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The Reception of Anglo-American Drama on the Post-War Croatian Stage: Theater, Politics, Ideology

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The article examines the relationship between theater and politics as exemplified by the existence and reception of Anglo-American plays on the post-war Croatian stage. Its primary aim is to analyze the reception of Anglo-American drama in Croatian political and cultural context and to determine whether peripheral cultural phenomena like the presence of a foreign repertoire on a national stage can be indicative in answering more relevant and central questions about a particular culture. The four sections constituting the article (the first two in this issue and the second two in the next issue of *SRAZ*) are ordered chronologically and reflect the degree of tension within the volatile relationship between theater and politics. On the basis of the material presented the author draws the conclusion that the connections between theater and politics are always there, even when submerged and perhaps for the moment forgotten, only to appear again to make us feel a new development in their tense and uneasy interrelationship.

Chapter 1.

The Beginning (1945—1952)

When the occupation of Croatia was accomplished in 1941, its territory was divided between the quisling Ustasha government with its seat in Zagreb, and Italy which annexed the coastal region. The quisling state, the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), got as compensation for the loss of its coast the whole province of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Srijem — two large territories with a predominantly Serbian and Moslem population.

Theater in Italy-occupied Split ceased, but in Zagreb and Osijek which were within the NDH, it continued, encouraged by the government to such an extent that it had an appearance of normality. The fact that the post of the director of the

Croatian National Theater almost automatically led to a ministerial portfolio points to the importance which the fascist government attached to the continuation of theatrical activity in the cities where there were daily sabotages against their rule. The police force of the NDH, directly under the command and supervision of the German Gestapo should have known the danger of allowing the theater to continue in Zagreb nad Osijek — if not earlier, then at least from April 22, 1942, when seven well-known actors left to join the partisans. But they did nothing. They were, truth to tell, to imprison Dubravko Dujšin, the greatest Croatian actor of the day, hang the actor Janko Rakuša on February 12, 1945, chase a number of people out of the theater and into camps, and carefully monitor the repertoire, but they did not otherwise interfere with the normal work of the theater. Expensive and hazardous trips by the Viennese State Opera to Zagreb in 1942 and 1943 testify to the importance given by the government to the continuation of theater performances, as the best manifestation of normal, peace-time life in the occupied towns.

However, these routine performances in well-lit theaters, full of German, Italian and quisling soldiers and officials were not the only theatrical activity going on in Croatia at that time, nor the most important. The Partisan Theater, a well-organized theatrical activity carried out under constant fire, is a unique event in the history of guerilla warfare and in the history of theater. Its existence also characterizes the nature of the National Liberation war and its broadly conceived cultural policy which attracted prominent poets, actors, dancers, painters and musicians.

There is a great amount of literature¹ available on the Partisan Theater. It ranges from autobiographical writings, reminiscences and statements by numerous participants (primarily actors) in the Partisan Theater to detailed studies of the phenomenon. The most exhaustive and, judging by the fragments known to the public, all-embracing study by Maja Hribar—Ožegović, in fact her dissertation (1966), has still not been published in its entirety.

The Partisan Theater was primarily a Croatian specialty and other nations and regions of Yugoslavia were acquainted with it in a much more modest form. The departure of seven members of the Zagreb theater (Vjekoslav Afrić, Milan Vujnović, Ivka and Joža Rutić, Žorž Skrigin, Salko Repak, and Zvonimir Cvija) to join the partisans on April 22, 1942, marks the beginning of this specific type of theater. By May 1 the group was already performing in two towns (Korenica and

1. Joža Rutić, "Partizanska kazališta", *Kazališni list*, nos. 3, 18, 21, 27 and 30, Zagreb, 1945/46.

Joža Gregorin, "O kazališnoj aktivnosti na oslobođenom području", *HNK — Zbornik o stogodišnjici*, Naprijed, Zagreb, 1960, pp. 124—28.

Maja Hribar—Ožegović, *Kazališna djelatnost u Jugoslaviji za vrijeme NOB-a*, unpublished, Zagreb, 1966.

Maja Hribar—Ožegović, "Partizansko kazalište i muzika u NOB", *Hrvatska lijeva inteligencija 1941—45*, ed. Mladen Iveković, Naprijed, Zagreb, 1970. vol. 1, pp. 269—74.

Lapac) which were liberated at the time. The program consisted of an introductory ideologically intoned speech, short sketches, dance numbers, songs, and one-act plays, while the audiences were made up of soldiers and peasants — often as many as 5,000 or more. This standard performing format, delivered from improvised stages, sometimes under a roof, more often under a tree or beneath the open sky, was an attempt to use the limited resources in the most effective way. The actor Vjekoslav Afrić, the most prominent and agile promoter of theater during the war, mentions in his reminiscences² that those “variety programs” or, as he calls them, “poster-performances” were an attempt to transpose the avant-garde spirit of the pre-war Drama Studio into new conditions and to create a true political theater, “anti-theater”, as envisaged by Meyerhold, Piscator, Brecht and Voskovec. In his opinion even those “one-act plays have been too reminiscent of the ‘standard’ theater, in the bad sense. Their simplified, construed realism whispered where shouts were needed”.³ Regrettably, very soon demands were made to transform this vibrant, intense and crude theater into the “traditional” theater and as Afrić rightly laments, the development of an avant-garde revolutionary theater was arrested at its inception.

Nevertheless, it was a theater with an always enthusiastic audience, which in many cases was seeing a performance for the first time. As the front moved, so did the actors, criss-crossing the whole country and establishing contacts between the partisans and the peasant population. Very soon, led by a few professionals, acting and dancing training courses were started and as many as fifty people attended. By the end of 1942, following guest performances over a wide area, Branislav Nušić’s comedy *Sumnjivo lice* (*A Suspicious Person*) was performed in Bihać and the course graduates formed their own theatrical company, which they called “August Cesarec”.

Early in 1943 the central group acquired a statute and the name “The National Liberation Theater” (KNO) and staged several plays, including Gogol’s *Inspector General*. During their stay in liberated Jajce, where the first Yugoslav parliament (the Anti-fascist Council of Yugoslavia) was proclaimed on November 29, 1943, they even had their first permanent stage and workshops. However, as the war raged and liberated territory changed hands the KNO divided into several groups, to find itself reunited in September 1944 on the island of Vis. There they staged Leonid Leonov’s *Invasion* with which they made guest appearances in Southern Italy, performing for the wounded partisans who had been taken to the allies’ hospitals for treatment. On November 1 they entered liberated Belgrade and gave their last performance as the National Liberation Theater on November 12.

Because Croatia was completely liberated six months later than Serbia the members of the theater troupes operating there were soldiers with rifles in their

2. Vjekoslav Afrić, “Sjećanje na Kazalište narodnog oslobođenja”, *HNK — Zbornik o stogodišnjici*, Naprijed, Zagreb, 1960, pp. 114—23.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

hands one minute, and actors entertaining their fellow fighters, the next. A whole generation of young drama enthusiasts grew through those performances into fully-fledged actors in the post-war theater in Croatia. They came from the ranks of amateur actors, from the ranks of the Zagreb Acting School, and from other centers. With the addition of renowned actors from Zagreb and Osijek they formed "The Central Theater Company" which entered Split in January 1945 and performed for the first time in a real theater. In April they changed their name into "The Croatian Liberation Theater" (KNOH) and on May 27 they gave their first performance of Leonov's *Invasion* in the Croatian National Theater in Zagreb. Six weeks later they merged with the ensemble of the Croatian National Theater and the combination of the traditional theater, performing during the occupation under normal conditions, and the Partisan Theater, with all the characteristics of a mobile touring company, produced in 1945 a theater with a really new social status, new audience and new criticism.

There is a generally held opinion, shared by the drama theorist Nikola Batašić, that "the Zagreb theater entered the new state and social relationships with an almost unchanged inner structure".⁴ To some extent this is true if the administrative organization of the theater is taken to be the decisive factor, but expectations, hopes and a determination to create a new theater swept in 1945 all of Croatia to such an extent that in the euphoric climate all old and newly formed administrative "structures" lost their importance. It was as if the medieval mysteries had reappeared, to raise the city to its feet with their amateurish performances:

The first theatrical season in liberated Zagreb has ended. More than four hundred days have passed since that evening in Spring 1945 when, almost religiously, and after a four year absence, I crossed the threshold of our old Franz Joseph Teater and when, uncritically, like a child, I watched Leonov's play *Invasion*. This National Liberation Theater with its erratic acting and Leonov's text with its forced and unconvincing last act is something that I have carried with me ever since; the greatest experience of my life surpassing even the time when as a little boy I stood for hours in "the gods" at the theater and my visits to the many theaters of Europe between the wars. I am aware of the fact that the performance verged on amateurism, but over its clumsiness, over the atmosphere of the whole auditorium a magic word hovered: "Beginning!"⁵

This emotionally colored text which Marijan Matković wrote as an introduction to his critical account of the four theatrical seasons (1945—49) published as Part III of his *Dramaturgical Essays* (1949) serves as a valuable document testifying to the spirit of the times. To doubt the excellence of Leonov's play which was officially hailed as the Soviet masterpiece about the recently ended war was an act of courage and showed a sharp critical sense. And yet, in spite of "the fact that the performance verged on amateurism" it was "the greatest experience of my life". How is one to take that? Obviously as an act of faith in the future.

4. Nikola Batašić, *Hrvatska kazališna kritika*, Matica Hrvatska, Zagreb, 1971, p. 253.

5. Marijan Matković, *Dramaturški eseji*, Matica Hrvatska, Zagreb, 1949, p. 311.

Even Batušić, who concluded that the theater's "inner structure had remained unchanged", went on to admit:

But what has changed is the community's response to theater. Not only was it given sufficient financial backing for the restoration of its activities and further development, but it was expected to become a real "people's" theater, to become the place where our recent revolutionary past was evoked, but also to become a platform for new strivings. Therefore, the theater, not only because of modest radio programs, insufficiently diverse daily papers and periodicals; concerts which have only just been resumed and movie-houses showing films with always the same ideological and aesthetic orientation, has retained, as it did before the war, its central position in the eyes of the public.⁶

Nevertheless, theater, like all other arts, was exposed to the same political pressures. While a *post factum* analysis of the National Liberation War, fought inside Hitler's fortress and far away from Russia, would show crucial administrative, economic and military deviations from Stalin's dogmatic dicta, the cultural sphere remained totally uncritical towards "socialist realist" postulates, as expounded by Milovan Đilas, Radovan Zogović, and Jovan Popović. This cultural policy, based on the Soviet model and on the legacy of the conflict on the left, was transmitted in an undiluted form to all Yugoslav republics and its implementation was swift and efficient. Various Agit-props, committees and commissars took pains to insure that nothing changed.

