

**The Neo-Avantgarde on Trial in Yugoslavia: The Case of the Új
Symposion Journal (1971/2)**

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Submitted to

Central European University

Department of History

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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Budapest, Hungary

2020

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Abstract

After the 1968 student demonstrations in Yugoslavia the authorities had tightened their control over the state's internal affairs. The period that followed became infamous for the banning and censorship cases, as well as political trials that targeted individuals and groups that stood in opposition to the regime. The youth press in Yugoslavia was deeply affected by these practices. One of the banned publications in this period was also *Új Symposion*, a Hungarian-language journal published in Novi Sad (Yugoslavia). *Új Symposion* was a neo-avantgarde art and literary journal with a critical tone toward any imposed principles. In the trial processes in 1971, the 76th and 77th issues of the journal were banned. The reason for these proceedings was found in the two writings published by Sándor Rózsa and Miroslav Mandić. After the banning cases, in 1972 criminal charges were raised against the two authors and the *Symposion*'s editor Ottó Tolnai.

The aim of this thesis is to explore the practice of political trials in Socialist Yugoslavia in the period of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The case of *Új Symposion* is used here as an example of the state's politics toward the neo-avantgarde in the indicated period. Besides the neo-avantgarde, I examine the *Symposion* case in the context of the New Left, which also significantly affected the journal's work and content. The two main questions explored are: how the neo-avantgarde can be put on trial and why the regime targeted a literary and art journal published in the Hungarian language, which only a minority in Yugoslavia could read.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank professor Tibor Várady for his more than generous help and support during my research. Also, I am deeply grateful to him, Sándor Rózsa and Katalin Ladik for sparing the time and agreeing to share their stories and experiences with me.

I am immensely thankful to professor Marsha Siefert for being a wonderful and incredibly supportive supervisor over the past two years. Moreover, I would like to thank Emese Kürti for sharing with me the enthusiasm toward this topic and for all of her remarkable advice. Also, I owe an immense debt of gratitude to professor Radina Vučetić who has been by my side and has encouraged me throughout the years. My special thanks go to all the amazing people at the History Department who I have learned a lot from and who I greatly admire.

Finally, I dedicate this thesis to the people dearest to me. Thank you for all the patience and support you have given me over the last two years (and more).

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Introduction

Yugoslavia is often perceived as considerably more liberal in comparison to other socialist states. During the Cold War era, the Yugoslav Communist Party (CPY)¹ found a way to balance between the East and the West. The strive for this balance even resulted in the creation of the alternative Yugoslav *third way* politics, which was crowned with the establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961 at the Belgrade Conference.² Yugoslavia's appearance on the international scene was compatible with its internal political, economic, social, and even cultural practices. The Yugoslav regime, headed by Josip Broz Tito, was striving to seize the “best of both worlds” and not having to take sides in the Cold War bipolar world. Therefore, Socialist Yugoslavia became known for the integration of the socialist system and the Western consumerist culture. And while the aspiration for distancing from the Soviet Union after 1948 was genuine among the Party's leadership, some practices inherited from the USSR were not easily given up by the Yugoslav regime. This included the phenomenon of political trials.

The main aim of this thesis is to explore the phenomenon of political trials in Socialist Yugoslavia through a very specific case of a single journal. *Új Symposion* was a Hungarian language “journal for art and critique” (“művészeti-kritikai folyóirat”) issued beginning with 1965 in the city of Novi Sad. *Symposion* became a space of cooperation of the Hungarian

¹ After the split with Stalin in 1948, Tito and the Yugoslav officials were eager to detach Yugoslavia from the Soviet Union in every aspect. Among the measures that were taken for this purpose was also the renaming of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia into the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in 1952. Further in the text I will be referring to the League of Communists of Yugoslavia mostly as “the Party”, or “the CPY”, since the use of the later terms is more common.

² See: N. Mišković, H. Fischer-Tiné and N. Boškowska (eds.). *The Non-Aligned Movement and the Cold War: Delhi-Bandung-Belgrade*. (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2014).

artists and writers in Vojvodina. Its content was inspired by the “new art practice”³ and the neo-avantgarde movement that appeared during the 1960s on the Yugoslav art scene. However, besides being inspired by the two, *Symposion* itself contributed to the building of the Yugoslav neo-avantgarde. The critical nature of the journal is what eventually draw the attention of the state officials to *Új Symposion*. In 1971 the distribution of the 76th and 77th issue of the journal was banned. The causes for the bans were two published writings of Sándor Rózsa and Miroslav Mandić, “Everyday Abortion” (“Mindennapi Abortusz”) and “Song about a Film” (“Vers a filmről”).⁴ These texts were later on used as foundations for the criminal prosecutions against the two authors and the editor of the journal, Ottó Tolnai. The judge proclaimed prison sentences for Rózsa and Mandić, while Tolnai got a suspended sentence in both cases. Finally, Miroslav Mandić was the only one who went to prison.

The *Új Symposion* case is inseparable from the political context it occurred in, which was shaped by the 1968 student riots in Belgrade and the 1971 demonstrations in Zagreb (Croatian Spring). These events became the grounds for the later political moves pulled by Tito and the Party leadership. The period that followed became infamous for the numerous censorship and banning cases, a number of which ended up getting in front of a judge. The main aim of this thesis is to determine how the case of *Új Symposion* fits into the bigger context of political trials in Socialist Yugoslavia, but also how the practice of political trials is reflected in this case.

The timeframe covered in this thesis is limited to the late 1960s and early 1970s when the political conditions shifted from liberal to suppressive in Socialist Yugoslavia. Significant emphasis is placed on the years 1971 and 1972 when the *Symposion* trials occurred. The

³ The “new art practice” is a term Ješa Denegri initially used in 1978 to describe the practices in link to the Yugoslav neo-avantgarde. See: J. Denegri. “Art in the Past Decade”. in: *The New Art Practice in Yugoslavia 1966-1978*. (eds.) Marijan Susovski. (Zagreb: Gallery of Contemporary Art, 1978). 8.

⁴ In this thesis I always write the two titles in English since they are often mentioned, therefore it is easier to follow the text that way.

spatial boundary of this thesis is not concentrated on the entire Yugoslav state but rather covers the territory of the Socialist Republic of Serbia, particularly in parts where I examine the wider context of political trials; while a more specific focus is placed on the region of Vojvodina and the city of Novi Sad.

Socialist Yugoslavia is often viewed from the perspective of its three largest entities (Serbs, Croats and Slovenians), their states and capital cities (Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana). By placing the focus on the case of *Új Symposion* my aim is to distance myself from the three major actors and to deal with the matters of Socialist Yugoslavia from a different viewpoint; the one of the Hungarians in Vojvodina. However, the Symposionists⁵ do not stand as an embodiment of the entire Hungarian minority in the region. They represent a “minority within a minority”: the alternative artists and writers among the Yugoslav Hungarians. Nevertheless, it is important to briefly address the multi-ethnic space of Vojvodina and its capital Novi Sad, as it is significant for the later exploring of the Symposionists’ identity.

Andrew Ludanyi (András Ludányi) suggested that “Vojvodina is as diverse in ethnic make-up as Yugoslavia as a whole.”⁶ The main question Ludanyi raised in his article is the one of the Yugoslav “Partisan myth” and how it affected the Hungarians in Vojvodina. The imposed “brotherhood and unity” ideology in the socialist period was a striving of Tito and the Party to possibly erase the issues of Yugoslavia’s ethnic complexity and intolerance for the sake of building a coherent state. Ludanyi suggested that the Partisans had provided Yugoslavia with a *myth* that had a unifying force, since it “has never been monopolized by

⁵ Further in the text I will refer to the people who founded and published in *Új Symposion* as the Symposionist.

⁶ A. Ludanyi. “Titoist Integration of Yugoslavia: The Partisan Myth & the Hungarians of Vojvodina, 1945-1975”. in: *Polity*. vol. 2/2. (The University of Chicago Press: Winter 1979). 232. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3234278?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents. (Accessed: June 5, 2020). Ludanyi also shows a demographic chart of Vojvodina’s population through seven decades in the twentieth century (1910-1971). This chart shows that after the First World War, Serbs were the largest entity in Vojvodina, followed by the Hungarians (and Germans until 1948).

any one ethnic group.”⁷ This ideology, or *myth* as Ladanyi referred to it, was more focused on the peace keeping between the Yugoslav “Slavic” nations, but it can be also applied on the case of Vojvodina and include the Hungarians. The impact of the “brotherhood and unity” ideology can best be perceived through the identity of the people in Yugoslavia. In the thesis I explore the identity of the Symposionists and with that present the impact of the mentioned ideology on the Yugoslav Hungarian alternative artists in Vojvodina.

Besides the position of the Symposionists in Yugoslavia, it is necessary to stress the importance of *Új Symposion* for the Hungarians in Hungary as well. I address this matter in some parts, however the emphasis in thesis is not placed on the links of the Hungarians “from the motherland” to those in Vojvodina or *Új Symposion* in particular. However, the subject of the Symposionists’ identity does raise the question of the Hungarian and Yugoslav entangled relations and it will briefly be addressed by showing the interactions of the Symposionists and the Hungarian intellectuals.

The structure of this thesis is divided into three chapters, of which the initial two serve as a context to the main subject of the *Symposion* trials. In the first chapter I introduce the concept of political trials and analyze the specific features of this phenomenon in the context of Socialist Yugoslavia. One of the questions I attempt to answer in the first chapter is how we can relate the neo-avantgarde scene to the political trials in Yugoslavia. Understanding the link between the art movement and the politicized judicial system provides the adequate framework for studying the *Symposion* case with more details. Since *Új Symposion* was influenced by the critical thinking of the New Left and the artistic realizations of neo-avantgarde, the first chapter of this thesis engages with these two appearances on the Yugoslav alternative scene. The critical left is studied mainly in link to the notion of the state’s internal enemy; a concept, which is also defined in the paper. On the other hand, the neo-

⁷ Ibid. 237.

avantgarde is examined as a cultural movement regardless of the notion of internal enemy, since unlike the New left the neo-avantgarde in its entirety was not considered as a threat by the regime. Great focus is placed on the neo-avantgarde movement in Novi Sad and Vojvodina, since the Symposionists were inseparable from the generation of young artists and writers who acted on the alternative art scene of the mentioned city and region during the 1960s. Finally, this chapter is concluded with the introduction of the first *Symposion* generation and the foundation of the journal. The Symposionists were young people, mostly students who identified themselves with the neo-avantgarde scene in Vojvodina, the critical left; Hungarians, but also Yugoslavs; and finally, the Yugoslav dissidents. This final part of the first chapter aims to analyze the complex identity of the Symposionists by relying of the testimonies of the members of the first generation.

The second chapter is dedicated to the matter of the press in Socialist Yugoslavia. However, the emphasis here is placed on the youth and alternative press that promotes the previously mentioned ideals of the critical left and the neo-avantgarde. The intent of this chapter is to provide insight on what the position of the youth and alternative press was in Socialist Yugoslavia and additionally, what the regime's relation to these publications was. Since *Új Symposion* was not the only banned journal in Socialist Yugoslavia, especially in the years after 1968, in this chapter I also present similar instances of banned and censored press. The previous chapter serves as a wider context, even in the narrower reference to the neo-avantgarde in Novi Sad; however, analyzing similar instances to that of *Új Symposion* offers concrete examples, which can be linked or compared to the *Symposion* case. In the following parts of the second chapter I engage with the content of the journal. Primarily, the general "art and critique" nature of the journal is explored, while later I focus concretely on the two banned issues. The emphasis in the part regarding the 76th and 77th number of the journal is placed on portraying the general subject and nature of Rózsa and Mandić's texts.

Along with this, I also look into some of the other writings published in the journal to gain sense of whether the two “incriminated” texts were exceptions among the articles ordinarily printed in *Új Symposion*. I should point out that I did not conduct a detailed discourse analysis for gaining the sense of the *Új Symposion*’s character. Instead I analyzed selected text, primarily from the two banned numbers, since I found that to be sufficient for achieving the goal of this paper, which is focused on the trial cases. Additionally, I have used secondary literature that deals with the content of *Új Symposion* in more details and oral history interviews which I have conducted with three *members* of the first generation. This contributed to the adequate presentation of the journal’s character.

Introducing the third chapter requires a presentation of the primary sources used for the writing of this thesis since the content of the final part is mostly based on this gathered material. In the final chapter of this thesis I analyze the *Symposion* trials through two opposite perspectives, one being the prosecution, the other the defense. The prosecution’s stand in the *Symposion* trials is analyzed through the official rulings and judgements issued by the court on Sándor Rózsa’s case. On the other hand, the interviews that I have conducted represent the defense’s viewpoint on the cases against the journal, Rózsa, Mandić and Tolnai.

The three interviewees who shared their memories and experiences of those days with me are: Sándor Rózsa, Tibor Várady and Katalin Ladik. Rózsa’s name was already mentioned several times as he was one of the three accused in the *Symposion* cases. Tibor Várady was one of the first Symposionist. He was one of the editors and had also published his works in the journal. Moreover, he was the legal representative of *Új Symposion* and the Youth Tribune (the publisher) in the case of the banning of the journal’s 76th number. Várady published a book a few years ago, entitles *Files and People (Spisi i ljudi)* that he wrote based on the documents found in his family archive.⁸ One of the cases he described in this book were the

⁸ See: T. Varadi. “Šándor Roža i jedno od suđenje *Symposionu*” [Sándor Rózsa and One of the *Symposion* Trials]. in: *Spisi i ljudi*. (Novi Sad: Akademska knjiga, 2015). 34-50. To clarify, the transcription of Tibor Várady’s

trials of Sándor Rózsa. I rely on this book in the thesis as well. The third interviewee is Katalin Ladik who was also a member of the first *Symposion* generation and the translator of Mandić's infamous text. Ladik is a performance artists and poet whose contribution to the neo-avantgarde scene in Vojvodina is of great importance. The information I gathered from the three interviews is what I mainly rely on when writing about the Symposionists or *Új Symposion*.

Since oral history is greatly present in this thesis it is necessary to briefly reflect on how this method can be used in history and why it is important. Oral history is often neglected by researchers and historians as it is considered a rather non-objective method. On the other hand, written documents are frequently approached with the assumption that they are entirely objective. Every source requires a researcher's critical approach, therefore written testimonies should not be perceived as generally more reliable in comparison to the oral ones.⁹ Oral history is simultaneously a narrative source and a conversation between the researcher and the interviewee.¹⁰ It represents an individual's memory and interpretation of a certain event intertwined with the social and cultural background of the person, along with the interviewer's own stand on the matter, particularly in the process of the interview's analysis.¹¹ The narratives presented to me by Rózsa, Várady and Ladik are extremely valuable for understanding the *Symposion* trials from the perspective of the people who had actually experienced them. The cultural and social background of the three interviewees is in detail presented through the parts of this paper that look into *Új Symposion* and the people who founded it. Rózsa, Várady and Ladik's testimonies show the *Symposion* trials from the

name in this thesis will be taken from Hungarian. However, the fact that the last name, when citing his book, is spelled "Varadi" derives from the fact that the book quoted here is a Serbian translation.

⁹ A. Portelli. "What Makes Oral History Different". in: R. Perks and A. Thomson (eds.) *The Oral History Reader*. (London: Routledge, 1998). 70-71.

¹⁰ Portelli. "What Makes Oral History Different". 66; L. Abrams. *Oral History Theory*. (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2010). 54.

¹¹ Abrams. *Oral History Theory*. 59.

defense's viewpoint, which is how I incorporate them into the thesis as well, by acknowledging the fact that their memories represent one aspect of this case.

Exploring the case of *Új Symposion* in this paper is used as a case study and a micro level instance for the purpose of demonstrating the practice of political trials in Socialist Yugoslavia. One of the aims of this thesis is to determine why the regime targeted and placed a Hungarian neo-avantgarde journal on trial, given that the *Symposion*'s readership was certainly not numerous. Due to the language it was written in and its neo-avantgarde nature, the journal grabbed the attention of a very limited circle. Another question that I focus on is how the neo-avantgarde can be put on trial, which is also the title of the upcoming, first chapter of this thesis.

1. How can the Neo-Avantgarde be Put on Trial?

While both the Eastern and Western bloc exploited similar tools in their ideological battle during the Cold War era, political trials are often linked exclusively to the socialist states. Associating the socialist regimes with the politicization of trials originates primarily with the 1930s Stalinist Purges. Since Stalinism influenced the establishment of the postwar regimes in Eastern and Central Europe, most of the USSR's practices were transferred to these states. Similar practices were utilized by the Communist Party in post-World War Two Yugoslavia.

My aim in this chapter is to introduce the practice of political trials in Socialist Yugoslavia and to examine their link to the neo-avantgarde cultural movement, or more specifically, the *Új Symposion* journal. In order to do so, I primarily look into the general features of the political trials through the history of Socialist Yugoslavia. Second, I analyze the concept of the "state enemy" and how the New Left ideological movement fits into this context. Somewhat following the ideology of the New Left, emerged the neo-avantgarde on the Yugoslav cultural scene. Since the focus of this thesis is placed on the space of Vojvodina, I look more closely into the neo-avantgarde movement of this region. Finally, the end point of this chapter presents the generation that founded *Új Symposion*.

The question of how the neo-avantgarde can be put on trial, stretches throughout the entire thesis, since the main topic covers the trial cases of a neo-avantgarde journal. However, I placed this question into the title of this chapter since I intend to analyze here the relation of the political trials and the neo-avantgarde movement in broader perspective. Once I grasp the wider context, it will be possible to move to the more specific case of *Új Symposion*.

For exploring the general concept of political trials, I rely on Barbara Falk's book *Making Sense of Political Trials* in which she analyzes this phenomenon and looks into its

utilization during the Cold War era, but also the contemporary War on Terror. Rajko Danilović and Srđan Cvetković wrote on the topic of political trials and the internal enemy in Socialist Yugoslavia; while Radina Vučetić examined the censorship mechanism, predominantly in the Socialist Republic of Serbia and its relation to the cultural scene in the state. The works of the three mentioned authors are used in this chapter for creating a clear context of the phenomena in Socialist Yugoslavia relevant for the subject of the *Új Symposion* trials. Additionally, I rely on the works of Miško Šuvaković for illustrating the general environment of the Yugoslav art scene and the position the neo-avantgarde occupied on it.

1.1. Political Trials in Socialist Yugoslavia

People were often prosecuted because they claimed that there was no freedom in the society, though the [court] judgement itself proved the truth behind that thought.¹²

As in the instance of other communist parties that came into power in Eastern and Central Europe after the Second World War, the influence of the Soviet Union on the CPY was also apparent. Besides the socialist ideology, the practices of its implementation and the consolidation of the Party's authority were also taken over from the USSR. Among these was the use of trials as a means of dealing with political opponents and "state enemies". In this subchapter, I study the practice of political trials in the context of Socialist Yugoslavia. Additionally, my aim is to explore the instances in which the CPY utilized political trials in order to deal with its opponents. As the timeframe of this thesis covers the beginning of the

¹² R. Danilović. *Upotreba neprijatelja* [The Use of the Enemy]. (Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike, 2010). 68. (All quotations that are not originally in English are translated by the author in the thesis.)

1970s, I will not go beyond this period in examining the practice of political trials. However, I will look into the immediate postwar period when the CPY started instituting its power in Yugoslavia.

Up until the first half of the 1970s, three waves of political trials can be recognized in Socialist Yugoslavia. The first one occurred at the end of the Second World War on the Yugoslav territories; the later one was the result of the 1948 Tito-Stalin split; while the last phase addressed in this subchapter appeared as a consequence of the 1968 student demonstrations. Before getting into details of these three periods, it is necessary to briefly explore the questions of what qualifies a trial as political and what the role of the politicized trials was in the Yugoslav socialist system.

Barbara Falk offers a set of criteria which might point to the politicization of judicial systems. According to her, a trial can be considered political if there is: “an obvious political motive for prosecution”; “the accused are political foes”; “the charges are often about [...] the potential for future actions”; and “there is a fixation on confession”.¹³ In her monograph Falk explores the general features of political trials and their roles in society. She stresses that trials in authoritarian regimes are often viewed as “political to the core”; and this makes sense when paired with the insight that “political trials to be fully understood, must be seen in the context of political culture they emblematically represent.”¹⁴ Authoritarian regimes strive to have control over every aspect of the state, what includes the trials that ought to serve the purpose of the political leadership. In these instances, the judicial system is mainly exploited for dealing with the regime’s political opponents. Political trials then become a “contest of competing ideologies” between “the political elites and those considered as enemies.”¹⁵ This

¹³ B. J. Falk. “Making Sense of Political Trials: Causes and Categories”. In: *Controversies in Global Politics & Societies*. Occasional Paper no. 8 (Munk Centre for International Studies, University of Toronto, 2008). 4. Falk lists some other potential indications of the politicization of justice. In the text, I pointed out what I consider are the most significant features among the ones she mentions.

¹⁴ Falk. “Making Sense of Political Trials”. 2/7.

¹⁵ Ibid. 8.

occurred in Yugoslavia; the political trials served the purpose of legitimizing the Party's rule and at the same time eliminating its opponents.

