



## ORIGINAL PAPER

## The Construction of Children's Literature during the Yugoslav First Five-Year Plan

Berislav Majhut\*

### Abstract

The radical elimination of bourgeois children's literature in 1945, coupled with the need to start educating children in a new Communist spirit, created in Yugoslavia a huge gap that could not be filled with the works of local authors. These are the reasons for a strong reliance on the massive translation of Soviet children's literature. Soviet children's literature compensated for the lack of tradition in certain literary genres and provided to Croatian (at that time, Yugoslav) children's literature narrative models. At the same time, it provided guidelines and correctives to social practices. While highly socially engaged works of children's literature by local authors were published before World War II, following the war they were revised and adjusted to new circumstances. In a similar manner, the translations of Soviet authors published before World War II were retranslated and ideologically adapted. After World War II, the books by Soviet authors made up more than half of all published books. The Russian origin of a book confirmed its ideological correctness, so that even Russian manuals for growing fruits and vegetables, related to a different climate, were translated. However, after the 1948 the break-up of Yugoslavia with the Soviet Union, children's literature was affected by a wave of revisionism. Although books were still translated from Russian (as Yugoslav production still did not reach the satisfying levels), only those that could fit in the new Yugoslav situation were selected for translation. The works translated earlier were thoroughly revised in order to be compatible with the new circumstances. Therefore, not only did the Communist ideology radically change the picture of children's literature but also continually revised its own production in line with the changing circumstances. Under the Communist regime the task of adjusting timeless works of art to the special needs of a particular political moment was never completed, and thus these literary works could never acquire their final form.

**Keywords:** *Soviet children's literature, Yugoslav children's literature, ideology in children's literature, ideological adaptations of translated literature, Croatian children's literature after Second World War*

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\* Full Professor, PhD, University of Zagreb, Faculty of Teacher Education, Email: berislav.majhut@ufzg.hr

## The Construction of Children's Literature during the Yugoslav First Five-Year Plan

In 1947, Viktor Cvitan and Dragutin Franković published a booklet titled *What Should My Child Read? (Što da čita moje dijete?)* containing a list of books recommended as good reading for children and youth. The list of 196 books contained a hundred books by Soviet authors and eight by Russian authors. Seven years later, in 1954, Ljudevit Krajačić published a booklet titled *Let us Offer Children a Good Book (Dajmo djeci dobru knjigu)* that had a similar purpose. Krajačić recommended 166 titles, among them eleven works by Russian authors, and not a single one by Soviet authors. The aim of this paper is to shed light on what occurred in the seven-year span between 1947 and 1954 with Soviet translated literature in former Yugoslavia. In other words, our aim is to examine the way Soviet translated literature made from absolute domination to its complete disappearance from Yugoslav school required reading lists.

In former Yugoslavia, the end of World War II and the victory of the National Liberation Army did not entail only the victory over Fascism and Nazism but also the victory of the social revolution. New circumstances and the building of a socialist society created an urgent need to educate new generations in the communist spirit. Something unprecedented was occurring: a new society was being built, a society that completely denied tradition, instead of using it as its basis. The past was denounced as a deceptive manipulator in the service of the governing class and could not be used as a groundwork on which a new reality would be built.

In our country, to educate means to revolutionize, that is to emancipate the manner of the child's thinking from the technical customs of thinking determined in the past, to emancipate it from delusions. At the basis of these delusions lies a centuries-old experience of a conservative life, based on a class struggle and an ambition of individuals to protect themselves and to fix individualism and nationalism as "eternal forms" and laws of social life.

The education of children should be organized in such a manner that from their early childhood children are resolutely, even when playing, forced to suppress conscious and unconscious desires for the past.

To be more precise, the entire aristocratic and bourgeois past and all its fundamental values should be rejected. What is valid for the whole of society should be valid for children's literature, as well (Gorky, 1945: 11-12).

The attitudes expressed by Gorky were embraced in Croatian/Yugoslav practice. In children's and youth literature, entire genres vanished: classical fairy tales, trivial adventure novels, books with religious content. After a fierce attack in the Yugoslav daily *Borba* (Combat), the cartoon was considered Western consumer goods.