Miroslav Krleža survived the war and although he had been "defeated" in the pre-war conflict on the left and did not join the partisans, he remained the foremost literary authority. Now, in the first heroic days of the victorious revolutions Krleža was ready, as a disciplined soldier, to serve. However, his attempt to re-enter the mainstream of literature was unsuccessful. Immediately following the liberation he was asked to edit a literary journal, the first issue of which was to come out that same year (1945). His co-editors were Vjekoslav Kaleb and Joža Horvat, writers who had returned to Zagreb as partisan fighters. Krleža accepted and in the first issue of *Republika* he published his essay "Literature Today".⁷ Not surprisingly both Milovan Đilas and Radovan Zogović found in the essay too much of unrepentant Krleža and at their direct instigation a public meeting, organized by the other two editors, was held in Zagreb and his essay publicly criticized. Once again, that year, Krleža attempted to publish his writings, this time a satirical dialogue "Crocodile or a Discussion of the Truth",⁸ but since it did not have the intended effect, he did not publish anything for the next two years. The Party used him to re-establish the new Yugoslav Academy of Arts and Sciences (1947) and it seemed quite satisfied with his silence. As for his other pre-war collaborators, Marko Ristić was also silenced by his ambassadorial post in Paris and Vaso Bogdanov turned exclusively to history and became a professor at Zagreb University.

6. Nikola Batušić, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

7. *Republika*, Zagreb, 1945, no. 1—2, pp. 139—60.

8. *Republika*, no. 3, pp. 225—40.

There remained four younger contributors to Krleža's pre-war literary reviews: Oskar Davičo (1909), Petar Šegedin (1909), Ranko Marinković (1913) and Marijan Matković (1915). None of them had collaborated with the enemy and were therefore politically "clean" — Davičo and Marinković had even participated in the Liberation War. Two of them, Marinković and Matković, had been closely connected with the theater before the war, the former as one of the most lucid drama critics in the late 30s⁹ and the latter as a playwright. Very soon after the war both of them took part in the life of new theater — Marinković as the drama director of the Croatian National Theater (1946—1950) and Matković as a drama critic and the general manager of the same theater (1949—1953). Although their posts might indicate that they had possibilities of directly influencing theatrical policy both of them were restricted by the general cultural situation, and could move only within the set coordinates of a rigid system.

Given the fact that by official regulation the repertoires were determined at conferences, and the final decision rested with the authorized Agit-prop office, it is not surprising that the first authors performed were the so-called established authors, authors above "suspicion", known either from the pre-war stage or from pre-war progressive literature. The first two post-war seasons in Zagreb saw productions of Shakespeare, Shaw and a dramatization of John Steinbeck's anti-fascist novel *The Moon is Down*. In spite of the many filters through which the repertoire had to pass, the choice of plays seems to have been quite arbitrary. However, this arbitrariness did not manifest itself only in the choice of Anglo-American plays, but characterized the whole repertoire, in all theaters, which mushroomed all over Croatia even in towns lacking the most elementary conditions for their maintenance. Repertoires were, as far as contemporary reality was concerned, non-representative and colorless.

And yet, during the first season a play was performed which later determined not only the choice of Soviet plays, but also the choice of American plays. The play was a comedy by a Soviet Ukrainian author, Alexander Korneychuk, *The Mission of Mr. Perkins in the Land of the Bolsheviks*. Of course this work did not arrive on the Croatian stage accidentally and naturally it was not the sole inspiration for the later choice of a special kind of Soviet and American plays. First, all theater managers were feverishly looking for texts from the Soviet Union and, failing that, from established Russian literature. During the first season in Zagreb eighteen

9. In *Hrvatska kazališna kritika* Nikola Batušić states: "Our journalistic-theatrical-drama criticism had experienced its last creative spark immediately prior to the beginning of World War II in the person of Ranko Marinković... He was interested only and exclusively in the literary work as such and the performance built upon it, while he left all other problems of the theater, not indeed ephemeral, but unnecessary at the moment of evaluation, outside the sphere of his critical interest. Between 1938 and 1941 Marinković published numerous reviews, only some of which were included in the collection *Geste i grimase*, published by Zora, Mala Biblioteka, Zagreb, 1951."

new plays¹⁰ were produced of which three were by Soviet authors (Vasilij Shkvarikin, Valentin Khataev and Alexander Korneychuk) and one by an earlier Russian writer, Alexander N. Ostrovski. Caution dictated the choice and Korneychuk's play satisfied most of the shaky criteria.

It seems that no one in the theater attributed any particular significance to this harmless comedy, which was more of a drawn out sketch than a realized comic creation, and it was performed on the so-called second, far less representative stage at the Croatian National Theater in Zagreb. It opened on November 3, 1945 to a full house. The play was "likeable" and the dulled edge of its satirical humor was benevolently aimed at America. The main character, a millionaire from Chicago, is essentially good-natured, although rather stupid, ignorant and naive. His mission, on which the whole suspense of the comedy is based, is to find first-hand the Russian "weak spot", which would allow Americans to exploit them through unfair trade. In the final scene Mr. Perkins discovers that "the weak spot of the Russian people is that they still haven't realized how much they had accomplished and how much they are capable of accomplishing". "This is how it was with us... Yes, this is how it was," concludes Mr. Perkins, a self-made millionaire, nostalgically. The confrontation of this verbose, conceited nitwit with Soviet reality produced comic situations and apparently left the audience to form judgments and reach conclusions of their own. At a time when the Cold War was entering a phase of loud weapon-rattling, such confrontations of stupidity and

10. The repertoire of the Croatian National Theater during the 1945/46 season:

Premieres

Miroslav Feldman:	<i>Iz mraka (Out of the Darkness)</i>
Jelena Loboda—Zrinska:	<i>Za pravdu (In the Name of Justice)</i>
Karel Čapek:	<i>Majka (Mother)</i>
Valentin Khataev:	<i>Očinski dom (Family Home)</i>
Alexander Korneychuk:	<i>Misija mister Perkinsa u zemlji boljševika (The Mission of Mr Perkins in the Land of the Bolsheviks)</i>
Alexander N. Ostrovski:	<i>Suma (The Forest)</i>
John Steinbeck — Slavko Batušić:	<i>The Moon is Down</i>

Revivals

Mirko Bogović:	<i>Matija Gubec</i>
Marin Držić:	<i>Dundo Maroje (Uncle Maroje)</i>
Branislav Nušić:	<i>Narodni poslanik (The People's Deputy)</i>
Branislav Nušić:	<i>Pop Ćira i pop Spira (Brother Ćira and Brother Spira)</i>
Vasilij Shkvarikin:	<i>Tude dijete (Somebody Else's Child)</i>
Shakespeare:	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>
Molière:	<i>George Dandin</i>
Molière:	<i>L'Avare</i>
Molière:	<i>Tartuffe</i>
Carlo Goldoni:	<i>La Locandiera</i>

wisdom, ignorance and knowledge, greed and fairness, served their purpose. Korneychuk's play was just an overture, which had to be continued with plays of a more profound and lasting effect. Very soon they were found both in Soviet and in American drama.

While the Anglo-American plays performed in Croatia during the first two seasons¹¹ primarily indicate caution, these uncontroversial dramas nevertheless gave an opportunity to the post-war critics to take a first step forward, developing a terminology and establishing some criteria. As far as criticism is concerned there existed a paradoxical situation. In this doctrinaire period there were many commentators, interpreters and explicators, but very few qualified critics, although there had been dozens before the war.¹² Theater which began its life on the strong foundations of tradition and partisan experience, ample funding and an enthusiastic audience was bereft of an authoritative critical pen. Even if such a one existed in Osijek, Rijeka, Split or any other provincial city with a theater, he could not easily develop critical independence without a model to be copied — especially in the face of political caution and a rigid cultural centralism.

Not all new critics were complete beginners — Vlado Mađarević had written some drama criticism before the war as had Vilko Ivanuša and Marijan Matković. Ervin Šinko had written sporadically about theater, Šime Vučetić and Augustin

11. The Anglo-American plays on the Croatian stages in the first two seasons:

Zagreb

John Steinbeck — Slavko Batušić:	<i>The Moon is Down</i>
William Shakespeare:	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>
William Shakespeare:	<i>Othello</i>

Rijeka (The "Ivan Zajc" National Theater began giving regular performances in the 1946/47 season and staged only one English play)

G. B. Shaw:	<i>The Widowers' Houses</i>
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Osijek

G. B. Shaw:	<i>The Devil's Disciple</i>
Ben Jonson:	<i>Volpone</i>
John Galsworthy:	<i>The Silver Box</i>
Charles Dickens:	an adaptation of <i>The Cricket on the Hearth</i>
William Shakespeare:	<i>Othello</i>

12. It was, in fact, Miroslav Krleža who prevented some of the Croatian critics from continuing to practice their profession. In 1932 he privately published a book *Moj obračun s njima* in which defending his dramas from their criticism Krleža discussed the critics' lack of knowledge and their inadequate critical methods. As a result the well-known names among the newspaper critics of the day were silenced: Ivo Brlić, Josip Horvath, Stanko Tomašić, Kalman Mesarić and Rudolf Meixner. Immediately after the war death came to Branimir Livadić and Milan Begović, and Ljubomir Maraković, once a militant and well-versed critic of clerical type, stopped writing.

Stipčević had some practical experience in theater and they were later joined by Ivo Hergešić. These were the main critics of the early post-war period, and some of them wrote about the first post-war productions of Anglo-American plays.

Two reviews which appeared immediately after the opening night of Slavko Batušić's adaptation of Steinbeck's novel *The Moon is Down* illustrate the new style and point of view operating within clearly defined, primarily ethical and political, categories. It is almost immaterial which papers they appeared in and who actually wrote them because they are so general that they do not allow their authors' individuality to come to the fore; however, as a collective expression of the times they had a contagious effect on contemporary critical standards, not only within Croatia, but throughout Yugoslavia:

To dramatize a prose work even when it contains distinct characteristics of drama is a very difficult and courageous task, because the work almost always loses some of its essential and primary meaning... The American author has been inspired by the struggle of light against dark, by the just struggle of the Norwegian people for freedom. He has illuminated and analyzed from all sides this conflict, this heroic struggle, and the characters he has presented, and this is exactly what lends credibility to his novel. On the stage this positive analytical approach slows down the action, and the characters become declamatory and full of pathos. The play should have shown real people confronted by a machine which is capable only of thinking like a machine. Germans are not moved to action by thinking but by crime...¹³

The emergence of new progressive forces in society results in the emergence of new characters in literature. Every progressive movement has found its expression in literature. The closer literature to progressive social forces, the more powerful that expression... The liberation struggle of people against Hitler's fascist Germany has inspired the new anti-fascist literature with the loftiest thoughts, ideas and content. The main protagonist in literature becomes the fighting man, the fighting people, who justly fight against the aggressor. In spite of horrible terror and violence, in spite of prisons and executions, the writers, inspired by the people's liberation struggle have created artistic works. The liberation struggle against fascism has united the nations in a common fighting spirit. Psychoanalysis, which gives special value to the novel, hinders the correct development of the play. The essential dramatic conflicts should have been extracted from the work and more emphasized.¹⁴

Both reviews are characterized by similar expressions: "liberation struggle", "heroic struggle", "the struggle of light against dark", "progressive forces", "progressive movement", "progressive social forces", etc. The discourse is obviously faithfully transferred from political speeches and newspaper editorials. Even when trying to escape this political straight-jacket the reviewers remain didactically overbearing: "real people should have been shown", or "the essential dramatic conflicts should have been extracted", which of course means throwing out the dubious psychoanalysis which had confounded the doctrinaire Marxists even before the war.

The inappropriateness of such criteria becomes even more pronounced when Shakespeare's plays are dealt with. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was performed

13. *Vjesnik*, Zagreb, Nov. 29, 1945.

