in 1971.

<sup>11</sup> *Glas Podravine*, 26<sup>th</sup> June 1971, “Knjižice – svečano”, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Idem, 16<sup>th</sup> July 1971, “Svečano uručene knjižice SK”, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Conversation with Ivan Ferenčak on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2022. He pointed out that a unique atmosphere was created, unseen on party gatherings before or after, which for a short while left an impression of intra-party unity.

<sup>14</sup> *Glas Podravine*, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1971, “Nema afirmacije i slobode čovjeka koju nude šovinisti”, pp. 1-2.

The idiosyncrasies of the Koprivnica municipality were also evident in the role held during the Croatian spring by the local subcommittee of [the oldest independent national cultural institution] *Matica Hrvatska*, founded in November 1966, led by Radmila Brlečić, a long-time Party activists in the town cultural institutions. The activity of the subcommittee had since its foundation been below the expectations of the intellectual public sphere. The local authorities resolved that this is how it should stay, so on the assembly on 14<sup>th</sup> February 1971 Aleksandar Vrančić was elected the new president of the subcommittee, as an educational and media official who had since the early 1950s advocated the rigid party policy.<sup>15</sup> The vice-president of the sub-committee was Mato Kudumija, a Đurđevac publicist, another representative of the dogmatic partisan generation. An important role in the board of directors was also held by [ethnic Serb] Vojislav Kučeković, in order to emphasise that this institution will take special care to equally represent both Croatian and Serbian interests.

As a result of this personnel compromise, the local chapter of *Matica hrvatska* was not active during the period of the Croatian Spring. It was even claimed to be the most passive one in Croatia. What is more, in the intellectual circles of Koprivnica, as reflected in the youth paper *Susreti*, but also in *Feferon* ('Chilli Pepper'), the humorous supplement of the *Podravka* house organ, it was derogatory called *trutica* [a portmanteau pun on *matica* 'queen bee' and *trut* 'drone']. This too was later held against both these papers, although *Feferon* in its cartoons and articles did not as a rule deal with daily politics.<sup>16</sup>

It was not until the second half of the 60s that an alternative had been built up against such conservative and dogmatic platform in the form of the authority of Pavle Gaži, who always put the economic interests before politics, using the Party as a lever to provide conditions for further development. This new spirit was demonstrated by Gaži on a symbolic level already at the time when as a member of CK SKH he attended the founding assembly of the *Matica Hrvatska* chapter in Koprivnica. It was here that the political stigma of a national designation of a cultural institution was removed in the local public sphere.<sup>17</sup> However, Tito's visit to Koprivnica resulted in a renewed surge of dogmatic positions by the local Party leadership, with national designation deemed unwanted.

Taking all this into consideration, the average reader of *Glas Podravine* could conclude that in SR Hrvatska, which was then the focal point of the most serious crisis to have affected the Titoist Yugoslavia, nothing dramatic or at least worth notice had taken place until the spring 1971. The articles in *Glas Podravine*, focused on the communal topics and non-political bread-and-butter issues, had not been pointing to a political and programmatic confrontation taking place, accompanied by decidedly wide-scale party personnel reshuffling with long-term consequences.

## 2. ALTERNATIVE MEDIA SPACE: LAUNCHING THE YOUTH PAPER *SUSRETI*

It was no coincidence that the sudden rise of the Koprivnica segment of the Croatian Spring had not come until April 1971. The reason for this does not only lie in the telegram of support for constitutional changes discussed above, or in the visit of Savka Dabčević-Kučar to Podravka. The second half of April also saw the launch of the youth paper *Susreti*, resulting in a sudden uproar on the Koprivnica media scene, questioning the actions of both local politicians and various municipal institutions and services. The heretofore dormant social scene suddenly roused itself, because the *Susreti* contributors wrote in a no-holds-barred manner, eschewing political correctness, and settling quite a few personal accounts, including malicious stings at times opaque to the readers. The editorial board seemed to delight in conflicts, polemics and public outrage it caused, especially when targeting "reliable" party staff.

<sup>15</sup> Idem. 19<sup>th</sup> February 1971, "Opsežan program", p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> Idem, 14<sup>th</sup> January 1972, "Program aktivnosti", p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Idem, 26<sup>th</sup> November 1966, "Osnovan pododbor Matice hrvatske", p. 1. It should be noted that until the mid-1950s the mere act of emphasising the Croatian name in public was subject to either misdemeanour or even criminal charges, and until the fall from power of Aleksandar Ranković [see footnote 4] on the Brijuni plenum, it had been treated as a nationalist, often pro-ustasha activity, recorded in the police files.

The launch of *Susreti* was related to Koprivnica hosting the Ninth Youth Meetings of the North-western Croatia. The organizer of this traditional mass gathering with 1500 participants, scheduled for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> June 1971, was OK SOH, and the meeting was greeted on behalf of SKH authorities by Jure Bilić, one of the most prominent party officials representing the dogmatic wing, which was another sign of the conflict within the Croatian Party leadership.<sup>18</sup> Since June 1970 the president of OK SOH had been Tomo Brinc, also elected representative to the Organisation and Political Council of the Parliament of SRH late in March 1971. This was, then, the most perspective official in Koprivnica, beloved by the youth, fully supporting the ideas of the Croatian Spring.<sup>19</sup>

It turned out that the budget for the youth meeting provided funds for information, so an idea appeared of launching a newspaper that would cover these events. The logical choice for the editor-in-chief was a young and unemployed journalist Ratko Aleksa. There were two reasons for his appointment as the editor. One was the then important fact that his father had been member of the partisan resistance since its inception, and at the time a long-time Party official, as well as the head of the Secondary School of Economy in Koprivnica. The other one, equally important, was that Aleksa had been a postgraduate student at the Faculty of Political Science in Prague during the period of rise and suppression of the Prague Spring, and after that a contributor to the Zagreb youth weekly *Omladinski tjednik*.<sup>20</sup>

The editor-in-chief immediately started with assembling the editorial board according to the customary activist model, with no editors' or authors' fees. This meant that the contributors had to be found firstly within youth organisations, as well as grammar school pupils and university students. He was, however, aware that he also needed intellectuals with some experience in media and writing so he assembled the hard core of *Susreti*. Together with Aleksa, it was made up of librarian with an affinity for journalism Ivan Peterlin-Špic, Croatian language secondary school teacher and poet Slavko Fijačko, and extremely talented designer and photographer Vladimir Kostjuk-Čarli. In the first edition the editorial board also comprised of grammar school pupil Katarina Gaži, daughter of the director general of Podravka, as the deputy editor-in-chief, as well as Marijan Špoljar, Duško Bodinovac, Mijo Glavak, Barbara Kukec, Ruža Mamić, Martin Šlabek, Kruno Sajko and Rajka Vajagić, daughter of the municipal chief of police.<sup>21</sup> As some of the contributors were also children of the local dignitaries, the editorial board was quickly labelled as a sort of a rebel alliance rising against the rigid revolutionary tenets on which the generation of their fathers had been raised.

The first edition had a circulation on 1500 copies and the price of three dinars, while for reference, municipality-subsidized *Glas Podravine* was sold for one dinar.<sup>22</sup> The readers immediately recognized the outrageously provocative style of the youth newsletter, so this became the dominant talking point on the streets of the town, but despite of that not all the copies were sold, although the editorial board would claim otherwise in the second issue. The interest was primarily shown by the relatively small

<sup>18</sup> Idem, 11<sup>th</sup> June 1971, "Svatko ima pravo da se diči prošlošću", pp. 1-2.

<sup>19</sup> Idem, 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1971, "Za zastupnika Tomo Brinc", p. 1. It should be noted that the assembly could choose between three candidates, with the opponents coming from Podravka and Bilo-Kalnik. Nevertheless, the vote gave Brinc a convincing support in numbers.

<sup>20</sup> Ratko Aleksa-Gric (born 1945) started his journalist career in 1964 as the founder of the short-lived Koprivnica *Youth Journal*. In the affirmed *Youth Weekly* he published a series of texts on the events in Prague in 1968, as a result of which Moscow and the Czechoslovakian diplomacy asked the Yugoslav authorities to intervene, due to alleged smearing of the Soviet and latent anti-communism, and stop such further articles. The editorial board was forced by the publisher to accept these demands, so Aleksa had to continue his vitriolic analysis of the Soviet Real Socialism in *Susreti*.

<sup>21</sup> *Susreti*, 1<sup>st</sup> April 1971, p. 47.

<sup>22</sup> Conversation with s Tomo Brinc from 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022. As president of OK SOH Koprivnica, and the publisher of the paper, Brinc had a more complete information about the publishing of *Susreti*. He noted that the first edition was sold in some 800 copies, with part of the circulation distributed free-of-charge, as it was custom for youth press. The other two editions were therefore printed in a smaller circulation, probably of around 1000 copies.

intellectual audience and the young generation. The reading habit prevailed among the others, favouring the long-serving *Glas Podravine*, from which no one expected any surge in quality, let alone appeal.