Rajko Danilović in his book questions the legitimacy of trials in Socialist Yugoslavia and lengthily elaborates on why he believes that the judicial system in this state was corrupted. Danilović was a defense attorney in a number of cases that required an encounter with a politicized court. He points out that he used his own experience in writing the book.¹⁶ Danilović offers a detailed explanation of the politicized trial processes in Socialist Yugoslavia, as well as the analysis of the Criminal Code articles (the one from 1977), which were frequently used against the regime's enemies. Additionally, he singles out numerous politicized cases, listing the violations that the judges ascribed to the convicts. Given his position of the defense attorney, Danilović offers the analysis of the political trials mostly in relation to its victims, the opponents of the regime. He claims that the political trials are the most effective measure against the ruling regime's enemies, and that they can serve the regime for frightening the enemies or eliminating them.¹⁷ According to Danilović, the politicized trial processes show us that the individual's political affiliation can often be enough for persecution.¹⁸ Since the internal enemy was divided ideologically into different clusters by the regime, Danilović's assertion that a person's political affiliation can be considered a criminal act might be realistic. Srđan Cvetković supports this claim as he writes that the ones who did not share the Party's ideals were easily identified as the state enemy.¹⁹ Indeed, certain actions of the individual are needed in order for the public prosecutor to actually file a lawsuit. Often it was sufficient for the person of the *wrong* political affiliation to simply publish a provocative text; as in the instance of the *Új Symposion* case, which is the main subject of

¹⁶ Danilović. *Upotreba neprijatelja* [The Use of the Enemy]. 39.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 43.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 40.

¹⁹ Cvetković. *Između srpa i čekića 2*. [Between the Hammer and the Sickle 2]. 63.

this paper. However, this was not a constant state of affairs in Socialist Yugoslavia, what takes us back to the three phases of political trials that I mentioned earlier.

The first wave of political trials appeared right after the Second World War. The Party needed a way to deal with the collaborationists, which was not unusual for the other postwar governments as well. However, the CPY at first disregarded the institutions in the prosecution cases. According to Srđan Cvetković, from 1944 until March 1945 *trials* were conducted outside of institutions and are therefore referred to as *wild cleansings*. These procedures against the collaborators were highly motivated by political and even personal vengeance.²⁰ The postwar repressions were directed against “domestic” collaborators, merely the Ustaša and Četniks. However, the ones taking place in Vojvodina were pointed at the Germans and Hungarians inhabiting this region, since they were collaborators or even occupiers in the eyes of the Party.²¹ In the first half of 1945 trials became institutionalized and the processes led against the war criminals, collaborators and occupiers were moved to the inside of a courtroom. A year later, it seemed that the Party managed to *clear* the state of its internal enemy, at least until 1948.

The immediate afterwar period in Yugoslavia served the Party to establish itself as the liberator of the people and with it to institute itself as the legitimate power holder in the state. The further phase of political trials appeared along with the 1948 Tito-Stalin split as a way to *clear* the Party of Stalinists supporters. Vladimir Petrović in his book covers the roots of the term *cleansing*, which can be linked to other notions besides ethnicity. The one that is essential for the subject of this subchapter is the *class cleansing* of the society. In general, he claims that “revolutionary ‘cleansings’ primarily had a clear political character and class context but had rapidly shifted its course from battling the enemies of the revolution and inner

²⁰ Ibid. 38.

²¹ Ibid. 41-42.

party purges to massive deportations of entire groups.”²² Similar occurrences appeared in Yugoslavia in a very short time span, between 1945 and 1948. Ironically, while battling with Stalinism among its lines the CPY utilized Stalinist measures for the purpose.

The political repressions against the so-called *informbiroists*²³ are an example to which we can relate the upward quoted Petrović’s insight on the “massive deportations of entire groups”. The supporters of Stalin in Socialist Yugoslavia were on the target list of the Party for five years, between 1948 and 1953. These people were deported to various labor camps, amongst which the Goli Otok island was the largest and most infamous one. Unlike the preceding and succeeding political trials, which were aimed at the abolition of the regime’s opposition, the ones against the *informbiroists* had a purpose of re-educating the enemy.²⁴ The difference is also that in the postwar period the CPY was “accepting the concept of *cleansing* as a measure of its own Bolshevik reality.”²⁵ On the other hand, while clearing out the Party lines was a measure inherited from Stalinism, this was not accepted in the period after 1948. At this point Yugoslavia was giving up its “Bolshevik reality” and turning to its own path labeled with liberalization and self-management.

The liberalization of the 1950s and the first half of the 1960s left a permanent mark on Yugoslavia being recognized as a liberal socialist country. Parting with the Soviet Union brought Yugoslavia closer to the Western countries, what becomes most apparent in the cultural relations.²⁶ Additionally, in the mid-sixties, Yugoslavia opened its borders, enabling

²² V. Petrović. *Etničko čišćenje: Geneza koncepta* [Ethnic Cleansing: Origins of the Concept]. (Beograd: Arhipelag; Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2019). 65.

²³ The Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers’ Parties, known in English as Cominform, in Serbo-Croatian is mostly referred to as the *Informbiro*. The Tito-Stalin split is also known as the *Informbiro* period, or the IB period; hence the term *informbiroists* (*informbirovci* in Serbian), which is used here in reference to the Yugoslavs in support of Stalinism.

²⁴ Danilović. *Upotreba neprijatelja* [The Use of the Enemy]. 47.

²⁵ Petrović. *Etničko čišćenje* [Ethnic Cleansing]. 99.

²⁶ While most socialist states restricted any kind of influence from the West (books, movies, etc.), after the split with the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia opened its borders to the cultural exchange with the countries from the Western bloc. This is most visible from the appearance of consumerist culture in Yugoslavia. See: B. Dimitrijević. *Potrošeni socijalizam: Kultura, konzumerizam i društvena imaginacija u Jugoslaviji (1950-1974)*. [Consumed Socialism: Culture, Consumerism and Social Imagination in Yugoslavia (1950-1974)] (Beograd: Fabrika knjiga; Pešćanik, 2016). Regarding the concrete influence of the US cultural politics on the Yugoslav

its citizens to travel without any restrictions. This period is seen as the *golden age* not merely for the Yugoslav cultural scene, but also for its intellectuals. It permitted the emergence of a critical leftist ideology among the Yugoslav intellectuals, but also the youth and artists. However, the followers of the New Left rapidly mounted the pyramid of the Party's internal enemies. The status of the internal enemy of the *New Leftists* will be explained in detail in the upcoming subchapter.

Before jumping to the subject of the internal enemy, I want to address the third wave of political trials that appeared in Yugoslavia, which followed the eruption of the 1968 student demonstrations in Belgrade²⁷ and the 1971 Croatian Spring. The tightening of the regime's control was viewed by the opposition as the restalinization of the self-management socialist system in Yugoslavia.²⁸ The liberalization enjoyed during the previous decade seemed to have changed overnight, as Želimir Žilnik recalls.

My generation had already known that after this wave of re-Stalinisation, the cultural climate and the system values in Yugoslavia during 1972-'73 was showing that it had become some other country, not the same one from 1968-'69. The system we had believed to be open was all of a sudden seen as [an] incredibly auto-destructive one.²⁹

society see: R. Vučetić. *Coca-Cola Socialism: Americanization of the Yugoslav Culture in the Sixties*. (Budapest: CEU Press, 2018).

²⁷ The 1968 demonstrations in Yugoslavia did not occur only in Belgrade, but also in Zagreb and Ljubljana, and partially in Sarajevo, Kragujevac and Niš. However, the student protests in other cities in Yugoslavia were not as big as the ones in Belgrade. Also, concretely the Belgrade protests were a trigger for the gradual re-establishment of the regime's control. See: H. Klasić. *Jugoslavija i svijet 1968*. [Yugoslavia and the World in 1968] (Smederevo: Heliks, 2018).

²⁸ R. Vučetić. *Monopol na istinu. Partija, kultura i cenzura u Srbiji šezdesetih i sedamdesetih godina XX veka* [Monopoly on the Truth. The Party, culture and censorship in Serbia in the 20th Century Sixties and Seventies]. (Beograd: Clio, 2016). 330-331.

²⁹ Ž. Žilnik. "Transkript debate održane 18.11.2005. godine povodom otvaranja izložbe „Trajni čas umetnosti, Novosadska avangarda '60ih i '70ih godina XX veka" u Muzeju Savremene umetnosti u Novom Sadu"/ "The Transcript of an open discussion held on 18 November 2005 at the opening of the exhibition "The Continuous Art Class, The Novi Sad Neo-Avantgarde of the 1960's and 1970's in the Museum of Contemporary Art in Novi Sad". In: *Izostavljena istorija/Omitted History*. (Novi Sad: Daniel Print, 2006). 55.

On the other hand, while the new wave of repressions did seem sudden and unexpected to the artists who experienced this period, the control of the regime existed even in the preceding decade (between the mid-1950s and mid-1960s); although, more subtly.³⁰ The Party financed the publishing of the critically oriented journals and films, what is often viewed as a paradox.³¹ However, in the context in which the authorities strived for control even during the “liberalization period”, it figures that the Party would finance its critics. The possible reasons behind this were Yugoslavia’s appearance on the international scene and the thought that by financing its opponents the Party could somewhat control their activities as well. When the situation started getting out of control, the CPY reestablished the practice of political trials.

Radina Vučetić studies the matter of the Party’s relation to culture in what I labeled here as the third wave of political trials. She places the emphasis on the issue of censorship and how the tightening of the Party’s control in the late 1960s caused an increase in the number of censored content in the press, literature, art, film, theatre and other cultural spheres. She notes that the two leading oppositional fractures in Yugoslavia emerged exactly in the period of the late 1960s and early 1970s – the nationalists and critical leftists (the New Left).³² The two groups were closely linked to the 1968 student movement and the Croatian Spring.

I am not getting into details of the two events, since I do not find the portrayal of their day-to-day actions quite necessary for the context of this paper.³³ On the other hand, the

³⁰ Cvetković. *Između srpa i čekića* 2. [Between the Sickle and the Hammer 2]. 62.

³¹ Vučetić. *Monopol na istinu* [Monopoly on the Truth]. 381.

³² Ibid. 378.

³³ For the more detailed portrayal and analysis of the 1968 student demonstrations in Yugoslavia see: Klasić. *Jugoslavija i svijet 1968* [Yugoslavia and the World in 1968]; N. Popov. *Društveni sukobi – Izazov sociologiji: „Beogradski jun 1968* [Social Conflicts – A Challenge for Sociology: “Belgrade June of 1968”]. (Beograd: Službeni glasnik, 2008); R. Radić (eds.). *1968 – Četrdeset godina posle* [1968 – Forty Years Later]. (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju, 2008). For the Croatian Spring see: J. Irvine, “The Croatian Spring and the Dissolution of Yugoslavia”. in: *State Collapse in South-Eastern Europe: New Perspectives on Yugoslavia’s Disintegration*. (eds.) L. J. Cohen and J. Dragović-Soso (Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2008). pp. 149-169; M. Zubak. “The Croatian Spring: Reinterpreting the Communist Heritage in Post-Communist Croatia”. in: *East Central Europe*, vol. 32/1-2. (January 2008). pp. 191-225 https://brill.com/view/journals/eceu/32/1-2/article-p191_10.xml. (Accessed: June 1, 2020).

consequences of the two movements are quite significant for the subject of this thesis, since in this paper I deal with an instance of their consequences, but on a minor scale. The student demonstrations that were triggered by the global 1968 movement, but had their own demands and beliefs, triggered the regime's need for suppressing the operations of the New Left. The students in Belgrade did not part with socialism; on the contrary, they presented the official program of the CPY as their own, along with the Yugoslav Constitution.³⁴ However, because of this and similar instances, the Party perceived them as a threat to their established order. The problem with the Maspok movement (Croatian Spring) was a different one. The initiators were individuals among the highest authority lines of the Socialist Republic of Croatia. Their main demand was more autonomy and self-governing rights for the SR Croatia. This event prompted the CPY to clear its ranks and to contain any expression of nationalism, not limited to the Croatian fraction.

The re-establishment of political trials at the end of 1960s and beginning of 1970s was different in comparison to the previous two phases. The processes were not directed to one larger group, but targeted different "enemy groupings" of the regime. The political trials were the Party's tool for dealing with these regime enemies. In the context of this paper, the phenomenon of political trials is a central one. Three associates of the *Új Symposion* journal had undergone what I aim to prove were politicized judicial procedures. The journal was founded with the aim of it being a literary, artistic and critical journal in 1965 and was freely published for more than half a decade and suddenly, in 1971, its content was perceived as inappropriate by the state officials. This points to *Symposion* being among the targets of the regime's restrictive politics that followed the 1968 and 1971 demonstrations. For what reason *Új Symposion* was possibly placed in the category of the state's internal enemy is what I aim to explore in the following subchapter. Analyzing more closely the notion and features of the

³⁴ Popov. *Društveni sukobi*. [Social Conflicts]. 44.

internal enemy in Socialist Yugoslavia brings us also closer to the possible answer to the question: how can the neo-avantgarde be put on trial?

1.2. The Internal Enemy in Socialist Yugoslavia

[S]omething that used to be the quality of the Yugoslav model, became drastically shaky and as soon as 1969, '70, '71 very unusual things started happening: banning, mass firing of editorial boards, banning films, where the situation deteriorated even further in 1972 and party in 1973, when a number of people from the world of art were arrested and sentenced [...] Lazar Stojanović, Slavko Bogdanović and Miroslav Mandić.³⁵

Exploring the topic of political trials in Socialist Yugoslavia leads to a new question of: who are the people placed in front the politicized courts? A broad and inexplicit question would be: the state's internal enemies. In this subchapter my aim is to define more closely who the internal enemies of Socialist Yugoslavia were. Since the focus of this thesis is placed in the timeframe of the early 1970s, I will mostly be looking into the emergence of the critical left and the nationalists, as well as the regime's relation to the two groups. The aim of introducing the concept of the internal enemy is to set the adequate framework for the later contextualization of the *Új Symposion* case.

In the Foča Regulations (*Fočanski propisi*)³⁶ from 1942 the term *people's enemy* is encountered for the first time in a document proclaimed by the CPY. The term was used to define anyone who collaborated with the occupation forces.³⁷ Other documents that followed

³⁵ Ž. Žilnik. "Transkript debate"/ "Transcript of an open discussion". 55.

³⁶ The Foča Regulations are an official document, a set of regulations of the CPY from 1942. The regulations were proclaimed during the Second World War in the town of Foča (today's Bosnia and Herzegovina), which was the centre of the partisan's liberated territory.

³⁷ Cvetković. *Između srpa i čekića* 2. [Between a Sickle and a Hammer 2]. 146; Danilović. *Upotreba neprijatelja* [The Use of the Enemy]. 57.

the proclaimed Regulations also dealt with the notion of the people's enemy. The one which I will address here is the Criminal Code of 1951. According to Cvetković the Criminal Code of 1951, in accordance to the politics led by the regime at that time, was another instance of departing with the Soviet state socialism. The Code was a way to democratize and liberalize Socialist Yugoslavia, but also to bring it closer to the Western states. Although, as Cvetković writes, this did not prevent the Party from having control over the sanctioning of political enemies.³⁸ The Criminal Code contained a separate part that was dedicated to the criminal acts against the state and its peoples. This part included the articles on: the counterrevolutionary attack on the state and social organization, the endangerment of the state's autonomy, espionage, aiding the enemy in war, political cooperation with the enemy, sabotage, alliance against the people and the state, etc.³⁹ All of these articles of the Criminal Code specify of how to deal with the internal enemy of the state. However, the ones that are most frequently used in the trials against the enemies address the act of "enemy propaganda" and the "causing of national, racial or religious intolerance, hatred or discord."⁴⁰ Paragraph 1 of the article 118 on the "enemy propaganda" activity states the following:

The one who carries out the propaganda against the state or social organization; or the political, economic, military or other important measures of the people's authorities, with a drawing, inscription, or with a speech on a gathering, in *the intent to undermine* the rule of their own people, the defense power of the state or the economic basis for socialist growth; or to break the brotherhood and unity of the peoples of the Federal Peoples Republic of Yugoslavia, will be punished with a strict prison sentence.⁴¹

Besides being the most common article of the Criminal Code utilized in the judgements of the politicized trials, the "enemy propaganda" article is also inexplicit. "The

³⁸ Cvetković. *Između srpa i čekića 2*. [Between a Sickle and a Hammer 2]. 152.

³⁹ "Criminal Code". in: *Official Journal of FNRJ*. no. 13/7. (Belgrade, March 9, 1951). 196-198.

⁴⁰ "Criminal Code". 198; Cvetković. *Između srpa i čekića 2*. [Between a Sickle and a Hammer 2]. 152.

⁴¹ "Criminal Code". 198. (Emphasis added.)

intent to undermine” the state, the people or the socialist system seems to be enough for an individual to be sentenced to imprisonment. Falk points out that *motive* of the “political foe” is extremely important on political trials; if there is a motive, the accused is probably guilty.⁴² In this sense, I believe we can equalize Falk’s *motive* and the *intent* mentioned in the Criminal Code. The assumption of one’s intent to carry out enemy propaganda was an easy way of dealing with the regime’s enemies.

In the previous subchapter, I partially defined who the state (people’s) enemies were in the afterwar period, up until the early 1950s. However, during the 1960s this number multiplied. Cvetković lists the internal enemy groups, which he states are differentiated by the analysts from the Yugoslav security services. According to this list, two main groups existed by which the internal enemies were classified: the “old civic opposition” and the “new socialist opposition”. The old opposition was constituted mostly of collaborators from the Second World War and other “anti-communist forces”. And while the *old enemies* were not considered a significant threat in the late 1960s, since most of them were already eliminated, the new opposition was seen by the state officials as a serious danger for the self-management socialist system. The bureaucrats (earlier mentioned *informbiroists*, but also *neostalinists*), libero-fractionalists (the liberal fraction within the Party), anarcholiberals, nationalists, supporters of Milovan Đilas and Aleksandar Ranković,⁴³ technocrats and a number of other could be found on the list of the regime’s “new socialist opposition”.⁴⁴ The group labelled as “anarcholiberals” that we encounter here stands for the supporters of the critical left mainly found among the youth (student) organizations and journals, alternative art movements, but also among a number of intellectuals and university professors.

⁴² Falk. “Making Sense of Political Trials”. 14.

⁴³ Both Milovan Đilas and Aleksandar Ranković were in the Party’s hierarchical top when Socialist Yugoslavia was founded. However, eventually both became the regime’s lead enemies.

⁴⁴ Cvetković. *Između srpa i čekića 2*. [Between a Sickle and a Hammer 2]. 358-360.

Two events of the early 1970s influenced the further actions of the regime taken against the internal enemy. One of them was the Twenty-first Session of the Presidency of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia that took place on December 1, 1971. This session marked the beginning of the regime's dealing with the nationalist fraction in the state. Primarily, the clashes started with the Croatian fraction of the Party that stood behind the Maspok movement. However, since the decision made on the session considered the oppression and persecution of the opposition and the political opponents, it was soon expanded onto the rest of the opposition as well.⁴⁵ Várady and Vučetić believe that this session was a trigger for the *Symposion* trials as well.⁴⁶ Given that the banns occurred before the session, this event might have urged the authorities to continue the process by initiating the criminal proceedings against Tolnai, Rózsa and Mandić.

The other act which contributed to the oppressive politics of the state authorities was the publication of Tito's *Letter* in October 1972. In his *Letter* the president of the Republic called for the suppression of the "disideologization", which he defined as an attempt of individuals to undermine the socialist ideology and to negate the revolution.⁴⁷ Tito marked the nationalists, anarcholiberals and the followers of Aleksandar Ranković ("rankovićevština") as the main antisocialist currents, to what he also added a strong criticism of the press and the culture.⁴⁸ Somewhat alike the Twenty-first Session, the *Letter* also dealt with the inner-Party circles. On this occasion the liberal leaders among the Party's highest ranks, Latinka Perović and Marko Nikezić, resigned.⁴⁹ This *Letter* does not have much significance for studying the subject of this thesis, since the *Symposion* trials ended in the first

⁴⁵ Danilović. *Upotreba neprijatelja* [The Use of the Enemy]. 288-289; Cvetković. *Između srpa i čekića 2*. [Between a Sickle and a Hammer 2]. 371.

⁴⁶ T. Várady. Interview conducted by the author. (Budapest: November 5, 2019); Varadi. "Jedno od suđenja *Simpsonianu*" [One of the *Symposion* trials]. 41; Vučetić. *Monopol na istinu* [Monopoly on the Truth]. 64.

⁴⁷ Vučetić. *Monopol na istinu* [Monopoly on the Truth]. 112.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 112.

⁴⁹ Vučetić. *Monopol na istinu* [Monopoly on the Truth]. 110; Cvetković. *Između srpa i čekića 2*. [Between a Sickle and a Hammer 2]. 382.

half of 1971. However, exploring the matter of the internal enemy in Socialist Yugoslavia required the mention of this act as well.

The oppression of the opposition continued even after the two decisive events. Some instances of the regime's ongoing persecutions, however that are related to the position of the New Left, are presented in the following part of the text.

1.2.1. The New Left as the Internal Enemy

It is not unusual that the Party found itself most endangered from the oppositional actions of the groups that were ideologically or otherwise closest to regime.⁵⁰ This is most obvious from the case of Milovan Đilas who once was one of Tito's closest associates, only later to become the number one enemy of the regime. Đilas found himself in front of the court four times, and each time, these trials required specific preparations and propaganda actions from the Party's side.⁵¹ The New Left can be perceived in a similar perspective, since the regime was fighting a battle with it over the "monopoly on the interpretation of Marxism, the revolution, but also of the entire Yugoslav reality."⁵² The place the critical left occupied in the Yugoslav space is of importance for this thesis since *Új Symposion* valued the same ideological principles as the movement in question. Since the New Left was on the regime's list of internal enemies, the people and groups associated with this movement suffered from the Party's suppressive politics expressed through politicized judicial processes and proscriptions.

The main channel for the spreading of critical leftist ideology was the philosophical journal *Praxis*. *Praxis* and the *Korčula Summer School* were active in Yugoslavia for a

⁵⁰ Danilović. *Upotreba neprijatelja* [The Use of the Enemy]. 47-48; Vučetić. *Monopol na istinu* [Monopoly on the Truth]. 245.