14. *Naprijed*, Zagreb, Dec. 1, 1945.

during the first post-war season (opening on June 1, 1946) and *Othello* in the second season (April 4, 1947). Since the plays had been performed before there existed numerous reviews, but none resembled in approach the new critical perspective of the *Glas Naroda* (*The Voice of the People*) review (May 16, 1947):

Shakespeare was Karl Marx's favorite poet. He was also admired by Friedrich Engels. Shakespeare's genius was also appreciated by Lenin and his work extensively published in the USSR.

When a paper as respected and widely read as *Glas rada*, the voice of the labor unions, published such a review it is not surprising that the students in their paper *Studentski list* should have followed suit. No generation could get away from the pervasive ideological discourse. S. Randić reviewing *Othello* for *Studentski list* recommends the play in the following terms:

It is enough to mention that in the spring of 1941 Shakespeare's plays were performed in more than 210 Soviet theaters, including the kolkhoz theaters. Over a twenty year period, from 1919 to 1939, more than 1,200,000 copies of Shakespeare's works were published in the Soviet Union.

Such simple-minded commendations of Shakespeare were written in a vacuum — as if such commentators as Šenoa, Miletić, Dukat, Krnic, Bogdanović, Haler, Ibler, Krišković, Nehajev and Torbarina had not created over the years a rich body of Yugoslavian Shakespearean criticism. This disregard of all past history, so typical of every post-revolutionary era, left its indelible mark on the criticism of that period.

During the 1947/48 season the Croatian National Theater staged five new productions, as a part of a relatively meagre repertoire.¹⁵ Ranko Marinković, the drama director, deliberately reduced the number of new productions in order to raise the performing quality of the company's performances. Two new productions which in different ways continued the course set by Korneychuk's play were *The Russian Problem* by Konstantin Simonov, which opened on January 17, 1948, and *Deep Are the Roots* by James Gow and Arnaud D'Usseau, which opened on April 4, 1948, three years after its New York debut. If we take as indicators of success the number of different productions and critical reaction, then no play by Shakespeare or Shaw can compete with the success of *Deep Are*

15. The 1947/48 season at the Zagreb Croatian National Theater:

Premieres

Joža Horvat:

Konstantin Simonov:

L. N. Tolstoy — N. D. Volkov:

James Gow — Arnaud D'Usseau:

Boris Lavrenyev:

Prst pred nosom (*Can't See for Looking*)

The Russian Problem

Anna Karenina

Deep Are the Roots

For Those at Sea

Revivals

Miroslav Krleža:

Anonymous dramatist:

Branislav Nušić:

U agoniji (*In Agony*)

Ljubavnici (*The Lovers*)

Gospoda ministarka (*The Minister's Wife*)

the Roots. This American play, now completely forgotten, was more successful than any work by a Yugoslav (Držić, Nušić, Krleža) in such a short period of time. Other new productions were Lavrenyev's comedy *For Those at Sea*, Joža Horvat's political satire *Can't See for Looking* and N. D. Volkov's routinely professional dramatization of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*. Although none of the chosen plays was in any way outstanding the season was resoundingly successful as regards official and critical reception as well as regards the audience. One of the reasons was that three out of five productions were contemporary and political. That third post-war season was the first to produce a predominantly political repertoire along the party line, in keeping with the national and foreign policies of socialist Yugoslavia.

Both *The Russian Problem* and *Deep Are the Roots* are structured as a "well-made play", with a clear exposition, complication, climax and resolution, and both plays are highly critical of American democracy. The action in *The Russian Problem* takes place in New York in 1946 and the main character, Harry Smith, is a journalist, working for a conservative newspaper. He is respected for his objective articles about the Russians during the war, and this is why he is chosen by the paper's unscrupulous owner, Macpherson, to write a book charging Russia with preparing for war with the U.S. Smith is offered a large advance which would enable him to get married and buy a house and he accepts. However, Smith cannot force himself to lie and when the book is finished it turns out to be opposite of what Macpherson expects. When Smith offers the manuscript to other publishers, they reject it under pressure from Macpherson and he is ruined. He loses his house, his wife leaves him and he remains alone, but ready to continue fighting for his beliefs. A parallel story follows the fate of his opportunistic friend, a correspondent for one of Hearst's papers, who gets killed when reporting on-the-spot on a test-flight of some shoddy company's new plane.

Deep Are the Roots takes place in the South, in the home of Senator Langdon. The main character, Brett, son of the Langdon's black servant Honey, comes home after fighting bravely for four years shoulder-to-shoulder with white soldiers. Tension develops immediately although the only evidence of Brett's emancipation is that he attempts to shake hands with the whites and walks into the local public library through the front door. Alice, Langdon's older daughter, who has always benevolently patronized Brett, wants him to continue with his studies at some university in the North, while he wants to take over the local school for the blacks and improve the lot of the local black community. The younger daughter Genevra, who was forbidden to play with Brett when they were children, falls in love with him. The Senator, a member of the old aristocracy, takes matters in his own hands and accuses Brett of stealing a valuable watch. Brett is arrested, beaten up and taken to jail. There are hints of a lynching party being organized. The watch is found and Brett is secretly put on a north-bound train. He jumps the train and returns to the Langdon house. After a big final scene in which it turns out that both the Senator and Alice knew that Brett had not stolen the watch he leaves with Genevra for the North.

It is quite evident that the plays are critical of two specific aspects of American social reality — manipulation of public opinion by the press and racial

discrimination. Therefore, paradoxically, it would seem that the first modern American play produced in post-war Zagreb and on numerous provincial stages (Osijek, Dubrovnik, Rijeka, Varaždin, etc.)¹⁶ was produced for the same reasons which brought about the productions of Shaw's and O'Neill's play during the German occupation.

The critics' reactions differed: while the American authors were gently reprimanded for some minor errors, Konstantin Simonov received uniformly favorable reviews. Before the opening night Vlado Madarević gave a lecture about the importance of the play to the company and the review in *Narodni list* (January 31, 1948) said the following:

In this dramatically vivid work the author — a Stalin prize laureate — has shown in an artistic way the workings of the anti-democratic, monopolistic press of a Hearst or MacCormack, and presented a cross-section of contemporary social reality in a country in which imperialists of all shapes and sizes have pounced in a rage upon all manifestations of democratic freedoms and basic human rights. In unmasking the breeding place of the most shameless lies and slanders which the hirelings of the imperialistic press spread daily against the Soviet Union and all people's democracies, Simonov also unmasks the rottenness of the capitalist system which lives in an ever growing fear of the onward march of progressive forces in the world.

This review and its phraseology was not, however, an exception.¹⁷ The fact that the author was a Stalin prize laureate remained an ever-present warning. Ervin Šinko showed in fact more naivety than courage when reaching the following conclusion about the play:

Simonov did not intend to create an artistic masterpiece when writing *The Russian Problem*. This play does not have such pretensions. All Simonov wanted was to

16. The performances of *Deep Are the Roots* on Croatian stages from 1948 to 1950:

Croatian National Theater (Zagreb)	1948
Croatian National Theater (Osijek)	1948
"Marin Držić" Theater (Dubrovnik)	1949
"Ivan Zajc" Theater (Rijeka)	1949
"August Cesarec" Theater (Varaždin)	1949
National Theater (Zadar)	1949
National Theater (Pula)	1949
National Theater (Karlovac)	1949

17. *Studentski list* published the following review by Slavko Goldštajn on January 12, 1948:

In the present day and age, when the insatiable imperialistic "greedy-guts" seem to be doing their best to cause another terrible human slaughter, all the hypocrisy, all the cruelty and calculated vileness of imperialistic politics is most clearly manifest. In order to hide their dirty dealings, these wretches try at all costs to shake from themselves the guilt of preparing a new war pumping up the story of "the Russian peril" by every means known to them. In this warmongering propaganda the most prominent place, both in volume and shameless falsity, is held by the so-called "free press". Simonov's play *The Russian Problem* gives a very clear picture of the role of the American press and therein lies its topicality. Simonov has shown us the way

participate in the struggle of his people and all progressive humanity against imperialism, and that, for a Soviet writer, is not a task outside of the sphere of art. Simonov has used the stage for a direct political struggle against the forces which threaten to reverse the victory over fascism and which forces are the enemies of socialist countries and therefore the enemies of all those who want progress, peace and prosperity for the human race.¹⁸

In order to justify his opinion that *The Russian Problem* was not an “artistic masterpiece” Šinko felt obliged to compare it with “the theater of the Atlantic culture” whose stages “are flooded by spiritualist ghosts, mediums and black magic” because “anything that is pure fantasy or pure psychological examination is fashionable there, along with ghosts and crime”.¹⁹ In other words, instead of saying that a Stalin prize laureate’s play lacked psychological depth, Šinko concluded that “Soviet art is the art of creative men, of the builders of a nation” while bourgeois art “does not and cannot express the real issues of its time”.²⁰ If one were not dealing here with an extremely accomplished writer,²¹ with two novels, two collections of short stories and numerous essays and studies behind

stories are made up about the Soviet Union and the way the statements of Soviet journalists are distorted. He also shows in *The Russian Problem* how various books are commissioned and written about “impressions” gained on journeys through the USSR, and how in all these even the most perfidious liars attempt to keep up an appearance of objectivity. However, this is not the only value of Simonov’s work: through his characterization of types and their inter-relationships, Simonov not only shows the situation in the American press but also the state of American society in general. The heartless trading spirit in that society, where both human character and integrity are traded with has been presented most powerfully by Simonov. Gould’s and Macpherson’s thoughtless cruelty which smothers integrity and all human feeling in their subordinates gives a true picture of “the American way of life”, while Smith’s beautiful mansion, furniture, and limousine are just a façade, which disappears the minute one wishes to become truly a man.

18. Ervin Šinko, “The Russian Problem”, *Republika*, Zagreb, Feb. 1, 1948, p. 188.

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*

21. Ervin Šinko (1898—1967) belongs both to the Hungarian and Croatian literary traditions. Not because he was born, as a Hungarian Jew, on territory which has belonged to Yugoslavia since 1918, but because from 1940 to the time of his death he lived in Croatia, as an active and prolific writer at the very heart of Croatian literature. Until that time his fate had been that of an emigrant, an Ahasuerus. He paid for his participation in the Hungarian revolution (1919) with twenty years in exile (in Vienna, Sarajevo, Paris, Moscow, and again Paris) during which he wrote profusely even though there was no possibility of his publishing his works. In vain did Romain Rolland, André Malraux and other champion his cause, for he was to publish virtually none of his major works until after 1945, first in Zagreb. At the same time he was publishing articles, essays and studies written in response to the post-war cultural, social and political circumstances in Croatia. Between 1945 and 1955 he was the loudest voice in Marxist criticism, a theorist of socialist realism up to 1949 and later the most radical polemicizer against the anti-humanist distortions of Stalinism. In 1955 he published *Roman o romanu*, his entries from his Moscow diary written between

him, it would be easier to understand how he fell under the sway of the “socialist realism” critical terminology. However, Šinko’s case is indicative of the all-pervasive character of political ideology.

The other critic who dared to question the excellence of *The Russian Problem*, Marijan Matković, also had to camouflage his critical integrity with general phrases and slogans, but he was better at it than Šinko:

In a discrete conversational play without much psychological depth and without any theatrical props Simonov has presented the growth of the main character through his business and private conflicts as well as his gradual awakening and increased awareness. Konstantin Simonov is an average playwright: *The Russian Problem* is more a topical political pamphlet presented in the form of a dialogue and scenes, than an authentic drama. And yet, in the criminally poisoned atmosphere of the editorial office, in this breeding ground of lies, which endanger the world, Simonov presents through an abundance of detail — Smith’s tragedy, Bob Murphy’s drinking, Fred Williams’s helplessness, Jessy’s “feminine” logic — a broad picture of human tragedy, human dignity and human honesty under American imperialism.²²

Deep Are the Roots was received less acceptingly by the critics, mainly because its authors were completely unknown.