Even the front cover of *Susreti* had an unusual long and narrow format on thicker paper, while in double issue 3-4 the front page was short and wide, both formats having to be hand-cut in the printing press. The first edition cover had been made in the trendy pop-art style. It featured a Coca-Cola bottle cap, a symbol of capitalist consumerism, in contrast with the utilitarian communist understanding of social values. The paper also published a series of photo montages, drawings and caricatures which had political and pornographic connotations, occasionally stepping over the boundaries of vulgarity, with the goal of upsetting the local puritan, and as was then popularly stressed, petty-bourgeois values. Almost every text, as well as the graphic design, was a form of provocation, with irony usually morphing into rough sarcasm and satire.

It immediately became obvious that *Susreti* would stir up a serious political conflict, especially when its politics led them to support the national ideas of Croatian Spring, mixed with a vitriolic social critique. The strong social engagement was based on the popular ultra-left ideology which was at that time supported by the philosophers gathered around the cult Zagreb magazine *Praxis*.

The sheer level of surprise and discomfort stirred among the local dignitaries by the youth paper out of control became apparent already after the first issue, which would turn out to be politically the most benign one. At the common session of the Municipal Committee SKH Koprivnica and the presidiums of the socio-political organisations, held late in May 1971, the matter was raised by the municipal youth organisation president Tomo Brinc. He claimed that “it went so far that the pupils who had contributed to the youth magazine *Susreti* were banned from coming to the Youth Committee, and at school their behaviour grades were lowered.” When they asked for an explanation, the prosaic reply from the Grammar School stated that “this was no business of the Youth Committee, and the school is not obliged to provide any explanation.”<sup>23</sup> At the common session no reactions were made to his accusation. It was, however, evident that the local political structures had already decided to limit the contribution to the unwanted youth paper through different means of pressure, including those exerted on the parents of the secondary-school pupils.

The spirit of the Croatian Spring could already be felt in the first issue in the editorial, where the editor-in-chief directly criticised the local party officials for not letting him attend the briefing by Savka Dabčević-Kučar given to the local officials in Podravka on 13<sup>th</sup> of April, despite his journalist credentials. Aleksa's writing is bitter, in the language of the street, which illustrates the political concept of the newly-launched newsletter: “NO, just for the invited. I dig it, always one and the same invited, always the same mugs, always that theatrical mystical splitting up into the invited and the uninvited ones. I was going to say, I'm from a good local family, a partisan family (not exactly high society, but still) well you know me, my dear old dad used to tell me that there had been the time for the invited and the uninvited, and I thought like that sheep had sailed, the hell it did. And there's Savka asking: why the NARROW political circle?... Sure, she wasn't asking why there was no editor of *Susreti*, but she probably thought the workers, citizens, simply PEOPLE who could hear something from her, remember her words, get more self-reliant. So that politics are no longer so exclusive when in essence she's aiming for a profound national revival that's already taking place.”<sup>24</sup> The text that followed was “Constitutional changes – integration on a new level,” summarizing Tito's conversation with the delegation of the Socialist Youth of Yugoslavia, the content of which fit into the agenda put forth by the Croatian Spring.<sup>25</sup>

If this made it clear that the policies of the Croatian Spring had (finally) received their media follower in Koprivnica, the same issue, using a graphic description portrayal of the old-school politicians, also specified the opponents of this political democratization. The hit list included *Glas Podravine* as the very symbol of the bureaucratic and playing-it-safe journalism, which, as the *Susreti* contributors

<sup>23</sup> *Glas Podravine*, 28<sup>th</sup> May 1971, “Deformacije u odgojnom procesu”, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> *Susreti*, 1, “Uredništvo *Susreta* ne želi sretan 25. svibanj praznih mladih”, April 1971, p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> *Idem*, pp. 6-7.

interpreted it, kept sidestepping any contentious and sensitive topics. *Susreti* started by publishing an open letter to *Glas Podravine*, which had published a story about OK SOH requesting the municipal authorities to fund their yearly activities, but instead of the actual amount of 19 million old dinars [equalling 190 thousand new dinars], *Glas Podravine* had printed the sum as no less than 39 old millions, and subsequently refused to publish a correction.<sup>26</sup> This was interpreted as not only consciously undermining the upcoming youth event, but also attempting to discredit the newly-launched *Susreti*.

That, however, was mere introduction to the article ominously titled: *Thirteen theses on Glas Podravine*, signed by Aleksa personally.<sup>27</sup> The text did not shy away from pretentiousness in its intention to serve as a platform for the desired democratisation of the media space, another item on the Croatian Spring agenda. The author started by stating that the “freedom of press” in Koprivnica, thanks to *Glas Podravine* “was non-existent,” that in that newspaper there was “no indigenous conception woven into the tradition of this soil, no critical thought, no engaged journalism, no independent politics as a means of public communication,” but that there was no lack of an enormous rise of all kinds of ‘gossip topics’ of all colours, from black of the crime and courts section to politically tendentious journalism. What followed was the conclusion that the editorial conception “is aiming for a certain readership circle who are not foreign to petty bourgeoisie lifestyle, existing in a vacuum, separated from the essential preoccupations of the inhabitants, the peasantry and the modern working class, of hundreds of highly-educated people working in Podravina and therefore the Municipal Assembly should finally, for once, clearly and openly define the social function of *GP*.”<sup>28</sup>

Aleksa’s text upset the newsroom of *Glas Podravine*, as for the first time since its launching the newspaper had competition, admittedly one in the form of an occasional publication with uncertain future, but which not only dared publicly criticize it, but also ridicule it. Thus, serious criticism was levelled at the founder, the Socialist Alliance and the local Party leadership. Still, it was concluded internally that ignoring the attack was a tactic preferred to polemizing. They could not even suspect then that this was not the end to the conflict with the *Susreti* newsroom, as a few months later another article appeared bursting with direct political accusations on account of the alleged obstruction of the reform processes by *Glas*, this one having an unpleasant court epilogue.

The text in question was *Glas Podravine – glas gluposti* (‘The Voice of Podravina – the voice of stupidity’) written by Slavko Fijačko, member of the inner editorial office.<sup>29</sup> He started with the thesis that it is a disgrace that in a town with no lack of intellectuals, journalism is practiced by “half-literates,” some of which “couldn’t pass the first grade of the grammar school.” He dubbed them “half-wits” and a sort of “drones living off social labour,” because the use their job for personal benefit, and to this general discreditation he added their alcohol addiction. Not even such moral degradation did he consider the greatest problem of the journalism in Koprivnica, but their alleged state of being “organized in a close-knit group, refusing any kind of influence, any useful suggestions or advice.” Fijačko stressed that the newspaper “does not follow social changes, does not follow changes in the contemporary Croatian language,” and all this is made possible due to them using “poltroon policy to maintain good relations with the rulers of this commune” who benefited from banalizing the life in Podravina by reducing it to the level of the crime and court section, with the news of brawls, drunkenness and swearing. Therefore, he suggested, the more suitable name for the newspaper would be “The Voice of Stupidity and Primitivism.”

What followed was Fijačko’s direct political accusation which, in the atmosphere of the Croatian Spring, carried a special weight. He stated that *Glas Podravine* and *Radio Koprivnica* represented a “unitarian diversion in Croatia.” In addition to alluding to the national structure of the editorial board, this was a direct accusation against the municipal Party leadership, which exercised full control over the newspaper. All this was a foreshadowing of what might result from the Croatian Spring. Depending on

<sup>26</sup> Idem, “Pismo OK SO *Glasi Podravine*”, pp. 8-9.

<sup>27</sup> Idem, pp. 9-10.

<sup>28</sup> Idem.