⁵¹ Danilović. *Upotreba neprijatelja* [The Use of the Enemy]. 47.

⁵² Vučetić. *Monopol na istinu* [Monopoly on the Truth]. 243.

decade, between 1963 and 1974. The journal and the school endorsed the ideas of the New Left and humanist Marxism. World-renowned intellectuals: Herbert Marcuse, Ernst Bloch, Jürgen Habermas, Leszek Kolakowski, György Lukács and others, participated in both the publishing of the journal and in organizing of the summer school.⁵³ *Praxis* and the *Korčula Summer School* were financed by the state and coexisted in peace with the Party until the outbreak of the 1968 demonstrations. The peaceful coexistence was possible since the Praxists did not negate the legacy of the revolution, nor did they question the self-management system, the Party or president Tito. They did criticize the implementation of the system in practice, what became the core of the problem at the end of the 1960s.⁵⁴ *Praxis* was banned in 1974 and a year later eight professors, former Praxists,⁵⁵ were dismissed from their positions at the Belgrade University. This is one instance of the regime battling with the places of critical thinking and the people who promoted it. The end of *Praxis* marked the end of the New Left's engagement in Yugoslavia.

Besides *Praxis* the issues of a number of other journals and newspapers were banned due to their critical tone (*Vidici*, *Student*, *Jež*, *Új Symposion*). The matter of the youth press (all of these papers were published by students, young authors and artists) will be examined with more attention in the following chapter; although it was necessary to mention them here since they were considered as the centres of the “anarcholiberals” actions.⁵⁶ Also, the black wave movement in cinematography was included in this categorization by the regime and fell victim to the same subjugations as the *critical press*.⁵⁷ All of these publications, including the black wave and similar directions on the Yugoslav cultural scene, were driven by the ideas of

⁵³ See: Klasić. “Časopis *Praxis* i Korčulanska ljetna škola” [The *Praxis* journal and the Korčula Summer School]. in: *Jugoslavija i svijet 1968*. 32-48.

⁵⁴ Vučetić. *Monopol na istinu*. [Monopoly on the Truth]. 246.

⁵⁵ Nebojša Popov, Zagorka Golubović, Svetozar Stojanović, Mihailo Marković, Ljubomir Tadić, Miladin Životić, Dragoljub Mićunović, Trivo Indić.

⁵⁶ Cvetković. *Između srpa i čekića 2*. [Between a Sickle and a Hammer 2]. 409.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 408.

the 1968 movement in Yugoslavia. This implied the criticism of the realization of the socialist ideology which ended up in the establishing of a hierarchical system instead of promoting social equality. Due to this, the Party leaders were called out as the “red bourgeoisie”.⁵⁸ The neo-avantgarde art movement due to its alternative character, subversive and critical tone also falls under the auspices of the New Left.⁵⁹ Its significance for this thesis derives from the fact that *Új Symposion* was a neo-avantgarde journal and had therefore, embraced both the ideological and the cultural leftist criticism.

1.3. The Yugoslav Neo-Avantgarde

Between the two world wars, while Yugoslavia was a bourgeois, multinational state, avant-gardes were treated as the far left fringe, thereby excluded from the corpus of national literature and art. After World War II, when Yugoslavia became a socialist, multinational state, the avant-gardes, neo-avant-gardes, and post-avant-gardes were treated as extreme expressions of Western bourgeois or civilian decadence, cosmopolitanism, and political subversion.⁶⁰

In the previous subchapters I analyzed the operation of political trials and the victims of the politicized jurisdiction in Yugoslavia. This leaves the one missing piece necessary for opening up the main subject of the *Új Symposion* journal – the neo-avantgarde. From Miško Šuvaković’s quote one gets a rather clear impression of the place the neo-avantgarde occupied in Socialist Yugoslavia, what I elaborate on in this subchapter. In the preceding segment of this chapter I have focused on the state’s relations to the New Left that emerged mostly in the

⁵⁸ Ibid. 408-409.

⁵⁹ M. Šuvaković. “Neoavangarda, konceptualna umetnost i krize socijalističkog modernizma” [“Neo-avantgarde, Conceptual Art and the Crisis of Socialist Modernism”]. in: *Republika*, no. 430-431 (June 1-3, 2008). <http://www.republika.co.rs/430-431/19.html>. (Accessed: May 31, 2020).

⁶⁰ M. Šuvaković. “Impossible Histories”. in: M. Šuvaković and D. Đurić (eds.) *Impossible Histories: Historical Avant-gardes, Neo-avant-gardes, and Post-avant-gardes in Yugoslavia 1918-1991*. (MIT Press, 2003). 5.

Yugoslav intellectual sphere. However, the critical left had its own influence on the art scene as well. The intent of this subchapter is to determine the link between the neo-avantgarde and the New Left in Socialist Yugoslavia. Additionally, my aim is to position the neo-avantgarde, not as much on the art and cultural scene, as on the political scene of Socialist Yugoslavia. The exploring of the neo-avantgarde in Yugoslavia in general provides a wider context for studying the emergence of this art movement in Novi Sad and Vojvodina, which *Új Symposion* was part of.

The Yugoslav secession from the Soviet Union included its seclusion from the Eastern bloc even in the cultural sphere. Therefore, starting with the early 1950s the Yugoslav art and cultural scene, according to Piotrowski, resembled more the art practices of the Western countries than those of the Eastern states.⁶¹ The travel restrictions lifted in the 1960s contributed to the distinguishing of Yugoslav artists from their colleagues in other socialist states. Additionally, Yugoslav artists had the opportunity to visit art exhibition and performances abroad, but also, foreign artists could participate in the events of their Yugoslav associates.⁶² This positioning of the Yugoslav artists reflected the political practices carried out by the Yugoslav state officials at the time. The visible presence of the neo-avantgarde on the cultural scene was a way to show the Western states that Yugoslavia was a liberal state that promoted artistic freedoms. On the other hand, already in 1963 one of the first Yugoslav black wave films, *Grad* (City) was banned in a judicial proceeding.⁶³ This collided with Josip Broz Tito's attack on abstract art, which he refers to as "modernist pieces that do not have anything to do with art, let alone our reality."⁶⁴ According to Ješa Denegri, this act could have

⁶¹ P. Piotrowski. *In the Shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-Garde in Eastern Europe, 1945-1989*. (London: Reaktion Books, 2009). 245.

⁶² J. Denegri. "Art in the Past Decade". 8.

⁶³ R. Vučetić. "Između avangarde i cenzure: Tito i umetnost šezdesetih" [Between Avant-garde and Censorship: Tito and the Art in the 1960s]. in: O. Manojlović Pintar, M. Bjelajac and R. Radić (eds.) *Tito – Videnja i tumačenja*. (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije; Arhiv Jugoslavije, 2011). 693.

⁶⁴ Excerpts from the speech can be found in: J. Denegri. "Politički napad na apstraktnu umetnost početkom 1963." [Political Attack on Abstract Art at the Beginning of 1963]. in: *Posleratni*

been influenced by Khrushchev's similar statement made a few days earlier in which the premier of the Soviet Union criticized the modernist art. Therefore, according to Denegri, Tito's attack was a clear political act in which he agreed with Khrushchev on his opinion on art and with that avoided concessions on more serious strategic matters.⁶⁵ This episode is a clear portrayal of how art was viewed in Socialist Yugoslavia and more importantly, how it was used for political purposes, what brings us back to the subject of the neo-avantgarde.

The episode of Tito and the abstract art helps to better comprehend the role the neo-avantgarde played on the political scene by making Yugoslavia seem a rather liberal state. According to Šuvaković, the neo-avantgarde art movement that appeared in Yugoslavia during the late 1960s and early 1970s, reached its peak with the eruption of the 1968 rebellion. Šuvaković highlights the critical engagement of the neo-avantgarde movement which opposed the aspiration of high modernism to narrow its operation to the strictly professional framework. Contrasting modernism, the neo-avantgarde "sought to expand art into everyday life (urbanism, design, advertising, political conflicts, emancipation of individual, psychotherapy) [...] and theoretical teaching (Marxism as the New Left in the West, Praxis in Yugoslavia, structuralism, and materialistic poststructuralism, alternative psychiatry)."⁶⁶ Eventually, the neo-avantgardes role in the sphere of the critical left was to create art that would support the ideology and promote its practices.

In the late 1960s in Yugoslavia emerged the "new art practice", and embodiment of the young (underground) artists' search for a new way to express themselves through art and to oppose the dominant culture in the society. The new art practice suggests the use of new media, such as photography, video, performance, art installations and other, for this purpose.⁶⁷

modernizam/neoavangarde/postmodernizam. Ogledi o jugoslovenskom umetničkom prostoru 1950-1990. (Beograd: Službeni glasnik, 2016). 109-113.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 111.

⁶⁶ M. Šuvaković. "Impossible Histories". 26.

⁶⁷ J. Denegri. "Art in the Past Decade". 8.

These practices all fall under the wing of the neo-avantgarde movement and the majority of artists used some form of the new art practice to express themselves. For instance, Katalin Ladik, a well-known artist of the cultural scene in Vojvodina and one of the *Symposion*'s associates, used body art, language, visual and phonetic poetry as mediums for expressing herself. According to Emese Kürti, Ladik was among the first representatives of the Yugoslav new art practice who draw the people's attention to her performances.⁶⁸ Although in this thesis I use more the term "neo-avantgarde" rather than "new art practice", as it is more inclusive and familiar, I found it necessary in this context to briefly define what the new art practice implies.

The end of the neo-avantgarde movement came along with the "defeat of the alternative youth revolution".⁶⁹ The demonstrations in Belgrade (1968) and Zagreb (1971), as seen from the previous subchapter, had caused the limiting of liberalization in Socialist Yugoslavia. The neo-avantgarde, due to its critical tone, was on the side of the political foes from the regime's perspective. Numerous plays and movies, along with newspapers, journal and literary works of the neo-avantgarde character were banned during this period, which is another instance of how the neo-avantgarde artists shared their history of the later 1960s and early 1970s with the New Left. Sándor Rózsa and Miroslav Mandić who were prosecuted in the *Symposion* case were also victims of this regime's clash with the critical artists. This ought to have somewhat answered the matter of placing the neo-avantgarde on trial. Of course, not all artists found themselves in front of the court, nor did all artistic groups experience the censorship measures. However, they all needed to be cautious and to tone down the criticism once the prohibitions became a regular practice of the regime.

⁶⁸ E. Kürti, *Screaming Hole: Poetry, Sound and Action as Intermedia Practice in the Work of Katalin Ladik*. (Budapest: acb ResearchLab, 2017). 25.

⁶⁹ M. Šuvaković. "Impossible Histories". 26.

Finally, the neo-avantgarde scene was decentralized in Yugoslavia. Artists and artistic groups differently experienced the neo-avantgarde in the federal republics and their cities.⁷⁰ According to Šuvaković the neo-avantgarde in Yugoslavia had three distinct national models: Serbian (different in Belgrade, Novi Sad and Zrenjanin), Croatian and Slovenian.⁷¹ I would add here that the Hungarian minority also made a significant contribution to the Serbian neo-avantgarde fraction (in Novi Sad and Zrenjanin). What the position of the Hungarian artists from Vojvodina was, mostly is considered in this paper through the action and works of the Symposionists. However, before addressing the *Symposion*'s relation to the neo-avantgarde and its specific identity, a brief turn to the Novi Sad art scene is required.

1.3.1. The Novi Sad Neo-Avantgarde Scene

Novi Sad was one of the centres of the federalized neo-avantgarde scene in Yugoslavia. Although, here I cover the actions and practices of the artists and artistic groups in Vojvodina in general, Novi Sad will be placed in the centre of attention since it is the capital of the region and most events and publications relevant for the subject of this thesis did take place in this city. The neo-avantgarde artists in Vojvodina together constituted one generation whose characteristics and activities are presented in this subchapter. The Symposionists played an active part in this generation.

The main base for the artists in Vojvodina was the Youth Tribune founded in Novi Sad in 1954, during the era of Yugoslavia's liberalization. The editor-in-chief of the Tribune in the period between 1968 and 1971 was Judita Šalgo. Practically all the neo-avantgarde

⁷⁰ Piotrowski. *In the Shadow of Yalta*. 306.

⁷¹ M. Šuvaković. "Impossible Histories". 27.

artists and groups, including the journals *Polja* (Fields) and *Új Symposion* were financed and published by the Youth Tribune and with the help of Judita Šalgo.⁷² The Youth Tribune, a centre of the Novi Sad alternative scene, was a place of collaboration between writers and artists.⁷³ Bálint Szombathy, the founder of the *Bosch+Bosch* art group and the graphic design editor of both banned *Symposion* issues,⁷⁴ said that the Youth Tribune was a symbol of freedom for him.⁷⁵ Lazar Stojanović, a film director and journalist, pointed to the fact that the Tribune was “very important, a liberal phenomenon in the cultural life of those years.”⁷⁶ However, as an institution that supported critical, conceptual and other alternative art practices, the Youth Tribune got into conflict with the lead authorities in Novi Sad. Following the replacement of the editorial of the student newspaper *Index* in 1970, which also supported the alternative art scene, the editorial of the Youth Tribune was substituted as well.⁷⁷ This caused a reaction in the Novi Sad art circles.

The art group *Februar* issued in 1971 an “Open Letter to the Yugoslav Public” directly alluding to the strivings and tendencies of the political elites and institutions in Novi Sad for taking control over the culture in the entire region of Vojvodina. The artists pointed out that self-management was impossible in “the reign of terror [...] because the trust of the government is always given to the politically ‘correct’ individuals.”⁷⁸ They also added that these practices “are disabling the democratization of culture and involvement of art in social

⁷² M. Ilić. “‘A Tester for Political Insult’: The Case of Novi Sad’s Youth Tribune, 1968-1971”. in: *Third Text*. vol. 32/4 (2018). 531. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09528822.2018.1505315>. (Accessed: June 1, 2020).

⁷³ Ibid. 530.

⁷⁴ See: E. Kürti. *Transregional Discourses: The Bosch+Bosch Group in the Yugoslav and the Hungarian Avant-garde*. (Budapest: acb ResearchLab, 2016).

⁷⁵ B. Szombathy. “Transkript debate”/“Transcript of an open discussion”. 69.

⁷⁶ L. Stojanović. “Transkript debate”/“Transcript of an open discussion”. 70.

⁷⁷ For more details on the case of the Youth Tribune see: Ilić. “‘A Tester for Political Insult’”. 530-545; M. Ilić. “‘Made in Yugoslavia’: Struggles with Self-Management in the New Art Practice, 1965-1971”. in: *ARTMargins*. vol. 8/1. (February 2019). 6-30. https://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1162/artm_a_00225?journalCode=artm. (Accessed: May 31, 2020).

⁷⁸ Grupa za nove umetnosti “Februar”/New Arts Group “February”. “Otvoreno pismo jugoslovenskoj javnosti”/“Open Letter to the Yugoslav Public”. in: *Izostavljena istorija/Omitted History*. 128-129.

processes”; concluding their letter with the following note: “Our language is art and we do not want it to become political language.”⁷⁹ Most of the artists who signed this were members of the group *Kôd*, an art group from Novi Sad that strived to dematerialize art and whose artists created works reaching from theatre and film to poetry and conceptual art.⁸⁰ Among these artists were also Miroslav Mandić, the author of one of the “incriminated” writings in *Új Symposion*, and his brother Božidar Mandić. Almost a year after the issuing of the letter, in December 1971 Slavko Bogdanović, also a member of *Kôd*, published his article “Underground Song for the Youth Tribune, Novi Sad” in the banned “Underground” issue of the newspaper *Student*. In this text Bogdanović criticized the newly established conditions at the Youth Tribune and the pressures applied to this cultural center, what eventually led to him getting an eight-month prison sentence.⁸¹ The trials and sentencing of Slavko Bogdanović are undoubtedly as important as the judgements of Mandić and Rózsa. However, I do not focus on his case in this thesis since the emphasis is placed specifically on the case of *Új Symposion*, while the neo-avantgarde scene in Vojvodina is used as a context for this main subject.

The letter of the *Februar* group reflected the thoughts of the entire neo-avantgarde movement in Vojvodina (and possibly wider). However, while the artists were asking for more freedom and democratization of art, the state officials did not limit their restrictions to the Youth Tribune and *Index* but continued with further prohibition practices. The most well-known instances of critical art are linked to the black wave films, also referred to as the *new film*. This movement appeared on the Yugoslav cultural scene at the beginning of the 1960s as an aspiration of the filmmakers to distance themselves from the imposed models in cinematography. Additionally, the filmmakers wanted the freedom to express their own views

⁷⁹ Ibid. 128-129.

⁸⁰ See: M. Radojičić. “Activity of the group KOD”. in: *The New Art Practice in Yugoslavia 1966-1978*. 38-46.

⁸¹ M. Ilić. “Made in Yugoslavia”. 26; M. Šuvaković. “Neoavangarda, konceptualna umetnost” [“Neo-avantgarde, Conceptual Art”].

and interpretations of the social and political conditions in the state.⁸² This aspiration of the new film can be reflected onto the entire neo-avantgarde: the ambition to break away from the established norms and create freely. We find this in the upward mentioned letter as well. *Új Symposion* was founded with the same aspirations as it will be presented in the following chapters.

The matter of the black wave films is relevant for this subchapter since the Neoplanta Film, the studio that produced a number of *new films*, was stationed in Novi Sad.⁸³ Among the films produced by the Neoplanta studios was Dušan Makavejev's movie, *W.R.: Mysteries of the Organism* (1971), which became one of the symbols of the socialist regime's censorship and banning policies. *Mysteries of the Organism* went through the official "censorship mechanism" (the Serbian-republic level Film Review Committee), which approved its screening. However, the film was eventually banned due to the "public pressure".⁸⁴ It was not only Makavejev who faced the consequences of this case, but the Neoplanta Film was also affected. The studios lost a significant amount of money and its director, Svetozar Udovički was soon replaced, which was seen as another assault on the neo-avantgarde in Novi Sad.⁸⁵ The banning of Makavejev's film left a significant impact on the neo-avantgarde and leftist groups in Yugoslavia. One of the examples is Miroslav Mandić's text, which became the cause for the banning of *Új Symposion*'s 77th issue. Mandić in his writing criticized the regime's attitude to films, specifically pointing to Makavejev's case. The subject of this text will be further analyzed and presented in the following chapter.

⁸² Vučetić. *Monopol na istinu*. [Monopoly on the Truth]. 266-267.

⁸³ See: A. Rimkute. "Negotiating Self-management while Producing Films – Yugoslav New Wave and Neoplanta Film Studio in 1966-1972." (master's thesis, Central European University, 2014). CEU Library Catalogue.

⁸⁴ For more details on Makavejev's case see: A. Rimkute. "Chapter 4 – 'WR: Misterije organizma' and the End of the Debate". in: "Negotiating Self-management while Producing Films". 80-107.

⁸⁵ Rimkute. *Negotiating Self-management while Producing Films*. 107.

Although not part of the Novi Sad cultural stage, it is also significant to mention the case of Lazar Stojanović here, who made a well-known contribution to the black wave movement with his film *Plastic Jesus* (1971). As in Makavejev's case, this film was banned. However, what made this case even more memorable is the fact that Stojanović got a three-year prison sentence for it; the severest penalty an artist got for publishing their work in Yugoslavia.⁸⁶ Stojanović's film *Plastic Jesus* was the most explicit criticism of Josip Broz Tito in an artwork created until the early 1970s.⁸⁷ It is this criticism that can also serve as a link between Mandić and Stojanović. Besides defending Makavejev, in his text Mandić also disapproved of the building of Tito's cult in the Yugoslav films, what was considered among the severest offenses in Socialist Yugoslavia. In comparison to the number of prohibition and censorship cases in Yugoslavia, not a lot of artists actually had to serve time in prison for their works. Miroslav Mandić, his colleagues Slavko Bogdanović and Lazar Stojanović were among the less fortunate artists.

Šuvaković claims that the imprisonments of Bogdanović and Mandić led to the end of the experimental art and cultural scene in Novi Sad.⁸⁸ Although, a number of artists did continue their works even after all the editorial replacements (in the Youth Tribune, *Index*, *Új Symposion*), they had to adapt to the newly established conditions that required less critical engagement and more self-criticism.

⁸⁶ Regarding the entire case against Stojanović, see: Vučetić. "Odricanje od *Plastičnog Isusa*. (Isus i Jude)" [Renunciation of the *Plastic Jesus* (Jesus and Judases)] *Monopol na istinu*. 325-374.

⁸⁷ R. Vučetić. *Monopol na istinu*. [Monopoly on the Truth]. 357.

⁸⁸ M. Šuvaković. "Neoavangarda, konceptualna umetnost" ["Neo-avantgarde, Conceptual Art].

1.4. The First Generation

The members of the first generation – like all the young people – searched for their place: in the Vojvodinian community, in the broader society, in socialism, Yugoslavia, as being of Hungarian “nationality” (that is minority).⁸⁹

The establishing of *Új Symposion* was tightly linked to a group of people who worked on making this journal a space for the gathering of Hungarian neo-avantgarde artists in Yugoslavia. However, *Symposion* was not restricted for the other nations in Yugoslavia, nor for the Hungarians coming from “the motherland”. My aim in this subchapter is to introduce the generation that not only belonged to the Novi Sad neo-avantgarde scene but has made a significant contribution to it and left the mark of their own. For understanding the nature of the journal and its content, it is necessary primarily to introduce the people that stood behind the literary and artistic works published in *Új Symposion*. The *Symposion*’s content will be the focus of the upcoming chapter.