The condescending tone of the critics is, however, all the more curious since, for all its limitations, the play is a far better drama than Simonov’s pamphleteering construction. In reviewing the play Drago Rubin wrote:

After the end of the war in America and England there emerged, along with numerous other post-war problems, the problem of demobilized soldiers who had fought against fascism. These veterans, as we all know, had, upon their return, to sleep in the streets without food, shelter or employment. This is what it was like for the white veterans. But the situation for the black veterans was even more tragic.²³

Although Rubin commends Gow and D’Usseau for confronting “this problem honestly and sincerely, powerfully presenting the social problem and situation of the blacks in a country in which shameless lies are uttered about freedom”,²⁴ he nevertheless reprimands them “for not presenting the leaders of the struggle, the working class and its avant-garde”.²⁵ Yet, in spite of this error, Rubin concludes:

We can feel the perspectives opening up in front of the united progressive forces, the communists and the whole American nation. These perspectives are bright, no matter how dark the cloud of Truman’s fascism hovering over America and the Statue of Liberty.²⁶

Šinko compares *Deep Are the Roots* with Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and, pointing out some similarities, states that “what is radically new in the play is the unmasking of ‘magnanimous’ liberal souls, such as Senator Langdon’s

1935 and 1937, one of the best books about conditions in the Soviet Union during the time of Stalin’s purges.

22. Marijan Matković, *Dramaturški eseji*, Matica Hrvatska, Zagreb, 1949, p. 408.

23. Drago Rubin, “Deep Are the Roots”, *Narodni list*, Zagreb, April 28, 1948.

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*

daughter, Alice".²⁷ However, while commending the play he also has some misgivings:

Undoubtedly the authors of the play have not sufficiently shown that essentially it is not the struggle between the white and the black race, but the struggle between the exploiters and the exploited, between imperialism and all the oppressed. It is not shown that "the Negro problem" is just a part of the global problem. Not only is this not shown, but to a certain extent it is almost deliberately glossed over...²⁸

The point at issue is not so much *what* Sinko and other reviewers thought about the U. S., its democracy, imperialism and racial problem, but *how* they expressed their opinions. Recent history provides many instances when only one line of thinking and commentary was allowed, but rarely was this orthodoxy expressed in such monotonous uniformity. For what is the difference between Sinko's way of expressing himself and the review by an anonymous student?

This play, in spite of its insufficiently clear characterization (especially the writer Merrick, Alice, and the main hero Brett, who is quite unrealistic, so that the motives for his actions are more sensed and hinted at than seen and whose revolt is rather unrealistic or at least not very clear), represents a serious attempt at unmasking the so-called democracy in the land of the dollar, as well as a strong protest against racial discrimination. It represents even more: it points out, though again not clearly, that the struggle of the enslaved blacks for equality is inevitable and it shows the forces which will be mobilized in that struggle.²⁹

There is no difference at all. And yet, these two reviewers are as different as possible in every respect: age, experience, profession. The former became a member of the Yugoslav Academy, entered encyclopaedias and text-books, while the latter remained anonymous; and yet the difference between them, in that shared moment in evaluating the first American play on the post-war stage, is not discernible. Even Marijan Matković, the most distinguishable drama critic of the time, gave much the same evaluation of the play:

The return of Brett only sharpens the latent conflicts — and nothing more: the return of several thousand black soldiers was to give and had already given the same result. The crack in the capitalist "democratic" American edifice was dangerously widening, and the danger of its collapsing and burying in the debris its arrogant owners was inevitable. The adversaries did not wait quietly for that final encounter: trivial bourgeois humanism took a back seat and the law of the "lynching party" became the law of verbal "democracy" ...

Only in certain moments was the powerful drama of this play clearly visible from under the clichéd theatrical declamation. And these were indeed impressive scenes, which spoke eloquently of the vital drama of a worthwhile dramatical text, which — despite the weaker parts in Act III and the inconsistencies in the dramatic development of some of the secondary characters — is certainly one of the best texts in progressive American drama.³⁰

27. Ervin Sinko, "Deep Are the Roots", *Republika*, Zagreb, 1948, no. 4, p. 470.

28. *Ibid.*

29. D. B., "Deep Are the Roots", *Studentski list*, Zagreb, May 1, 1948.

30. Marijan Matković, *op. cit.*, pp. 416—417.

The sameness of the approach to literary work is quite evident in the quoted reviews and such a uniform point of view could have been achieved only if based on certain premises of literary criticism which comprise an elaborate theory. Therefore, it would be wrong to assume that this uniformity could have developed in the short period of time that had elapsed since the liberation of the country and it seems safe to conclude that the main postulates of post-war criticism can be traced as far back as ABC's attack on Krleža.

The other factor which contributed to the pervasive uniformity of point of view was the sincere desire, which Šinko attributed to Simonov's motivation for writing: "to participate in the struggle of one's nation and all progressive humanity against imperialism." Undoubtedly, this moral imperative, and not opportunism, must have motivated Šinko and many others to adopt their one-dimensional perspective.

Rarely has critical reaction corresponded so closely to public sentiment, which wholeheartedly embraced this play about the black problem in the U.S. The audiences everywhere welcomed it more enthusiastically than Horvat's satire about the petty bourgeoisie of Zagreb and their confusion under new circumstances, and more than Simonov's representation of America. This fact points at two possible conclusions: first, the topicality of the theme was not the cause of its popularity, for Horvat's play about people and problems which were recognizable in everyday reality was far more topical to Croatian audiences. Secondly, the sharpness of the critique aimed at the American way of life was not the cause either, because Simonov was more critical.

However, the reason for its popularity might lie in the greater suggestiveness of the play. For, whether or not Matković was correct in stating that the play was "surely one of the best texts of progressive American literature", it is undeniable that *Deep Are the Roots*, when compared to Simonov's play or to Horvat's superficial witticisms, is a serious, traditional drama, containing that inner Ibsen-like tension, which facilitates a degree of audience identification with the characters and their fates. Although Gow and D'Usseau were reprimanded by all the reviewers for not showing "that essentially it was not a matter of the struggle between the white and black races, but of the struggle between the exploiters and the exploited", and although the play was correctly criticized for weaknesses in characterization and plotting, the critics nonetheless recognized the differences in substance and emotional quality between *The Russian Problem* and *Deep Are the Roots*.

Still, in my opinion, the greater suggestiveness of the play, superior to anything produced in the 1948 repertoire, does not answer the question of its tremendous popularity. Yugoslav post-war audiences, starved of amusement, were filling the theaters regardless of the quality of the plays being produced. Shops were almost empty, cinemas were showing almost exclusively Russian war movies, restaurants could not offer decent food. Never again have so many books been sold (and read) and never again have there been such lines in front of the theaters. But quality alone did not guarantee success. On the contrary, lines were

hundreds of meters long when an operetta was being shown, and the closer to the cabaret-type entertainment it was, the longer the lines.

Just as extra-theatrical considerations determined the inclusion of *Deep Are the Roots* in the repertoire, — considerations based on the political effect of the play, — so was its popularity influenced by extra-theatrical considerations. *Deep Are the Roots* was staged so that people could see the corruption in America, recorded by American authors, and audiences went to see it because they were led to believe that they would see the *real* America. America the ally was now America the enemy — powerful but unknown, and therefore doubly interesting. American films which were occasionally shown — even weak ones — could draw large audiences bored by the drab, monotonous indoctrination of Soviet films.

Two years later when Lillian Hellman's *The Little Foxes* and Arthur Miller's *All My Sons* were performed, although undoubtedly better plays than *Deep Are the Roots*, and just as topical and critical, they did not achieve the same success. Even Ehrenburg's *Lion on the Square*, with its anti-American attitude expressed in witty dialogue, was performed on no other Croatian stages after its premiere in 1949 at the newly founded "Zagreb Drama Theater". An obvious explanation might be that those plays lacked the advantage of being icebreakers and that audiences had become satiated with that kind of ideological play. However, the reasons were different. Although *The Little Foxes*, *All My Sons* and *Lion on the Square* were performed in the same cultural climate as *Deep Are the Roots* and *The Russian Problem*, under the patronage of the same organizational and ideological apparatus which still carefully watched over the preservation of harmony between the brotherly communist parties of Yugoslavia and the USSR, the changed political climate after 1948 influenced the psychology of the audience.

But why was not the changed political climate, after Tito's break with Stalin, registered in the policies of the watchdogs of art and culture? Culture is always conservative, especially if it is petrified within institutions and permeated by a single ideology which it uncritically disseminates. Consequently it is not surprising that *The Russian Problem* and *Deep Are the Roots* appeared simultaneously on Croatian stages just at the very moment of the historical break with the USSR, nor that the plays remained in the repertoire during the following season and were performed as well on most of the provincial stages.

However, the other, more important reason for the continuation of the same cultural policy was the government's insistence on maintaining ideological purity, as protection against any charges of "revisionism" that might have been brought by the Comintern. At the historical Fifth Congress of the CPY (1948), when Josip Broz Tito delivered a paper on behalf of the Politbureau of the Central Committee asking the Congress to affirm the new political course, the two main standard-bearers of the pre-war and post-war "socialist realism", Radovan Zogović and Milovan Đilas, submitted the following plan of action to the Congress.

To fight against decadence and formalism in art means: (1) to fight against decadent and formalistic "art" of the capitalist countries, namely the great capitalist countries of Western Europe and America; (2) to fight against the remnants of decadence and

formalism to be found in countries with a people's democracy; (3) to fight against the remnants and recidivism of decadence and formalism in our own country.³¹

For the very reason that Yugoslavia faced an extremely dangerous confrontation with Stalin's Soviet Union and was exposed to the threat of imminent invasion and to pressure from an awesome propaganda machine, the Yugoslav cultural ideologists abstained from giving any indication that it was time to stop aping the Soviet cultural model. Although the foundations were cracking the roof had to remain intact. All Yugoslavs who did not approve of the attitude of the Party leadership towards the Cominform, Stalin and Molotov, and could represent a potential "fifth column" in the case of Soviet military intervention were either imprisoned or sent to a re-education camp. And yet, at a time when Yugoslavia was threatened by a very real enemy, both within and without its borders, and when all her forces should have been concentrated on removing this threat, Milovan Đilas was still relentlessly pursuing his enemies — the decadent intelligentsia:

And there are indeed enemies, specially among the old bourgeois and petty-bourgeois intelligentsia. With Marxism and Leninism becoming the ruling ideology in our country this intelligentsia found themselves faced with the problem of how to relate to it. One part of this intelligentsia has taken an antagonistic attitude towards Marxism and Leninism and continues to act, especially in our schools, from the standpoint of old ideological positions. The other part of the intelligentsia takes a so-called "middle of the road" line, or one might say an ideological position of compromise and parity.³²

Therefore, although the reasons for staging Lillian Hellman's *The Little Foxes* (Belgrade, October 9, 1948; Zagreb June 29, 1950) and Arthur Miller's *All My Sons* (Zagreb, May 14, 1951) were similar to those which brought *Deep Are the Roots* to Zagreb, their fate on Croatian stages was significantly different. To be sure, those two plays were performed in other Croatian theaters, but not so soon after their Zagreb production, nor on so many stages. The Osijek Theater, which always faithfully followed the Zagreb repertoire produced *The Little Foxes* the same year (December 20, 1950), but it took more than six years for an Arthur Miller play to be performed in Osijek (*Death of a Salesman*; December 15, 1956). On the other hand, the Varaždin Theater staged *All My Sons* during the 1952/53 season, but Lillian Hellman was never performed there.

