

In memoriam

Croatian geographer and academician Dragutin Feletar (1941-2023)

Hrvaški geograf in akademik Dragutin Feletar (1941-2023)

Hrvoje Petrić

hpetric@ffzg.hr

Last year, the geography of the area along the Drava River lost Dragutin Feletar, a long-time member of the international editorial board of the *Review of Geography* and one of the most prominent geographers not only in the Republic of Croatia but also far beyond. Dragutin Feletar was born on July 10, 1941, in Veliki Otok, in the then municipality of Đelekovec, and today's municipality of Legrad, Republic of Croatia. The parents moved to Veliki Otok from Donja Dubrava, where they returned immediately after the end of the Second World War. Thus, he attended elementary school in Donja Dubrava (1948-1952) and Kotoriba (1952-1956), and high school in Varaždin (1956-1960). He fell in love with geography in elementary school, so from 1960 to 1965 he studied at the Geography Department of the Faculty of Science and Mathematics of the University of Zagreb (he graduated with academician Josip Roglić on the subject "Industry of Međimurje"). From 1971 to 1973, he completed his postgraduate studies at the Geography Department of the Faculty of Arts, and the extensive geographical and historical monograph "Podravina" was published as his master's thesis. He defended his doctoral dissertation on "Industry in the economic-geographical structure of Podravina" in 1982 under professor Velimir (Veljko) Rogić.

From 1965 to the beginning of 1983, Dragutin Feletar spent mainly in journalism, education and culture. Already as a high school student, he started scout detachments in Donja Dubrava, Kotoriba and Donji Vidovec and started the newspaper "Međimurski izviđač" (1958-1959). Since then, he has been very active in local newspapers, especially in the Čakovec weekly "Međimurje", later also in "Vjesnik" and Radio-Zagreb. As a graduate student for one school year (1964-1965), he worked as a geography and history teacher at the elementary school in Donja Dubrava, where he also led student groups of young journalists, geographers and meteorologists, and published the newspaper "Dubravčan". As an already established journalist, he got a job in 1966 at the weekly "Međimurje" in Čakovec, where he worked until the beginning of 1970. There, he published several thousand articles, of which the reportages on economic topics, as well as feuilletons on the history and geographical features of Međimurje, were particularly notable. The Čakovec branch of Matica Hrvatska published his first book "Iz povijesti Međimurja (From the History of Međimurje)" in 1968, which includes a series of historical feuilletons. In the same year, he was among the founders of Radio Čakovec and its first editor. In 1969, he was one of the founders of the publication of the "Međimurski kalendar", and in 1970 of the Cultural and Educational Society "Zrinski" in Čakovec. That society continued to publish the "Kajkavski kalendar" (1970, 1971, 1972), and in addition to its cultural activities, it also started a rich library of poetry and books of geographic and historical content. Feletar's first scientific work - the monograph "Legrad" (1971), as well as the collection of poems "Moje Međimurje (My Međimurje (Moje Međimurje))" and the very popular work "Stari gradovi i dvorci sjeverozapadne Hrvatske (Old Towns and Castles of Northwestern Croatia)" (co-author Tomislav Đurić, went through 5 editions) were also printed in that library.

Dragutin Feletar continued his working career in the Koprivnica food company "Podravka", where he worked from 1973 until 1983. There, he first worked as a journalist and editor in the factory newspaper "Podravka", and then as the director of the Center for Cultural Activities. Thanks to the work of Dragutin Feletar, Podravka was famous as an important cultural point in Croatia at that time. In addition, he continues to develop professionally and scientifically, publishing a large number of books and papers in scientific journals, and he also participates in several (international) scientific meetings (The Hague, Zagreb, Göttingen, Ljubljana). Then he wrote several of his most important books, such as the monograph "Podravina" (1973), "Glazbeni život Koprivnice (Musical Life of Koprivnica)" (1977), "Podravka" (1980), "Studije i radovi o Podravini (Studies and works on Podravina)" (1982), "Stare građevine istočne Hrvatske (Old buildings of eastern Croatia)" (1983), etc. He is particularly active in researching the economic history of northwestern Croatia, and in addition to the extensive monograph "Podravka", he also published books on Čakovec printing, the textile industry of Čakovec, the wood industry of Međimurje, the textile industry Zaboka, Koprivnica printing industry, Sisak "Segestica", Hoča food industry near Maribor and Umag, Koprivnica wood and shoe industry, Varaždin and Koprivnica banking, locksmithing in Zagreb, forestry and wood industry in Podravina and Novska, etc. In addition, he founded worker's cultural and artistic society Podravka, with one of the best choirs in Croatia, and art, literature and other sections, as well as publishing activities. He designed and was among the founders of one of the first industrial museums in Croatia - the Podravka Food Museum in Koprivnica (1982). At that time, Feletar was also very responsible for the development of the cultural life of Koprivnica and Podravina, engaging in educational activities (presentations, expert-scientific gatherings, lectures, cultural manifestations, etc.). In 1975, he initiated the publication of the "Podravski zbornik" yearbook within the framework of the City Museum in Koprivnica and was the editor of that publication for a number of years. The collection is still published today and has completely changed the dynamics of professional and scientific research in Koprivnica and Podravina. He also initiated the publishing of publications within the "Podravski zbornik" library (over fifty books have been published since 1977).