In February 1948, the manager of the Municipal Library in Zagreb submitted a report on the reorganization of the library's collection of books. The library conducted the reorganization of its collection in order "to become a genuine library for the people". The purging of the library's collection, which contained 70,000 book copies, was carried out in March 1947.

All harmful and worthless books had to be removed from the library...[...] About 16,000 copies of various no-good, reactionary, ideologically uncommitted, atrocious, pseudo-scientific literature, were eliminated from the library's collection. (Kancijan, 1948: 47)

However, in addition to the disappearance of entire literary genres, a large number of authors also vanished, either because they were banished from public life or were even

physically eliminated. A list of authors for children who were allowed to publish contained about ten authors. Therefore, owing to the urgent need to provide adequate reading for children, who had to be raised in the new, communist spirit, there appeared an enormous gap that had to be filled with appropriate content. The only viable solution was to rely on those who had already had more experience with similar problems: Soviet children's literature. In almost no time, the libraries and bookshops were flooded with books for children by Soviet authors. This made it possible to satisfy a need for large production of books that were published in printing runs of 15 to 20 thousand copies and printed in several editions. In addition, this made it possible to satisfy a need for literary models that could be followed by Croatian authors and used as models in practical life.

In the years following World War II, the unquestionable authority of the Soviet Union was essentially indispensable. The victory of the communist Soviet Union over Nazi Germany provided legitimacy to the Yugoslav communist regime in the eyes of the majority of the population, who were either apolitical or highly frightened and antagonistically disposed towards the communist government. Such a mood was, *inter alia*, a result of decades-long propaganda that represented communists as the greatest social evil. In the eyes of the skeptical or indifferent local population, the powerful Soviet infrastructure, able to produce thousands of tanks and aircraft and crush the German military machine, provided legitimacy to the Yugoslav Communist Party that had no experience in managing a peacetime economy. Therefore, in the post-war period, the Sovietization of Yugoslav society, which aimed to become a communist society, was indispensable and had to be conducted on all levels: not only on the strategic level of society management but also on the level of everyday life .

A good illustration of this might be found in the schedule of holidays to be celebrated in schools, which was published in *People's Education (Narodna prosvjeta)* on January 18, 1946. Of 15 days that were marked as holidays, six referred to Soviet holidays, two to international holidays, four to Croatian anniversaries and three to Yugoslav anniversaries.

Libraries were also deeply involved in carrying out their educational tasks. In addition to the "passive" imposition of the Soviet content through the selection of books available in libraries and their prominent status in various exhibitions organized by libraries, Soviet books were "actively" pushed into the hands of readers:

The activity of librarians – agitators is evident in the following episode: a 15-year old boy, asked for *The Idiot* by Dostoevsky, as he had no idea what to choose for reading and the title intrigued him. At last, he was glad to leave the library with *How the Steel was Tempered* under his arm (Kancijan, 1948: 48)

At the time when Yugoslav literary heroes had not yet entered the scene, i.e. prior to 1953<sup>1</sup>, giving prominence to Soviet heroes and their superiority over other literary heroes was sorely needed in children's literature. For example, *Son of the Regiment (Sin puka)*, a novel by Valentin Kataev, first published in the Soviet Union in 1945, was published in Yugoslavia in 1946. Its hero, Vanya Solntsev, an orphan adopted by the military unit at the frontline, was a perfect literary realization of the child-hero, a concept which, though very present in Yugoslav society in the years following World War II, was not depicted in literature . A large number of children joined Partisan units during the war.

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<sup>1</sup> The first Croatian war novel for children, *Pirgo* by Anđelka Martić, was published as late as 1953. It was followed by *Modri prozori (Blue Windows)* by Danko Oblak, published in 1958, and *Courier from Psunj (Kurir s Psunja)* by Gabro Vidović, published in 1959.

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After the war they were perceived in the same manner as during the war: as being equal to adults.