In spite of a host of new names among theater critics, the reviews were still confined to that conceptual framework which had been created by the post-war ideological polarization. Two Zagreb dailies (*Vjesnik*, and *Narodni list*) and a weekly (*Naprijed*) published reviews of *The Little Foxes* at the same time, which were marked by their uncanny similarity. While the *Narodni list* review mentions that "the play is set in 1900, in the American South, where capitalist social relations are being formed and the merchant industrialists are becoming the

31. Radovan Zogović's discussion quoted from *The Transcript of the Fifth Congress*, Kultura, Zagreb, 1948, p. 466.

32. Milovan Đilas's discussion, *ibid.*, pp. 298—299.

ruling class” and concludes that “the family ‘idyll’ at the Hubbards’ home mercilessly unmasks the falsity and corruption, inhumanity and injustice of the social order which is based on money as the only true value”,³³ the *Naprijed*, review commends Lillian Hellman, who “with her well-written dialogues, and her every character psychologically different, gives a powerful picture of the unscrupulousness, lies and decadence of that society, which from the outside is painted with the pleasant colors of cordial family relations”.³⁴ The *Vjesnik* review sums up the play in the following way:

Lillian Hellman, the progressive American writer, who visited this country the year before last, has presented in her *Little Foxes* a bourgeois family from the southern USA at the beginning of this century, centering her plot on the dirty business machinations of the Hubbard brothers, who established a factory in the cotton plantations, in order to join the ranks of the big capitalists by mercilessly exploiting black labor. The personal tragedies of the members of this family, restricted by the decaying and inhuman ties of bourgeois family life and bourgeois marriage are played out around this basic plot.³⁵

The uniformity of expression which dominates the reviews is not surprising in itself as the fact that this kind of criticism was still prevalent a full two years after the break with the Soviet Russia. Even as late as 1951 Arthur Miller's play *All My Sons*, received the following review, written by a well-known poet and novelist, Augustin Stipčević:

Miller's play deals with a theme typical of bourgeois America during the last war: the hoarding of money at any cost. The factory owner Keller manufactures faulty cylinders for airplanes and when the planes crash because of the malfunctioning cylinders he gets out of it by blaming his manager. This is where Miller's play begins. Miller, through exceptionally well-developed action, a psychological plot and realistic observations, confronts such relations and morality with humane relations and morality, with a humane social consciousness and emphasizes social and moral contradictions, developing through them his dramatic action. This is not all: Miller, in the name of humanist principles, directly accuses and in keeping with his basic idea and dramatic development of action, conscience and humanity are victorious and the crime punished.³⁶

Nevertheless, the review of the same play in *Vjesnik*, written by an as yet unknown reviewer, contained, along with such with well-worn phrases as “criminal capitalist machinations”, some elements which were soon to become common in more individualized and aesthetically oriented theater criticism:

Indeed, this powerful social-psychological play, which deals with the acquisition of wealth and criminal capitalist machinations during the last war, distinguishes itself not only by its topicality and classical dramatic composition, an excellent dialogue and skilful plotting, but also by its highly moral power and deeply felt humanity. The life of a milieu and times, the immorality of a class and characters with different

33. Stipe Vojnović, “The Little Foxes”, *Narodni list*, Zagreb, July 4, 1950.

34. Ljerka Kreliuš, “The Little Foxes”, *Naprijed*, Zagreb, July 7, 1950.

35. Zlatko Matetić, “The Little Foxes”, *Vjesnik*, Zagreb, July 2, 1950.

36. Augustin Stipčević, “All My Sons”, *Republika*, Zagreb, 1951, no. 7—8, p. 670.

qualities, feelings and points of view, are here condensed with rare artistic power and courage into three acts, full of dynamic dramatic action. This young author depicts the characters with admirable freedom, not by employing a black-white pattern or the most classical formula of "eternal types", but by showing their fullness and complexity, so that by their ceaseless transformations they contribute to the complexity, expansion, intensity and dynamism of the dramatic action.³⁷

These three plays were not, however, the only Anglo-American plays performed on the Croatian stages around the year 1950. As previously mentioned the Croatian National Theater in Zagreb was managed between 1949 and 1953 by the most perceptive critic of the first post-war years, Marijan Matković. Although the theater lost its exclusive monopolistic and trend-setting position, it still remained an important model for other Croatian theaters. It retained its prominent position partly through the authority of its manager, partly through his unconventional choice of national and foreign repertoire. Matković took full responsibility for the choice of the repertoire and as a consequence was forced to leave the theatre in 1953, after permitting the staging of a play in which a German soldier is shown to possess some vestiges of feeling (Josip Kulundić's *Man is Good*). While the complete repertoire during the 1949—53 period may show the breadth of his policy which emphasized the contemporary Croatian drama, it is sufficient to list here only the modern Anglo-American plays that were staged:

G. B. Shaw:	<i>The Devil's Disciple</i>	1949*
Arthur Miller:	<i>All My Sons</i>	1950
Lillian Hellman:	<i>The Little Foxes</i>	1950
G. B. Shaw:	<i>Mrs Warren's Profession</i>	1950
W. Somerset Maugham:	<i>Jack Straw</i>	1951
G. B. Shaw:	<i>The Philanderer</i>	1951
Ruth and Augustus Goetz's adaptation of Henry James's <i>Washington Square</i> :	<i>The Heiress</i>	1952
Tennessee Williams:	<i>The Glass Menagerie</i>	1952

If we add to the list three plays performed during 1953/54 season and included in the repertoire by Matković before his resignation (Terence Rattigan: *The Deep Blue Sea*, G. B. Shaw: *Caesar and Cleopatra* and Oscar Wilde: *Lady Windermere's Fan*) and two new productions of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and *The Merchant of Venice*, then the gradual increase in the number of Anglo-American plays becomes more evident. However, it should be noted that G. B. Shaw's works were still the most frequently performed and that only *The Glass Menagerie* anticipated the future prevalence of American dramatists.

Although the reviews still lagged behind theatrical practice, without comprehending the changes in the cultural situation, there were signs of change, of movements outside the petrified Soviet aesthetical doctrine. *Republika*, still the

37. Božo Kukulja, "All My Sons", *Vjesnik*, Zagreb, May 6, 1951.

most prestigious Croatian literary review, published in 1952 an article written by two young authors, Antun Šoljan and Ivan Slamnig, which was indicative of the new attitude. After a brief survey of all the important American dramatists between the wars, the authors concluded:

It remains to be seen how this drama will develop, both the great American contribution to world drama between the wars does credit to this young literature. We have not attempted to analyze in depth any individual authors, still less individual plays, because it would take too much space and in the welter of material, facts and discussion we would risk missing the main point: to show the power of American drama in relation to European drama, because this is where our people most frequently err, judging American drama, and American art in general, with a certain "European" loftiness. Undoubtedly, such evaluations could have been applied in regard to the 19th century, but the times have changed.³⁸

And the times had indeed changed. While all the reviews written in the first six post-war years had been somewhat cautious, with certain ideological reservations, no matter how carefully the American plays were chosen, the *Republika* article gave a positive evaluation of a whole period of American drama. Admittedly the article was written by two young authors (Šoljan was twenty and Slamnig twenty-two years old), who cleverly attributed the post-war suspicion of modern American drama to the so-called Yugoslav "European loftiness" and not to ideological prejudice, but the very fact that it came out at all gave a clear indication of the new attitude.

Even the reviews which followed the staging of *The Glass Menagerie* employed a different tone from that which greeted the previously performed American plays. Darko Suvin, for instance, approves of Williams's use of symbols, although he finds them "sometimes too dense"³⁹ and "so extremely Freudian that one would think he had taken them from a psychology text-book".⁴⁰ Nevertheless, Suvin admits that "even Freudian symbols, however one-sidedly erotic they may be, are taken from real life",⁴¹ but asks, "what do they symbolize?"⁴² Suvin concludes that there is probably some "double symbolism" at play, because otherwise "the whole play is pretty shallow, an individual tragedy which is after all needlessly provoked thanks to the fixed ideas of a girl with an inferiority complex".⁴³ Zlatko Matetić commends the play for its "fine poetry",⁴⁴ but criticizes its "poor, almost banal plot".⁴⁵ As a general cautionary remark, Matetić points out

38. Antun Šoljan — Ivan Slamnig: "Eugene O'Neill and American Drama between the Wars", *Republika*, Zagreb, 1952, pp. 179—187.

39. Darko Suvin, "The Glass Menagerie", *Studentski list*, Zagreb, Sept. 12, 1952.

40. *Ibid.*

41. *Ibid.*

42. *Ibid.*

43. *Ibid.*

44. Zlatko Matetić, "The Glass Menagerie", *Vjesnik*, Zagreb, Nov. 28, 1952.

45. *Ibid.*

that “this type of work allows the director to try all kinds of modernistic experiments, falling into morbidity, pathological behavior and psychology, as it is sometimes played in the West”,⁴⁶ but is “pleasantly surprised” that Williams, “who otherwise tends towards a certain decadent morbidity and biological naturalism (*A Street-Car Named Desire*)”⁴⁷ supplies *The Glass Menagerie* with “a precise and knowledgeable explanation of the social background”.⁴⁸ Commending the play for showing “the destruction and destratification of the petty-bourgeois strata”⁴⁹ and “illustrating the era of economic crisis through the Spanish Revolution, the clashes with workers in Chicago, Cleveland and St. Louis”,⁵⁰ Matetić, as if re-writing the four-year old reviews of *Deep Are the Roots*, reprimands Williams for not being able “to see a single positive, militant character” so that “those people end up without a class, quite superfluous, like swashbuckling sailors, or spinsters or old women who make nuisance of themselves and dream of the good old times”.⁵¹ While Matetić’s review does hark back to “the good old times” of socialist realism, Bruno Begović uses the occasion to affirm the new course:

We have finally revised certain mistaken notions about Western drama (here I am referring to certain prominent and progressive dramatists only), which at times seemed to us only bizarre and formalistic, but as yet we do not approach it with sufficient penetration and comprehension. I even dare say that the dramatists, who are rightly criticized for their non-realist tendencies in form and content, which are caused by a particular social structure, show a more or less discernible progressive critical attitude toward reality as well as an aspiration towards a more harmonious social system in which human actions and spiritual life will be better.

The poetic tone and psychology in modern European and American drama, unless they are colored by conscious reactionary political views and anti-humanist formalistic tendencies, are a sign of its quality, which is neither uninteresting nor unacceptable to us, and represents in its own way a world on its death-bed and an aspiration to a more purposeful life. Undoubtedly, the negation of that which exists is the first, though not the only, precondition for taking action. It is interesting that in Western literature, especially American, this dissatisfaction is expressed through the dissection of the most human psychological personal complexes and most obvious physical, mental and social anomalies.⁵²

The positive assessment of modern American drama, the acceptance of “symbols” and “the poetic tone and psychology” as well as the very staging of a play like *The Glass Menagerie* were signs of a whole new concept of culture which can be explained only by the larger political context in which they appeared.

