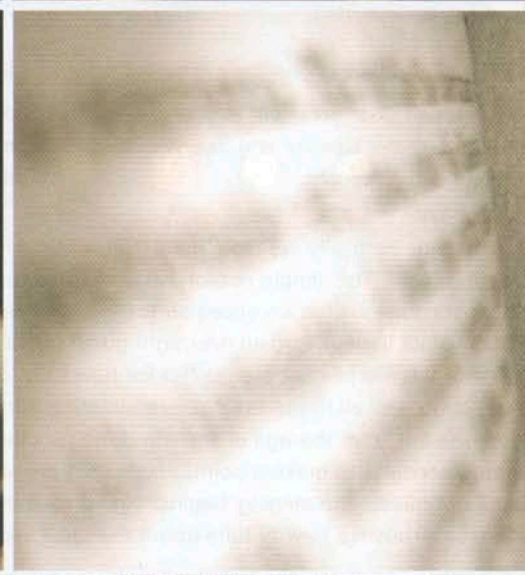
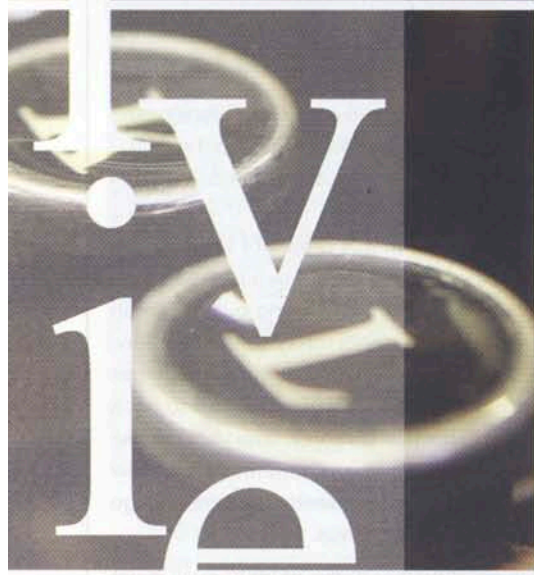
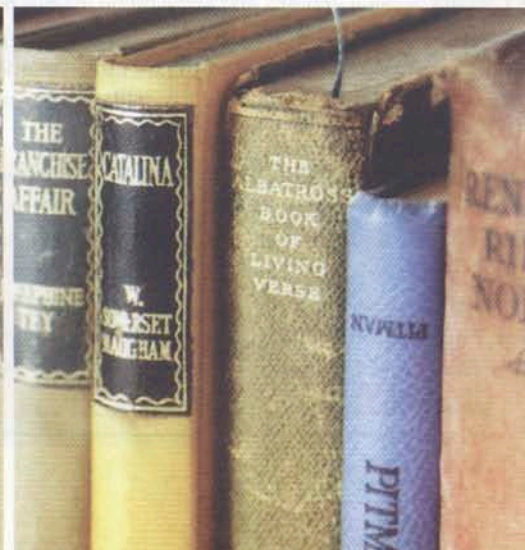
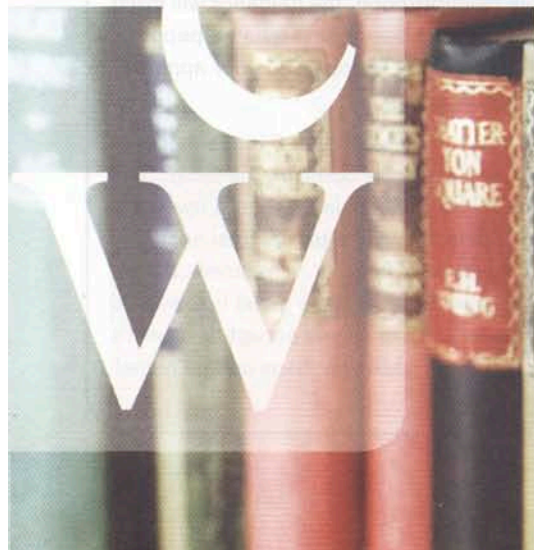


It is always flattering for any writer to get his work translated, especially if you come from a small country and language base. But one should also be aware that without an adequate promotional backup it will remain just a drop in the sea, no matter how well it corresponds to taste and affinities of its potential readers. *(Gordan Muhanović)*



Nos atalhos de corrupção com mão dourada, justiça e comprar a lei crime, mas com a justiça a essa justiça não haver as nossas acções mostramos obrigados a confessá-las. Que me resta, em que o arrependimento e qual será o seu...



Inter view le w

LOST IN TRANSLATION

by Aleksandar Holiga

OK, so we couldn't pick a more obvious title for an article about the problems the Croatian authors and publishers are facing when trying to get their books out on the international market, now could we? But the thing is, we couldn't think of a more appropriate one, either.