War victors and those who took up the task of building a new society imposed the picture of the child they created during the war: this is a picture of the child-hero who performed war tasks even in the fiercest battles. In the new circumstances, during the period of the post-war reconstruction, this child stood shoulder to shoulder with adults during the reconstruction of the country.

Pioneer units were formed with the aim of taking part in the reconstruction that was under way all over the country. The image of the heroic child, a relevant participant in society, is particularly noticeable in the pioneer press. The first pages of children's magazines were most often reserved for resolutions and reports from the congresses of the Alliance of the Communist Youth of Yugoslavia (*Savez komunističke omladine Jugoslavije*) or the Communist Party of Yugoslavia or for addresses by the Party leaders. The lexis, syntax and argumentation used in these articles were not in the least different from those used in articles addressed to adult readers.

However, a considerably larger number of children had not taken part in war operations but had lived their lives in urban or rural environments. It was urgently necessary to introduce these children to their new social role and to provide them with heroes they had to look up to. Large masses of children, who could not be easily influenced by political speeches and meetings, or various forms of pressure or promises of a better social status or employment, had to be mobilized. To a certain extent, this was achieved through school curricula.

In the circumstances of war poverty, the easiest and most efficient way of mobilizing children was to offer them mental **dolls** of love and hate. These mental dolls offered protection in inhuman conditions in which such children lived. Often, the only crutches the child could rely on in the struggle for survival were, on the one hand the personalities of loved commanders or of Comrade Tito and on the other, the personalities of demonized inhuman enemies. However, in the post-war period, such mental dolls proved to be a highly efficient means of mobilizing the children who were not involved in war operations. They were also taught how to love Comrade Tito on the one hand and how to "relentlessly hate" other protagonists they became familiar with at school, in particular in the classes of native tongue and history. To whom was this "relentless hate" targeted? From 1945 to 1947, "towards enemies of the homeland, towards all those who try to destroy our national-liberation struggle"; in 1948, "towards the enemies and oppressors of the working people"; in 1950, "towards all that is reactionary and inhuman"; in 1951, "towards the enemies of our homeland and destroyers of peace"; in 1956, "towards imperialists and other enemies of our socialist homeland".

However, in order to be able to efficiently love and relentlessly hate, one has to take a certain standpoint, to take over a certain role, identify with a particular character, from whose position one can love and hate. In an article by Croatian children's writer Danko Oblak *How Vojkan Defeated Winnetou* (*Kako je Vojkan pobijedio Vinetua*), published in 1947 in *Pionir* (*The Pioneer*), a boy called Vojkan stands in a bookshop. Suddenly, he imagines that popular literary characters from the children's books lying on the bookshelves have become real people involved in a fight.

"But you cannot give real adventures, exciting and true adventures", says angrily "Son of the Regiment" and steps, along with "Družina Pere Kvržice", in front of Old Shatterhand. "Look at him? Nothing but an idle vagrant. What a gun he has, an ancient cannon! And look at my brand new machine gun, it can fire 70 bullets

at a time. I'll kill you all like flies! The Apache stirred. Their eyes flashed with a belligerent glow... (Oblak 1947: 12.)