<sup>29</sup> Idem, 3-4, September 1971, p. 6.

who comes out as the winner, it would either spell the end for *Susreti*, or the local weekly and its radio station would have to undergo radical conceptual transformation and personnel change.<sup>30</sup>

Directly calling out political institutions and media in the semi-annual issues of *Susreti* was not the only thing which caused unease and anger in part of the local public.<sup>31</sup> It will suffice just to look at the covers of the other two issues. The second issue front page featured a boy blowing a preservative, as a way of signalling to the readers that the editorial board was pressing on with their sexual provocations. A special role in that was played by the explicit short stories by Ivan Šituma about the troubles with his genitals, as well as the “scientific” discussion by Duško Bodinovac on sperm, illustrated with numerous pictures from the book *Figurae veneris*. The climax came in the form of 25 ironical tips for group sex, which the editorial board addressed to their fellow citizens for a “successful inception of the new school and working year.”<sup>32</sup>

With the addition of several other well-known names of the cultural and scientific scene of Croatia, the critical and polemical impression of *Susreti*, presenting an undeniable media novelty even in the wider Croatian framework, was heightened in the second and third issue by the contributions of Igor Mandić, literary critic and phenomenologist, who also hosted a well-attended forum in Koprivnica. Mandić wrote decidedly sharply on recent writers from the Podravina region, e.g. Žarko Marjanović, leading to a heated debate. *Susreti* also became a fighting arena for great Podravina painters on the topic of the birth of naïve art, with a face-off between Ivan Generalić and Krsto Hegedušić. Another rising star of visual art from Koprivnica, Zlatko Kauzlarić Atač, caused a fierce controversy as well. Finally, issue 3-4 contained a text by Franjo Tuđman, just dismissed (and hastily retired) as the director of the Croatian Institute for the History of Workers’ Movement and at the time one of the leading figures of Matica hrvatska. His topic was the permanent relevance of the Croatian Peasant Party leader Stjepana Radić’s thought, which he used to allude to the need to transform the Yugoslav Federation into a Confederation.<sup>33</sup>

Still, the greatest controversy was sparked by the local subjects with easily recognizable (anti) heroes. Most of the space in the second issue of *Susreti* was devoted to the growing social differences observable in the Yugoslav model of *socialist self-management*. A theoretical text on this phenomenon was written by Antun Mijatović, following the *Praxis* ideological model, but as a causerie column, bitterly criticizing the enrichment of the local “red bourgeoisie” primarily the political officials and the directors of successful companies.<sup>34</sup> The backdrop to these highly critical texts was an unsigned report on a worker, who was a Macedonian Albanian, living with a large family in the Koprivnica suburb in extremely severe material conditions, without running water.<sup>35</sup>

The point that *Susreti* were making did not, however, lie in these highly critical texts, but was obvious from the front page. This showed a photograph of a popular click-clack toy, into the balls of which were photo montaged two residential buildings. The first one was Idriz’s shack, and the other the just finished villa of the most powerful Koprivnica director and politician Pavle Gaži. This did not just cause

<sup>30</sup> Fijačko’s political and moral indictment against *Glas Podravine*, in which the local officials also recognized themselves, had a harrowing epilogue. Following the collapse of the Croatian Spring, a lawsuit was filed against the author, resulting in a first instance prison sentence. Only later, when the political tensions had got defused, would the unconditional prison sentence be commuted into a suspended sentence, but Fijačko was for a time banned from working in the education institutions of Koprivnica. It is indicative that still now, even though Fijačko has passed away, no one is willing to discuss this in more detail, with those who were involved more closely in the case usually replying that they “can’t recall the details.”

<sup>31</sup> See more in Davor Premec: *Koprivnički omladinski list Susreti*, diploma thesis, University North, Koprivnica 2021

<sup>32</sup> *Susreti*, 3-4, “Grupni sex”, September 1971, pp. 9-10

<sup>33</sup> Idem, “Živi Radić”, p. 11.

<sup>34</sup> Idem, “Otvoreno pismo – da ga ne moraju otvarati”, pp. 4-5. A similarly conceived commentary by Ratko Aleksa “Uz ovu i ine biografije” p. 5. Mijatović later devoted himself to scientific work, becoming professor at the Pedagogy Department of Pedagogy, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb.

<sup>35</sup> Idem, “Idriz Latis: skica za biografiju koja nikada i nikome neće biti potrebna”, p. 5.

a big surprise in the local public, but also consternation, partly because of the collaboration of Gaži's daughter Katarina in the newspaper. It is clear, though, that this was a conscious diversion of the already narrowed editorial board, who must have been dissatisfied with Gaži's vague position on the Croatian Spring, and a condemnation of the local ideological "thugs," as they dubbed the rigid Party leadership.

The fact is that in the initial period Podravka's director had given an unequivocal encouragement to the Croatian Spring ideas, especially those related to economic issues. He was aware that the technological development of the highly promising Koprivnica food industry, despite solid export results, was in the hands of the federal administration. When it came to the key political issues, however, Gaži as a rule did not speak publicly. His seemingly excessive caution annoyed the newsroom of *Susreti*, because they thought that he was giving too much manoeuvring space to the local party hardliners, which kept Koprivnica on the margins of the Croatian Spring.

This was corroborated by Gaži's unwillingness to give interview for the June issue of *Susreti*. After initially agreeing in principle to the interview, the journalists repeatedly tried to reach him, but they could not get beyond his secretary. Apparently the excuse was always that he was "too busy." As a result, the editorial board published the genesis of these futile attempts, together with the list of questions sent.<sup>36</sup> These questions made it clear why the director general of Podravka had evaded the interview. He considered it more prudent to avoid speaking up on the relationship of Podravka to the local authorities and the development of Koprivnica, and especially to voice his opinion on the leadership of SRH, the scandals rocking Croatia, the position of Podravka on the Yugoslav market, and the relationship between economy and politics. It is beyond dispute that by making his position clear, Gaži would have provoked negative reaction on one of the sides. As it later turned out the most important businessman and politician of Koprivnica would resort to the same tactics at what amounted to be the trial of the leadership of the Croatian Spring in early December 1971 in Karađorđevo. He left there as a person considered by the public close to the Croatian reformers, and he returned on the winning side.

Still, the defining moment of the events of 1971 for Koprivnica was Tito's visit in the September of that year, at the height of the Croatian and Yugoslav crises. Every effort was made to ensure Tito was left with an impression of a distinctly positive mood of the citizens of Koprivnica, and through the same visit of Varaždin too, which would play an important part in the final decision on the political fate of the Croatian Spring. In part, it succeeded.

### 3. REASONS FOR TITO'S VISIT TO THE NORTHWESTERN CROATIA

The summer of 1971 was extremely difficult for the leadership of the Croatian Spring. It was no longer possible to cover up the rift between the Party organisation on all levels, and above all on the highest level, in the Executive Committee of CK SKH. For this reason, Tito held a meeting with this Party body on 4<sup>th</sup> July in Vila Weiss in Zagreb, with participation of other top officials in Croatia. Tito's words had an understandable effect of disturbing the leadership of the Croatian Spring, as he levelled a series of grave accusations against them, primarily connected to the operations of Matica hrvatska and the Serbian Cultural Society *Prosvjeta*, as well as the growing interethnic mistrust of Croats and Serbs. He repeatedly mentioned the possibility of a civil war outbreak. He indirectly threatened with deploying the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) to calm the tensions. He even indicated a possibility of direct intervention by the Soviet Army: "This time I shall speak first. You can see that I'm very angry... The situation in Croatia is not good... Croatia has become the key problem in the country when it comes to rampaging nationalism... Under the cover of present national interests, all hell has gathered, all opposed views, all the way to the counterrevolution. Now is the time to take concrete measures. We can't go on like this..."<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Idem, 2, "Kako smo ostali bez intervju sa drugom Gažijem?", June 1971, pp. 14-15.

<sup>37</sup> Dušan Bilandžić: *Hrvatska moderna povijest*, pp. 600-601, Golden marketing, Zagreb 1999.

Several other Tito's meetings with the Croatian Spring leadership during the summer of 1971 unfolded in a similar atmosphere. Some of these were held in Belgrade on the federal level, others during his occasional tours of the country. He repeatedly called Croatia "the weakest link" of Yugoslavia, calling for energetic measures against those who, in his opinion threatened the national unity. To these calls he would usually receive vague answers, which did not satisfy him in the least, as was illustrated by one of his telephone conversations with Miko Tripalo. He used every such conversation to try and separate Tripalo, for whom he had previously expressed considerable sympathies, so that he had even been listed as a potential successor to Tito, from the rest of the Croatian Spring leaders, dubbing him endearingly a "Yugo-brand" personality.<sup>38</sup> Tripalo, however, did not wish to buy his career by rejecting the reformist ideas of the Croatian Spring.

That summer Savka Dabčević-Kučar noticed that the increasingly frequent accusations by the Serbian and federal officials, as well as the more and more politically active JNA, targeted not only the leaders of Croatia, but Tito himself.<sup>39</sup> Whatever he did, one of the sides would criticise him, resulting in an additional pressure and anxiety, even the fear of being forcibly removed from power. Tito felt progressively more isolated in Belgrade, of which he several times complained to the Croatian leadership. As a result, the Croatian Spring activists were aware of the extreme importance of appealing to Tito's vanity. They were assuring him that he was still beloved and respected in Croatia, and that there were no forces worth reckoning with, which could challenge his theretofore inviolable status and his political concepts of preserving the Yugoslav Federation.

Only in this context of suspicions and intrigues does it become clearer why late in the summer of 1971 an idea appeared of inviting the president of Yugoslavia to witness for himself the mood of the people of Croatia. Whether it had been instigated by the Croatian Spring activists, asserting that Tito had been fed tendentious information in numerous matters, or it was him who wanted to gain a direct insight into the real state of affairs, it cannot be claimed beyond any doubt. Neither the literature, the recent press coverage nor the archival material available can provide a satisfactory answer. This very fact might suggest that Tito's 1971 tour of Croatian regions was a spontaneous result of mutual contacts, in other words that it had gradually ripened.