The notion of generation is frequently linked to *Új Symposion*. Szerbhorváth when writing about the *Symposion*’s “first generation” emphasized the significance of the generational belonging and the visible differences between the earlier generations and the one growing up in the 1950s.⁹⁰ Virág also writes about the “generational cohesion” of the Symposionists and describes *Új Symposion* as a “generational journal” in a number of instances.⁹¹ Even the Symposionists refer to themselves as the “first generation”; for instance, Tibor Várady and Katalin Ladik did so during our interviews. “We were generationally very, very close, in that first *Symposion* generation”, claimed Várady.⁹² Katalin Ladik also pointed

⁸⁹ Gy. Szerbhorváth. *Vajdasági lakoma - Az Új Symposion történetéről* [The Vojvodinian Feast – On the History of *Új Symposion*]. (Pozsony: Kalligram kft., 2005). 54.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 52.

⁹¹ Z. Virág. “Skitnice sa margine: O časopisu ‘Új Symposion’” [Drifters from the Margins: About the ‘Új Symposion’ Journal]. in: *Zlatna greda*, vol. 74 (December 2007). 52.

⁹² Várady, interview.

out that she belonged to “the so-called first *Symposion* generation”, even more because of her works and texts, which were, as she said, “in that *Symposion* spirit.”⁹³ The notion of generation has already been brought up in the previous subchapter regarding the general neo-avantgarde scene in Vojvodina. However, coming back to it in the narrower context of *Új Symposion* was necessary, since the generational narrative is pervasive in the way in which the journal’s 1960s and early 1970s history is told. Additionally, the term “first generation” will be used frequently in the thesis as a reference to the people who founded *Új Symposion* and who made it “the journal for art and critique”, what was also the subtitle of the journal.

One of the main characteristics binding the *new* generation was the space in which its members acted. In the previous chapter it is mentioned that the neo-avantgarde generation in Vojvodina stood up against small-town provincialism,⁹⁴ which we encounter among the principles of the Symposionists as well. During their student years, the Symposionists from all over Vojvodina moved to Novi Sad, the capital of the region. Szerbhorváth points out that moving to the city meant a great challenge, but also a change for the young Symposionists. He describes the influence the urban environment had on this generations lifestyle: “[...] they could move freely in the city, they could now live the coffeehouse life, even bohemianism was not banned, they could read the trendy journals and they could also watch the world’s latest film productions in the cinemas.”⁹⁵ Along with the urban setting, this generation found itself in a new institutional environment as well. Predominantly they were tied to the Department of the Hungarian Language and Literature at the University of Novi Sad, founded

⁹³ K. Ladik. Interview conducted by the author. (Budapest: November 16, 2019).

⁹⁴ See: Kürti. *The Bosch+Bosch Group*. 8-9.

⁹⁵ Szerbhorváth. *Vajdasági lakoma*. [Vojvodinian Feast]. 54.

in 1959 by Ervin Sinkó,⁹⁶ as well as the Youth Tribune.⁹⁷ István Bosnyák,⁹⁸ János Bányai,⁹⁹ Csaba Utasi¹⁰⁰ and László Gerold¹⁰¹ were among the students from the Department of Hungarian studies who joined the *Symposion* circle. On the other hand, Sándor Rózsa was an active member of the Youth Tribune and director of the Tribune's Hungarian program. From there he joined the Symposionists for a very short cooperation.

The first number of *Symposion* (without the *Új*, which was later added at Sinkó's suggestion) came out on December 21, 1961, as a two-page supplement to the journal *Képes Ifjúság* (Youth in Pictures). The editor of this issue was Ottó Tolnai who is also considered to be the central figure in the founding of the journal.¹⁰² Beginning with January 1965, *Új Symposion* was published independently and it very soon became a very respected journal along with the circle it gathered around itself.

"How did that generation come to be is really hard to say, but some really exceptional talents appeared there", emphasized Várady mentioning the names of István Domonkos¹⁰³ and Ottó Tolnai; however, he repeated once again that the entire generation was

⁹⁶ Ervin Sinkó (1898-1967) is considered to be the greatest literary figure among the Yugoslavian Hungarians. Although he started writing and publishing after the First World War, he made the most significant contribution to Yugoslav Hungarian literature during the 1960s. His influence on the founding of *Új Symposion* and on its first generation was crucial. One of his most famous novels is *Egy regény regénye* [A Novel's Novel], published in 1961, is based on his stay in Moscow during the 1930s. See: I. Bori. "Ervin Šinko" [Ervin Sinkó]. in: *Književnost jugoslovenskih Mađara*. (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 1979). 241-247.

⁹⁷ Szerbhorváth. *Vajdasági lakoma*. [Vojvodinian Feast]. 53; Virag. "Skitnice sa margine" [Drifters from the Margins]. 51.

⁹⁸ István Bosnyák (1940-2009) was the first editor in chief and managing editor of *Új Symposion*. In his published writings he extensively dealt with the contemporary socio-political matters. See: Bori. "Generacija esejista" [The Essayist Generation]. in: *Književnost jugoslovenskih Mađara*. 249.

⁹⁹ János Bányai (1939-2016) was a writer and a university professor. He joined the Symposionists from the very beginning. Among other things he published essays, analytical works, etc. See: Bori. "Janoš Banjai" [János Bányai]. in: *Književnost jugoslovenskih Mađara*. 250-251.

¹⁰⁰ Csaba Utasi (1941-2010) was a literary historian and criticist. He was the managing editor of *Új Symposion* after the trials, in 1972-1973. He was also the director of the *Forum* publishing house. See: Bori. "Generacija esejista" [The Essayist Generation]. 248-249.

¹⁰¹ László Gerold (1941-2016) was a drama and theatre criticist. During the 1960s and 1970s, besides writing for *Symposion*, he also wrote drama critiques in *Magyar Szó*. See: Bori. "Generacija esejista" [The Essayist Generation]. 249.

¹⁰² Szerbhorváth. *Vajdasági lakoma*. [Vojvodinian Feast]. 58.

¹⁰³ István Domonkos (1940-) was a Yugoslav Hungarian poet. He started his career with publishing his poems in *Új Symposion*. Unlike most of the Symposionists he was not much interested in the theoretical parts of poetry or art in general. The *Áthúzott versek* [Crossed out Verses] book of poems published in 1971 contains his most famous works. See: I. Bori. "Ištvan Domonkoš" [István Domonkos]. in: *Književnost jugoslovenskih Mađara*. 256-259.

outstanding.¹⁰⁴ Tibor Várady himself was among the first Symposionists. He was the managing editor of the journal in the period between 1969 and 1971. In 1971, Tolnai took over from him and became both the editor in chief and the managing editor of the journal with its 75th issue, the one published right before the bans. Várady was the legal representative of the Youth Tribune and *Új Symposion* in the case of the banning of the 76th issue. He dedicated a chapter of his book to this case, written on basis on his own experience and on the trial documents.¹⁰⁵ Várady also published his own works in the journal. The interview I have conducted with him is extensively used in this thesis as one of the main sources for the *Symposion* trials.

During our interview Várady stressed the “dissident thought” present among the writers and artists gathered around *Új Symposion*. He explained this more closely by pointing out the existence of the revolt in this generation; however, not an anticommunist revolt, but one against the models imposed by the ruling party and the existing literary patterns as well.¹⁰⁶ The issue of dissent is a complex one and it requires a detailed study as to who were the people who called actually themselves “dissidents” in Yugoslavia. Mira Bogdanović in her article on Yugoslav dissidents deals closely with this subject and who could have carried the dissident label in country. Bogdanović looks into the use of this notion in the works of other intellectuals in order to better illustrate who might be considered a dissident on the Yugoslav scene. She notices how the notion of dissent stretches from one extreme to another in the Yugoslav context: while some claim that there are no dissidents, others see them in every person protesting against the ruling regime in Belgrade during the 1990s.¹⁰⁷ Bogdanović

¹⁰⁴ Várady, interview.

¹⁰⁵ See: Varadi. “Jedno od suđenja *Simposionu*” [One of the *Symposion* trials]. 34-50.

¹⁰⁶ Várady, interview. He stresses the same in his book as well Varadi. “Jedno od suđenja *Simposionu*” [One of the *Symposion* trials]. 34.

¹⁰⁷ The protests during the 1990s in Belgrade occurred after the breakup of Socialist Yugoslavia and they were directed against the ruling regime. This is by no means relevant for the subject of this chapter, however Bogdanović uses the protest of 1990s as an instance of how some think of dissent in Yugoslavia as a massive appearance. M. Bogdanović. “Jugoslavenski disidenti i Hladni rat” [Yugoslav Dissidents and the Cold War]. in: *Sociologija* vol. 50/2 (2009). 114.

herself stands behind the thought that dissidents in Yugoslavia practically did not exist. She praises the connection that Pavle Rak makes between the issue of dissent and the state's foreign politics, comparing Yugoslavia to the other socialist countries. In the Eastern European states, dissidents were intellectuals who opposed the imposed regimes in their countries and were forced to emigrate, becoming the main sources and witnesses in the West reporting on the political conditions in the East. On the other hand, the Yugoslav state had established official relations with the Western countries, therefore, the West was not as interested in the Yugoslav intellectuals. The exception being, of course, Milovan Đilas.¹⁰⁸ Trying to untangle the question of dissent Bogdanović relied on the extensive debate led on this issue among the (ex)Yugoslavs.

The debate as to who the dissidents were in Socialist Yugoslavia is still ongoing, as different actions might qualify one of being a dissident or not (again, Bogdanović explains this in more details). Finally, my intent in this thesis is to accept the label used by the contemporary actors to characterize their own actions. In the instance in which Várady uses the notion of dissent and “dissident thought”, he labels actions, or writings in this case, which are opposed to the official, imposed ideals. The lawsuits filed against Mandić and Rózsa, as well as the fact that the first one was imprisoned, while the latter had to leave the country, contribute to the vision of the Symposionists being dissidents.

The Symposionists also saw themselves standing between the Yugoslav and Hungarian dissidents. Várady in our interview clearly defined *Új Symposion* as a Hungarian literary journal, but at the same time, closely related to the dissident literary circles in Yugoslavia.¹⁰⁹ This brings us to the question of the national identity of the Symposionists. The reason for the complexity of this issue is the fact that the journal was published in the

¹⁰⁸ See: M. Bogdanović. “Jugoslavenski disidenti i Hladni rat” [Yugoslav Dissidents and the Cold War].120-125.

¹⁰⁹ Várady, interview.

Hungarian language, but in Yugoslavia, where Serbo-Croatian was the official state language. Kürti in her book on Katalin Ladik deals in detail with the question of the use of the Hungarian language in literary works and cultural performances among the Hungarian Yugoslav writers and artists.¹¹⁰ In particular these artists and writers from Vojvodina found a way to use the linguistic complexity they faced to their advantage. Probably the most suitable instance is Katalin Ladik's poetry and artistic performances. Ladik herself, during our interview, pointed out the problem the Hungarian artists in Yugoslavia encountered regarding language and translation. She said that she performed mostly in Hungarian, however sometimes using both languages, which finally, made her performances unique and authentic on the international scene. Additionally, when we discussed what *Új Symposion* meant for her personally, Ladik said: "It meant that I was not alone. That I was with like-minded people, who spoke Hungarian, which was very important for me."¹¹¹ Speaking the same language was a way for the Hungarians in Vojvodina to identify with each other. However, speaking and writing in Hungarian did not alienate them from the Yugoslav culture.

Szerbhorváth writes that, "[a]lthough the Symposionists were Hungarians, they swore on Yugoslavism."¹¹² While this is also one way to put it, I have to add that I do not think they had another choice. While the culture, tradition and language of the national minorities was mostly respected in Socialist Yugoslavia, they were still required to be devoted to the country (and the regime). This was most certainly expected of the Symposionists as well. And while there is no doubt of them belonging to the general Yugoslav literary and cultural scene, their identity is a more complex question. Finally, as in the matter of dissent, imposing a national identity on the Symposionists is a wrong approach to this matter. Instead, I wish to conclude

¹¹⁰ See: Kürti. "Minor Literature and Yugoslav Identity". in: *Screaming Hole*. 11-20.

¹¹¹ Ladik, interview.

¹¹² Szerbhorváth. *Vajdasági lakoma*. [Vojvodinian Feast]. 86.

this discussion with Várady's testimony: although *Új Symposion* was a Hungarian journal, it had tight bonds to the Yugoslav literary, and I would add artistic, circles.

2. *Új Symposion* and the Youth Press

In the previous chapter, I have analyzed the phenomenon of political trials in Yugoslavia and the New Left, as well as the neo-avantgarde in link to this practice. The *Új Symposion* journal was also introduced, with the focus placed on the foundation of the journal, the familiarization with its first generation and its link to the Novi Sad neo-avantgarde scene. In this chapter, which brings the thesis a step closer to the *Symposion* trial cases, I portray the content of the journal. The aim of the chapter is to gain sense of what texts and artworks lie behind the “journal for art and critique” and to present and understand the context in which the two banned articles were published. The main questions that should be addressed here are if and how “Everyday Abortion” and “Song about a Film” fit into the general content of *Új Symposion*.

However, before investigating the stated questions I address some more general aspects of the Yugoslav (youth) press during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Primarily I place focus on the “Law on Press and Other Forms of Information” (press law) that shaped the policies of press publication in Socialist Yugoslavia. The authorities relied on the press law for banning the newspapers and journals that were not in complete agreeance with the state led politics. Most of the newspapers and journals that were banned on the basis of this law, including *Új Symposion*, can be placed into the category of the youth press. Therefore, following the presentation and brief examination of the press law’s content, I explore the presence of the youth press on the Yugoslav political, social and cultural scene. The role of the youth newspapers and journals becomes quite significant starting with the 1968 demonstrations as these papers were the main (and only) voice of the youth, but also

intellectuals and artists who opposed the regime. This role and other features of the youth press will be examined in the second part of this chapter.

The main source used in the first subchapter is the press law. The purpose of introducing and analyzing the content of this law is to illustrate the press publication policies in Socialist Yugoslavia and the relation the authorities had toward the press. In the third and fourth subchapter I rely on the journal itself as the main source for exploring the content and explaining the nature of *Új Symposion*. In this chapter I also rely on the work of Radina Vučetić who dedicates a part of her book to the controversies of the press law as well as to the consequences of its implementation, mostly regarding the youth press. Marko Zubak deals in detail with the topic of the youth press in Yugoslavia and some of his works are addressed in this chapter as well. By relying on the listed sources and secondary literature my aim is to present the context in which *Új Symposion* appeared and how this might have affected the journal and the prosecution cases against it.

2.1. The Regime against the Youth: The Press Law

The initial fiercer wave [of repressions] appeared already in June 1968 affecting those papers that completely took on the efforts of the student movement, but also those paper and journal that carried its voice to the public. At the time, the main form of repression was expressed through court injunctions backed by political pressure.¹¹³

For understanding the position of the youth press in Socialist Yugoslavia, it is necessary to primarily introduce and analyze the “Law on Press and Other Forms of Information” proclaimed in 1960. The press law was used in the banning cases of all the newspapers and

¹¹³ Popov. *Društveni sukobi*. [Social Conflicts]. 232.

journals that were considered problematic, or a threat (in the internal enemy sense) by the regime. The youth press at the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s was most affected by the employment of this law.¹¹⁴ Looking into the content of the press law and its impact on the youth press contributes to the investigation of the legal background of the *Új Symposion* case. Radina Vučetić analyzed in detail a debate “Justice and Politics” (“Pravosuđe i politika”) published in a Serbian daily newspaper *Politika*, in which jurists commented on the operating of the judicial authorities and legislative practices in the state.¹¹⁵ In the subchapter, besides the press law I also rely on this analysis for illustrating the opinions and views of the contemporaries on the matter of the implementation of the press law.

From the regime’s point of view the press functioned as one of the instances of the democratization process of the Yugoslav society. The purpose of the variety of newspapers and journals published in Yugoslavia was to mirror the liberalization of the state that started in the 1950s. While the press law indicated free publishing, at the same time it found a way to limit the proclaimed freedom. It was article 1 of the press law that declared freedom of the press and of other forms of information “for the purpose of the realization of the citizens’ democratic rights.”¹¹⁶ However, article 20 was considered a main contradiction to this, since it obliged the publishers of each paper to provide three copies of every published piece to the district attorney.¹¹⁷ This proves that the prosecutor was somewhat involved in the publication process, what directly limits the newspapers’ and journals’ right to publish their works freely. For the case of *Új Symposion* it is also necessary to note that point 2 of this article implies an additional requirement for the press published in a foreign language; it suggests that one copy of the paper’s issue should be provided to the republican administrative authority in charge

¹¹⁴ Cvetković. *Između srpa i čekića 2*. [Between a Sickle and a Hammer 2]. 155.

¹¹⁵ Vučetić. *Monopol na istinu*. [Monopoly on the Truth]. 67-71.

¹¹⁶ “Law on Press and Other Forms of Information”. in: *Official Journal of FNRY*. no. 45/16. (Belgrade, November 9, 1960). 814.

¹¹⁷ “Law on Press and Other Forms of Information”. 816; Vučetić. *Monopol na istinu*. [Monopoly on the Truth]. 67-68.

of information matters.¹¹⁸ While this does not seem as an additional complication for the foreign language press, it does demand an extra step and further possible obstacles in their publication process.

The banning of newspapers and journals was most frequently executed on the basis of article 52, section 1, point 2, where the following was stated: “[if] false, corrupted or alarming news; or claims that cause disturbance among the citizens and public order and peace, are presented and spread”, the distribution of those publications will be banned.¹¹⁹ This article (and section) caused a lot of resentment due the ambiguity of its tone. Some jurists claimed that the article was unconstitutional and that the authorities could enforce it based on their individual likings and believes.¹²⁰ They also argued that this article provided basis for conducting political decisions.¹²¹ In the article it was also stated that a paper should be banned if it: “performs criminal acts against the peoples and the state, or the Yugoslav armed forces”; moreover, if it “brings harm to the honor and reputation of our [the Yugoslav] peoples, their highest representatives and the President of the Republic; or to the honor and reputation of foreign peoples, their chiefs and diplomatic representatives”; also it if “gravely insults the morale”; or if the given paper’s content “brings harm to the children’s and youth’s education.”¹²² The presented points in article 52 seem to share the mentioned ambiguity, since it is not defined in the law what an insult of the morale implies, or how a newspaper could bring harm to the youth’s education. By presenting the other points of this article it becomes clearer that their interpretation was left to the authorities, district attorneys and judges.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. 816.

¹¹⁹ “Law on Press and Other Forms of Information”. 819; Vučetić. *Monopol na istinu*. [Monopoly on the Truth]. 67.

¹²⁰ Cvetković. *Između srpa i čekića 2*. [Between a Sickle and a Hammer 2]. 155-156; Vučetić. *Monopol na istinu*. [Monopoly on the Truth]. 68.

¹²¹ Vučetić. *Monopol na istinu*. [Monopoly on the Truth]. 68.

¹²² “Law on Press and Other Forms of Information”. 819.

The banning of *Új Symposion* was also based on article 52 of the press law. The points that are directly cited in the ruling for the banning of the journal's 76th issue (for the publication of Sándor Rózsa's text) were the ones that concern the performing of criminal acts against the state and its citizens, and the bringing of harm to the people, the state and the president.¹²³ What the examples cited from Rózsa's text for proving the judge's ruling were is a subject I present and explore in detail in the third chapter of this thesis. Here I simply wanted to point out how the press law directly influenced the *Symposion* case.

Nebojša Popov claimed that the press law "endangers the legal security of the citizens and with it the social order" in the state.¹²⁴ All the criticisms of this law were based on the fact that after 1968 it practically was turned into a tool of the authorities in their battle against the internal enemy. In the previous chapter I have examined the position of the internal enemy in Socialist Yugoslavia. This subchapter adds to that context by briefly analyzing the content of the press law since this it was often used in the banning and trial cases that included the youth and alternative press, which fitted into the regime's portrait of the internal enemy. How and why the youth press was targeted by the Yugoslav authorities is a subject covered in the following subchapter.

¹²³ Ruling of the District Court in Novi Sad, no. K. 340/71. From November 26, 1971. In: Private collection of Tibor Várady.

¹²⁴ Popov. *Društveni sukobi*. [Social Conflicts]. 242.

2.2. The Voice of the Youth

Magazines were also very important. Today magazines do not have the same role, the same meaning they used to have 35 and 40 years ago. Today magazines are not banned as they used to be.¹²⁵

This statement of Zvonko Maković, a Croatian art historian and the editor of numerous journals, among which student journals such as Zagreb's *Studentski list* (Student journal), is a reference to the 1960s and 1970s in Yugoslavia and the importance magazines (or journals) had in that period. I found that this quote is an adequate introduction to the subject of the Yugoslav youth press. The focus of this subchapter is placed on the literary and art (youth) journals that can be linked to *Új Symposion*. One of the central matters addressed are also the cases of bans and editorial replacements that are symptomatic for the period after 1968. The question why the youth newspapers and journals were targeted by the regime in this period is closely linked to the matters discussed in the previous chapter, primarily the critical left. This link is further elaborated in the following paragraphs.

The discord between the youth (student) organizations and the state authorities became a reality predominantly after the 1968 student demonstrations. The youth, at least in the Socialist Republic of Serbia, came ideologically closer to the New Left, which disagreed with the official politics propagated by the Party. Probably the most relevant source for exploring the relations between the youth and the state authorities is the youth press. The bans of numerous youth newspapers and journals and the replacement of editorials were the regime's way of dealing with the critical thought that emerged in the 1960s in Yugoslavia. The youth press was somewhat an embodiment of the critical left in this period.

¹²⁵ Z. Maković. "Transkript debate"/ "Transcript of an open discussion". 64.