In this fictional direct confrontation the characters from trivial literature (such as Winnetou) are completely inferior to the machine guns of the heroes of Soviet children's literature. While Croatian/Yugoslav literature could not offer protagonists who could inflame children's imagination and make children identify with them, such heroes could be found in Soviet literature. Soon *Timur and His Squad* (*Timur i njegova četa*) by Gaidar, *Boy with Narva Frontier* (*Dječak iz Narve*) and Pantelijevo were published<sup>2</sup>. Soviet novels provided protagonists who could be used as literary depictions of the child-hero or its derivations, such as pioneers, boys from semi-military collectives or collectives similar to the military. The main idea in Gaidarov's novel *Timur and His Squad*<sup>3</sup> is that Timur and the boys he organized into a closely knit gang are doing good deeds and protecting families whose fathers and husbands are in the Red Army. *Pionir* (1947)6:1 published a picture of young people working on the rail tracks, accompanied with the following text: "Let us organize full and continuous help to the families of the youth who take part in youth worker brigades and go to work on the youth rail track Šamac – Sarajevo. Let us help their families to cultivate their fields and farms." However, at the beginning of 1948, the relations between former Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union suddenly changed for the worse. According to Bilandžić's interpretation (see Bilandžić 1985: 151 and further), the conflict was caused by Stalin's ambitions to achieve complete control over Socialist countries and consolidate his position in the aggravated Cold War circumstances. Stalin managed to control the countries in which the Red Army defeated Nazism. However, Yugoslavia, where by the end of World War II the resistance movement grew into the Yugoslav People's Army, a respectable military power, expected equality and partnership relations among communist countries. The conflict escalated with the Resolution of the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) adopted on June 28 1948. The Resolution stated that due to complete misconduct of the Central Committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party, the Yugoslav Communist Party was expelled from the union of brotherly Communist Parties. The Yugoslav Communist Party was called to dismiss its Central Committee and elect a new internationalistically oriented leadership.

On its Fifth Congress held in Belgrade from July 21 to July 28 1948, the Yugoslav Communist Party rejected the qualifications of the Cominform. Suddenly, the warm brotherly relations of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union became so tense that they were on the verge of an armed conflict. The Communist Party of Yugoslavia was in a great trouble. That the situation was serious is evident from the fact that all segments of society were mobilized, even the Pioneers' Union. The magazine for children, *Pionir*, on the cover page of its issue published on August 15 1948 had a picture of children bathing and jumping to the sea. The second page had a full page portrait of Comrade Tito, "the Secretary General of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia". Below the headline "Long Live the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia led by Comrade Tito" there followed a list of all members of the Central Committee, a list of all candidates for the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and a list of

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<sup>2</sup> A large number of other works by Soviet authors appeared. For example, *My Dear Boys* (*Moji dragi dječaci*) by Lav Kasilj, *Hearts of the Brave* (*Srca smjelih*) by Kotov and Ljaskoski, *Adventures of a Little Boy* (*Doživljaji "malog"*) by Likstanov, etc.

<sup>3</sup> The novel was published in Belgrade in 1946 by Nopok publishing house, and readers of *Pionir* could learn about this new book in issue 39, p. 10.

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the members of the Central Revision Commission. On the fourth page<sup>4</sup> a speech delivered by Comrade Tito after the election of the members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia was printed:

Long Live the Communist Party of Yugoslavia! (A long and loud applause and chanting Tito-Party).

Long Live the Soviet Union led by the great Stalin (A long applause and several rounds of chanting Stalin-Tito. All the delegates rise and sing The Internationale) (*Pionir* (1948)14: 4).

This period was marked with the concept of the child-hero. In other words, the child was perceived as a little adult and the children's magazine addressed children as if they were adults. However, at no point were the motives and purposes of the Communist Party Congress hinted at. No clue was given that the reason for the Congress is the attack of the Soviet Union and the countries of the people's democracy against the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. On the contrary, readers of *Pionir* must have been convinced that the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia lived in perfect harmony.

In the field of children's literature, "a long applause and chanting Stalin-Tito" resonated for some time, at least for a year. Only in the middle of 1949, the authorities mustered the courage to speak about what really occurred in the relations with the Soviet Union. An article published in June 1949 in *Pionir*<sup>5</sup> may be a good illustration of how great the shock and collective trauma were:

You knew that we were under attack by imperialists because they lost control, because the society that we build, eradicates any form of abuse and fights for peace and socialism. But at school you learnt different things about the socialist state, the Soviet Union, about the countries of people's democracy and it must have come as a surprise that the attacks against our country and the Party came from these countries. It has been a year since the historical Congress of our Party [the Fifth Congress of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, held from 21 to 28 July 1948], which gave a decisive and clear answer to all slenderers, which proved that Yugoslavia was able to build socialism relying on its own powers.

[...]