What is certain, however, is that the organisation of this visit was carefully prepared, and that nothing was left to chance. Savka Dabčević-Kučar and Miko Tripalo were aware that the only chance for their survival came from Tito witnessing first-hand that his political achievements were not threatened and that he remained the admired and undisputed leader of the state. In this they were initially quite successful.

The tour started early in September with Tito's visit to Dubrovnik and Split. Then he travelled to Zagreb, where he was given an enthusiastic welcome on 9<sup>th</sup> September, and where the following day he opened the traditional Zagreb Fair. As the high point of the tour, a tour of north-western Croatia had been planned for 10<sup>th</sup> September. That was a highly demanding itinerary for a person who had that year turned 79, because in a single day, with several stops, local tours and speeches, he had to cover 150 kilometres. A significant part of that journey he was standing in his open limousine, greeting the gathered crowd.

The basis of the political, but also psychological preparations for Tito's visit are evident from the memoirs of Savka Dabčević-Kučar, the well-informed president of CK SKH. It is apparent that this was a scenario which on the level of carefully orchestrated detail transcended even the frameworks typical of one-party states with charismatic leaders:

"Tito loved the jubilant welcome of enthusiastic crowds of people, although he would keep warning us not to inform the people of his arrival in advance... We knew he was distinctly vain, like most people who have ruled for a long time and control all the tools of power, so they have grown accustomed to

<sup>38</sup> Savka Dabčević-Kučar: *'71: hrvatski snovi i stvarnost* (I. i II.), pp. 668-669, Interpublic, Zagreb 1997.

<sup>39</sup> Idem. To get a complete picture of the many conflicts and intrigues on the federal level, and the position of the leadership of the other Yugoslav towards the Croatian Spring activists, it is necessary to analyse the records on pp. 593-785.

expressions of delight, adoration, and applause. Collecting evidence of our alleged greed for leadership, those who had been working against our policies were trying to persuade Tito that the cold reception in Croatia would be clearly linked to that, that we are deliberately trying to destroy his cult... And then came the tour of Zagorje (10<sup>th</sup> September); Koprivnica, Ludbreg, Varaždin... We had given instructions to activate all our supporters, as it was really important for us to show that we held power, and that this power was socialist in nature, and not controversial, or aimed against him, but at the same time displaying our slogans on the sovereignty of Croatia, foreign currency etc.! The people responded remarkably. It was a real people's celebration. They chanted his name, but also our names, they were carrying countless banners with our slogans, waving Croatian flags and cheering to the party; he was being greeted by our leaders ... The same problems, the same demands were pointed out everywhere, the same line of arguments. Sovereignty, statehood, economic change, economic reform, constitutional change! This left a strong impression on him.”<sup>40</sup>

It turned out that in Tito's tour of the north-western Croatia everything went according to the estimates of what the “greatest son of Yugoslav nations and ethnicities” would expect. This result, however, had not been brought about by the Croatian Spring activists alone, because due to an unpredictable outcome, their political opponents had identical interests.

### 3.1. DETAILED PREPARATIONS FOR TITO'S WELCOME TO KOPRIVNICA

In line with Tito's instructions not to inform the “people” (meaning the local political structures) about his arrival too early, it wasn't before 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1971 that the inhabitants of Koprivnica found out about the “soon to arrive...distinguished guest,” whose visit they had wished for since the celebration of the 20th anniversary of Podravka in 1967. This brief and imprecise information could be read on the front page of *Glas Podravine*, noting that this visit could not have been realized on the previously announced date, without specifying which one, but that this time “there will be no changes and we will soon be able to greet in our community our dearest guest.”<sup>41</sup> Hence, the date was still left unspecified, along with the towns he would visit. We can, however, assume that the local party leadership had this information, too, because a special edition of *Glas Podravine* had been announced for 7<sup>th</sup> September, containing a long list numerous instructions and directions concerning the visit.

It was indicative that the first announcement of Tito's arrival coincided with publishing the above mentioned conversation of Jelica Radojčević with the Koprivnica students, which suggested that unquestionable support for Tito was also expected of them. It was equally certain that Tito's visit to Koprivnica was not just of special interest to the Croatian Spring supporters, but was also an opportunity for the dogmatic followers from OK SKH to prove that they were keeping the situation in the Municipality of Koprivnica under complete control. It was a prerequisite for their political survival as well. The interests of the two opposing party groups here completely coincided.

On 7<sup>th</sup> September 1971 the announced special issue of the local weekly appeared on four pages, the first in its two-decade-long history. It finally confirmed that the “dear guest” would arrive on 10<sup>th</sup> September. On the front page, in red letters below the president's portrait, a message stood on behalf of all citizens “Welcome, Comrade Tito!”<sup>42</sup> It was also announced that the guest would visit the workplace collectives of Podravka and Bilo-Kalnik, after which he would talk to the political representatives of Koprivnica. The front page was dominated by the proclamation of the Municipal Organisation of SSRNH, which stressed that “the long-standing wish of the people of this region will finally be fulfilled.”<sup>43</sup> What followed was a series of praises of the Yugoslav president, including naming him “one

<sup>40</sup> Idem, p. 681. In this paragraph the author demonstrated poor knowledge of the regions of Croatia. The route of the trip did not include Hrvatsko Zagorje at all, with Tito's birthplace of Kumrovec, but Prigorje, Podravina and the Varaždin area, of which he spent most time in Koprivnica.

<sup>41</sup> *Glas Podravine*, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1971, “Dolazi nam Tito”, p. 1.

<sup>42</sup> Idem. 7<sup>th</sup> September 1971, p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> Idem, “Narodu Podravine, Kalnika i Bilogore”.

of the most esteemed figures in the modern history,” followed by a string of his contributions to the “struggle for the welfare of the working people.” The local community, on the other hand, was informed: “All of us, the inhabitants of the Municipality of Koprivnica, as well as the neighbouring communes of the Bjelovar region, will have the opportunity to see him up close, to shout and applaud him, to shower him with flowers. Through our spontaneous joy we will prove to him that we follow his path and his thoughts and that we fight for the ideals to which he has dedicated his whole life... Pioneers, youth, workers, peasants, members of the JNA and the police, the intelligentsia, housewives and pensioners, as well as all the other working people of the Municipality of Koprivnica and other neighbouring communes, let's take to the streets en masse, on 10<sup>th</sup> September 1971 in our town of Koprivnica! Let us, by eight in the morning fill every foot, every metre of our city, where Comrade Tito will pass.”<sup>44</sup> In the same style, on behalf of the local Party wrote Ivan Povijač, presented as the “chairman of the welcoming committee,” which contained the leaders of all the socio-political organizations and local self-government.

Next came statements of admiration for the character and work of the charismatic president by those Koprivnica residents who had the opportunity to meet him, related to their jobs or as members of some delegations.<sup>45</sup> Also published was a review of Tito's interwar activities in Podravina as a trade union commissioner, authored by historian Mira Kolar Dimitrijević.<sup>46</sup>

The most interesting part, however, was the back page of the special issue. It contained a detailed plan of Tito's welcome and stay in Koprivnica. From this it was clear that the mentioned “spontaneity” was anything but. Although it is beyond doubt that to the overwhelming majority of the citizens, Tito was a welcome guest, for the first time in Podravina after the communist rise to power, the welcoming committee would leave nothing to chance. The plan of welcome makes it evident that there was practically no citizen who, with some task or other, was not required to appear at a designated location. Those involved were primarily the employees of all the institutions and companies in Koprivnica, primary and secondary school pupils, members of many organisation, clubs, and associations, but also other citizens based in their local communities.<sup>47</sup> Everyone had been given a role to fill literally every inch of space along the roads, divided into 19 zones. If anyone was prevented from being on the streets for any reason, Radio Koprivnica, connected to the other local radio stations, had a live broadcast from 8.30 am, and in the afternoon it played a recording of Tito's address to the citizens.

It had been decided in advance which messages on the banners would be desirable and allowed. Those glorifying Tito naturally dominated, but some, by no mere chance, referred to the need to resolve the current economic issues, mostly in terms of the need for financial decentralization and a fairer distribution of foreign exchange earnings. There were also a few that cheered to the League of Communists of Croatia for putting these requests. Certainly noticeable, compared to the gatherings in some other parts of Croatia, was lack of banners singling out the leaders of the Croatian Spring, with only a few media-isolated instances. It was paramount for Tito to gain the impression of being the only persona celebrated. It was only as the long column of vehicles was passing that occasional cheers were heard to “Savka and Miko,” but not to an extent that would exceed those addressed to Tito.<sup>48</sup> It was obvious that the messages sent to the activists from the party centre had hit the spot, but it was also apparent that the opposing side had given its full contribution to the organization. All of this was also evident in the long column of luxury limousines, which included all those who meant something in Croatian politics, from

<sup>44</sup> Idem.