The youth press can be defined as a set of newspapers and magazines, journals that were founded and published by the student and youth organizations.¹²⁶ During the second half of the 1960s the youth press became a place of rebellion, criticism and promotion of new ideas,¹²⁷ what the regime saw as a threat similarly to what we met in the subchapter on the New Left. The fact is that the ideas of the critical left, “the ruthless criticism of everything that exists”, were actually promoted in Socialist Yugoslavia through the *Praxis* philosophical journal.¹²⁸ While I addressed the matter of *Praxis* in the previous chapter, here I wanted to point out that this journal belonged to the youth culture (press) besides the critical left, and that it had made a significant impact on a number of other publications. The newspapers *Student*, *Susret*, along with the monthly journal *Vidici*, and a number of other youth papers published in the Socialist Republic of Serbia, were greatly influenced by the critical thinking that originated from *Praxis*.¹²⁹ In history, they also became tied by the same faith that eventually awaited all of them.

The press served as the main source for the Yugoslav youth for the information from the international scene, not only regarding the student movements, but the youth culture in general. Eventually, these reports inspired the student’s in Yugoslavia to initiate a rebellion of their own in 1968.¹³⁰ In Yugoslavia, *Student* was the main media which gave the students of the Belgrade University voice to communicate with the public during the 1968 demonstrations. They did not have access to publish in any other newspaper, what eventually intensified their revolt toward the authorities and mainstream media.¹³¹ The students found

¹²⁶ M. Zubak. “Pripremanje terena: Odjek globalnog studentskog bunta 1968. godine u jugoslovenskom omladinskom i studentskom tisku” [Setting the Stage: The Echo of the Global Student Revolt of 1968 in Yugoslav Youth and Student Press]. in: Radić, Radmila (eds.). *1968 – Četrdeset godina posle [1968 – Forty Years Later]*. (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju, 2008). 419-420.

¹²⁷ Ibid. 420.

¹²⁸ See: Klasić. “Časopis *Praxis* i Korčulanska ljetna škola” [The *Praxis* journal and the Korčula Summer School]. in: *Jugoslavija i svijet 1968*. 32-48.

¹²⁹ Vučetić. *Monopol na istinu*. [Monopoly on the Truth]. 249.

¹³⁰ M. Zubak. “Pripremanje terena” [Setting the Stage.] 421.

¹³¹ Popov. *Društveni sukobi*. [Social Conflicts]. 229.

that the freedom of the press had been jeopardized accusing the media of spreading lies regarding the demonstrations.¹³² The fight led by the students through their newspaper exceeded the duration of the June riots, but it had also spread from the limit of one newspaper to a number of other youth papers and journals. *Student* issues were banned numerous times, not just in 1968, but at the beginning of the 1970s as well. The first replacement of its editorial came in 1969 after a long battle with the authorities.¹³³ However, the people that stood behind *Student* in this period did not entirely give up. A number of them ended up in the editorial of a literary journal *Vidici* [Perspectives] which, eventually, was also banned in 1971, at least a couple of times.¹³⁴ Although, *Student*'s succeeding editors continued with the critical tone, what ultimately initiated a new clash with the regime, new bans and finally even legal prosecutions in December 1971.¹³⁵ It is interesting to notice that numerous bans of the press occurred in 1971, when the *Symposion* numbers were prohibited as well: *Student*, *Vidici*, *Fleš*, *Anali pravnog fakulteta* [Annals of the Faculty of Law], *Stradija*, *Kultura* and number of others.¹³⁶ It seems that 1971 was a memorable year for the youth press in Yugoslavia. The unrests that started in Croatia in May 1971 (Croatian Spring, Maspok movement) could have been the close causes of these massive prohibitions; although the announcement of dealing with the opposition came after the infamous Twenty-first Session (December 1, 1971).

The youth press also contributed greatly to the politicization of culture. In their newspapers and journals, the youth promoted the *underground* culture, which was extensively

¹³² Ibid. 230.

¹³³ Ibid. 239-240.

¹³⁴ M. Zubak. "Omladinski tisak i kulturna strana studentskog pokreta u Socijalističkoj Federativnoj Republici Jugoslaviji (1968.-1972.)" [Youth Press and Cultural Aspect of the Students' Movement in Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (1968-1972)]. in: *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*. vol. 46/1. (2014). 42. <https://hrcak.srce.hr/122059>. (Accessed: June 11, 2020); Cvetković. *Između srpa i čekića* 2. [Between a Sickle and a Hammer 2]. 409.

¹³⁵ Vučetić. *Monopol na istinu*. [Monopoly on the Truth]. 64-65; The prosecution of Slavko Bogdanović is tied to the matter of the *Student*'s banning and the legal prosecutions filed in December 1971, since his article was the reason behind this banning, and he was among the defendants in this case. See: M. Ilić. "'Made in Yugoslavia'". 26; Švaković. "Neoavangarda, konceptualna umetnost" ["Neo-avantgarde, Conceptual Art"].

¹³⁶ Vučetić. *Monopol na istinu*. [Monopoly on the Truth]. 64-66.

politicized and conflicted to the imposed models.¹³⁷ However, more important for the subject of this thesis were the equally alternative neo-avantgarde journals, which were also part of the youth press and culture. In Novi Sad the Youth Tribune issued a Serbian-language literary journal *Polja*, which is considered to be a sister paper of *Új Symposion*. Additionally, a Hungarian-language journal *Híd* [Bridge] was published in Vojvodina beginning with the interwar period. Its relations to *Új Symposion* were also close. Also, a number of neo-avantgarde journals were published in Belgrade and Zagreb. Their publication was encouraged by cultural institutions and, similarly to the youth newspapers, these journals helped promote the international art scene in Yugoslavia and even create links with it.¹³⁸ In regard to the youth's strive to produce politically engaged culture, Marko Zubak writes about the aspiration of the young journalists to create their own authentic art practices. As an example of this he refers to the publications of *OHO*, a neo-avantgarde art group from Ljubljana, in the Slovenian student journal *Tribuna*.¹³⁹ This example and the aspiration of the youth for producing authentic culture speaks directly to *Új Symposion* and the first generation's aims of making this journal a centre for the Yugoslav Hungarian neo-avantgarde artists and authors.

As can be seen from this subchapter, the purposes of the press were multiple for the youth in Socialist Yugoslavia. They transmitted valuable information from the international scene, they promoted the culture and ideology of the youth; simply, they were a means of communication for the young people. In this manner were both the New Left and the neo-avantgarde promoted. I have noted in the subchapter on the critical left that the journal *Praxis* was the main propagator of this ideology, but the rest of the youth newspapers and journals

¹³⁷ The banned issue of *Student* from December 1971 where Bogdanović published his article was a number dedicated to the underground. M. Zubak. "Omladinski tisak i kulturna strana studentskog pokreta" [Youth Press and Cultural Aspect of Students' Movement]. 49-50.

¹³⁸ See: D. Šimičić. "From *Zenit* to *Mental Space*." in: *Impossible Histories*. 294-330.

¹³⁹ M. Zubak. "Omladinski tisak i kulturna strana studentskog pokreta" [Youth Press and Cultural Aspect of Students' Movement]. 47.

presented in this chapter have made their own contribution to this purpose. So did *Új Symposion*, which is one of the reasons it fits into the context of the youth press, the other being the generational belonging.

2.3. “Journal for Art and Critique”

“The journal was revolutionary, both in its content and appearance.”¹⁴⁰

The previous chapter was an introduction to the further dealings with the *Új Symposion* journal, since the youth press presents a context for the *Symposion*’s “associates” on the media scene in Yugoslavia. Moreover, in the first chapter of the thesis I covered the political and cultural operation of the New Left and the neo-avantgarde, showing the establishing of the *Új Symposion* journal. In this context I also reflected on the Youth Tribune, as the publisher of the journal, and introduced the first *Symposion* generation, whose members are the main actors in the subject of this paper. In this subchapter, my intention is to look into the content of *Új Symposion* for the purpose of gaining a sense of the setting in which the two “problematic” writings of Sándor Rózsa and Miroslav Mandić were published. This serves as an introduction to the following part of this chapter where I present the two texts. I do not conduct a detailed content analysis of all the texts published in *Új Symposion* in the late 1960s and early 1970s, since it is not essential for the subject of this paper. Besides using the journal as my main source in this subchapter, I partially rely on the conducted oral history interviews, as well as the secondary literature that deals with *Új Symposion* in various contexts.

¹⁴⁰ Várady, interview.

In the previous chapter I have discussed the neo-avantgarde nature of the journal, however, mostly proving this point by introducing the writers and artists that formed the first *Symposion* generation. Here, the neo-avantgarde will be perceived through the journal's content, which did not encompass only literary works, but was in various instances engaged with conceptual art, musical, and cinematographic realizations.¹⁴¹ As the generation that founded it, *Symposion* itself was similarly versatile in the literary and artistic context.

I have previously elaborated on how *Új Symposion* fits into the Yugoslav cultural space and tried to illustrate its closeness to Vojvodina's neo-avantgarde circles. And although I specified that in this thesis I deal with *Symposion* mainly from the Yugoslav perspective, its Hungarian connections are briefly covered here. Primarily, it is important to note the impact of Lajos Kassák's works on *Új Symposion*. As explained by Emese Kürti, the leftist ideology to which *Symposion* is linked derives partially from Kassák's influence.¹⁴² Kassák published two journals, *Út* (Road) and *Ma* (Today), which inspired the neo-avantgarde artists in the 1960s. Imre Bori published a number of articles in *Új Symposion* dedicated to Kassák and his literary works.¹⁴³ It was not by accident that *Symposion* was one of the main journals to carry out Kassák's legacy. This was mostly due to the more liberal politics of the Yugoslav regime in comparison to other socialist countries. These circumstances are ultimately what brought Hungarian writers and artists from Hungary to Yugoslavia.

Rózsa and Várady mentioned famous Hungarian writers and intellectuals (dissidents) who published in *Új Symposion*. György Konrád, Dezső Mészöly, and Gyula Illyés came up

¹⁴¹ Virag. "Skitnice sa margine" [Drifters from the Margins]. 50.

¹⁴² Kürti. *Screaming Hole*. 16; E. Kürti. "UFO Party: Az *Új Symposion* folyóirat szerepe a magyarországi neoavantgárdban" [UFO Party: The Role of the *Új Symposion* Journal in the Hungarian Neo-Avantgarde]. in: *Tiszatáj*. vol. 72/6 (June 2018). 77. <http://tiszataj.bibl.u-szeged.hu/24502/>. (Accessed: May 26, 2020).

¹⁴³ For instance: I. Bori. "Kassák Lajos – problémák" [Kassák Lajos – Problems]. in: *Új Symposion*. no. 8. (August 1965). 26-27; I. Bori. "Kassák, a lírikus" [Kassák, the lyricist]. in: *Új Symposion*. no. 9-10. (September-October 1965). 1 and 26; I. Bori. "Kassák, a lírikus" [Kassák, the lyricist]. in: *Új Symposion*. no. 11. (November 1965). But the Symposionists also published some works of Kassák himself, for instance: L. Kassák. "Kedves kollégák, barátaink" [Dear colleagues, Friends]. in: *Új Symposion*. no. 20-20 (1967).

during the interviews, in relation to the journal.¹⁴⁴ According to Várady Hungarian dissidents were often publishing their writings in *Új Symposion* due to the journals “privileged position” – “[t]herefore, we [Symposionists] were a *haven* of a sort for the intellectuals from Hungary”, Várady added.¹⁴⁵ This privileged position was an allusion to the beforehand mentioned greater freedom existing in Yugoslavia. Kürti also mentions this image of the Symposionist being privileged in the eyes of the Hungarians across the border. Similarly to Várady, she writes in more detail about *Symposion* being a place where Hungarians from Hungary could freely publish their works. She mentions 1967 as the year when the neo-avantgardists from Hungary started their cooperation with the Symposionists. From Kürti’s article we get a more complete impression as to how this cooperation functioned. Among other things, she brings forward the story of Csaba Koncz, who managed to emigrate from Hungary to Austria, through Yugoslavia, with the help of the Symposionists.¹⁴⁶ This speaks to the observation Ladik made during our interview: “for the Hungarians in Romania, and for the Hungarians in Hungary, in reality, it [*Új Symposion*] was a window to the West”, she said.¹⁴⁷

Symposion was not liberal only in comparison to the publications available in Hungary. Its leftist character was also *avant-garde* for the Yugoslav context. *Új Symposion* found itself in the company of *Praxis*, *Polja* and *Vidici*, the journals that published contents that were not entirely acceptable to the regime. The subtitle of *Új Symposion*, “journal for art and critique” suited the character of the journal’s content. The criticism present in *Symposion* was similar to the one found in the other youth newspapers and journals. The Symposionists published writings of well-known intellectuals who belonged to the critical leftist circles, such as: Herbert Marcuse, György Lukács, Leszek Kolakowski, and others.¹⁴⁸ Additionally, text

¹⁴⁴ Várady, interview; Rózsa, interview.

¹⁴⁵ Várady, interview. (Emphasis added by the author.)

¹⁴⁶ Kürti. “UFO Party”. 76-83.

¹⁴⁷ Ladik, interview.

¹⁴⁸ Some of the texts published: H. Marcuse. “Etika és forradalom” [“Ethics and Revolution”]. trans. Z. Apró. in: *Új Symposion*. no. 59 (March 1970). 9-12; Gy. Lukács. “Taktika és etika” [Tactics and Ethics]. in: *Új*

written by the representatives of the Yugoslav New Left (for instance Nebojša Popov and Gajo Petrović) were also present in the journal.¹⁴⁹ These texts were published following the 1968 movement in Yugoslavia and their critical tone undoubtedly places *Új Symposion* among the representatives of the Yugoslav New Left. The Symposionists themselves added to this tone with the texts of their own.¹⁵⁰ I do not go into details of the contents of these texts since it is not necessary for the topic of this thesis. My aim was to briefly illustrate the nature of the texts in *Új Symposion* in order to present the context in which Rózsa and Mandić's writings were published.

The "art" part of the *Symposion*'s subtitle was represented through visual poetry, numerous drawings, photographs and other artistic practices of the neo-avantgarde that could be found on the pages of the journal itself. Even in these instances it becomes clear that the Symposionists followed the latest practices of, not just the Yugoslav, but the international alternative art scene. For instance, an entire number of *Új Symposion* in 1968 was dedicated to the youth cultural movement that globally marked that year.¹⁵¹ However, both ideologically and artistically *Új Symposion* primarily followed the Yugoslav (alternative) trends.

While being part of the Yugoslav cultural and artistic scene had a positive and progressive connotation during the late 1950s and first half of the 1960s, after 1968 this drastically changed. *Új Symposion* experienced both realities and the main topic of this thesis explores how it was affected by the political changes that came after the student

Symposion. no. 1 (January 1965). 1 and 4-7; L. Kolakowski. "Mit jelent ma a baloldal?" [What does the Left Mean Today?]. in: *Új Symposion*. no. 43 (November 1968).

¹⁴⁹ Popov was among the Praxists and in 1975 he was one of the professor's dismissed from the Belgrade University. See: N. Popov. "Az egyetemista mozgalom értéklehetősége" [The Option Value of the Student Movement]. trans. I. Brasnyó. in: *Új Symposion*. no. 58 (February, 1970). 9-10; N. Popov. "A társadalmi összetűzések formái és jellegzetessége" [Forms and Characteristics of Social Conflicts]. in: *Új Symposion*. no. 74 (June, 1971); G. Petrović. "A filozófia és forradalom: Húsz kérdéskör" [Philosophy and Revolution: Twenty Issues]. trans. G. Vajda. in: *Új Symposion*. no. 53 (September, 1969). 13-14.

¹⁵⁰ See some of the examples: T. Várady. "Nagyhatalmak és ideológia" [Great Power and Ideology]. in: *Új Symposion*. no. 59. (March, 1970) 12. I. Bosnyák. "Diktatúra" [Dictatorship]. in: *Új Symposion*. no. 68 (December, 1970). 17; I. Bosnyák. "Szabad-e sztrájkolni" [Is the strike allowed]. in: *Új Symposion*. no. 55. (November, 1969), 28. A large number of politically engaged and critically oriented texts in *Új Symposion* could be found in a section entitled "The Centrifugal Corner" ("Centrifugális sarok").

¹⁵¹ *Új Symposion*. no. 36 (April, 1968).

demonstrations. It is safe to say that it followed the faith of the Yugoslav New Left and the neo-avantgarde. The *Symposion*'s two issues were banned in 1971 similarly to the instances of other youth papers. In the succeeding part of this chapter I analyze the content of the texts that were listed by the prosecution as causes for the journal's banning.

2.4. The Two “Incriminated” Texts

It was [the article was written] after a conversation in the student dorm. And I wrote it word by word, adding some things to it. And that is it [...] that is how it happened between us. It [the article] was completely innocent.¹⁵²

Although not quite part of the *Symposion*'s first generation, Sándor Rózsa and Miroslav Mandić ended up being among the central figures in the history of the journal. Neither of them took part in the publishing, but they were associated with *Új Symposion* through the activities of other artistic groups and cultural institutions. It was mostly the neo-avantgarde that brought Rózsa and Mandić closer to the Symposionists. In this subchapter I present the “incriminated” texts written by the two artists who were not destined to become regular publishers of *Új Symposion*. My intention is to portray parts of the two writings in order to illustrate the character and the tone with which they were written. I will not analyze in this subchapter the prosecution's nor the defense's position regarding the two texts, since that is the central subject of the upcoming chapter.

The 76th and 77th issue of *Új Symposion* were August and September numbers; however, instead of appearing in the two months, the publication of both issues was late, and

¹⁵² Rózsa, interview.

they were printed only in November 1971.¹⁵³ In the later statement of the journal's editorial board, they ascribed the banning of the two issues in part to the *Symposion*'s late publication. According to the board, "the society's political atmosphere substantially changed" in those two or three months the print of the two *Symposion* numbers was delayed, which eventually led to the "incriminated writings taking a different tone from the one they would have if published on time."¹⁵⁴ Whether the late printing of the two issues might have somewhat contributed to the *Symposion* trials is a rather complicated question. Although the circumstances did change in Yugoslavia during the late 1960s and early 1970s, the print delay was merely a couple of months.

The Twenty-first Session of the Presidency of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, when it was decided that the authorities would deal with the regime's opponents, had taken place in December 1971, after the 76th *Symposion* issue was already banned. The reason why I am bringing back the subject of this session is the editorial board's claim of the change in the country's political circumstances. As I stated, the Party did change its inner politics after 1968 but visible changes in 1971 occurred after the December 1, therefore the print delay probably did not make much difference. What the declared fight against the opposition on the Twenty-first Session might have influenced were the soon proclaimed prosecution charges, a thought Tibor Várady and Radina Vučetić also brought forward.¹⁵⁵

The reason why I focused on the question of the print delay this much is to try and demonstrate

¹⁵³ The editorial board of *Új Symposion* indicated the delay of the prints in a statement published after the banning. Az Új Symposion szerkesztő bizottsága. "Szerkesztőségi közlemény" [The Editorial's Statement]. in: *Új Symposion*, no. 80 (December 1971). 441. Furthermore, according to Szerbhorváth, the 77th issue appeared two weeks before (on November 4) the 76th one (on November 18), in 1971. Szerbhorváth. *Vajdasági lakoma*. [Vojvodinian Feast] 259. I have not encountered elsewhere the exact date when the 77th issue was printed. However, according to the judgement in the criminal proceedings against Rózsa and Tolnai, the 76th issue was printed out on the 18th of November. It is stated in the document that the circulation of this *Symposion* number was 1500 copies, a majority of which was distributed. On the other hand, Várady points to the delay of the 76th number of *Új Symposion* and to the fact that "[t]he entire issue was printed, it just was not distributed." Varadi. "Jedno od suđenja *Simposionu*" [One of the *Symposion* trials]. 36.

¹⁵⁴ Az Új Symposion szerkesztő bizottsága. "Szerkesztőségi közlemény" [The editorial's statement]. 441.

¹⁵⁵ Várady, interview; Varadi. "Jedno od suđenja *Simposionu*" [One of the *Symposion* trials]. 41; Vučetić. *Monopol na istinu*. [Monopoly on the Truth]. 64.

that this brief postponement probably did not change much; however, the short period between the trial cases for the banning of the two issues and the criminal proceedings seemingly did change a lot. This matter is addressed with more details in the following chapter of this thesis where I focus on the trials from the two opposed sides.

According to Szerbhorváth the year 1971 was peculiar for several reasons for *Új Symposion*. Beginning with this year Magdolna Danyi, who came to be the editor in chief of the journal in 1974 and marked the coming of its second generation, was part of the *Symposion*'s editorial board. Also, from the January issue (1971) the journal was published in a smaller format. Finally, that was the year when the “*Symposion* movement” marked a decade of its existence.¹⁵⁶ Nonetheless, the year 1971 in the *Symposion*'s history became known for the bans of “Everyday Abortion” and “Song about a Film”.

2.4.1. Sándor Rózsa and “Everyday Abortion”

In 1971, when he stepped into the *Symposion*'s offices, Sándor Rózsa (born in 1948 in Kanjiža, a small town in Vojvodina) was a student at the Faculty of Sciences, at the Department of Chemistry in Novi Sad. Up until then, he was a director of the Youth Tribune's Hungarian program and a writer for the *Képes Ifjúság* [Youth in Pictures] journal. He was famous for the happenings he performed at the Youth Tribune, two of which were described to me by Rózsa himself. One of his performances consisted of Rózsa peeling a banana, eating the peel, while throwing away its inside. According to the artist, that symbolized Yugoslav socialism. On another occasion, Rózsa recited Petőfi Sándor's “National Song” (“Nemzeti

¹⁵⁶ The *Symposion* as an annex to the journal *Képes Ifjúság* published its first number in 1961. Szerbhorváth. *Vajdasági lakoma*. [Vojvodinian Feast] 257.