Among other things, some leaders in these countries are saying that our Party raises the children to hate the Soviet Union and other peoples, that it teaches them to love only their own people. The love of our pioneers towards the Soviet Union, its Army, and Soviet pioneers need not be explained in many words<sup>6</sup>.

At the third meeting of the Cominform held in November 1949 a new resolution titled "Yugoslav Communist Party run by murders and spies" was passed. One of the conclusions reads:

The spy group led by Tito, Ranković, Kardelj, Đilas, Pijade, Gošnjak, [...] represents the enemy of the working class and peasants, the enemy of the people of Yugoslavia (Bilandžić, 1985: 160).

At this time, the Yugoslav Communist Party had already conducted the most brutal purges of all its members who gave any sign that they might have any understanding

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<sup>4</sup> On page five a speech by pioneer Brane Marković, leader of the platoon "Danilo Jauković" held at the Fifth Congress of the Party was printed.

<sup>5</sup> Even after 1949 in children's literature the connection both with the Soviet Union and Stalin was retained.

<sup>6</sup> *Pionir* (13-14), pp. 3 Pero Ivačić: *At the Anniversary of the Fifth Congress of the Yugoslav Communist Party*.

for the attitudes expressed by the Cominform. The notorious detention camp on the island of Goli was opened and according to some statistics about 40,000 people were detained there. One of the theses of this study is that, despite the radical and brutal destalinization of Yugoslav society, prompted by the confrontation between the communist parties in the Cominform and the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, this process ran considerably slower and more discreetly in children's literature. Thus, after the split with the Cominform, titles by Soviet authors continued to be published until 1951, when the publishing of the books by contemporary Soviet authors was abruptly stopped and publishers shifted their focus on publishing of world and Croatian/Yugoslav classic works. The leadership of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia managed to resist the pressures and remained in power. Having rejected the thesis that there is only one, Soviet road, towards a classless society, Yugoslavia announced it would take its own road to socialism, according to which the state-owned property became social ownership and workers' self-management was introduced. In art, the doctrine of social realism was rejected, in particular after the legendary speech of Miroslav Krleža at the Congress of Yugoslav Writers in Ljubljana in 1954. The process of destalinization of the Party and Yugoslav society was unrelentless and rigorous. However, on the surface, in particular in the children's world these processes were considerably slower and mitigated. Thus, at the same time when Yugoslav writers responded to Soviet writers (January 15 1949) and their criticism that the leadership of the Yugoslav Communist Party betrayed the interests of the working class and international proletariat, *Pionir* in its issue of January 1 1949 published an article<sup>7</sup> with a picture of Stalin surrounded with children. The text below the picture reads: "In the Soviet Union, man is highly appreciated and that is why enormous attention is paid to the education and life of man. Pioneers have the opportunity to enjoy various entertaining activities, since the Bolshevik Party and Stalin take care of it. Every citizen of the USSR takes loving care of the life of pioneers, as they are seen as future adults that will be able to build Communism." (*Pionir* (1949)1)<sup>8</sup>.

It is evident that the developments in the relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union ran at two speeds: at the faster speed in the adult world and at the slower speed on the level of children's consciousness.

The first book by Sergei Mihalkov to be published in Croatian translation was *The Red Neckerchief (Crvena marama)*, a drama piece published on June 30 1949. Elena Prokhorova defines the literary efforts of Sergei Mihalkov in the following way: "If the subject of Mihalkov's works is state iconography, the target is the child who is learning the fundamental lexicon of the empire and its everyday practices." (2008:288) Therefore, at the time of the fiercest attacks of Stalin against the Yugoslav Communist Party leadership, *Novo pokoljenje (New Generation)*, the largest Croatian publisher of children's literature, published a book by a children's author who was Stalin's ideological follower. Taking into account general circumstances at the time, it is hardly possible to interpret this as ignorance or an oversight of the publisher. In particular, if we know that in the following year, 1950, another book by Mihalkov, *A Special Task (Posebni zadatak)*, whose aim also was to glorify Stalin, was published by the same publisher. These decisions must have

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<sup>7</sup> This was the last article in *Pionir* devoted to Stalin.