<sup>45</sup> Idem, p. 2. The statements published included those by Rade Radišića, Anđela Turek, Vinko Imbričić, Dubravka Filipić, Duško Bodinovac and Helena Knežević.

<sup>46</sup> Idem, “Tito u Koprivnici”, p. 3.

<sup>47</sup> The author, then a 7<sup>th</sup> grade student remembers that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Primary School had the designated zone of welcome in 32<sup>nd</sup> Division Street (today Croatian Statehood Street) “to the right of the furniture shop through to the Army Hall” and that they had got flags which they waved and, prompted by the teacher, chanted Tito's name when together with his wife Jovanka he was passing in an open car.

<sup>48</sup> Conversation on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2021 with then student and member of the editorial board of the first issue of *Susreti* Marijan Špoljar.

all the prominent Croatian Spring activists to their opponents led by the Vladimir Bakarić, Jure Bilić, Milka Planinc, Milutin Baltić and Dušan Dragosavac, together with the still confused and undecided Jakov Blažević.

Not only did every citizen of Koprivnica know the role they had been given for Friday 10<sup>th</sup> September, but the same was true of the suburban areas, and even of the furthest parts of the municipality. The 19 zones contained the locations marked specifically for the inhabitants of these settlements. To give an example, the 4<sup>th</sup> zone from from the Galantplet manufacture to the inn "Pod lipom" was designated for the inhabitants of Veliki Poganac, Prkos, Rasinja, Subotica and Cvetkovec, while the 9<sup>th</sup> zone, stretching from "Ivo Marinković Street [today Ante Starčević Street] from tailor Šestak[ 's workshop] to Podravka [office building]" had been designated for those coming from Gola, Gotalovo, Botovo, Drnje and Peteranec.<sup>49</sup> It is clear that those coming from the rural areas were assigned to the zones where the column would not stop or where the guests would not leave their vehicles, probably owing at least in part to less opportunity for the screening performed by Tito's security.

Also important was the bus and train schedule. Obviously, these were no regular lines, but each arrival and departure had been timed to the welcome program, with improvised bus parks, depending on the travel routes set at the Town Cemetery, the town Fair Ground, and at the Town Stadium. Emergency transport had been set up on all railway lines, with early morning and afternoon departures every hour. Everyone knew what their means of transport was, and the traffic police blocked all vehicles travelling in the direction of Tito's column, unless they had a special permit. There were special trains and buses, as well as pre-registered cars, arriving from the surrounding cities. The visitors from the wider region had been assigned locations mostly in the zone of the railway station, where the largest gathering took place and where Tito gave a welcome speech.

There were large groups arriving from some towns and municipalities. A typical example was Virovitica, whose local journalists boasted of having taken record of most of their fellow citizens coming to greet Tito: "The celebration of the people of Podravina was joined by about a thousand inhabitants of Virovitica, who rushed to Koprivnica on Friday morning, in private cars, buses and special trains. A caravan of private cars to Koprivnica was organized by the Auto-Moto Society from Virovitica. We counted 54 of them in the column. Two buses full of secondary school pupils and eighth grade primary school pupils left Virovitica for Koprivnica early on Friday morning, and 6 carriages left the railway station, attached to the regular train composition, also full of citizens of Virovitica municipality."<sup>50</sup> The people of Bjelovar, Đurđevac, Daruvar, Čazma and others from the wider Podravina-Bilogora region did more or less the same.

The 150 journalists and reporters from all the republics of Yugoslavia and larger newspapers confirmed the organizers' estimates of "more than 30,000 people" on the streets and squares of Koprivnica on 10<sup>th</sup> September.<sup>51</sup> This number would certainly be even higher if it had not been for the fact that the inhabitants from the settlements along the main route Križevci – Koprivnica had been assigned to stand in front of their houses and greet the president, throwing flowers on the column of vehicles, waving state flags on all on all electric and light poles, with his portraits displayed on tables decorated with folk embroidery. The same task had been given to the inhabitants of the settlements along the afternoon route from Koprivnica to Ludbreg. This way they had another chance to see and greet Tito after Koprivnica, as evident from the welcome program.

It is beyond doubt that the gathering which took place on the 10<sup>th</sup> September was one of the largest in the history of Koprivnica. For comparison's sake, the census from spring 1971 showed the town of Koprivnica to have no more than 16.5 thousand inhabitants. It is also beyond doubt that there have never

<sup>49</sup> *Glas Podravine*, 7<sup>th</sup> September 1971, p. 4.

<sup>50</sup> *Virovitički list*, 16<sup>th</sup> September 1971, "Pozdrav najdražem gostu", p. 2.

<sup>51</sup> *Idem*.

been more texts and television footages published on Koprivnica and its economy in one day, at that in a positive tone, rather obviously in the context of Tito's stay.<sup>52</sup>

The extended report of *Glas Podravine* on Tito's visit to Koprivnica was published in line with the regular circulation dynamics a week later, on the first six pages. The reports recorded almost every detail of Tito's several-hour stay in the usual pathetic tone. On the front page was a quote from his speech that "we should build socialism together," and the cover line stated that the "the citizens of Koprivnica and surrounding places prepared a magnificent welcome to Comrade Tito and other guests."<sup>53</sup> There were three photos published. The biggest one showed Tito on the ceremonial stage at the Railway Station, with his wife Jovanka, Savka Dabčević-Kučar and Pero Pirker, as well as the organiser of the visit Ivan Povijač and president of the Municipal Assembly Stjepan Kapusta. In the other picture his wife was standing next to the youth organisation president Tomo Brinc, receiving a gift from a pupil in a traditional folk costume, with the third one showing Tito and Jovanka in an open car greeting the gathered crowd, with a carefully chosen banner in the background "Long live SKJ, led by Comrade Tito."<sup>54</sup>

The following pages contained texts and photos illustrating the joyous atmosphere, including one with a large group of citizens standing on the roof of an unfinished house, waving flags. There was a description of Tito's visit to the new plants of Podravka and Bilo-Kalnik, which was the very reason why Tito had chosen Koprivnica as an industrially promising destination where he would spend most of his time on the tour. The heads of these companies, Pavle Gaži and Josip Bukovčan, strove to impress the guests with further extremely ambitious development plans. However, as part of the previously prepared scenario, they complained to the president about major problems with the federal administration regarding the distribution of foreign currency needed to obtain more favourable loans which were necessary to purchase equipment, expand production facilities and penetrate foreign markets, as had been repeatedly insisted on by the Croatian Spring leadership.

That is why one of the headlines in the carefully arranged reports of the local newspaper was made to point out that the main battle for the survival and future of the federation is being fought on the economical plain, which was also evident from the headline quoting Tito's toast at the luncheon: "Economic problems outweigh the political."<sup>55</sup> In the course of the conversation Tito had repeatedly confirmed that the problems of income management, investment and foreign currency had to be urgently addressed.

The paper also reported that Tito had talked to the political activists of the municipality, as well as the officials from the entire region, discussing the equally complex problems of agricultural production. He had also taken time to greet the veterans of the National Liberation War, and the mothers of the fallen resistance fighters.<sup>56</sup> What followed, as in the case of the visits of most high-ranking politicians was a short meeting with Ivan Generalić, Mijo Kovačić and Ivan Večenaj, naïve painters from Podravina, who at the time represented a world art sensation. Although this was not explicitly stated, he had probably received a painting from them, because the reports from Varaždin said that their equally distinguished colleague painter Ivan Rabuzin had done the same. The company Bilo-Kalnik presented Jovanka Broz with a valuable folk costume from the mid-19th century, made in "the vicinity of [the village of

<sup>52</sup> Ivo Čičin Mašansker, then editor-in-chief of *Podravka* house organ, as well as its humorous supplement *Feferon*, collected press clippings of Tito's visit, including about a hundred texts published on 11<sup>th</sup> September 1971 related Koprivnica. There is literary no newspaper worth mentioning that would not report on the conversation held by the Yugoslav president with his hosts from Koprivnica. In addition to every Croatian publication on the republic and regional levels, the clippings include the Belgrade newspapers *Politika*, *Ekspres Politika*, *Borba*, *NIN*, *Komunist*, *Ekonomska politika* and *Večernje Novosti*; *Oslobođenje* from Sarajevo; *Dnevnik* from Novi Sad, *Nova Makedonija* and *Večer* from Skopje; as well as *Delo* and *Dnevnik* from Ljubljana. The explanation for such great interest of newsrooms from all parts of Yugoslavia lay in the realization that the conflict within the Croatian leadership was approaching its climax.

<sup>53</sup> *Glas Podravine*, 17<sup>th</sup> September 1971, p. 1.

<sup>54</sup> Idem.

<sup>55</sup> Idem, p. 5.