46. *Ibid.*

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Ibid.*

49. *Ibid.*

50. *Ibid.*

51. *Ibid.*

52. Bruno Begović, “The Glass Menagerie”, *Narodni list*, Zagreb, Nov. 16, 1952.

I have already emphasized that the Fifth Congress of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia held in 1948 meant only a *political* break with the Soviet Union and the Comintern, but as far as *culture* was concerned, Đilas and Zogović still insisted on enforcing the dogmatic concept of socialist realism by means of the government apparatus which was at their disposal. Radovan Zogović's collection of essays and articles, *Na poprištu (On the Battlefield)*, written before and after the war and published in 1947, remained for the next two years the aesthetical catechism. The mechanism whereby ideological purity was maintained in the theater remained unchanged until 1949. During that period, the Ministry of Culture appointed or dismissed the theater managers like any other civil servants. The managers' direct responsibility was twofold: in regard to their administrative work they were responsible to the Ministry of Culture, and in regard to their political work, consisting primarily in choosing the "ideologically correct" repertoire, to the Agitprop office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The same mechanism existed in other republics. The repertoires for the following season had to be submitted in advance both to the Ministry and the Agitprop office, and their representative regularly came to the rehearsals in order to determine whether something in the play should be changed or whether the whole play was "unacceptable".

At the time when the political practice seriously questioned the Soviet Stalinist model, Zogović shortsightedly envisaged the future cultural development in terms which were even then an anachronism:

The struggle against the remnants and recidivism of formalism and decadence in our country, against the influence of decadence from the West and its remnants in people's democracies has included and will include in future the struggle for the popularization of the great achievements of Soviet art, that is, the struggle against any attempt by the intelligentsia to disparage Soviet art.⁵³

Evidently, the "party spirit" in literature still lingered on as a potential shield against accusation from the East, which could become a pretext for military intervention. However, a year later, when speaking about "party spirit" at the Second Congress of the Yugoslav Writers' Association in 1949, Krleža tried to align it with the political reality:

We must rid ourselves of the distorted chauvinistic, regional shortsighted perspectives of our petty-bourgeois aesthetics and science as well as of the schematic leftist Cominform phrase, which reduced the literary measure of "party spirit" to such slight and insignificant proportions that it cannot measure even one millimeter of Zhdanov's intellect, let alone the volume of our monumental presence in the vortex of the century.⁵⁴

On the same day another pre-war contributor to *Pečat*, Petar Šegedin, contrasted the pleasure of poetry with its "pragmatic value" and asked a question which would have been regarded as heretical only a few months before:

53. Radovan Zogović's discussion, *op. cit.*, p. 470.

54. Miroslav Krleža's speech at the 2nd Congress of the Yugoslav Writers' Association (Zagreb, Dec. 26, 1949), quoted from his *Eseji, Zora*, Zagreb, 1967, p. 140.

It seems to me that to deprive a man of such experiences of poems is to impoverish him; actually to dehumanize him and this is a denial of the party spirit and reduces poetry to mere entertainment. Comrades, can the Party, which organizes man's whole life, allow this, simply for pragmatic reasons?⁵⁵

Both Krleža and Šegedin set the tone of the Congress without effective opposition, and brought about a condemnation of the former cultural policy and a realignment with the independent political course which followed the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Comintern.

The Third Congress of the Yugoslav Writers' Association in 1952, at which Krleža delivered the key paper, meant not only the full affirmation of the new course, but also his full rehabilitation. The long drawn-out polemic which started in 1928 finally came to an end in 1952, and the position which was labeled as revisionist and a Trotskyist deviation in 1939 finally won the day. It was the last time that Krleža felt it necessary to restate his consistent plea for artistic freedom. His speech reiterated the main moral-aesthetical-theoretical principles which he had expounded from his essays in *Plamen* to his introduction to *The Motifs of the Podrava Region*, but now he delivered them from the podium in the Congress Hall, where even his former adversaries, perhaps against their own personal convictions, applauded. By not opposing Krleža's restatement of the oft repeated theses, the authorities recognized the independence of art and gave their blessing to the new course by including some of Krleža's well-known ideas into the Program of the League of Yugoslav Communists:

In order that we might perform our historical role in the creation of a socialist society in our country, we must use all our powers to that end, be critical of ourselves and our actions, be irreconcilable enemies of every kind of dogmatism and faithful to the revolutionary, creative spirit of Marxism. Nothing in existence must be so sacred to us that it cannot be surpassed or make room for that which is more progressive, more free and more human!⁵⁶

If 1952 was indeed the year of decisive changes which put an end to one cultural period and inaugurated another this would seem appropriate ending to a chapter which started with 1945. Let us recapitulate: in 1952, the year of Krleža's speech at the Third Congress of the Yugoslav Writers' Association, the Croatian National Theater staged Jean Giraudoux, Armand Salacrou and the first Tennessee Williams play, which prompted a critic to say "We have finally revised certain mistaken notions about Western drama..."; Slamnig's and Šoljan's article on American drama was published as well as their comprehensive anthology *A Selection from American Poetry* (Zora, Zagreb). All this was symptomatic of a new cultural orientation and climate which could be taken as a proof that the political decision arrived at in 1948 finally matured into corresponding ideological

55. Petar Šegedin, "On Our Criticism", the paper delivered at the 2nd Congress of Yugoslav Writers' Association, quoted from *Hrvatska književna kritika*, Matica Hrvatska, Zagreb, 1950, vol. X, p. 93.

56. *The Program of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia*, Zagreb, 1958, pp. 258—259.

consciousness. What remains to be examined is the effect of the change of policy on the Anglo-American repertoire on Croatian stages. The next three years should supply sufficient evidence to show whether the theoretical victories won in the Congress Hall in 1952 were confirmed or defeated.

Chapter 2.

Drawing a Line (1952—1955)

One important criterion for determining the scope of the relationships between cultures is the accessibility of one culture to another. It has already been mentioned that translations from the English language were not undertaken until the 20th century and that they were almost exclusively of Shakespeare. However, if we examine the list of translations published in Zagreb during the 1952—55 period it becomes obvious that translating was intensified both in quantity and in scope:

Herman Melville:	<i>Typee</i>	1952
John Steinbeck:	<i>The Moon is Down</i>	1952
H. G. Wells:	<i>The First Men on the Moon</i>	1952
R. L. Stevenson:	<i>Treasure Island</i>	1952
Lewis Carroll:	<i>Alice in Wonderland</i>	1952
Nathaniel Hawthorne:	<i>The Scarlet Letter</i>	1952
William M. Thackeray:	<i>The Rose and the Ring</i>	1952
Aldous Huxley:	<i>Point Counter Point</i>	1952
W. Somerset Maugham:	<i>Ashenden</i>	1952
John Dos Passos:	<i>Manhattan Transfer</i>	1952
Joseph Conrad:	<i>Typhoon</i>	1953
George Meredith:	<i>The Egoist</i>	1953
Oscar Wilde:	<i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i>	1953
Charles Dickens:	<i>The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club</i>	1953
R. L. Stevenson:	<i>Kidnapped</i>	1953
Sinclair Lewis:	<i>Elmer Gantry</i>	1953
W. Somerset Maugham:	<i>Theatre</i>	1953
William Faulkner:	<i>Light in August</i>	1953
Herman Wouk:	<i>The Caine Mutiny</i>	1954
R. L. Stevenson:	<i>The Beach at Falesa</i>	1954
	<i>The Master of Ballantree</i>	1954
	<i>Trawn Janet</i>	1954
Herman Melville:	<i>Moby Dick</i>	1954
Upton Sinclair:	<i>Presidential Mission</i>	1954
Aldous Huxley:	<i>Eyeless in Gaza</i>	1954
Frederick Loomis:	<i>Consultation Room</i>	1954
Stephen Crane:	<i>Maggie: A Girl of the Streets</i>	1954
Henry James:	<i>Washington Square</i>	1954

D. H. Lawrence:	<i>The Rainbow</i>	1955
	<i>Sons and Lovers</i>	1955
Oscar Wilde:	<i>The Happy Prince, And Other Tales</i>	1955
Stephen Crane:	<i>The Red Badge of Courage</i>	1955
William Saroyan:	<i>Human Comedy</i>	1955
Aldous Huxley:	<i>Two or Three Graces</i>	1955
Nelson Algren:	<i>The Man with the Golden Arm</i>	1955
Norman Mailer:	<i>The Naked and the Dead</i>	1955

This list is at least tripled if we add to it the translations published in Belgrade, Sarajevo, Novi Sad and Titograd, where Serbo-Croat is also spoken. Most of the translators appeared for the first time after the war, in spite of the fact that English was not an obligatory subject at school, like Russian or French, and that people could not travel freely abroad. Moreover, the quality of the translations was on the whole better than before the war.

Among the translations there were also plays which were commissioned by different theaters. Thanks to the general democratization of Yugoslavia and the new freedom in the choice of repertoire enjoyed by each theater, American drama was no longer "forbidden fruit". It is not surprising that *Deep Are the Roots* should have been the most successful play staged in Croatia, but after 1952 the success of particular American plays was measured primarily by their artistic merits rather than by their political content. Still, the selection of plays was not exceptionally large or contemporary:

The list of Anglo-American Plays on Croatian Stages from 1950 to 1955

G. B. Shaw:	<i>Pygmalion</i>	Rijeka 1950 Osijek 1955
J. B. Priestley:	<i>An Inspector Calls</i>	Karlovac 1950 Sisak 1950 Bjelovar 1951 Pula 1954
G. B. Shaw:	<i>Mrs Warren's Profession</i>	Zagreb (HNK) 1950 Osijek 1951 Dubrovnik 1951 Sisak 1951 Zadar 1952
Lillian Hellman:	<i>The Little Foxes</i>	Zagreb (HNK) 1950 Osijek 1950
Arthur Miller:	<i>All My Sons</i>	Zagreb (HNK) 1950/51 Požega 1952/53 Pula 1954
John Knittel:	<i>Via Mala</i>	Dubrovnik 1951
Norman Krasna:	<i>Dear Ruth</i>	Zagreb (Kom.) 1951 Rijeka 1951/52 Split 1951/52 Bjelovar 1951/52