<sup>8</sup> In the same issue of *Pionir* the Resolution of December 16 1948 on the merging of the Association of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia and the People's Youth of Yugoslavia into one organization was published. Actually, this meant that all youth in Yugoslavia were communist. The system, feeling endangered, tried to take over absolute control.

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been brought with the blessing of the Party leadership, with the aim of sending the message that there were no deviations from the Communist road and that, through the messages inculcated in children, the Yugoslav and Soviet future were fundamentally linked.

*The Red Neckerchief* is a drama piece devoted to the 25th anniversary of the Organization of Young Pioneers (*Всесоюзная пионерская организация имени В. И. Ленина*) that was established on May 19 1922. Therefore, it abounds in ideological axioms. For example, in *Dunja's Neckerchief* (*Dunjina marama*), a story by Danko Oblak, Dunja is a pre-school child. She has an 11-year old brother, Bojan, who no longer wants to wear a blue neckerchief, a symbol of belonging to pioneers since some older boys mocked him that he was a kid. Dunja is distressed because of this and at the end of the story she manages to convince her brother that it is important to wear a blue pioneer neckerchief. However, in Mihalkov's drama piece, the reader learns that the pioneer neckerchief is "part of our red communist flag" (Mihalkov 1949:83), and that to be a pioneer means that one wants to become a communist. So it is completely unclear how Bojan's blue pioneer neckerchief fits into this.

Mihalkov's drama piece is actually an answer to the question what constitutes "a happy childhood". A happy childhood is not about "eating bottled fruit, going to the cinema every other day and going to the seaside every summer" (56). Happiness is when you become what you want to become. (57)! Some time ago, in capitalism children had to work hard and had no opportunity to become what they wanted to become. In America, if you are born as a black, you are not a human at all. In the Soviet Union, however, irrespective of the material status of your family, or even if you have no family, the state will help you to make your dreams come true. It is enough that you have a wish. That is why at the admission ceremony for new pioneers the cheers "Young pioneers, be ready for the Lenin-Stalin cause! Hurray!" are heard. (131)

Let us now sketch the third period, in which children's literature by Soviet authors lost its unquestionable authority. In 1952, Croatian editor and poet, Grigor Vitez, referring to the past years noted: "In the years following our Liberation we had an unusually large number of translated foreign books for children, almost exclusively by Russian authors: publishers were of the opinion that choosing these works they could not fail in terms of the purity of ideas expressed. Thus, in addition to truly valuable works, quite a number of works which were of average, or even poor, value were translated and published." It should be noted that Vitez refers to "the purity of ideas expressed" which made it possible to translate and publish even low quality works, without any questions raised.

In the period of the Sovietization of Croatian/Yugoslav children's literature every word of Soviet authors was piously absorbed. Works by Soviet authors depicted the reality that was desired by the Yugoslav Communist regime. On the other hand, the works of Croatian/Yugoslav socially engaged authors who wrote before World War II were republished in the post-war period and had to be adapted to the demands of the new reality. Let us quote several randomly selected examples: *Poletarci*, a novel by Josip Pavičić, published in 1937, had to be completely adapted before it was republished in 1949. In a similar way, *Deca Velikog Sela*, a novel by Mate Lovrak, was first published in Belgrade in 1933 and underwent considerable changes in its first post-war edition in 1946.

Books by Western authors were censored and adapted to the needs of Yugoslav Communist society. Thus, *Bambi*, *Heroes of Paul Street*, *Winnetou*, and *Heidi* were heavily adapted, with no guilt feelings on the part of publishers. In the period after 1951, books by Soviet authors shared a similar destiny, this time because of different ideological



motives. The attitude towards Soviet authors was deprived of the respect characteristic for the period of Sovietization.

The whole process from the glorification of Stalin to radical destalinization may be revealed if we examine the translation of *Son of the Regiment*, a novel by Kataev, and a drama piece under the same title.

In 1947, Belgrade-based *Prosveta* published a translation from Russian of *Son of the Regiment*: a drama piece in three acts. At the very end Enakiev dies on the stage and addresses his last words to Vanya.