<sup>56</sup> Idem. "Naši narodi mnogo su dali" and "Tu ste, dragi prijatelji!", p. 6.

Koprivnički Ivanec,” for which Tito, while receiving it, remarked that it nevertheless rightfully belongs in a museum.<sup>57</sup>

As expected, a lot of space was dedicated to Tito's stay in Podravka by the factory house organ, in two issues a dozen pages each.<sup>58</sup> Here too every detail was recorded, each word spoken by the charismatic guest and his entourage. Special attention was paid to Tito and Jovanka drinking Jakobs coffee, since its licensed production had started at that time. Journalists noted that Vladimir Bakarić also talked positively about drinking coffee produced in Podravka.<sup>59</sup> There was also a statement by factory worker Jelica Bosman, who boasted about her favourite souvenir ever. It was a cup the president had drunk from personally.<sup>60</sup> Short interviews were printed with all the workers who had had the opportunity to shake hands with the president, and a situation was recorded when Tito had wanted to see the plant for the production of the famous Vegeta, and then started sneezing because of the raw materials.

At around 4.30 pm, the hosts from Koprivnica thanked Tito for his visit, in front of the Podravka Hotel, and escorted him towards Varaždin, with a short stop in Ludbreg. In Varaždin almost the entire scenario of exhilarating mass welcome from Koprivnica was replayed, except for the visits to local companies. The president and his column were welcomed in the largest city in the north-western Croatia by as many as 50,000 citizens, who had also arrived from the wider region, from Međimurje to Hrvatsko Zagorje. The talks with the political activists and businessmen were also dominated by economic topics. It was emphasized that in the Varaždin region exports were higher than imports, but that companies are still facing the problem of insolvency.<sup>61</sup> A very unpleasant fact was stated of as many as 13,000 workers from the Međimurje region being on “temporary work abroad” at the time, equalling the number of those employed in the local companies.<sup>62</sup>

The president of Yugoslavia here too emphasised that resolving such economic illogic was a political priority, along with the usual phraseology of “empowering the workers to decide on the results of their work.” in contrast to a situation where the distribution is dominated by “bureaucratic structures.” Tito was resolute here about the further steps he intended to take about economy: “I know why some oppose resolving the foreign exchange regime. But I do not want the republics to quarrel among themselves over whether to change this system or not. I shall quote the producers and speak on their behalf. This is not just a matter of the Republic of Croatia and factories on its territory... However, in some republics they would like these funds to be transferred to other things - not for the benefit of working collectives - but to various ambitious things. I shall not tolerate this any longer.”<sup>63</sup>

It is interesting that in the speeches on the topic of the support for the Party, it was not mentioned to what level this specifically applied, and instead the vague term “League of Communists” was used everywhere.

In the end, among other gifts, Tito was especially pleased with a box of expensive and hard-to-obtain Cuban cigars, while his wife Jovanka received Lepoglava lace and a traditional wooden chest from Hrvatsko Zagorje.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>57</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>58</sup> *Podravka*, 17<sup>th</sup> September and 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1972.

<sup>59</sup> *Idem*, 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1971, “Pijem ja vašu kavu svaki dan”, p. 10.

<sup>60</sup> *Idem*, “Šalicu sam uzela”, p. 7.

<sup>61</sup> *Varaždinske vijesti*, 18<sup>th</sup> September 1971, “Veličanstven doček u Varaždinu” and “Bezrezervna je naša podrška Savezu komunista”, p. 1.

<sup>62</sup> *Idem*, “Svaki drugi u inozemstvu”, p. 5

<sup>63</sup> *Idem*, “Tito: Jedinstvo misli i akcije”, p. 3.

<sup>64</sup> *Idem.*

#### 4. TITO ABRUPTLY CHANGES OPINION ON THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN CROATIA

It is beyond doubt that the tour of north-western Croatia left a strong impression on the Yugoslav leader, who would in the coming months win another presidential term by a landslide in all the republics. It was not just a matter of carefully directed massive welcome rallies, which clearly demonstrated the satisfaction of citizens to meet a person who had by then been transformed into an exceptional historic statesman, even within the international framework, already turning into a political myth. Tito had here, more than in the other republics and regions, faced the illogic, irregularities, and calculated solutions of the Yugoslav economic model, in which political influence was more important than the quality and results of economic activities. Therefore, regardless of the collapse of the Croatian Spring and the persecutions that followed, it could be argued that the numerous changes in the political and economic system of the Yugoslav federation that followed were the result of the insights Tito had gained chiefly in his September tour.

The immediate result of the tour of north-western Croatia was the toast which Tito raised on 15<sup>th</sup> September 1971 in Hotel Esplanada in Zagreb, responding to the one raised on behalf of the Croatian leadership by Savka Dabčević-Kučar, in front of all the major Croatian officials. Keeping in mind his public speech in the capital of Croatia earlier in July, his toast caused quite a bit of surprise, to the Croatian spring activists a very pleasant one. He noted, among other things, this: "I have now visited a good part of Croatia. I saw how the people live and felt their pulse. The reception we came across was such that we will never be able to forget it. It reminded me a little of those first days following the end of the war of liberation. I saw that the people had great confidence in the League of Communists and in me... I saw that the stories that had circulated about Croatia are downright absurd – about great chauvinism appearing and flourishing here etc. This is not true (applause). I saw that for myself everywhere I went... Here in Croatia, I have seen and learned a lot. Really, next time I'll know better how to rate various news and talk."<sup>65</sup> It is important to note that in that long toast he also mentioned that the adopted amendments to the Constitution "created the conditions for a definitive solution to the national question and for each republic to have its statehood."<sup>66</sup>

The Croatian Spring activists did not hide their enthusiasm for Tito's speech, which had a controversial echo in the wider Yugoslav public. Savka Dabčević-Kučar described this hugely significant toast in her memoirs in a chapter indicatively titled "Tito acquits us of the charges" in these words "During the toast many guests applauded Tito's words of support and confidence in Croatian politics. The excitement was at its peak. We could not expect more in our dreams. He confirmed that he had felt the mood of the people. He distanced himself from the slanders targeted at us. He in fact called them slanders. He supported our economic demands that were about to be resolved. He mentioned the statehood of the republic... The speech dropped like a bomb. I will never forget the faces of the opponents of our policy at the time... Milutin Baltic was as pale as a rag. Vladimir Bakarić, very sweaty in the face... went grey, although he occasionally obediently applauded with the rest. Jelica Radojčević and Milka Planinc looked at each other in bewilderment. Dusko Dragosavac froze. But the biggest changes were seen on Kardelj [Edvard, Tito's federal-level associate]... He was simply furious. So much so that he could barely control himself. His face was crimson."<sup>67</sup>

The Croatian Spring Activists were thus temporarily amnestied. On the other hand, Tito's toast angered and united many opponents of the Croatian Spring policies, not only individual republican and federal officials, but also the staunchly anti-Croatian military leaders. In the following weeks, Tito was faced with constant pressure to mount a coup against the Croatian Party leadership. To make a long story short, he resisted those pressures until the student strike broke out in Zagreb. After that, accelerated preparations for the party meeting in Karadorđevo began. The reform platform of the Croatian Spring, calling among other for strengthening the sovereignty of the republics, did not stand a chance

<sup>65</sup> Dušan Bilandžić: *Moderna hrvatska povijest*, p. 604-605, Golden marketing, Zagreb 1999.

<sup>66</sup> Savka Dabčević-Kučar: *'71: hrvatski snovi i stvarnost* (I. i II.), p.682-683, Intrerepublic, Zagreb 1997.

<sup>67</sup> Idem, p. 683.

in the political power relations at the time. The president of CK SKH in her memoirs noted that in those critical moments Tito also admitted to her that he was faced with a simple dilemma: “Either me – or you!”<sup>68</sup> He naturally chose his survival. The Croatian Spring activists were left with a bitter consolation that the changes that culminated in the adoption of the new federal constitution were largely what they had insisted on for years.

## 5. KOPRIVNICA THEOREM: THERE IS NO NATIONALISM, BUT THERE WILL BE NO *SUSRETI*

The last edition of *Susreti*, double issue 3-4, was printed in the second half of September 1971, after Tito's visit to Koprivnica. Here a lot of space was directly or indirectly dedicated to this event, the importance of which far exceeded the local framework. The published materials included Tito's address to the people of Koprivnica from the ceremonial stage at the Railway, as well as the toast he raised during the festive lunch at the Podravka Hotel.<sup>69</sup> However, unlike all the other publications, it included the statement by Savka Dabčević-Kučar.<sup>70</sup> The most interesting parts of the presentations of Stjepan Kapusta and Pavle Gaži, the respective leaders of the Municipal Assembly and Podravka, were also presented.<sup>71</sup> In the latter, they key figures were presented, speaking of the subordinate roles of the exporters compared to those who only produced for the domestic markets, causing the income in the municipality of Koprivnica per capita to be up to 25 percent lower than the national average.