Dal”), that begins with the words: „Talpra Magyar”, which means: “On your feet Hungarian”. The *irony* behind this act is that he did it standing upside-down.¹⁵⁷ The text he later on published in *Új Symposion* had the same sarcastic tone we find in his performances.

Rózsa described the days he spent at the Youth Tribune as the years of the biggest freedom in Yugoslavia. However, later he added: “We were free, up to a point. We did not speak about the Communist Party, nor the dictatorship.”¹⁵⁸ As to how he ended up publishing in *Új Symposion*, Rózsa said that Tolnai approached him after one of the discussions at the Youth Tribune, offering him to publish his work in *Symposion*. Rózsa’s association with the journal ended up being his last “performance” in Yugoslavia.

The *Symposion*’s 76th issue was dedicated to the works of young authors, who had not yet published their works. Sándor Rózsa was one of them. Rózsa’s “Everyday Abortion” (“Mindennapi Abortusz”) was the writer’s first publication in *Új Symposion*. “Everyday Abortion” is a short story, a *humoresque*,¹⁵⁹ published on pages 344 and 345 of *Új Symposion*. The text is written in a form of dialogue between students in a room of a student dormitory. The topics of the conversation covered the economic, social and political conditions in the country. Yugoslavia is never openly mentioned in the writing, but the connotations are clear.

They come here from the Republic of PI-CHAD,¹⁶⁰ additionally their father was a cannibal, they swindle all around Europe. Opels, Volkswagens with foreign

¹⁵⁷ S. Rózsa. Interview conducted by the author. (Budapest: October 18, 2019). Várady also describes these acts in his book. Varadi. “Jedno od suđenja *Simposionu*” [One of the *Symposion* trials]. 37.

¹⁵⁸ Rózsa, interview.

¹⁵⁹ Originally, in English a *humoresque* is a word for a musical, usually a piano composition. See: The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. “Humoresque”. in: *Encyclopedia Britannica*. 1998. <https://www.britannica.com/art/humoresque-music> (June 4, 2020). However, in the context of this paper I will be using it as a word for a short story that contains humor, since it was used a number of times in this context by Várady (however, in Serbian), but also in the official prosecution and court documents. Várady. (2019, November 5). Personal interview conducted by Katarina Beširević; Varadi. “Jedno od suđenja *Simposionu*” [One of the *Symposion* trials]. 42. In the ruling of the District Court for the banning of the 76th issue of *Új Symposion* it is stated that Várady, the *Symposion*’s legal consultant on the case, “presented the incriminated article as a *humoresque*.” Ruling of the District Court in Novi Sad, no. K. 340/71. From November 26, 1971. In: Private collection of Tibor Várady.

¹⁶⁰ It is a word play in Hungarian. While the author refers to the north-central African country Chad, written like this “Pi-Chad” it can also be read as a swearword in Hungarian.

licence plates, are filled with dollars, and plus the state subsidizes them; of course, we are playing nice on the outside, but we ourselves do not have anything to eat. I just want to know why we are sucking up to these banana-republics.¹⁶¹

This part of the text satirically indicates the relationship Socialist Yugoslavia had with other Non-Aligned countries. Continuing this discussion, one of the students in the writing compared the position of the Hungarians in Vojvodina to that of the African Americans in the United States.¹⁶²

During the further discussion of the students in the text, they continued debating the subject of communism.

– What would you do if you were the president of the republic? – Laci asked.

– I would resign. – Gru replied. – I would desert to China. The big Mao held a speech: “Comrades, we have built socialism and we are on our way to communism.” A Chinese guy: “But Mao, I am hungry!” Mao: “Hush! We are not eating on the way”! He-he-he-he. It’s good, isn’t it? Yesterday my professor told me.

– Yet, what is your opinion on socialism?

– If you really wish, I will tell you: my father went to steal a melon, he forgot to bring a bag. Inc-pinc,¹⁶³ you are out!

– Didn’t you want to be a member [of the Party]? – I asked Gru – they need such big-mouthed guys there.

– Yes, once I decided that I will join in. But I ran so hard, that I got out on the other side – Gru explained.¹⁶⁴

In the conversation one of the students (Gru) criticized not just the Yugoslav but also the Chinese socialist system, while the other student seems to be mocking him for his critical

¹⁶¹ S. Rózsa. “Mindennapi Abortusz” [Everyday Abortion]. in: *Új Symposion*, no. 76 (August 1971). 344-345.

¹⁶² Ibid. 345. I will elaborate on this further in the following chapter (the part dedicated to the prosecution), since both parts of the text were listed, by the district attorney and the judge, as reasons for banning the 76th issue of *Új Symposion*. In: Ruling of the district attorney’s Office in Novi Sad, no. Ut. br. 75/71. From November 24, 1971. In: Private collection of Várady Tibor. 2; Ruling of the District Court in Novi Sad, no. K. 340/71. From November 26, 1971. In: Private collection of Tibor Várady. 3.

¹⁶³ “Inc-pinc” is an example of a Hungarian counting-out game/counting rhyme.

¹⁶⁴ Rózsa. “Mindennapi Abortusz” [Everyday Abortion]. 345.

opinion on socialism, as he himself (Gru) used to be a Party member. Having in mind the satirical tone of the text, one might even say that Rózsa is ridiculing not just the socialist system, but its critics as well. However, the state prosecutor did not perceive the text in that way.

I cited some parts of Rózsa's text not just to portray the content of it, but to more clearly illustrate the manner in which it was written. However, the question of how the prosecution interpreted "Everyday Abortion", as well as how the defense presented it, is a matter that requires a more detailed analysis, to which I have dedicated the parts of the next chapter.

Some of the other text published in the 76th issue of the *Symposion* had a similar tone to that of Rózsa's writing. For instance, István Bosnyák published a text entitled "The Work Actions and 'pure numbers'" in which he criticizes an article published in the journal *NIN*, which blamed the youth organizations for the money lost in the "Banjaluka 71" project. Bosnyák stands in the defense of the youth, even at times criticizing the self-management system.¹⁶⁵ In his other article, published in the same issue, Bosnyák openly criticizes the poet Miroslav Antić for writing poems in praise of politicians and the fact that he is privileged because of this.¹⁶⁶ In Rózsa's text one encounters sarcastic insights on the position of Hungarians in Yugoslavia. László Garai, in the same issue, writes a similar criticism, but without the sarcastic note to it. Garai claims that based on statistical data it becomes clear there are not enough Hungarians attending universities in Yugoslavia. Also, he criticizes the non-existence of a student newspaper published in Hungarian in Novi Sad.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ I. Bosnyák. "A munkaakciók és 'tisztá számok'" [The Work Actions and "pure numbers"]. in: *Új Symposion*. no. 76 (August 1971). 355.

¹⁶⁶ I. Bosnyák. "'Privilegizáltak' és az éhségstrájk, avagy adalék a szociális fantáziátlanság újjabbkori történetéhez." [The Privileged and the Hunger Strike, or an Addition to the Modern History of Social Fantasy] in: *Új Symposion*. no. 76 (August 1971). 356.

¹⁶⁷ L. Garai. "Egy magyaryelvű egyetemista lap szükségéről" [About the Need for a Hungarian-Language Student Newspaper]. in: *Új Symposion*. no. 76 (August 1971). On the journal's back cover.

Based on the other articles published in the 76th issue of *Új Symposion* it becomes clear that Rózsa's text was not the only "provocative" one. Szerbhorváth speculates that Rózsa's writing might have caught the eyes of "the censors" since it was not written in a small font, on the back of the journal, as was Garai's article. Although later in the text he does add that the most important reason for the banning of the journal was Rózsa's dealing with the "taboo topics" of the Yugoslav Republic.¹⁶⁸ While the issue of the *font* is less likely to be relevant, the taboo topics in Rózsa's article (the position of the Hungarian minority compared to that of the African Americans, the criticism of the socialist system, etc.) are listed in the prosecutor's elaboration on why the 76th issue got banned. However, what remains unclear is why "Everyday Abortion" is targeted by the state prosecutor, while the other text that have a similar critical tone are not mentioned in neither of the prosecution's documents.

2.4.2. Miroslav Mandić and "Song about a Film"

Miroslav Mandić (born in 1949) began his artistic engagement in the group *Kôd* (1970-1971), where he familiarized himself with conceptual art and experimental poetry. In 1971 he participated in the works of groups *January* and *February* where he worked on creating politically engaged art.¹⁶⁹ When he mentioned Mandić, Várady pointed to his incredible talent. He stressed the quality of the literary writings published by both Miroslav Mandić and his younger brother, Božidar Mandić.¹⁷⁰ Like Rózsa, Mandić also was a performance artist, but most of his performative works came after he served the prison sentence.

¹⁶⁸ Szerbhorváth. *Vajdasági lakoma*. [Vojvodinian Feast]. 260-261.

¹⁶⁹ Šuvaković. "Neoavangarda, konceptualna umetnost" [Neo-avantgarde, Conceptual Art].

¹⁷⁰ Várady, interview.

In his youth Mandić had developed an interest in film. Disappointed after the banning of Dušan Makavejev's film *W.R.: Mysteries of the Organism*, Mandić wrote the text "Song about a Film", which was later published in *Új Symposion*. As in the case of Rózsa and his text, this was Mandić's last publication in *Symposion*, as well. Before his publication in *Új Symposion*, Mandić was a writer for the journal *Polja*. The text was originally written in Serbian, while Katalin Ladik translated it to Hungarian. The reason why Mandić published the text in Hungarian instead of Serbian remains unknown to me. I can only speculate that he assumed the text would be less visible published in a Hungarian journal instead of a Serbian one.

The 77th issue of *Új Symposion* was a theme number dedicated to cinema. In Socialist Yugoslavia, cinematography was greatly respected and extensively used for propaganda purposes. However, at the same time cinematography suffered considerably from the regime's bans and censorship, what was especially characteristic for the films and filmmakers of the Black Wave movement. In the previous chapter, I have already addressed the subject of the *new film* in Yugoslavia; here I briefly return to one instance, which is particularly important for the discussion on Mandić's text.

In 1971 Dušan Makavejev released his famous film, *W.R.: Mysteries of the Organism*, which was eventually banned due to "public pressure".¹⁷¹ The banning of Makavejev's film left a huge impact on the Yugoslav art scene, including Miroslav Mandić. Mandić in "Song about a Film" openly condemns the forbidding of Makavejev's film, while criticizing "Western films (*Neretva*, *Sutjeska*) as displaying Soviet ideological taste."¹⁷² He also adds that "[t]hese petty films do not belong to this [Yugoslav] society. Yugoslavia is not the USA nor the USSR. Some still cannot understand this."¹⁷³ As with the leftists or the neo-

¹⁷¹ See: A. Rimkute. "Chapter 4 – 'WR: Misterije organizma' and the End of the Debate". 80-107.

¹⁷² M. Mandić. "Vers a Filmről: Szonett avagy tizennégy verssor" [Song about a Film: The Sonnet or the Fourteen Verses]. trans. K. Ladik. in: *Új Symposion*, no. 77 (September 1971). 379.

¹⁷³ Ibid. 379.

avantgardists in Yugoslavia, Mandić also was not opposed to socialism in Yugoslavia. One does encounter criticism of the Yugoslav state system in the text, however, in reference to its implementation and not the ideology as such.

The Yugoslav worker is the avant-garde of the workers' movement, and the Yugoslav Cerberus¹⁷⁴ is the American prosperity and the bad imitation of the Russian force.¹⁷⁵

This quote from the text is used to portray the connection of Mandić's narrative to that of the New Left. The contempt for Soviet influence in Yugoslavia, which we encounter in parts of "Song about a Film", was omnipresent among the regime's leftist critics. The criticism the author directs at Yugoslav cinematography points also to the Soviet influence for using film for propaganda purposes. Along with this, Mandić calls out the Yugoslav society for not recognizing the art behind films, but instead using film mainly for entertainment, similarly to concerts. He judges film's "fake cultural role" in Yugoslavia and calls the banning of Makavejev's film "a primitive situation".¹⁷⁶

Mandić concludes his article with instructions on how to make a film about the revolution.

For the film REVOLUTIONS there is no need of a: camera, cameraman, director, screenwriter, costume designer, scenographer, actors, extras. The film needs life. The filming should be shot on a daily basis, until we die.¹⁷⁷

He adds to the instructions two "scenarios" of how to make films entitled "Josip Broz Tito" and "Workers".

¹⁷⁴ Cerberus is used here in reference to the creature, a three-headed dog, from the Greek mythology. Previously in the text, Mandić writes the following: "The W.R. film reveals that in Yugoslavia a large group of people help those in need by – looking. In the Greek mythology these people were played by animals, and they called them Cerberi." Mandić. "Vers a Filmról" [Song about a Film]. 379.

¹⁷⁵ Mandić. "Vers a Filmról" [Song about a Film]. 379.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. 379.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. 389.

scenario for a movie entitled JOSIP BROZ TITO

Record a colored photograph of Josip Broz Tito in a single shot for two whole hours. The camera is still. Together with the end caption the narrator declares that this was Josip Broz Tito.

scenario for a move entitled WORKERS

Record Yugoslavia's every worker. One worker per scene in which the worker in question announces his personal information.¹⁷⁸

The part regarding a film about Tito was considered the most “problematic” by the state officials and it was the main reason for the later criminal proceedings against Mandić.¹⁷⁹

“Song about a Film” was not the only text Mandić published in *Új Symposion*. Also in 1971, in *Symposion*'s March issue (73rd), along with his colleague from the group *Kôd* Slavko Bogdanović, Mandić published a text entitled “L.H.O.O.Q. To the Yugoslav Public and to the Yugoslav Institutions”. This text was also translated to Hungarian by Katalin Ladik. Its critical tone was fairly obvious as Mandić and Bogdanović openly condemn the control established by the Yugoslav regime. The two authors praise the idea of freedom, which, according to them, is not possible in a system that strives to control everything. At a certain point they emphasize that: “Stalin wore and wears the red star as do we. Does that mean that the Yugoslav flag is the flag of Stalinism because it has a red star?”¹⁸⁰ The criticism continues extensively throughout the text and the explicit mention of Yugoslavia and Yugoslavism is not left out. “Does it bother anyone to write that chauvinism exists in Yugoslavia?”¹⁸¹ Additionally, the two authors directly mention Josip Broz Tito in the text: “who does the truth

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. 389.

¹⁷⁹ Šuvaković. „Neoavangarda, konceptualna umetnost” [Neo-avantgarde, Conceptual Art].

¹⁸⁰ M. Mandić and S. Bogdanović. “L.H.O.O.Q. A jugoszláv közvéleménynek és a jugoszláv intézményeknek” [L.H.O.O.Q. To the Yugoslav Public and to the Yugoslav Institutions], trans. K. Ladik. in: *Új Symposion*. no. 73 (March, 1971). 207.

¹⁸¹ Ibid. 209.

about Yugoslavia being a kingdom before the war bother? The surname of poet Tito. Name and surname of the Marshal of SFRY.”¹⁸²

Instead of analyzing the content of the *Symposion*’s 77th number and comparing “Song about a Film” to the other texts published in that issue, I decided to briefly examine Mandić’s first text printed in the journal. Comparing “Song about a Film” to “L.H.O.O.Q.” clearly shows the more explicit criticism present in the later. The disapproval of Stalinism although visible in both writings seems to be more subtle in the context of the banned text. From the previous subchapters it becomes obvious that Rózsa and Mandić’s texts were certainly not exceptions in *Symposion*’s content, but that the criticism was present in the journal from the very beginning. However, the comparison of Mandić’s two writings also shows that the banning of the 77th issue was not directed against Mandić himself, since he had published a more provocative article in the journal a couple of months earlier. The fact that he already published “L.H.O.O.Q.” in *Új Symposion* translated into Hungarian and that the text was not banned, probably encouraged Mandić to continue writing for this journal. It is notable that both Mandić and Bogdanović went to prison in 1972 for the text they published after the one they co-authored.

My intention in this subchapter in regard to both texts was merely to present the writings as they are. The idea was to avoid the prosecutions and the defense’s standpoint “in this phase”, so that I could gradually reveal each layer the two writings had gained over time. From the content presented in this chapter, I would conclude that Rózsa’s and Mandić’s texts did not stand out among the other published articles in *Új Symposion*. The question of what urged the authorities to ban the two issues of *Symposion* remains and I focus on it extensively in the third and final chapter of this thesis.

¹⁸² Ibid. 209.

3. The Case of *Új Symposion*

In the last couple of months in 1971, two issues of the *Új Symposion* journal were banned. A few months later, in 1972, Sándor Rózsa and Miroslav Mandić, the authors of the texts that were considered *problematic* by the prosecution, were sentenced to prison. Along with them, the editor of the journal, Ottó Tolnai was prosecuted, however receiving a suspended sentence. With this, *Symposion* got caught up in large-scale politics led by Communist Party of Yugoslavia, which entailed tightening the regime's control for the purpose of defeating the internal enemy and consolidating the Party lines. The intention of this chapter is to analyze the established regime control on a micro level of a literary journal's banning. Exploring the discourses and dynamics underlying the *Új Symposion* case certainly provides additional insight into the state's stance on the neo-avantgarde scene in Vojvodina as well as the youth culture in the same region. My case study also offers a further understanding of the *rebirth* of political trials that suppressed specific groups in Yugoslavia in the late 1960s and early 1970s, what is ultimately the main aim of this thesis.

In this chapter two approaches to the case of *Új Symposion* are applied. The aim is to study the case through two conflicting perspectives, the prosecution and the defense. By focusing on these two aspects of the trial, I hope to gain sense of what instigated the banning of the two *Symposion* issues and why. This question was raised by both Tibor Várady and György Szerbhorváth, however, from different perspectives. While Várady wrote the history of the trials in a memoir form relying on his own experience along with the trial documents, for Szerbhorváth the 1971 banning and the 1972 trials were merely part of the *Új Symposion*'s

history and not the central focus of his work.¹⁸³ Also, Szerbhorváth focuses on the nationalist context of the trials, whilst here, my intention is to place emphasis on the *Symposion* case in the context of the New Left and the neo-avantgarde movements in Yugoslavia.

Following the two subchapters that discuss the trials, the third part is focused on the *Symposion* case in general and the question of why this case is relevant for the period of the early 1970s in Yugoslavia when there were numerous instances of censorship, banning and imprisonments. The fourth segment of this chapter is centered around the aftermath of the 1971 and 1972 banning and prosecution cases of the *Symposionists*. The intent is to explore the consequences that the general politics of Yugoslav officials left on this neo-avantgarde literary journal. The main questions are: did the measures implemented by the regime trigger a change in the publication policy of the journal, as well as what was their impact on first generation *Symposion* writers like Tolnai, Rózsa and Mandić?

The main sources used in this chapter are the judgements and prosecution documents from the trials against Sándor Rózsa, which serve as the main instance of the prosecution's position in the case. For analyzing the case of Miroslav Mandić, due to the lack of access to primary sources, I will mostly rely on secondary literature. Since Ottó Tolnai was the editor-in-chief for both issues, the charges against him were tied to both Rózsa and Mandić's case and therefore require the use of both types of sources. My interviews with Sándor Rózsa, Tibor Várady and Katalin Ladik are used to portray the defense's standpoint during the *Új Symposion* trials. Additionally, the subchapter written from the defense's point of view includes official statements of the journal's editorial board, the Workers Council¹⁸⁴ and the Youth Tribune, regarding the banning of the two journal numbers. And while the three administrative organs did not have significant roles in the defense of the journal or the authors,

¹⁸³ Varadi, "Jedno od suđenja *Simposionu*" [One of the *Symposion* trials]. 34-50; Szerbhorváth. *Vajdasági Lakoma* [The Vojvodinian Feast].

¹⁸⁴ Workers Councils were established as the main administrative organs in the Yugoslav self-management system. Each enterprise, institution, or in this case a journal, had its own Workers Council.

they all were important factors in the processes of editing and publishing the journal; therefore, their statements were crucial for the further faith of *Új Symposion*.

3.1. Malicious Texts: The Prosecution

“The incriminated article distortedly, maliciously and falsely presents the socio-political conditions in the country.”¹⁸⁵

The quoted sentence is taken from the ruling of the District Court of Novi Sad in the case of the *Új Symposion* 76th issue’s banning and it serves as a brief illustration of how the prosecution viewed Sándor Rózsa’s text. In this subchapter I analyze the case of *Új Symposion* from the standpoint of the district attorney and the court, by which I aim to present the functioning of the politicized trials in Socialist Yugoslavia. An addition to this analysis is the following subchapter which explores the defense’s side to the story.

In the second chapter of this thesis I have provided selected parts from both “Everyday Abortion” and “Song about a Film” in order to illustrate more effectively their subjects and the tone in which the two texts were written. Some of the previously cited parts might match the quotes from this chapter, although the quotes here present the parts of the writings singled out by the District Court as *evidence* or reasons for banning the two *Symposion* issues. It is important to note that I do not display every excerpt from the documents, but the ones that I consider to be the most relevant for this thesis.

¹⁸⁵ Ruling of the District Court in Novi Sad, no. K. 340/71. From November 26, 1971. In: Private collection of Tibor Várady. 4.