At the beginning of 1983, he was hired as a teacher for the Geography Department of the Faculty of Science University of Zagreb. where he became an assistant and then a docent in the same year. He was elected associate professor in 1988, scientific advisor in 1991, full professor in 1993, and permanent professor in 1999. As a university professor, he developed several courses, the primary one of which was Industrial Geography. He also taught at several faculties in Zagreb, and held invited lectures at universities in Maribor, Ljubljana, Pula, Belgrade, Skopje, Sarajevo, Pristina, Peč, Budapest, Munich, Göttingen, Zadar, Osijek, Rijeka, Ostrava and Lodz. He was a mentor to a large number of graduates, masters and doctoral students. At Faculty of Science, he also held numerous management positions: he was head of the Department unit of Geography and Spatial Planning (1990-1998), head of the Department unit of Regional Geography and Methodology (1999-2002), head of the Geography Department (1998- 1999), Head of Postgraduate Studies at the Department of Geography (1999-2000), Vice-Dean for Finance at the Faculty of Science (2002-2004) and Dean of the Faculty of Science (2004-2006). In addition, he was the secretary and president of the Croatian Association of Geographical Societies

(1984-1987). He was also the editor of the scientific journal "Geografski glasnik" (1986-1989), Geographical Papers (1986-1988) and others.

He was extremely active in the development of Croatian geography, cultural and economic history, and higher education. He was a member of the Senate of the University of Zagreb and the College of Rectors, and a member of the Educational Council of the Ministry of Education of Croatia (1992-1997), a member of the Matric Committee for geosciences of the University of Zagreb (1992-1998), etc. He was responsible for the establishment of the Department of Geography and the University of Zadar, and he looked forward to strengthening the geography profession in neighboring countries, so he tried to help the development of geography at the University of Maribor and elsewhere. He also contributed to the development of geography as a member of the editorial board of a dozen geographical and ecological journals from Croatian universities, as well as from Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2005, he edited and co-authored a monograph on the Faculty of Science and Mathematics in Zagreb. He led and was a member of teams in a dozen scientific projects in the fields of geography, demography and transport, as well as the territorial structure of Croatia.

In 1993, he founded a publishing house in Koprivnica, whose publishing program was continued by the publishing company "Meridijani" based in Samobor. He has edited 203 books, mostly within the framework of "Meridiana". Under his editorship, 221 issues of the popularizing geography, history and ecology magazine "Meridians" have been published continuously since 1994, and two scientific magazines have also been launched. The journal (A1) "Podravina" has been published since 2002 and 44 volumes have been published, and the journal "Ekonomska i ekohistorija (Economics and Ecohistory)" since 2005. To date, Meridians have published hundreds of book titles and dozens of geography and history textbooks. Most of these magazines, books and textbooks were published under the editorship of academician Feletar.

In the scientific sense, his contributions to the development of Croatian (and partly Central European) economic geography are important, with an emphasis on its specialty - industrial geography. In the 1980s and 1990s, he published pioneering scientific works detailing the methodology and goals of industrial geography. In addition to the transfer of European and world achievements to Croatian industrial geography, he also developed new research methods, provided a scientific analysis of the mutual influence of industry and the transformation of geographical space, contributed to the knowledge of industrial location theories with new quantitative methods, worked out the relationships between industrial branches, as well as the relationships between industry and individual economic activities. He developed a methodology for studying the development of industrial and other economic branches, especially on the example of companies and activities in northwestern Croatia. Together with his collaborators, he developed the methodology of geographical-historical research of settlements. Thus, under his editorship and (co) authorship from 1971 until his death, about 30 notable geographical and historical monographs of cities, municipalities and settlements, mostly from central and northwestern Croatia, were published. He showed a special research interest in demogeographical research, especially developing quantitative methods and pointing out the importance of researching the relationship of natural features as a factor in the spatial distribution

of the population, while also entering into historical research. Demogeographical research was conducted especially on the example of Podravina and Međimurje.