		Šibenik 1951/52
		Osijek 1953/54
		Dubrovnik 1952/53
		Virovitica 1954/55
Robert Sherwood — Eric Keowen:	<i>Sir Tristram Goes West</i>	Zagreb (Kom.) 1951
J. B. Priestley:	<i>Ever Since Paradise</i>	Zagreb (Kom.) 1951
		Pula 1953
W. Somerset Maugham:	<i>Jack Straw</i>	Zagreb (HNK) 1951
G. B. Shaw:	<i>The Philanderer</i>	Zagreb (HNK) 1951
William Shakespeare:	<i>Twelfth Night</i>	Zagreb (HNK) 1951
Brandon Thomas:	<i>Charley's Aunt</i>	Sisak 1951
		Zagreb (Kom.) 1955
Henry James — R. A. Goetz:	<i>The Heiress</i>	Zagreb (HNK) 1951
		Šibenik 1952
		Zadar 1956
Tennessee Williams:	<i>The Glass Menagerie</i>	Zagreb (HNK) 1952
		Bjelovar 1954
John Galsworthy:	<i>The Pigeon</i>	Karlovac 1952
Margaret Mayo:	<i>Baby Mine</i>	Pula 1952
William Shakespeare:	<i>Hamlet</i>	Osijek 1951
		Dubrovnik (Fest) 1952
		Rijeka 1953
		Zagreb (HNK) 1954/55
		Rijeka 1952
Eugene O'Neill:	<i>Anna Christie</i>	
Pearl Buck:	a dramatization of <i>East Wind, West Wind</i>	Pula 1953
		Bjelovar 1953
		Dubrovnik 1954
		Sisak 1954
William Shakespeare:	<i>As You Like it</i>	Pula 1953
		Zagreb (ZDK) 1955/56
Mary Chase:	<i>Harvey</i>	Rijeka 1953
		Karlovac 1955/56
Irma and Walter Firner:	<i>The Thompson Brothers</i>	Rijeka 1953
G. B. Shaw:	<i>Major Barbara</i>	Rijeka 1953
Arthur Miller:	<i>The Crucible</i>	Zagreb (ZDK) 1954
		Dubrovnik 1955
Herbert Hugh:	<i>The Moon is Blue</i>	Zagreb (Kom.) 1954
		Bjelovar 1954
Peter Ustinov:	<i>The Love of Four Colonels</i>	Zagreb (ZDK) 1954/55
John Steinbeck:	<i>Of Mice and Men</i>	Zagreb (ZDK) 1954/55
Lillian Hellman:	<i>Children's Hour</i>	Zagreb (ZDK) 1954/55
George Axelrod:	<i>Seven Year Itch</i>	Zagreb (ZDK) 1954/55
		Rijeka 1954/55
William Shakespeare:	<i>Merry Wives of Windsor</i>	Zagreb (Kom.) 1954/55

Jan de Hartog:	<i>The Fourposter</i>	Zagreb (Kom.) 1954 Sisak 1955
Terence Rattigan:	<i>The Deep Blue Sea</i>	Zagreb (HNK) 1954
G. B. Shaw:	<i>Caesar and Cleopatra</i>	Zagreb (HNK) 1954
Oscar Wilde:	<i>Lady Windermere's Fan</i>	Zagreb (HNK) 1954
William Shakespeare:	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	Zagreb (HNK) 1954
George S. Kaufman — Edna Ferber:	<i>Dinner at Eight</i>	Zagreb (HNK) 1954/55
Elmer Rice:	<i>Dream Girl</i>	Osijek 1954 Rijeka 1954
G. B. Shaw:	<i>The Devil's Disciple</i>	Rijeka 1954
Tennessee Williams:	<i>Cat on a Hot Tin Roof</i>	Zagreb (ZDK) 1955/56
G. B. Shaw:	<i>Candida</i>	Osijek 1955 Bjelovar 1955
Herman Wouk:	<i>The Cain Mutiny</i>	
	<i>Court-Martial</i>	Zagreb (HNK) 1955/56
William Shakespeare:	<i>A Winter's Tale</i>	Zagreb (ZDK) 1955/56
W. Somerset Maugham:	<i>Constance</i>	Zagreb (HNK) 1955/56
G. B. Shaw:	<i>St. Joan</i>	Zagreb (HNK) 1955/56
John Patrick:	<i>Tea-House of the August Moon</i>	Zagreb (Kom.) 1955 Rijeka 1955
Hartley Manners:	<i>Peg o'My Heart</i>	Bjelovar 1955

This list is possibly incomplete because many theaters operating at that time no longer exist as professional establishments and a great deal of documentation has been irretrievably lost. However, one consolation is that for our purposes, i.e. the reconstruction of the Anglo-American repertoire during the 1950—55 period, their activities are of no consequence. In the first place, those small theaters did not often venture to include foreign plays in their repertoires, and when they did, they followed the example of the large centers, like Zagreb, Osijek, Split or Rijeka, staging the plays which had already been performed there. Perhaps the most convincing proof of this is the Anglo-American repertoire of the theaters in Sisak¹

1. The Sisak Theater Anglo-American repertoire (1950—1955):

J. B. Priestley:	<i>An Inspector Calls</i>	1950
Brandon Thomas:	<i>Charley's Aunt</i>	1951
G. B. Shaw:	<i>Mrs Warren's Profession</i>	1951
Pearl Buck:	a dramatization of <i>East Wind, West Wind</i>	1954
Jan de Hartog:	<i>The Fourposter</i>	1955

or Pula², which had a professional theater for a time, and which today have amateur groups, occasionally reinforced with professional actors — as is the case in Virovitica, Našice, Vinkovci, Karlovac, Zadar and Šibenik.

An analysis of about forty plays performed in the 1950—1955 period shows that eight plays were by Shaw and six by Shakespeare, all of which, except for Shaw's *The Philanderer*, had been performed before the war. The same is true of Brandon Thomas, Oscar Wilde and Eugene O'Neill. Some authors staged before the war — among them, Sherwood and Maugham, had their different plays performed afterwards. It appears that an effort was made to make up for the lost time. What remains, however, are about fifteen new plays staged after 1952, all of them more or less contemporary, of which the majority were written by American playwrights (Hellman, Miller, Williams, Wouk, Patrick, etc.). In effect, Šoljan's and Slamnig's article found its confirmation in theatrical practice, and American drama established a position which was consolidated during the next decade, becoming an integral feature of any repertoire, equal to, if not preferred to, other foreign dramas.

The fact that a light comedy like Krasna's *Dear Ruth* was the most widely performed play in Croatia and that *Charley's Aunt* and *Baby Mine* made a reappearance does not mean that they were the most popular in terms of the number of performances. No play matched *Deep Are the Roots'* record (87 performances), but Zagreb productions of *The Glass Menagerie* (44), *The Crucible* (36) and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (81) attracted more spectators than *Dear Ruth* (19). In other words, although the post-war tide of spectators had ebbed by 1952, American contemporary drama attracted large audiences.

The general gradual decline in attendance can be explained by the fact that the theater had ceased to be the only place which afforded entertainment. The economic emancipation from the Eastern block resulted in an increase in prosperity and in available consumer goods, and culture became just one of many needs. Simultaneously many provincial theaters lost their subsidies and became amateur theaters which relied on guest actors and directors whenever staging a more demanding play. Generous financial support extended by the government after the war was a direct continuation of the 19th century tradition which saw theater as an institution capable of influencing public opinion. However, complex social structural changes, like rapid industrialization and urbanization,³ required

2. The Pula Theater Anglo-American repertoire (1950—1955):

Margaret Mayo:	<i>Baby Mine</i>	1952
William Shakespeare:	<i>As You Like It</i>	1953
J. B. Priestley:	<i>Ever Since Paradise</i>	1953
Pearl Buck:	a dramatization of <i>East Wind, West Wind</i>	1953
J. B. Priestley:	<i>An Inspector Calls</i>	1954
Arthur Miller:	<i>All My Sons</i>	1954

3. For a detailed discussion of the Yugoslav social development during this period see Stipe Šuvar, *Sociološki presjek jugoslavenskog društva*, Školska knjiga, Zagreb, 1970;

different and more mass-orientated instruments of persuasion. When in the immediate post-war period the primary task of the government was the consolidation of power and organization of the new socialist state, theater could very well serve as an instrument of political indoctrination, but once this task was successfully accomplished, theater was no longer deemed able to influence the long-term process of cultural and social change. The precondition for this process was the education of the masses: eradication of illiteracy (16.3% in 1953), technical education necessary for integration into an industrialized economy and urban environment, as well as a more subtle political education of all citizens and not only those who constituted theater audience. Such tasks are better accomplished by mass media — radio, TV, newspapers, periodicals and other publications. It is not surprising that in the 1948—53 period the number of radios quadrupled and the number of newspapers doubled.

Mass media and mass culture, as correlations of an industrialized society, contained two opposing tendencies — on the one hand, a controlled and systematic promotion of the social and political system and on the other, the democratization of culture, which often meant catering to undeveloped taste and obeying the laws of the market-place. As a consequence theater lost its privileged position, but acquired a much more autonomous status — a position removed from wide popularity, but also removed from explicit outside interference.

One curious aspect of the democratization of culture was that at the time when many provincial theaters were closing down there proliferated a number of theater festivals along the coast, combining culture and tourism. As regards the Anglo-American repertoire, the Dubrovnik Festival is the most important one.⁴

Branko Horvat, *Ogled o jugoslavenskom društvu*, Mladost, Zagreb, 1969 and Dušan Bilandžić, *Društveni razvoj socijalističke Jugoslavije*, cdd, Zagreb, 1976.

4. The Dubrovnik Summer Arts Festival has been taking place annually since 1950. Over the course of the years it has grown into a drama and music event of world significance. It owes its existence and growth during the early years primarily to Croatian and later Serbian, and Slovenian theatrical people. Marko Fotez, Branko Gavella, Marijan Matković, Bojan Stupica, Milan Bogdanović, Miše Račić, Josip Depolo, Oskar Danon, Ranko Marinković, Vlado Habunek, Kosta Spaić, Georgij Paro and many other dramatists, stage directors, composers, conductors, stage designers, and a pleiad of the best Croatian, Serbian and Slovenian actors, all found themselves vitally committed to this theatrical phenomenon which was, from the very beginning, open to guest appearances by foreign troupes and individual performers. The specific nature of this festival is based on this, and the basic repertoire each season from July 10 to August 25 includes not only guest appearances with ready-made performances rehearsed elsewhere, but plays which have been rehearsed in Dubrovnik itself by the ensembles made up of the best actors from all the different Yugoslav theaters. Although the contribution of Croatian theater people is by far the greatest, the Festival, in creating its own "mixed" ensemble for certain performances, is a kind of meeting place for the best Serbian, Slovenian and Croatian actors on its open-air stages, on the squares, in the streets and parks and fortresses of Dubrovnik, whose Baroque—Renaissance architecture is unique.

In its broadly conceived repertoire over the last twenty-seven years (from 1950 to 1976) the Dubrovnik Festival has produced a total of seventeen Anglo-American dramas. Some of

While in 1952 Krleža's Ljubljana speech had offered a broad framework which could accommodate the new artistic consciousness, suddenly free of direct political pressure, only two years later there arose a necessity to re-examine the standpoints and to re-define the position of art in the new conditions. The Emergency Plenum of the Yugoslav Writers' Association held in Belgrade from November 10—13, 1954 gathered all prominent Yugoslav writers and critics.⁵ However, Radovan Zogović and Milovan Đilas were not present — the former lost his political position because of his pro-Soviet stance and the latter because of his complete ideological turn-around from a staunch Stalinist to a critic of Yugoslavia's "undemocratic" socialist practice. Some of their former supporters, like Marin Franičević, Boris Zihlerl and Marijan Jurković, were in attendance, as were Miroslav Krleža and his pre-war collaborators from *Pečat*, Marko Ristić and Petar Šegedin.

the dramas have been performed at several festivals, while others have been revived with new casts and directors after an interval of some years. The majority of dramas have been Croatian, but *Hamlet* has been by far the most frequently performed play — 174 performances in three different productions.