On November 24, 1971 the district attorney delivered a ruling to the District Court of Novi Sad for the temporary banning of *Új Symposion*'s 76th issue in which Sándor Rózsa's text "Everyday Abortion" was published;¹⁸⁶ along with the ruling, a proposal for the temporary banning of this issue was presented.¹⁸⁷ A couple of days later, on November 26, the District Court of Novi Sad delivered a ruling for the banning of this issue and with this accepted the district attorney's appeal.¹⁸⁸ According to the district attorney:

This writing ["Everyday Abortion"], both in its content and the form in which it was written, through a dialogue of the persons in the piece, maliciously and tendentiously depicts the socio-political and socio-economic conditions in our country [Yugoslavia]; disparages and negates our socialist self-management system and socialism as a system in general. It contains false news [lažne vesti] and deviant claims that cause concern among the citizens, it causes national and racial hatred, it brings harm to the honor and reputation of our peoples and the President of the Republic.¹⁸⁹

The court agreed on the arguments brought forward by the district attorney and banned the 76th issue of the journal on the grounds of article 52, paragraph 1, points 1 and 7 of the press law.¹⁹⁰ According to these points, the distribution of the 76th issue was banned since Rózsa's article was considered "a criminal act against the people and the state or the Yugoslav armed forces", and it "inflicts harm to the honor and reputation of our peoples, their highest authorities and the President of the Republic, as well as to the honor and reputation of foreign peoples, and chiefs and diplomatic representatives of foreign countries".¹⁹¹ As I have presented and examined the press law in the second chapter of the thesis, here I focus more

¹⁸⁶ Ruling of the District Attorney's Office in Novi Sad, no. Ut. br. 75/71. From November 24, 1971. In: Private collection of Tibor Várady.

¹⁸⁷ Motion of the District Attorney's Office in Novi Sad, no. Ut. br. 75/71. From November 24, 1971. In: Private collection of Tibor Várady.

¹⁸⁸ Ruling of the District Court in Novi Sad, no. K. 340/71.

¹⁸⁹ Ruling of the District Attorney's Office in Novi Sad, no. Ut. br. 75/71. 1.

¹⁹⁰ Ruling of the District Court in Novi Sad, no. K. 340/71. 1

¹⁹¹ "Law on Press and Other Forms of Information". 819.

on why the prosecution and the court saw Rózsa's article as a violation of the beforehand mentioned article 52.

What was perceived as especially problematic in the writing was the display of the position of the Hungarian minority in Yugoslavia, which the judge (Rihard Hibš) interpreted as, a "malicious spreading of lies on chauvinistic bases, suitable for stirring national hatred and intolerance."¹⁹² Along with this, it was stressed in the ruling that "unlike the pre-war Kingdom of Yugoslavia, in which the Hungarian nationality did not have an equal position, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, since the time it was founded, took up the task and was striving for rightly regulating international relations within the state and, by that, also the position of the Hungarian nationality."¹⁹³ The nationalist label was taken quite seriously in Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav socialist state was built on the bases of the "brotherhood and unity" ideology, in which there was no place for nationalist outbursts. Therefore, the argument that Rózsa's text is "stirring nationalist hatred" is the most elaborated one in the District Court's ruling. The comparison to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in this segment also adds to the critical, or even judgemental tone toward nationalism, since the royalists were also among the regime's enemies. This way, it seems, the judge wanted to condemn the spreading of nationalist intolerance, by also linking it to one of the regime's fiercest opponents.

Along with an elaboration regarding why Rózsa's text is considered inappropriate, the documents contain parts of "Everyday Abortion", which are used as proof for the judge's ruling. The court recognized the false illustration of the status of the Hungarian minority in Yugoslavia in the following part of the text:

¹⁹² Ruling of the District Court in Novi Sad, no. K. 340/71. 3.

¹⁹³ Ibid. 4.

In reality we are Black people – I said – Black people with Hungarian skin. If you get into a store and you start speaking Hungarian, they will not serve you, the same as they do not serve the Black people in America [...] They peel off two skins form a Hungarian worker – I said – primarily because he is a worker, then because he is Hungarian.¹⁹⁴

Associating the status of the Hungarian minority in Yugoslavia with that of the African Americans in the United States was seen by the court as completely inappropriate, due to the “unjust position” of the African Americans who are “identified with their fight for political and economic equality.” Therefore, this comparison is perceived as “an insult to the Hungarian people.”¹⁹⁵ Besides this excerpt there are a number of others singled out by the judge, among which I wanted to address one more example.

The Big Mao is giving a speech: comrades, we have built socialism and we are on the way to communism. A Chinese man: but Mao, I am hungry. Mao: hush, we will not be eating along the way.¹⁹⁶

Clearly, this paragraph was considered intolerable due to its representation of the Chinese state, its people and the founder of the People’s Republic of China. Therefore, besides the accusations of Rózsa’s writing being a trigger for nationalist hatred, the judge found that the text also “maliciously and falsely presents the situation” in communist countries other than Yugoslavia.

In the case of Rózsa’s text, the judge ruled out the defense presented by the *Symposion*’s editor Ottó Tolnai and Tibor Várady, who was a paralegal at the time and the legal representative of the Youth Tribune and the journal in the case of the banning.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴ Ruling of the District Court in Novi Sad, no. K. 340/71. 3; Rózsa. “Mindennapi Abortusz” [Everyday Abortion]. 345.

¹⁹⁵ Ruling of the District Court in Novi Sad, no. K. 340/71. 3.

¹⁹⁶ Ruling of the District Court in Novi Sad, no. K. 340/71. 3; Rózsa. “Mindennapi Abortusz” [Everyday Abortion]. 345.

¹⁹⁷ Ruling of the District Court in Novi Sad, no. K. 340/71. 3-4.

However, the details of the defense's strategy will be portrayed from the viewpoints of their own in the following subchapter. Here, it seems appropriate to conclude this part of the subchapter with the ending of the judge's ruling on the banning of the 76th *Symposion*'s issue.

The paper – the journal “Új Symposion” is by its nature a serious journal for art and critique, which by itself gained certain reputation. This reputation was created by the great associates, the high quality of the published articles and the political maturity of the journal, as of the articles in it. Therefore, it is less acceptable for an article of this kind of content, like Rózsa Sándor's incriminated article, to be found in this journal.¹⁹⁸

The judge directed the ruling merely to the *incriminated* article and Rózsa as an individual, disassociating the ruling from the journal. He made a clear distinction between the “journal's reputation” and the nature of the article and it seemed as though the journal got out with just a warning. However, the trials were not over for Rózsa.

Before looking into the criminal proceedings, the attention will briefly be shifted toward Mandić's “Song about a Film”. Since I did not manage to obtain the documents regarding the banning of the 77th issue of *Új Symposion*, which concerns Miroslav Mandić's writing, for this case I will rely on secondary literature. It is also necessary to note that in literature (mostly the one written in Serbian) more focus is placed on Mandić's case in comparison to Rózsa's.¹⁹⁹ However, the reason for this are probably the later proclaimed judgements and the fact that, at the end, only Mandić went to prison.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. 4.

¹⁹⁹ For instance, Šuvaković in his article regarding the Vojvodinian neo-avantgarde, when mentioning the *Symposion* case in detail refers only to Mandić. Šuvaković. “Neoavangarda, konceptualna umetnost” [Neo-Avantgarde, Conceptual Art]. Radina Vučetić writes similarly, however, mentioning Rózsa's sentence. Vučetić. *Monopol na istinu* [Monopoly on the Truth]. 327/8. Marko Ilić writes about the Youth Tribune and the New Art Practice in Novi Sad mentioning on this occasion the cases of Slavko Bogdanović and Miroslav Mandić. Ilić. “A Tester for Political Insult”. 541. Rajko Danilović and Cvetković cover both cases, as does Szerbhorváth. Danilović. *Upotreba neprijatelja* [The Use of the Enemy]. 370-374.; S. Cvetković. *Između srpa i čekića 2*. [Between the Hammer and the Sickle 2]. 415/416 and 467; Szerbhorváth. “Az első betiltás” [The First Banning].

The 77th, September number of the journal was banned on December 9, 1971. The banning was also based on the article 52 of the press law (points 1 and 7), as in the case of Rózsa.²⁰⁰ According to Miško Šuvaković, the ruling for the banning of this issue stated that Mandić's critique of the Yugoslav cinema represents the artist's assault on the President himself, and therefore, also on the bases and symbols of the Yugoslav socialist society.²⁰¹ The main concern regarding Mandić's "Song about a Film" is the portrayal of Josip Broz Tito. Regarding this, Danilović quotes the following from the ruling on the banning:

Putting a writing with the title 'Instructions for making a film on the revolution', with ridicule and cynicism he gives instructions and offers a 'scenario for a film Josip Broz Tito' in which he says: 'Record a colored photography of Josip Broz Tito in a single shot for two whole hours. The camera is still. Together with the end caption the narrator declares that this was Josip Broz Tito.'²⁰²

Not getting into any details of what Mandić's intentions actually were, since that is a question for the following subchapter, here I will focus on the prosecution that seems to have accepted the text being an assault on the President Tito. These are probably the most severe allegations the state could make. A simple offense made against Tito was seen as an attack on the entire state. Tito's cult and popularity had reached its peak right about the time of the *Symposion* trials, at the beginning of the 1970s.²⁰³ One would say that the timing for the release of "Song about a Film" could not have been more inopportune.

On the last page of his writing under the subtitle "Why did I write this text", Mandić declares: "Because I believe only in the Yugoslav society even though it is in shit."²⁰⁴ It seems

in: *Vajdasági Lakoma*. 256-269. On the other hand, Várady covers more Rózsa's case. Varadi. "Jedno od suđenja *Simposionu*" [One of the *Symposion* trials]. 34-50.

²⁰⁰ Šuvaković. "Neoavangarda, konceptualna umetnost" [Neo-Avantgarde, Conceptual Art].

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Danilović. *Upotreba neprijatelja* [The Use of the Enemy]. 373.

²⁰³ Cvetković. *Između srpa i čekića 2*. [Between the Hammer and the Sickle 2]. 69.

²⁰⁴ Mandić. "Vers a Filmröl" [Song about a Film]. 389; Šuvaković. "Neoavangarda, konceptualna umetnost" [Neo-Avantgarde, Conceptual Art].

that besides attacking the state “indirectly” by criticizing its president, Mandić also made a direct implication of what he thought of the country he lived in. According to the court’s ruling, the author “causes a disturbance among the citizens, because he is tendentiously making fake and perverted claims.”²⁰⁵ Undoubtedly, Mandić’s article was meant to be provocative, however, the fact is that he published it in Hungarian (Katalin Ladik translated the text) makes one wonder of whether he intended for it to be less visible. At the end of the day, the article was not published in neither of the two languages, since although the 77th issue was printed, it was never distributed to the public. The fact that the article was written in Hungarian turned out not being an advantage after all.

In “Song about a Film” Mandić heavily criticized the Yugoslav relations to cinematography, which was also, according to Danilović, condemned by the District Court.

Denying the value and the orientation for nurturing the tradition of our people’s revolution, as well as the endeavour, in link to the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the revolution, to depict and eternalize the memories and actors of this epopee and the big and significant events during the revolution, he [Mandić] made a claim that ‘the film today in Yugoslavia has an outsized cultural role’; and he characterized the assaults on the films with antisocialist content as ‘a primitive situation’.²⁰⁶

Mandić’s text was an extensive film review of the Yugoslav cinematography written in *the spirit* of the neo-avantgarde. And although his defense of Makavejev’s film was interpreted as “antisocialist”, the bigger issue here, as mentioned, were his “assaults” on Tito. One might speculate that, finally, Tito was Mandić’s prison card, similarly to the case of Lazar Stojanović.

²⁰⁵ Šuvaković. “Neoavangarda, konceptualna umetnost” [Neo-Avantgarde, Conceptual Art].

²⁰⁶ Danilović. *Upotreba neprijatelja* [The Use of the Enemy]. 372.

The banning of the two *Symposion* issues was followed by criminal prosecutions and prison sentences. On February 21, 1972, Rózsa was charged with the criminal act of enemy propaganda and the evoking of national and racial intolerance and hatred. This judgement was made on the basis of article 118 of the Criminal Code.²⁰⁷ This brings us back to the topic of the internal enemy covered in the first chapter of the thesis. According to Srđan Cvetković this article of the Criminal Code was most often utilized in the politicized trials.²⁰⁸ The ambiguity of the criminal act of “the propaganda against the state”²⁰⁹ was adequate for using it as a label of any activity that did not suit the politics of the regime, since there was no clear elaboration on what the notion of propaganda actually entails.

The charges from the judgement were tightly related to the court’s ruling on the banning of the *Symposion*’s 76th number. The court rejected the defense presented by Rózsa’s lawyer (Slobodan Beljanski) in which he stated that the writing in question was a “humoresque” and that the author did not have any intention of “spreading enemy propaganda, or national hatred and chauvinism”.²¹⁰ According to the judge (Radivoj Ranisav) the statement of the defense was forged for the purpose of avoiding any criminal liability and that therefore, provoking national and racial hatred was in fact the intent of the defendant.²¹¹ Rózsa’s “actions” were recognized by the court as a “great danger to society” and he was sentenced to three years of prison.²¹²

A couple of days later, Mandić was charged with spreading false news, with the criminal act of damaging the reputation of the state, its authorities and the president. He was sentenced to nine-months in prison, mainly due to the criticisms of Josip Broz Tito found in

²⁰⁷ Judgement of the District Court in Novi Sad, no. K. 10/72. 1.

²⁰⁸ Cvetković. *Između srpa i čekića* 2. [Between a Sickle and a Hammer 2]. 152

²⁰⁹ “Criminal Code”. 198.

²¹⁰ Judgement of the District Court in Novi Sad, no. K. 10/72. 4-5

²¹¹ Ibid. 7.

²¹² Judgement of the District Court in Novi Sad, no. K. 10/72. 8. In literature: Varadi. “Jedno od suđenja *Simpasionu*” [One of the *Symposion* trials]. 48; Danilović. *Upotreba neprijatelja* [The Use of the Enemy] 370; Cvetković. *Između srpa i čekića* 2 [Between the Sickle and the Hammer 2]. 415/467; Vučetić. *Monopol na istinu* [Monopoly on the Truth]. 328.

his text.²¹³ The defense attorney in Mandić's case was István Koncz, who also somewhat belonged to the Symposionists and had published his works in the journal.²¹⁴

Tolnai as the managing editor and the editor in chief of the journal was criminally charged in both cases, although he got a suspended sentence.²¹⁵ According to the judgement in Rózsa's case Tolnai was found guilty for publishing "Everyday Abortion" and with that being an accomplice in carrying out the criminal act of enemy propaganda and the spreading of national and racial hatred.²¹⁶ However, the court found Tolnai being in a better position in comparison to Rózsa since, according to the judge, "he had disassociated himself from the [Rózsa's] writing and resigned from the editorial position" before the criminal charges were filed.²¹⁷ Based on what Rajko Danilović writes it seems that similar charges were filed against Tolnai in Mandić's case as well; he was found guilty for publishing "Song about a Film", for having it translated into Hungarian and for enabling the article to reach the wider public.²¹⁸ The irony behind this is that *Új Symposion* could not reach the wider public since it was published in a language only a minority Yugoslavia understood.

According to the judgements, Sándor Rózsa got the severest sentence out of the three Symposionists. However, this proved to be irrelevant, since Rózsa left Yugoslavia after the trials without any restraints. Finally, Mandić was the only one who served the prison sentence.

Rajko Danilović perceives the *Symposion* trials as an announcement of the new wave of repressions in Socialist Yugoslavia.²¹⁹ Although he does not specify why he considers these trials as somewhat a turning point, it becomes clear based on the Yugoslav political scene at

²¹³ Varadi. "Jedno od suđenja *Simposionu*" [One of the *Symposion* trials]. 48; Danilović. *Upotreba neprijatelja* [The Use of the Enemy]. 372; Cvetković. *Između srpa i čekića 2* [Between the Sickle and the Hammer 2]. 415/6; Vučetić. *Monopol na istinu* [Monopoly on the Truth]. 327/8; Šuvaković. "Neoavangarda, konceptualna umetnost" [Neo-Avantgarde, Conceptual Art].

²¹⁴ Varadi. "Jedno od suđenja *Simposionu*" [One of the *Symposion* trials]. 46.

²¹⁵ Ibid. 48.

²¹⁶ Judgement of the District Court in Novi Sad, no. K. 10/72. 3.

²¹⁷ Ibid. 8. Although Tolnai did resign from the position of the *Új Symposion*'s editor in chief, he did remain in the journal's editorial.

²¹⁸ Danilović. *Upotreba neprijatelja* [The Use of the Enemy]. 372.

²¹⁹ Ibid. 373.

the time that the *Symposion* trials were one of the first that came after the decisions made on the Twenty-first Session of the Presidency of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. These decisions implied a fiercer dealing of the regime with its opponents and the criminal proceedings against the Symposionists could have been an example of the new implemented measures. This possibility is further addressed in the following parts of the chapter.

3.2. A Humoresque: The Defense

Well, you see, I wrote about that and I really believe it to be true. The *Symposion* was a place of very, very critical texts and a lot of them were critical towards the regime.²²⁰

Approaching the subject of the *Új Symposion* case by relying on the defense's standpoint requires using somewhat different primary sources in contrast to the previous subchapter. The official court documents are replaced here with testimonies of three witnesses of the *Symposion* trials. Tibor Várady and Katalin Ladik are representatives of the first generation, while Sándor Rózsa's publication of "Everyday Abortion" was his primary and, as it turned out, last interaction with the journal. Unfortunately, I did not manage to conduct an interview with Miroslav Mandić; therefore, the testifying of the defense on his case is also portrayed and analyzed through the stories of Várady, Ladik and Rózsa.

From the evidence in the previous subchapter, it is quite clear that the state officials considered the Symposionists as being part of the larger group of the regime's internal enemies and saw the two texts as "propagandistic writings" that have the aim of undermining

²²⁰ Várady, interview.

the Party, president Tito, but also Yugoslavia and its peoples.²²¹ It is safe to say right away, that the Symposionists saw this rather differently. How different the Symposionists position was and what the reactions of the journal and its associates were to the trials, is what I attempt to interpret in this part of my thesis.

Rózsa sees “Everyday Abortion” as an “unfortunate article.” He points out that the conversation in the text was inspired by real life events, a real life discussion, adding that, “[...] now, I would not write it like that [...] [I wrote it] completely naively [...] I am not proud of it, but it happened, completely freely. And then, I saw the consequences of this conversation between the students in the student dormitory.”²²² Várady stresses, both in his book and in our interview, that he was basing his defense retorque on the claim that “Everyday Abortion” was a humoresque. “The text is not about the socio-economic or political circumstances [in Yugoslavia]; rather, it is a situation in a room of a student dormitory.”²²³ Neither of them neglects the fact that some criticism was present in the text.²²⁴ In fact, from the introductory quote of this chapter, as from the previous chapters, it is clear that the Symposionists did not devalue the critical nature of the journal, rather quite the opposite; after all, its subtitle proclaimed it.²²⁵ However, despite the subtitle and the tone of the previously published writings in the *Új Symposion*,²²⁶ the banning of the two issues called for a public reaction of the editorial, the Workers Council, as well as from the Youth Tribune, the journal’s publisher at the time. Some of these reactions took self-criticism seriously.

²²¹ The term “propagandistic writings” derives from the court’s judgement against Rózsa for spreading “enemy propaganda” in “Everyday Abortion”.

²²² Rózsa, interview.

²²³ Várady, interview; Várady. “Jedno od suđenja *Simpsonianu*” [One of the *Symposion* trials]. 42.

²²⁴ When I asked Rózsa during the interview what the intent of his writing was, whether it was provocation, he answered affirmatively. As stated in the text, later he said that the dialogue in the writing was inspired by real life events and also that he would not do it again, that he was naive at the time. Rózsa, interview. Several times during the interview, Várady pointed out the critical character of the journal, along with the fact that a number of intellectuals from Hungary published their works in *Symposion* due to the tolerance of the Yugoslav regime. In reference to Rózsa’s text, Várady admits that “[t]here are some harsh statements, but that is a statement in an argument where there are two sides.” Várady, interview.

²²⁵ The subtitle of the journal was “journal for art and critique”.

²²⁶ See: Szerbhorváth. *Vajdasági lakoma* [Vojvodinian Feast] 257-260.

The statements of the three administrative organs were published in the 80th, December 1971 issue of the journal. The editorial's main argument was that the two writings were misinterpreted and that *Symposion* was not promoting nationalism in any way, pointing out the fact that the Symposionists were beforehand charged with being "antinationalist" and even "overly internationalist".²²⁷ The Workers Council and the Youth Tribune were more harsh regarding the subject of the banning. The Workers Council disassociated itself completely from Rózsa's text, stating that the text was "a mistake, even if it was indeed a humoresque and not a political article."²²⁸ Additionally, the Council elaborated on how a misunderstanding arose concerning Mandić's text, however, not hesitating in the end to hold both authors responsible for the published articles. As did the editorial, the Council also denounced completely the nationalist charges against the Symposionists, arguing that this claim cannot be projected onto the entire journal based solely on the two incriminated writings.²²⁹ Finally, the Youth Tribune expelled both Rózsa and Mandić, stating that Rózsa's text contained a nationalist aspect. The Tribune's Council stressed that it will not tolerate any "nationalist activity", but instead "will continue promoting the self-management socialist system" and will also "educate the youth on the bases of brotherhood and unity".²³⁰ While the editorial of the journal published a rather neutral statement, both the Workers Council and the Council of the Youth Tribune strived to isolate themselves from the two infamous writings. Várady believes that the statement of the Tribune was a necessity due to the pressure applied by the regime. However, he adds that the journal itself was also under surveillance, yet still managed to remain neutral in its statement and emphasize the literary criticism behind the

²²⁷ Az Új Symposion szerkesztő bizottsága. "Szerkesztőségi közlemény" [The Editorial's Statement]. in: *Új Symposion*, no. 80 (December 1971). 441.