In this issue, as already stated, the thematic focus was on social differences, as well as the final showdown with Glas Podravine. It also included a series of direct or indirect comments related to the Croatian Spring, so that, in addition to various provocations, they sent slaps in the face of all those with whom they did not agree. And by September 1971, there were many more of these than those openly supporting them. Among other things, Ivan Peterlin in his editorial struck hard again at “trutica,” which was the only way they would refer to Matica hrvatska.<sup>72</sup>

He also stated that a form of revenge of the local authorities towards the members of the editorial board was the sudden sending of an invitation to the editor-in-chief Ratko Aleksa to serve in the JNA.<sup>73</sup> Peterlin, contrary to the official phraseology of ‘brotherhood and unity’, wrote: “Ratko is going to Rajlovac [near Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina] to give his people a year of his life, although they are not to be found near Rajlovac.”<sup>74</sup> Peterlin's other provocation, due to the names called out having more serious repercussions than the previous one, was related to Tito's conversation with the local officials: “While the speech by Pavle [Gaži] was decent, interspersed with contemporary phrases of Croatian, Bukovčan [Josip] held (...) a speech (...) which made my hair stand on end. Here's an excerpt: “mora da vas informišem” [‘I must inform you’ *but in a markedly Serbian syntax*]... and all like that.”<sup>75</sup>

The local Party officials dubbed both of Peterlin's provocations nationalist outbursts so immediately after the paper came out of the print they demanded OK SOH, as the publisher, to remove it, before *Susreti* could appear on newsstands. The editorial board did solve it, but in its own way. They crossed out the disputed sentences by hand with a black felt-tip pen. They consciously did it quite sloppily, so it was easy to see what had been printed. If there was a dilemma about any word, it was enough to raise the page to the light source. By the time the Party “censors” realized that they had been tricked again,

<sup>68</sup> Idem, p. 682.

<sup>69</sup> *Susreti*, 3-4, September 1971, pp. 1-2.

<sup>70</sup> Idem, p. 2.

<sup>71</sup> Idem.

<sup>72</sup> Idem, “Ivan Peterlin: Pisanije”, p. 7.

<sup>73</sup> On the day of Tito's arrival to Koprivnica the information circulated, as retold to the author by Tomo Brinc, that Aleksa was detained at the police station as a precaution, as was then the case with potential dissidents during Tito's visits to certain towns and cities. The text of the mentioned Peterlin's introduction makes it clear, however, that Aleksa nevertheless attended Tito's conversation with the political activists.

<sup>74</sup> *Susreti*, September 1971, p. 7.

<sup>75</sup> Idem.

the formal ban had lost all meaning. The newsroom of *Susreti* however, was not forgiven, and this resurfaced in the media analysis following Karađorđevo, together with the defiant printing of the musical score and the full text of the national anthem *Our Beautiful Homeland*, printed next to the mentioned Tuđman's article about Stjepan Radić.<sup>76</sup>

As the icing on the cake of that issue came the re-publishing of a poem by already well-known Koprivnica writer Paje Kanižaja from his Kajkavian collection printed in Zagreb *Kralju Tomislavu*. The eponymous poem happened to be an ironic political message to the authorities and a call for national revival. The final verses best reflected the spirit of the Croatian Spring, but also foreshadowed a rough confrontation with their ideals: "... you are still on the horse / and we are in in the shitter."<sup>77</sup>

Ivan Povijač and the other local Party officials did not wait for the outcome of the conflict at the level of the republic, which had long since spilled over onto the federal level. The last issue of *Susreti* had caused so many affairs and political resentment that the next one was not even considered. The formal justification, as in any unwanted project in the socialist period, was the "lack of funds," and the editor-in-chief had anyway already donned a military uniform. Political analysis had also been initiated, in which the editorial board of *Susreti* would be given the role of the main media villain.<sup>78</sup>

Also facing serious problems, in an obviously irrational movement, was the humorous paper *Feferon*, published until June 1971 as a supplement to the house organ of *Podravka*. The cover of the issue which was then published as an independent edition and placed on newsstands showed the face of a person sticking out their tongue and having two fingers on their scalp. This was turned into a poster saying that it was a paper for Croats who could still laugh. It had covered the town that summer, but when Tito was scheduled to visit Koprivnica, the town's communal services had to remove all the posters overnight, with the explanation that Tito should not be greeted with "tongue sticking out and [cuck-old] horns." This also caused the humourists to come under attack, which was justified by the text in which the editorial board refers to the local Matica hrvatska as "trutica."

A political accusation was raised about this at the session of the Municipal Committee SKH Koprivnica, on 29<sup>th</sup> October, reinforced by the ideological connection between *Feferon* and *Susreti*.<sup>79</sup> The editorial board of *Feferoni*, however, did not back down, but dared to call out the same party leadership, so that intrigue was quietly pushed into a corner.<sup>80</sup> The public secret of the political turnover lay in the fact that *Podravka*'s director Gaži did not allow the "committee cadre," which he did not hold in particularly high esteem due to their narrow-mindedness, to boss around his company. In contrast, *Susreti* had no such powerful political backing.

The committee session was also remembered for the fact that its secretary Ivica Grgić took the opportunity to emphasise that during that year there had "no more than a dozen" nationalist incidents in the Koprivnica municipality, "mostly in bars."<sup>81</sup> With this he wanted to say that the Croatian Spring had practically no effect on Koprivnica. At the same time, he indirectly confirmed that the only problem for the party leadership were the insufficiently controlled local newspapers.

The extent of the political confusion in that autumn of 1971 is best evidenced by the fact that only a week after the aforementioned showdown with *Susreti* and *Feferon*, and the report on "bar nationalism," the same SKH Municipal Committee publicly supported the leadership of the Croatian Spring. It was this message that was sent on 22<sup>nd</sup> session of CK SKH by Pavle Gaži. More specifically, the director of *Podravka* observed that "support for this political direction and the current leadership is indivisible."<sup>82</sup> This did not prevent him from interpreting the same events in a different way after Karađorđevo.

<sup>76</sup> Idem, p. 11.

<sup>77</sup> Idem, p. 13.

<sup>78</sup> Davor Premec: *Koprivnički omladinski list Susreti*, diploma thesis, University North, Koprivnica 2021. It explains in more detail what happened later with some of the editors and contributors.

<sup>79</sup> *Glas Podravine*, 5<sup>th</sup> November 1971, "Nije dovoljna samo osuda", p. 4.

<sup>80</sup> *Podravka*, 15<sup>th</sup> November 1971, "Općinski komitet Saveza komunista o *Feferonu* i *Susretima*", p. 5.

<sup>81</sup> *Glas Podravine*, 5<sup>th</sup> November 1971, "Jedinstvenost Naroda", p. 4.

<sup>82</sup> *Glas Podravine*, 12<sup>th</sup> November 1971, "Podrška CK SKH", p. 2.

For Koprivnica, on the other hand, it was convenient that choosing the winning side enabled Podravka to develop rapidly the following decade, without company leadership upheaval.

The first major public speech after the removal of the Croatian Spring activists and the appointment of Milka Planinc as the new president of CK SKH, came late in December 1971 on the meeting of OK SKH, an extended political body of the Committee, where it was stated that in “In relation to nationalism and other phenomena, nothing will change, because the attitude of the communists in this area towards these phenomena had been the same even before the 21st session of the Presidency of the SKJ in Karađorđevo.”<sup>83</sup> On that occasion, the introductory speaker Ivan Povijač listed various “nationalist and chauvinist activities” throughout Croatia, noting that this was not characteristic of Koprivnica and Podravina, which remained steadfast “on Tito's path.” It was in the primary interest of Povijač and his associates to prove themselves in the eyes of the new party leadership as one of the strongest anti-nationalist bastions, where almost nothing got out of control. Special gratitude was expressed for such a situation to the two directors of the largest Koprivnica companies, who were also in the highest party forums – Pavle Gaži and Josip Bukovčan.<sup>84</sup>

The work of the local subcommittee of Matica hrvatska was also praised, because in it, perhaps due to the fact that its activities were kept to a minimum, there had been no nationalist outbursts. Bukovčan stated that this was due to the fact that “communists also worked there.” Moreover, as he mentioned, they had been sent to Matica “on a party assignment.”<sup>85</sup> Matica, therefore, never even had an opportunity to be active and take on the tasks for which it had been formed.