He has been engaged in education and popularization of science throughout his working life, especially geography, history, demography, art history and ethnology. From these areas, he has published hundreds of popular articles in twenty Croatian and foreign newspapers, on radio and television, holds several public lectures every year, participates in book and project presentations, participated in seminars and workshops, helped young scientists and collaborators, etc. founded the Historical Society of Koprivnica (1984) and the Geographical Society in Koprivnica (1985), the Ecological Society in Koprivnica (president from 1989 to 1992), and has been active in the Croatian cultural and educational association "Brothers of the Dragon" since its founding. In 1990, he was the head of the Dragon Table in Čakovec (1997-2006), and the grand master (2006-2011). He was also the initiator and/or editor of several magazines for the popularization of science - Podravski zbornik (1975), Muzejski vjesnik (1978), Geografski horizont (1986), Rugjer (1996), Meridijani (1993), Donjomeđimurski zbornik (2013), Virje na razmeđu stoljeća (Virje at the turn of the century) (2011) and others.

Feletar received numerous awards for his scientific, professional and social work. We mention the most important ones: the award of the President of Croatia, the Order of the Croatian Danica with the image of Ruđer Bošković (2002), the Lifetime Achievement Award of the Koprivnica-Krizevačka County (2002), the Lifetime Achievement Award of the City of Koprivnica (2005), the Memorial Medal of the University of Zagreb (2006), Science Award of the University of Zadar (2006), Zrinski Award of Međimurje County (2018), etc., and he was declared an honorary citizen of Legrad Municipality (2018), Donja Dubrava Municipality (2018), Koprivnica City (2020) and Koprivnica-Križevac County (2021). He is the winner of the Annual State Prize for the Popularization of Science (2004), the European Knight of Culture in Budapest (2011), the Vjekoslav Klaić Prize for the Popularization of History (2016) and others.

He collaborated with the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts for decades. He was the co-editor and co-author of the extensive "Virovitički zbornik" published by the Academy (1986), then from 1989 to 1993 he was the team leader for the development of conceptual projects for the expressways Sveta Helena-Vrbovec-Koprivnica-Gola, Vrbovec-Bjelovar-Virovitica and the traffic junction. Vrbovec within the Scientific Council for Traffic. He was elected an associate member of the Academy in 2006, and a regular member (academic) in 2016. Since 2019, he has been the head of the Department of Ethnology (and editor of the magazine Zbornik za narodni život i običaje), since 2021 the head of the Institute for Scientific Research in Bjelovar (and the editor of the journal "Radovi" there), and since 2018 the editor-in-chief of the magazine "Rad". He was also a member of the Scientific Council of the Institute for Scientific Research in Križevci, and a member of the Committee for Awards and the Committee for determining the existence of works that are not in accordance with the reputation and dignity of a member of Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

Feletar's bibliography is very extensive: as an author and co-author, he published 92 scientific and professional books, 6 books in the field of literature, and 37 geography

textbooks for primary and secondary schools. He published 297 papers in domestic and foreign scientific periodicals, and around 350 professional and more significant popular articles. He developed fruitful cooperation with scientists from about 20 countries and gave presentations at 216 scientific and professional meetings (in a larger number of meetings he was the president and member of the organizational-scientific committees). In addition, he wrote 164 forewords in books or catalogs and was a reviewer for a large number of scientific works and books. He would have written and edited much more if his numerous plans had not been interrupted by a short and serious illness, as a result of which he died on June 21, 2023 in Koprivnica, Republic of Croatia.

Dragutin Feletar, always full of cheerfulness, optimism and agility, is survived by numerous colleagues, friends, acquaintances and associates who will find it difficult, if not impossible, to fill the gap that remains. In all good and difficult times, the most important thing for him was his family. Academician Feletar, as a great humanist with an open personality, with a sense for understanding people, enormous work energy and broad intellectual thinking, marked generations of associates and students in several countries, including the Republic of Slovenia, and almost until the last day he devised plans for new projects, books, articles, lectures. As one of the most important Croatian geographers of the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century, he was respected by numerous generations of students, but also by colleagues and associates of various professions, to whom he transmitted the "contagion" of his activism and enthusiasm for educational activities and the advancement and popularization of science and cultures. He undoubtedly belongs to those individuals who, with their dedicated work, significantly influenced the development of geography, so the time to come will certainly show how important his work was. His optimism, cheerfulness, correct attitude towards everyone, high standards, but also the feeling of fulfilling all the duties he performed remain as a constant encouragement and example for us. His collaborators will try to continue and build on his work and in that way best preserve a lasting memory and give thanks for everything.