²²⁸ Az Új Symposion Munkatársi Értekezlete. "Határozatok" [Resolutions]. in: *Új Symposion*, no. 80 (December 1971). 442.

²²⁹ Ibid. 442.

²³⁰ Az Ifjúsági Tribün tanácsa. "Az Újvidéki Ifjúsági Tribün közleménye az Új Symposion betiltott számaiban megjelent írásokról." [The Vojvodinian Youth Tribune's Statement Regarding the Writings Released in the Új Symposion's Banned Issues]. in: *Új Symposion*, no. 80 (December 1971). 442.

two texts.²³¹ Ultimately, a part of the “defense team” seems to have had to hold a middle ground between the journal and the prosecution, in order to shelter itself from the possible further reactions of the regime. However, according to Katalin Ladik, self-criticism was present even five years after the *Symposion* trials,²³² an issue to which I will return later in the text.

In contrast to what one could grasp from the content of the previous subchapter and the emphasis placed on the nationalist tendencies seen by the prosecution and the court behind Rózsa’s writing, the defense disclaims the nationalist context of the text and stresses its critical and neo-avantgarde nature. The neo-avantgarde and New Left context of the *Új Symposion* is already covered in detail in the previous chapters of the thesis, relying both on the primary sources and secondary literature. However, here I intend to return to the subject of the neo-avantgarde nature of the journal, with the focus placed exclusively on the conducted oral history interviews. The aim of this approach is to portray the difference in understanding of the two writings (but primarily Rózsa’s) by the prosecution and the Symposionists.

When addressing his student life in Novi Sad, Rózsa put great significance on the *happenings* he performed in the Youth Tribune, and linked “Everyday Abortion” to all of his works, which suggest the neo-avantgarde nature of this piece.²³³ Várady also emphasized the fact that there were no nationalist implications in Rózsa’s text and that both he and Mandić were performance artists, as well as writers.²³⁴ Additionally, Katalin Ladik related Mandić’s case to what she referred to as “the black wave that was initiated against the intelligentsia in Yugoslavia.”²³⁵ Of course, Mandić was not the one accused of spreading “nationalist hatred

²³¹ Várady, interview.

²³² Ladik, interview.

²³³ Rózsa, interview.

²³⁴ Várady, interview.

²³⁵ Ladik, interview.

and intolerance”,²³⁶ so the fact that the Várady and Ladik place him in the context of what by all accounts qualifies as the neo-avantgarde scene is not so much in contrast to what the prosecution claimed.²³⁷ However, they do not exclude Mandić as an individual, but refer to this entire generation and, more importantly, the content of the journal in the same context.

The Symposionsist and their associates agreed that Rózsa’s writing did not propagate nationalism, but the majority also agreed that it might be misinterpreted. Ladik claims that she did not see the potential problems Mandić’s text might initiate. “They were talking and thinking like that everywhere and I did not believe that it would happen. I think that also the editors did not think it. I liked what Mandić wrote and I thought that it should be published.”²³⁸ Ladik emphasized a significant confusion, not just regarding the *Symposion* case, but also the other banned journals, newspapers, literary and artistic works. In the late 1960s and early 1970s to some it seemed as though the banning and censorships occurred out of the blue in Yugoslavia. However, for *Symposion* it was even more so, since the journal was written in a language that the vast majority could not read or understand. Rózsa and Várady raised similar concerns. While Rózsa reminisced that Tolnai told him during the trials that he (Tolnai) was the one who was supposed to see the potential troubles the two articles could bring,²³⁹ Várady claimed that the *Symposion* trials would not have occurred just a year earlier.²⁴⁰ This finally raises the question of why *Új Symposion* was targeted by the regime and how it fits into the wider context of political trials in the early 1970s.

²³⁶ Ruling of the District Court in Novi Sad, no. K. 340/71.

²³⁷ Although neither of them mentions concretely the neo-avantgarde, it is clear from the context that this is the movement and art scene in question. “It was also a revolt against patterns in literature [in the *Új Symposion*], so there was abstract literature, modernism, performance. It was, at the same time, a revolt against patterns in art, modern painting.” Várady, interview. Ladik addressed the political aspect of the engaged art at that time, mostly in link to films, poetry and literature in general, which is undoubtedly the characteristic of the neo-avantgarde in the late 1960s and early 1970s in Yugoslavia. Ladik, interview.

²³⁸ Ladik, interview.

²³⁹ Rózsa, interview.

²⁴⁰ Várady, interview.

3.3. *Új Symposium: A Politicized Case*

I felt that there was a general direction toward censorship at that time; and I felt it everywhere.²⁴¹

In the previous two subchapters I presented the *Új Symposium* trials by displaying the sources that mirror the prosecution's and defense's positions on the case. The portrayed facts lead to the question as to why the *Új Symposium* case is significant for the period of the early 1970s. The indicated period was marked by a tightening in the regime's politics in Yugoslavia, which led to the rise in a number of censorship cases and political trials. The intention here is to understand, based on the case presented in the previous parts of the text, how the *Új Symposium* fits into the context of the late 1960s and early 1970s political trials in Yugoslavia.

Tibor Várady offered a potential answer based on his own experience. According to him, the ruling on the case of *Új Symposium* was predetermined. Describing his prepared defense in the case of the banning, he emphasized the following:

[...] it was obvious that the decision had been made in advance. I was under the impression that it was as though the judge Rihard Hibš had more sympathy for us. That could have been noticed during the trial. But the decision had been made in advance. I heard that; that is, I had also direct evidence of it [the decision being made in advance] before the trial. When the judgement had been handed out to Tolnai and Sándor Rózsa, then a member of the Provincial Committee,²⁴² who was an assistant at out faculty,²⁴³ told me considerably ahead what the judgements will be. Because the judgements were actually made in the Provincial Committee.²⁴⁴

²⁴¹ Ladik, interview.

²⁴² In this case Várady is referring to the Provincial Committee of Vojvodina, which is a branch of the Party and an administrative and political organ in Vojvodina.

²⁴³ In this case it is a literal translation of "at out faculty".

²⁴⁴ Várady, interview. The statement that the ruling regarding the banning of the *Symposium*'s 76th issue was predetermined can also be found in Várady's book. Várady. "Jedno od suđenja *Simposionu*" [One of the *Symposium* trials]. 44.

From this content it is clear that Várady's statement questions the functioning and the independence of the judicial system in Socialist Yugoslavia. In addition, Rózsa also spoke about the trials being prearranged. He said that Várady was the one who heard, a day before the judgement had been made, that Rózsa will be sentenced to three years of prison. "There was no rule of law", was what Rózsa added to this.²⁴⁵ Similarly, Várady argued that there was no place for "legal tools" in the *Symposion* case. Here, Várady further elaborates on the subject of the judiciary:

[...] that [the non-existing legal tools] does not completely apply to the entire legal system of that time, because in the case of litigations that did not have political backgrounds, the decisions were really appropriate. There was no corruption. Except the political ones. I would not like to talk negatively about the entire legal system, but in this case, in which there were a lot of political wills and intentions, the arguments remained on stage, but the decision has been made behind the scenes.²⁴⁶

Várady places the *Symposion* case among the political trials in Socialist Yugoslavia, which is what this thesis also aims to demonstrate, that the decision to ban the *Új Symposion* journal, but especially to criminally charge the authors, was political. Returning to the first chapter and the general context and features of the political trials in Yugoslavia, one can say that these claims have basis. Not going once again into details of what might qualify a trial to be a political one, I simply wanted to point to the presence of the *Új Symposion* case in literature regarding censorship, political trials and repression in Yugoslavia (with the focus on the Socialist Republic of Serbia).

Srđan Cvetković in his book classifies the *Symposion* case into two categories. According to him, the *Symposionists* were seen as part of the anarcholiberal internal enemy, but also as nationalists, placing Tolnai and Mandić undoubtedly among the anarcholiberals

²⁴⁵ Rózsa, interview.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

and writing about Rózsa's case in both sections.²⁴⁷ This is one way to disentangle the doubt of whether Rózsa's writing was nationalistic or avant-garde. However, this classification can cause a misunderstanding, since Cvetković does not explain in detail the reason for including Rózsa in the two internal enemy clusters. Regardless, what is significant for the claim in this chapter is that Cvetković uses the example of the *Symposion* case, along with the instances of *Praxis*, *Student* or Lazar Stojanović, to demonstrate the politics behind culture related trials in the late 1960s and early 1970s.²⁴⁸

Furthermore, Miško Šuvaković claims that the *Új Symposion* case was “one of the paradoxes characteristic for the self-managing Socialist Yugoslavia”, since the *Symposion* journal was not one of the “anticommunist or antileftist journals [...], but on the contrary, a leftist journal of experimental and critical thought”. He adds that in this case one can recognize the “burocratization of the self-management culture”.²⁴⁹ While I agree with Šuvaković that the *Symposion* case might be perceived as a paradox of the Yugoslav socialist system, it also has to be emphasized that it is certainly not a sole instance of a “leftist” journal, literary or art piece being criticized and banned by the regime. Šuvaković also claims that these trials were political, as does Radina Vučetić, who addresses the *Symposion* case in a chapter regarding the regime's repressions toward the neo-avantgarde scene in Vojvodina.²⁵⁰ On the other hand, Rajko Danilović does not deal with the dilemma of the neo-avantgarde or nationalist nature of the journal; he rather interprets the prosecutions against Rózsa, Mandić and Tolnai as a strike against the intelligentsia.²⁵¹ One point is certain: none of these authors doubt the political background of the *Symposion* case.

²⁴⁷ Cvetković. *Između srpa i čekića 2* [Between the Sickle and the Hammer 2]. 415/6 and 466/7.

²⁴⁸ Ibid. 415/6 and 466/7.

²⁴⁹ Šuvaković. “Neoavangarda, konceptualna umetnost” [Neo-Avantgarde, Conceptual Art].

²⁵⁰ Šuvaković. “Neoavangarda, konceptualna umetnost” [Neo-Avantgarde, Conceptual Art]; Vučetić. *Monopol na istinu* [Monopoly on the Truth] 327-329.

²⁵¹ Danilović. *Upotreba neprijatelja* [The Use of the Enemy]. 370.

Besides the general framework of the political trials in the late 1960s and early 1970s Yugoslavia, Várady places the *Symposion* case in the context of the Twenty-first Session of the Presidency of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (December 1971), when it was determined that the Party will deal with its internal enemies (however, with the central focus on the Croatian nationalists). He claims that the decisions made at this session were “grandiose” and that they influenced the continuation of the *Symposion* trials, since it was no longer sufficient to simply ban the two issues. The pressing of criminal charges became a necessity.²⁵² In the subchapter that covered the prosecution’s standpoint in the case, I pointed out that Danilović also saw the *Symposion* trials as an announcement of a new period of repressions,²⁵³ what can be linked to the decisions of the Twenty-first Session. While the bans of newspapers, journals and artworks were a common practice before December 1971, it is likely that the announced persecution of the regime’s political opponents on the session was a trigger for not just banning the publications but filing criminal charges against their authors and editors; as in the *Symposion* case.

Finally, the *Symposion* case does not have to be *unique* in order for it to be relevant and important to study. A significant point that this case proves is that the regime was striving to have control over everything that seemed to head toward any type of oppositional, or simply critical activity. According to Danilović there was hardly any opponent of the regime of any of the peoples (*narod*i) or ethnic groups that did not suffer from the, what he addressed as, “communist terror.”²⁵⁴ In this controlled environment emerged a place for a neo-avantgarde journal “for art and critique” written in Hungarian. This is emphasized also by Várady: “the balance, which brought some very, very positive things in former Yugoslavia, this time it meant that, now, the punishments should be everywhere. And primarily they should take place

²⁵² Várady. “Jedno od suđenja *Simposionu*” [One of the *Symposion* trials]. 46.

²⁵³ Danilović. *Upotreba neprijatelja* [The Use of the Enemy]. 373.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 29.

in Serbia and Croatia, but also in Bosnia, Macedonia, Kosovo and Vojvodina, therefore including the biggest minority languages, Albanian and Hungarian.”²⁵⁵ By perceiving the *Symposion* trials in this manner, it might seem as though the state officials were simply seeking for a scape goat among the Yugoslav publications written in Hungarian, and that they found one in *Új Symposion*. The writings of Rózsa and Mandić were of the appropriate content for the intentions of the regime. There is no doubt of the satiric content of the two texts, they contain common places of the other critical leftists works banned in the same period, which caught the intention of the state officials. Another angle that should be added here is Rózsa’s claim that Mandić was charged so that it does not seem that the *Symposion* case was a repression directed merely against Hungarians.²⁵⁶ This statement might complicate the *Symposion* case even further and turn it into an issue of ethnicity more than it actually was. The ethnic belonging of either Rózsa or Mandić as individuals might not have mattered in this case as much. What certainly was important for the state official was rather the identity embedded in *Új Symposion* by the first generation that stood behind it.

Approaching the *Symposion* case in the manner presented in this subchapter leaves the circulation of the journal out of the picture, since it did not matter how many people have read the articles; instead, it was significant for the regime to establish its control even among the Hungarian neo-avantgarde minority, making sure that similar articles did not reappear in the future. What the impact of the banning and the imprisonments was on the further editorial and publishing politics of *Új Symposion* is a question I deal with in the following part of this chapter.

²⁵⁵ Várady, interview.

²⁵⁶ Rózsa, interview.

3.4. What Comes Next?

I believe that the spirit [inside *Új Symposion*] was not lost.²⁵⁷

In 1972 Sándor Rózsa left Yugoslavia and went to Germany where he continued his studies. Miroslav Mandić went from serving in the military to a prison in Sremska Mitrovica (a small town in Vojvodina). Ottó Tolnai preserved his place as the journal's editor until 1974 when Magdolna Danyi took over from him. The *Symposion*'s first generation was gradually splitting up. This subchapter serves as a brief overlook of what followed after the *Symposion* trials and aims to present the nature of the journal after the judgements.

Rózsa said that after the trials he heard the news of his conviction on Radio Free Europe and that the fact that his case became known across Europe might have influenced the authorities to let him leave the country in peace. He caught a boat to Italy from Zadar (Croatia) and left Yugoslavia for good. He eventually got an asylum in Germany and continued his studies at the University of Cologne. Today, Sándor Rózsa lives in Budapest and is an environmental activist.²⁵⁸ Tibor Várady also described the epilogue of Rózsa's trials. He wrote in his book that the case got considerable attention from the international public. He also pointed out the fact that even intellectuals in Yugoslavia, for instance Dobrica Ćosić, raised their voices against Rózsa's three-year prison sentence. According to Várady, these reactions might have influenced the state officials to allow Rózsa to freely leave the country.²⁵⁹ Since one of the aims of political trials was getting rid of the state enemy, it can also be possible that it was not necessary for the authorities to ban one from leaving the

²⁵⁷ Ladik, interview.

²⁵⁸ Rózsa, interview.

²⁵⁹ Várady, interview; Várady. "Jedno od suđenja *Simpsonianu*" [One of the *Symposion* trials]. 49.

country. Quite the contrary, if they wished to eliminate the operation of the internal enemy, the *enemy* leaving Yugoslavia might have been the best possible solution.

On the other hand, Mandić was not pardoned in any way; he served an eight-month prison sentence. According to Šuvaković, after that Mandić did not engage in any art work or performances for a long period of time.²⁶⁰ However, he never left art entirely behind. Várady underlined the fact that Mandić remained a person of performances. He described one of these performances during our interview, explaining that at one occasion Mandić was an “exhibit” in a museum for some time, where he was sitting at a desk and writing a book. Várady pointed out that Miroslav Mandić remained a dissident all of his life and that he was full of revolt toward everything.²⁶¹ Mandić came to be one of the rare artists in Socialist Yugoslavia who actually went to prison because of their works. His colleague from the *Kôd* group, Slavko Bogdanović was imprisoned for the same reason, for a text he published in the December 1971 number of the newspaper *Student*, which was never distributed. Lazar Stojanović’s case is more famous than those of the two neo-avantgarde artists from Vojvodina. Stojanović was sentenced to three-years of imprisonment for directing a film *Plastic Jesus*. Did the works of the three artists really present such a threat to the regime that they needed to be imprisoned for writing a text or directing a movie? Frankly, one can only guess. The possibility that the three (and maybe some others) were scape goats that served the regime to demonstrate its power is not excluded; however, it cannot be proved.

The faith of *Új Symposion* was not as unfortunate. As all other censored and banned journals *Symposion* had to calm its critical tone for some time after the trials. Katalin Ladik claims that the consequences of the trials were visible for *Új Symposion* even five years later. She described her exclusion from the Party in 1977, emphasizing that the Party officials accused her of being immoral and asked her to “execute self-criticism” (“da izvršim

²⁶⁰ Šuvaković. “Neoavangarda, konceptualna umetnost” [Neo-Avantgarde, Conceptual Art].

²⁶¹ Várady, interview.

samokritiku”).²⁶² She said that the blames of her being immoral were based on an artistic nude photograph of her from the year 1970, while the exclusion from the Party came much later. She suspected that the fact that she translated Mandić’s “Song about a Film” in 1971 also played a role in the events that occurred six years later.²⁶³ Based on Ladik’s testimony, it seems that the *Symposion* somewhat remained a target of the regime even after 1972. However, both Ladik and Várady pointed out that although the content and the tone of the journal was not the same after the trials of 1971 and 1972, the succeeding generation did strive to follow the path of the first Symposionists.²⁶⁴ The journal preserved its literary and artistic character and gradually retrieved its critical tone as well. Although, neither the generations that followed were spared of the consequences of the regime’s internal politics. About a decade after the trials presented in this thesis, the new Symposionists faced a new banning case; however, this remains a subject for further research.

²⁶² Ladik, interview.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Várady, interview; Ladik, interview.

Conclusion

Josip Broz Tito and the Party leadership strived to lead Yugoslavia onto its own, *third way* in the bipolar Cold War world. This required obtaining a balance between the socialist system, that placed Yugoslavia among the countries of the Eastern bloc, and the liberalization of its politics, which enabled the state officials to build relations with the Western countries. While the authorities worked hard on remaining neutral on the international stage, the country's internal political scene could not keep up with this balance for long. The liberalization period in Yugoslavia, that marked the second half of the 1950s and the first years of the 1960s, was easily given up by the regime after the 1968 demonstrations in Belgrade. The threat of the internal enemy urged the state officials to tighten the course of the domestic politics. This resulted in a number of politicized trial cases, as well as bans and censorship.

The aim of this thesis was to examine the practice of political trials in Socialist Yugoslavia by looking into the case led against a neo-avantgarde literary journal, *Új Symposion*. The publishing of this journal in the Hungarian language in Yugoslavia is one of the main curiosities of this case, since the question it raises is: why would the regime want to ban a neo-avantgarde journal published in a language only a minority in the country could read? I attempted to answer this question in the thesis, and the most general answer would be that the regime's domestic politics of the time demanded it. *Új Symposion* is far from being the only journal banned in the early 1970s, however it was the only Hungarian journal banned at that time in Yugoslavia. This leaves us with the impression that the case of *Új Symposion* might have been a way for the Yugoslav authorities to demonstrate their power in every possible realization of the internal enemies' actions; and the Symposionists were seen among the regime's anarcholiberal enemy.

In order to better understand the problem posed in this thesis and to offer an adequate perspective for exploring the *Symposion* trials, I dealt with a number of concepts, focused mostly on their existence in the context of Socialist Yugoslavia. Primarily, I examined the practice of political trials exploited by the state authorities for dealing with the opposition, the internal enemy. I looked into the origins of both the political trials and the notion of the internal enemy, beginning with the end of Second World War up until the early 1970s. Following the studying and presenting of the two concepts, I described the appearance of the New Left and neo-avantgarde on the Yugoslav scene separately; but also, simultaneously exploring the relation of two movements. Adding more to the necessary contextualization, I examined the position of the youth press which was the main medium for the spread of the youth culture and ideology which, among other things, encompassed the New Left and the neo-avantgarde.

The stage set for the *Symposion* case is complex since all of the practices and concept mentioned were entangled with one another, with the journal placed in the middle. The introduction of the first generation of Symposionists reflected the character of the journal itself. The people who founded and published in the journal, created *Új Symposion* as an embodiment of their own artistic, literary and ideological principles. The first generation behind *Új Symposion* made it a critical, artistic and literary journal for the Hungarian youth in Vojvodina. Of course, there were exceptions. A wide range of works of other Yugoslavs, but also international authors and artists could be found in *Új Symposion*.

Finally, the approach to the *Symposion* trial cases in this thesis is somewhat specific. The use of the main sources that seem to oppose each other by default inspired me to structure the final chapter in a similar manner. I used the official documents from Sándor Rózsa's trials to present the position of the prosecution in this case. Opposite to it was the defense, the standpoint of which was illustrated on the bases of the interviews I conducted with three

Symposionists (Tibor Várady, Sándor Rózsa and Ladik Katalin). By approaching the subject of the *Symposion* trials in this manner my aim was to explore the two sides of this case and to conclude with my own analysis, with the help of the secondary literature and the previously set context. The part that portrays briefly the events that came after the trials is placed at the end of the last chapter and serves the purpose of making the history of the first Symposionists complete.

Getting back to the question of how the neo-avantgarde can be put on trial I wish to conclude that the case of *Új Symposion* can be used as an adequate example of this. By putting the artist's or author's works on trial, as it is done in this case and in other instance of censorship or banning, the regime not only targets the artist or the author, but also the movement their work is a representative of. In the example of the numerous neo-avantgarde materials (journals, films, plays) placed on trial in Socialist Yugoslavia one could easily claim that the entire movement was put in front of the court. *Új Symposion* is used in this thesis not just as an example of this practice, but also as a representative of the entire neo-avantgarde (and critical left) in its clash with the state authorities in Yugoslavia.

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