Enakiev: Thank you!... Vania, come here, lean to me, listen what I am going to tell you. You were a good son of the scouts. You were a good son of the artillerymen. You were my dear, good son. But, in the first place, always and everywhere, you must be a true son of your mother – your Fatherland! You must be a true son of the best son of our Motherland – the great STALIN!...

[...]

Enakiev: Vanjusha! Go! Go! .Bravely, the bugle calls! Bidenko, give him a hand, help him! Go, Vania! Step bravely forward! ..  
APOTHEOSIS

Vania and Bidenko climb the „stairs of the Suvorov Military Academy.“ Banners, trumpets, music.

The end.

In this drama piece, as in the novel published a year before, Stalin's leading role in war is repeatedly emphasized. Thus, in the Croatian translation of the novel from 1946 the artillerymen yell:

Fire on damned German soil – fire!

Hold on! Fire!

For the Motherland! For Stalin! Fire!

Death to Hitler! Fire! !" (Kataev, 1946: 104)<sup>9</sup>.

Both in the Serbian edition from 1973 and the Bosnian one from 1971, the words „For Stalin!“ are omitted.

At the end of the novel *Son of the Regiment*, the commander of the regiment presents Vanya with the captain's shoulder straps from the uniform of his beloved dead captain Enakiev, telling him “ But, listen: always and everywhere in the first place you must be a true son of your mother – your Motherland! You must be a true son of the best son of our Motherland – the great STALIN!“ (128).

In all the editions of *Son of the Regiment* published after 1948 the words of the best son of our Motherland – the great STALIN!“ were omitted.

In later editions, the entire end of the novel full of pathos is completely changed. At the end of the novel, Vanya climbs the staircase decorated with red flags to meet an old war general.

It was hard for him to run. But the old man gives him a hand. The old man is clad in a grey military coat, laid over the shoulder, in boots with spurs and a diamond star on his chest, a grey lock over his beautiful, frowned forehead.

He takes Vanya by the hand and leads him up the staircase to the top, where among the potrgani war banners from four victorious wars, stand Stalin with a brilliant marshall star, glittering and glowing under his army coat.

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<sup>9</sup> Both in the Croatian and Serbian editions from 1946 all references to Stalin were retained.

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Under the flat brim of the cap protruding, blinking eyes look at Vanya with a demanding expression. But under the dark moustache Vanya notices the firm and fatherly smile and it seems that Stalin is telling him: "Come on, shepherd boy. Step lively!" (Kataev, 1946: 132).

In the later editions, the entire end of the novel (from the words "It was hard for him to run...") is omitted. To conclude, we have portrayed three periods in the reception of Soviet children's literature in Croatia/Yugoslavia: a) the period of strong Sovietization of Yugoslav children's literature that lasted from 1945 to 1948. This period was marked with a strong presence of Soviet authors, whose works provided models both for the future literary production and for everyday practices (demobilization of children who participated in the war, the organization of the Pioneers' Union, the relations between pioneers and the youth; b) the period of cooling in the relations with the Soviet Union that lasted from 1949 to 1950. In this period, the number of the books by Soviet authors decreased but still the minimum of relations with the Soviet Union were maintained; c) the period after 1951, when the works by Soviet authors were published again, but they lost the status of authority which provides models for literature and everyday life. Rather, the choice of the books, as well as the interventions into the texts, show that the main concern was to adapt them to the demands of the reality, as shaped by the Communist regime in Yugoslavia.

In histories of Croatian children's literature, overviews of the decades following World War II are scantily written. As a rule, overviews of this period boil down to the pejorative qualifications of the propaganda literature, lacking any wish for a closer analysis. Usually, the later period of children's literature spanning from 1956 is analyzed, without the critical examination of the prior period, an exceptionally turbulent and unprecedentedly experimental period. As if the later period was not built on the groundwork of the prior, suppressed time. How can we, then, really understand the later period built up on the previous one and all the later periods if we do not try to critically examine the beginning?

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