The Anglo-American repertoire at the Dubrovnik Summer Festival (1950—1976):

William Shakespeare:	<i>Hamlet</i> (dir. Marko Fotez)	1952—53
	(dir. Denis Carrey)	1967—69
	(dir. Dino Radojević)	1974—76
	<i>Henry V</i>	1964
	<i>Love's Labour's Lost</i>	1964
	<i>Julius Caesar</i>	1969—70
	<i>Macbeth</i>	1970—72
	<i>Twelfth Night</i> (Bojan Stupica)	1961
	(Georgij Paro)	1964—65
	(Tony Robertson)	1973
	<i>The Tempest</i>	1962
	<i>Othello</i>	1964—67
	<i>Pericles</i>	1973
	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	1962
	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> (Marko Fotez)	1954—56
(Joško Juvančić)	1972—73	
<i>The Merry Wives of Windsor</i>	1972	
G. B. Shaw:	<i>Don Juan in Hell</i>	1955
	<i>Saint Joan</i>	1962
	<i>Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead</i>	1971
Tom Stoppard:	<i>The Incredible Julia</i>	1973
Jean Reavey:	<i>The Royal Hunt of the Sun</i>	1973
Peter Shaffer:		

5. The papers presented at the plenary session:

Miroslav Krleža: "On Commitment"

Josip Vidmar: "Realism and Fantasy"

Zoran Mišić: "Between Waking and Sleeping"

Boro Pavlović: "On the Contemporary and the Modern in Literature"

The introduction to the book which published all the materials from the Plenum states that the Plenum was organized at the initiative of "the writers themselves" and sums up the situation as follows:

Our former literary journey, mainly along a single track, has started to branch out, to take different directions. The writers have started to become independent in the full sense of the word and what used to be a more or less unison choir has developed into a literary polyphony. The writers have started to differ openly, decisively and quite sharply in opinion as regards numerous questions of creative theory and practice.⁶

However, the introduction is quick to point out that "these differences do not penetrate into the basic, essential core of contemporary literature"⁷ and that "the platform on which the socialism ... is being erected is, of course, not questioned".⁸ Although the introduction does not state it explicitly it very soon emerged from the ensuing discussions that "differences" were greater than it appeared and that the main reason for the convocation of the Plenum was to find an equilibrium between artistic freedom and political ideology.

Milan Bogdanović, a Belgrade critic, expressed in his discussion most cogently the dilemma which had to be resolved at the Plenum. First he reminded everyone of his speech in Ljubljana in which he stated that "today, when we have started to free ourselves from that nightmarish pressure of directives ... we should not go to the other extreme, thinking that we are in a position or that we have gained the right to be absolutely, boundlessly and irresponsibly free in every respect",⁹ and then turned his attention to the central issue of the Plenum:

It seems to me that we in this day and age should go back to a point where, while completely rejecting all that has put pressure on our literature earlier, criticizing it

Marko Ristić: "On the Function of Literature and the Social Responsibility of the Writer"

Ervin Sinko: "On Some Common Characteristics of Different Programmatic Aesthetics in Regard to the Creative Arts"

Janez Menart: "Form and Contemporary Themes"

Oto Bihalji—Merin: "Misunderstandings in Culture, the Atomization of Art and the Attempt at a Synthesis"

Marin Franičević: "On the Realistic and the Modern"

Slobodan Novak: "On the Contemporary and the Modern in Literature"

Janko Kos: "On Marxist Aesthetics and Marxist Literary Criticism"

Participating in the discussion following the presentation of the papers were Vladimir Bartol, Milan Bogdanović, France Filipić, Eli Finci, Zoran Mišić, Slobodan Galogaža, Herbert Grün, Živko Jeličić, Marijan Jurković, Kajetan Kovič, Mihajlo Lalić, Borislav Mihajlović, Boško Novaković, Petar Segedin, Boris Zihherl, Ciril Zlobec, Stanislav Vinaver, Radoslav Rotković, Mladen Oljača, as well as Krleža, Vidmar, Mišić, Sinko, Bihalji—Merin and Kos who had presented papers, with a conclusion by Josip Vidmar.

6. *Extraordinary Plenary Session of the Yugoslav Writers' Association*, published by the Yugoslav Writers' Association, Belgrade, 1955, p. 7.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*, p. 161.

and refuting it as a trend, we must have our own critical point of view and know where to draw the line.¹⁰

Numerous papers addressed themselves to the same problem of determining where the line should be drawn, trying to find and theoretically justify that elusive borderline. Marin Franičević attacked modern trends in literature stating that they are actually “conservative and regressive”, because only “truly new” is “progressive” and not when it is “quasi-new and therefore quasi-literary”. He also inveighed against T. S. Eliot’s “symbolism and mysticism” as well as Auden’s “religious conversion”.¹¹ Sinko stated that “we have not shaken off the shackles of directed aesthetics in order to dedicate ourselves completely to childlike or childish games with words and colors”¹² and Krleža once again restated his main theses which had been tacitly accepted in Ljubljana. Again he illustrated his views by using examples from painting, which was his characteristic method when talking about literature. Thus when criticizing abstract painting, which had become the dominant trend in Yugoslavia, he actually talked about the modern literature of the West, which was also being copied. The main thrust of his paper was in favor of autochthonous art, but against the imitation of ready-made imports, as much as provincialism and the cult of folklore.

Circumstances had changed since 1952 when his younger fellow-writers attentively listened and applauded his denunciation of Zhdanovist dogmatism in the name of artistic freedom. Now he seemed to many, especially younger artists, to be trying to muzzle that same freedom by inveighing against abstract painting (banned in 1945—49 period) and contemporary West European literary trends. Very few understood him completely: just as in Ljubljana in 1952 he criticized Soviet Socialist realism, so in Belgrade he criticized the Western doctrines — in both instances defending his own concept of indigenous art as an expression of Balkan character and circumstance, instead of a copy of the Eastern or Western models. When in the ensuing discussion it was suggested that his attitude towards modern art reflected his advanced years and that he could not understand contemporary literature,¹³ he quoted from his texts written in 1919 to prove his consistency and won the verbal duel.

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 96.

13. For instance, Borislav Mihajlović, one of the younger writers said the following:

I too will be forced to refer to a section of the paper presented by Miroslav Krleža, taking that small, undeserved liberty of disagreeing, with all due respect, with some of his opinions. The attitude which I cannot agree with is the so-called and so incorrectly called “crisis in modern literature” including our own, which is one of the many themes of Krleža’s paper.

I must tell you an anecdote. After reading a scowling, bone-chilling, senile article written by one of our authors about the fact that contemporary literature was not worth a bean, a young writer said to me: “Today I wrote a letter to myself, with the

However, he did not succeed in finding the common denominator which would unify the literary strivings of the majority of his fellow writers. In this sense the Plenum did not achieve its purpose of resolving the tensions between artistic freedom and political ideology:

The Emergency Plenum of the Writers' Association did not formulate any conclusions regarding instructions and directives. All the papers and the discussions are published in this book and presented to the public to judge for itself. Therefore, only the strength of the argument will be decisive and convincing. The Emergency Plenum is only a preparation for a general Congress of Artists which the Writers' Association would wish to organize during the course of this year.¹⁴

The planned Congress was never organized. Not only did no one pay any attention to Bogdanović's concept of "limited" freedom, but even Krleža's framework of "committed" literature seemed too narrow. A great majority of Yugoslav writers who had suddenly become free of political pressures, most especially the younger generation received it with scepticism as an anachronistic call for a new politicizing of literature. Intoxicated by the possibility of total freedom, now for the first time staring at the world's showcase full of various expressive devices offered by the contemporary art, they experienced Krleža's words as those of an old man who was past understanding the lively curiosity of artistic youth. In vain did Krleža defend himself by stating that he was not against modernity, but against the tedious "copying of obsolete themes and techniques known as 'the revolution in art'"; in vain did Marko Ristić back him up by reading a collage of his own old texts. The flood of apoliticism, confusion and intoxication with freedom after a decade of rigid discipline, could not be channeled any longer.

Since the Plenum the Writers' Association has lost many of its former "regulating" functions and has become a somewhat decorative institution promoting the writers' social and financial status. It has never organized another Plenum, nor did Krleža ever again publicly speak about aesthetics. Fifteen years later, in a conversation with Predrag Matvejević he talked in a somewhat resigned manner about the writer's position and function in contemporary civilization:

A writer must realize that this civilization, which sometimes resembles an enormous, catastrophic railway disaster, needs stretchers, ambulances and medicine more than anything else. Literature is here a rather weak and ineffective palliative agent: therefore, it should not be misused by overestimating its potential.^{15*}

instructions that I should open it on my fiftieth birthday. In this letter I told myself a few simple things: if when you open this letter the literature you are reading seems bad to you, incomprehensible, inadequate and confused, don't say anything about it; it is more likely to be your fault and not something lacking in the literature." *ibid.*, p. 202—203.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

15. Predrag Matvejević, *Razgovori s Krležom*, Naprijed, Zagreb, 1969, p. 30.

* This article continues the pioneering work of Ivo Hergešić (1904—1977), whose study "La part de l'étranger dans le répertoire du Théâtre National de Zagreb" was published in the

RECEPCIJA ANGLOAMERIČKE DRAME NA HRVATSKOJ POSLIJERATNOJ POZORNICI:
KAZALIŠTE, POLITIKA, IDEOLOGIJA

Studija se bavi odnosom kazališta i politike na primjeru recepcije anglo-američke drame na hrvatskoj poslijeratnoj pozornici. Njen je osnovni cilj analiza recepcije anglo-američke drame unutar hrvatskog političkog i kulturnog konteksta, koja bi nam trebala pomoći odrediti da li takav periferni kulturni fenomen kao što je pojava jednog stranog repertoara na nacionalnoj pozornici može dati odgovore na bitna pitanja o nekoj kulturi.

Četiri poglavlja studije slijede kronološki red i odražavaju stupanj napetosti unutar odnosa između kazališta i politike. Autor zaključuje da su veze između kazališta i politike uvijek prisutne, čak i onda kad su naizgled nevidljive, da bi se ubrzo ponovo pojavile kao nova faza u razvoju tog nelagodnog međuodnosa.

first issue of *Révue de littérature comparée*, in Paris, in 1934. The subsequent studies which deal with foreign repertoires on the Croatian stage are as follows:

Ivo Hergešić, "Le répertoire français du théâtre de Zagreb", *Annales de l'Institut Français de Zagreb*, Zagreb, no. 4, 1938.

Blanka Breyer, *Das deutsche Theater in Zagreb (1780—1840)* Zagreb, 1938.

Ivana Batušić, "Od najava i prologa do impromptua u francuskom i hrvatskom kazalištu", *Rad*, Zagreb, 1962, no. 326, pp. 215—388.

Franjo Čale, "Talijanski dramski teatar u Zagrebu (1860—1941)", *Rad*, Zagreb, 1962, no. 326, pp. 389—518.

Miljenko Majetić, "Antička drama na zagrebačkim pozornicama", *Rad*, Zagreb, 1962, no. 326, pp. 519—554.

Nikola Batušić, "Uloga njemačkog kazališta u Zagrebu u hrvatskom kulturnom životu od 1840 do 1860", *Rad*, Zagreb, 1968, no. 353, pp. 395—584.

A study which would deal with Anglo-American repertoire on the Croatian stage has not as yet been written. There exist several works which focus on Shakespeare's plays performed in Croatia:

Ivo Hergešić, *Shakespeare — Molière — Goethe*, Zora, Zagreb, 1957.

Rudolf Filipović, *Englesko—hrvatske književne veze*, Liber, Zagreb, 1972.