The final position on the media activities supporting the policies of the Croatian Spring<sup>86</sup> was reached by the Commission for Idea Development [evaluating ideological eligibility] of OK SKH. The meeting was held on two days, on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> January 1972, and lasted in total for 12 hours. Obviously, it took a long time to reach a consensus on the conclusions. Some, as the word on the street suggested, thought they were too mild, while others thought they were too harsh. Thus, the idea of starting *Susreti* was “essentially positive” because it showed “interest of young people in our socialist self-management.” However, the development of the project “demonstrated lack of a political and organisational maturity on the part of the publisher and the editorial board.” This is evident in some “articles that were not in line with the program of SKJ, deviating either to the left, towards [uncritical] levelling, or to the right, towards nationalism and separatism.” The latter had not come as a result of “organised nationalist influence from the outside” or the editorial board acting on the platform of “counter-revolution.” In the end, it was indirectly confirmed that the continual publishing of *Susreti* was no longer possible, because it was noted that the concept of a future youth newspaper must be agreed upon with the Commission for Idea Development of OK SKH Koprivnica.

As for *Feferon*, which had already been separated from the “case of *Susreti*” as a result of Podravka's firm stance, it was just noted that it had published two unacceptable texts and that the self-managing bodies should “in future provide greater support to the editor.” *Glas Podravine*, on the other hand, received praise for staying all along “on the course of development on the basis of socialist self-management.”<sup>87</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Idem, 31<sup>st</sup> December 1971, “Stav ostaje isti!”, pp. 1-2.

<sup>84</sup> Idem.

<sup>85</sup> Idem.

<sup>86</sup> With the collapse of the Croatian Spring, in the political forums it was referred to using the pejorative name “maspok” [from *masovni pokret* ‘mass movement’] as the Belgrade media dubbed it, wishing to emphasise its anti-Party nature.

<sup>87</sup> *Glas Podravine*, 14<sup>th</sup> January 1972, “Program aktivnosti”, p. 2.

## 6. CONCLUSION: INCOMPATIBILITIES THAT HAVE BEEN CARRIED OVER TO INDEPENDENT CROATIA

Conciliatory political assessments were one thing, and the stance towards those who provoke bad blood with the dogmatic party officials was quite another. The latter, though, was mostly demonstrated behind the scenes. The first to be targeted after the fall of the Croatian Spring leadership was Tomo Brinc. However, as it was not deemed politically opportune to bring up fresh affairs, despite public demands from the city's Party organizations for his removal, Brinc was allowed to remain in office until the end of his term, specifically until April 1972. He could not, of course, do anything concrete and was not invited to any political meetings and discussions.

Another reason for this political coexistence with the proscribed Brinc lay in the fact that until the spring of 1973 he also had parliamentary immunity, which would again provoke public attention. That is why only a few days after the end of his parliamentary term, he was summoned to the District Court in Bjelovar. He was there accused of “stealing” a plan to organize youth military units, developed after the Soviet military intervention in Czechoslovakia. These units were never formed, and in the absurd procedure it was determined that Brinc had not been in charge of keeping the plans, which, to make the absurd greater, were supposed to be stored in the safe of the OK SKH. The reasonable judge acquitted him of all charges, but he had a hard time getting a permanent job in Koprivnica.<sup>88</sup>

As it already said, Slavko Fijačko was not so lucky, escaping prison for the text about *Glas Podravine* only after a few years, and for some time unable to get an adequate teaching job in the city. It seems that the key to giving up the prosecution of Ratko Aleksa was that he was in the army when the time of reckoning had come, but also in the reputation that his family enjoyed. Upon returning from the army, he was formally hired as a municipal official, without any real tasks, after which he managed to join the editorial board of the Zagreb-based *Vjesnik*. Peterlin was also barred from working as a journalist for years, and only during a comparatively more liberal Party period did he join the editorial board of the newspaper he had fiercely criticized - *Glas Podravine*, eventually becoming the editor-in-chief. The most bizarre, however, was the case of graphic editor Vladimir Kostjuk, who was expelled from the Party at his workplace in Podravka, even though he had not been a member.

The situation in Croatia in these ‘Years of Lead,’ which followed the Croatian Spring, is best illustrated by the fact that the visit of the Yugoslav president to Koprivnica was supposed to be preserved in a special richly illustrated tome to be published in the April of 1973. Its title was *Tito in Koprivnica*, and it was supposed to be published by Koprivnica OK SKH. The team of authors was led by journalist Ivo Čičin Mašansker, who prepared the text on 88 typed pages, along with a significant number of photographs.<sup>89</sup> A printing house, *Zrinski* from Čakovec, was also found, guaranteeing high quality printing. It remained for the project to be verified by the “central committee for welcoming Comrade Tito.” The verification, however, never arrived.

Instead of the committee's position, the author's team from Podravka received remarks from Dušan Dučić, Gaži's closest associate. In eight points, Dučić listed the reasons why the book was not suitable for printing. The most specific one was that the text was written too factually, which he deemed similar to the descriptions “in the yellow press.” Instead, he argued, “more lyrics and warmth” were needed. In this regard, he proposed that the text be redacted into four chapters: “Preparations and Tito's welcome”, “We are by Your side, Comrade Tito”, “Tito to Us” and “Goodbye, Comrade Tito.”

It was immediately clear that Gaži was not in favour of the book's publication. It clearly had nothing to do with the lack of lyricism. The book would have been very hard to illustrate, even with the names of the Croatian spring leaders left out, because they appeared in all the group photos. This rendered impossible high-quality photo retouching, a procedure common in all one-party systems as a process of changing history. Gaži was rational enough to understand that not publishing a book was the lesser evil, and a lesser political embarrassment.

<sup>88</sup> Conversation with Tomo Brinc from 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022.

<sup>89</sup> The author had a chance to see the typed text of the book, together with the accompanying correspondence, from the personal archive of Ivo Čičin Mašansker early in December 2021.

Two decades later, Croatian independence only confirmed that the wounds of the Croatian Spring had never healed. On a personal level, there was still no tolerance, and at times no basic empathy. The new government, which also included some former Party members, did not need the *Susreti* contributors as the only formally marked Croatian Spring activists. Peterlin was even systematically degraded in *Glas Podravine*, which in the changed circumstances functioned in the service of [the dominant party] Croatian Democratic Union (*HDZ*). This resulted in the reunion of the *hard core* of *Susreti*, with the exception of Aleksa, in 1990s in three Koprivnica tabloids (*Koprivnički magnum*, *Novi magnum*, *Podravski tjednik*), becoming a fierce and irreconcilable opposition to those in power. This time, too, they stood no chance of long-term survival, permanently maintaining the stigma of their political and world-view maladjustment.

## SOURCES

1. *Glas Podravine*: Years 1967-1972 – stored in the media collection of the Museum of the Town of Koprivnica and the digital collection of the *Fran Galović* Town Library and Reading Room
2. (<http://library.foi.hr/lib/knjiga.php?C=20&G=&F=&H=koprivnica&vrsta=&grupa=&lang=hr&godina=1950&broj=&stranica=&grupa=Gradska%20knji%9Enica%20i%20%20E8itaonica%20FRAN%20GALOVIC%20Koprivnica&vrsta=ZBI&H=koprivnica>)
3. *Susreti*: Year 1971 - stored in the media collection of the Museum of the Town of Koprivnica and the digital collection of the *Fran Galović* Town Library and Reading Room
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5. *Podravka*: Year 1971 – stored in the media collection of the Museum of the Town of Koprivnica
6. *Feferon*: Year 1971 – stored in the media collection of the Museum of the Town of Koprivnica
7. Press clippings of the Croatian and Yugoslav publications from September 1971 – private collection of Ivo Čičin Mašansker
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## SAŽETAK

Grad i općina Koprivnica sve do travnja 1971. nisu bili aktivnije uključeni u reformski pokret Hrvatskog proljeća. Partijsko je vodstvo bilo na rigidnoj dogmatskoj liniji i u potpunosti je kontroliralo lokalni tjednik *Glas Podravine* i *Radio Koprivnicu*. Izvjesnu je promjenu donio posjet Savke Dabčević-Kučar Podravki, koji je imao za posljedicu upućivanje telegrama podrške proljećarskom vodstvu. S tim događanjima koincidira i pokretanje omladinskog lista *Susreti*. Iako su tiskana samo tri broja, *Susreti* su uznemirili koprivničku javnost otvaranjem niza političkih i socijalnih tema te svjetonazorskih tabua, a otvoreno su se sukobljavali i s partijskim dužnosnicima. Stjecajem političkih okolnosti, Koprivnica je u rujnu 1971. bila središnje mjesto turneje jugoslavenskog predsjednika Tita po sjeverozapadnoj Hrvatskoj, koja je trebala dokazati da tu nema »nacionalizma i šovinizma«. Posjet je bio masovan i pomno organiziran do najsitnijih detalja pa je privremeno promijenio Titov stav prema proljećarima. No, u Koprivnici je samo koji tjedan kasnije krenuo otvoreni obračun sa *susretovcima*, koji su zadugo uklonjeni iz javnosti. Na sjednici saveznog partijskog vodstva u Karađorđevu protiv proljećara se okrenuo i najutjecajniji koprivnički dužnosnik Pavle Gaži, tako da je grad u nekoliko narednih godina u političkom i medijskom smislu proživljavao svoja »olovna vremena«.