The post-war period in Croatia has seen the arrival of many authors of the younger generation on the domestic literary scene, along with the set of new, more specialized publishers. With the most-acclaimed writers like Miljenko Jergović, Zoran Ferić, Ante Tomić and others well establishing their status, many others have emerged bringing to light various specific sentiments and sensibilities.

Among them is Gordan Nuhanović, whose collection of short stories entitled 'Survival League' (originally published as 'Liga za opstanak' in 2002) was recently translated in the US and published by Oregon-based Ooligan Press. As described in editor's note, Nuhanović's prose 'is a doorway to the heart and soul of a vibrant society ravaged by recent wars'. His amusing, evocative tales probe the human condition through the commonalities and the idiosyncrasies of everyday life and their universal appeal was first recognized by his overseas publisher through Nuhanović's contribution to an American literary magazine. It is always flattering for any writer to get his work translated, especially if you come from a small country and language base, he tells us. But one should also be aware that without an adequate promotional backup it will remain just a drop in the sea, no matter how well it corresponds to taste and affinities of its potential readers.

'I got some nice reviews and feedback, but that's about as far as it gets. It would be unrealistic to expect much more', explains Nuhanović, now a book critic living in Zagreb.

There has been a sharp increase in translations of Croatian modern authors in recent years. Most of them were in German, followed by English, Czech, Polish and some other languages. But too often

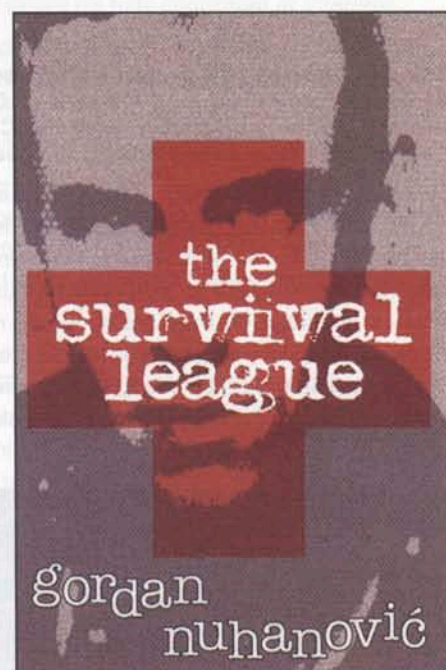
these books were taken by small-time publishers and never even managed to get into second print, let alone making any significant impact on readers and the media.

'There's no system of how these things normally should be done', claims Krno Lokotar, editor-in-chief at AGM, one of the largest publishing houses in Croatia. 'We have very little or no mediators such as literary agents and the institutions are not doing enough on their part, so it's always improvisation', he adds. For example, a special committee within the state Ministry of Culture will provide the financial

"We have very little or no mediators such as literary agents and the institutions are not doing enough on their part" (Krno Lokotar)

means for the translation of any book, which means paying the translator's fee. Nevertheless, there's a big 'but' about it – that money is only approved when the foreign publisher contacts the committee and has already decided to put on the book. How the publisher gets the translated manuscript almost always completely depends on the skills and contacts of the agile domestic editors and sometimes even the authors themselves.

Lokotar is quite bitter because he feels the Ministry is letting the publishers and the authors down by not recognizing chances to promote Croatian literature internationally. The country is to be an official partner at the Leipzig Book Fair in 2008, which is the first time Croatia has been chosen for such a role in a major international book event. But since the announcement of partnership a team of domestic editors and promoters has



been working on a broad presentation program, which includes translations of 20 modern authors on German within the next two years, getting only a formal support from the Ministry.

'They are ignoring, if not sabotaging our efforts', says Lokotar. 'Meanwhile, the huge amounts of money spent by the state on international book fairs are mainly aimed at tourist propaganda, without the serious intention of promoting Croatian literature'.

The Croatian literary scene of today is a rich and pretty diverse microcosm, with many authors just crying out to be read outside it. But, as long as some fundamental relations within it don't change, it seems they can only rely on enthusiasts like the people at Ooligan press. ■

“BUILDING A READERSHIP FOR ANY ‘UNKNOWN’ AUTHOR IS A LONG-TERM COMMITMENT”

by Julienne Eden Bušić

Recently, Dennis Stovall visited Croatia and the Croatian Ministry of Culture to discuss the three translated books to be published in 2005, the first of which is *The Survival League*, a collection of short stories, by Gordan Nuhanovic. (www.pdx.edu)

You are the head of U.S. publishing house, Ooligan Press, which recently produced a series of Croatian authors in translation, in cooperation with the Croatian Ministry of Culture. How have the books been received so far?

There are two answers to this. 1. Those who have read the books love them. 2. Getting the books in the hands of readers so they can fall in love with these excellent works is not easy, though. Americans read less seriously than most people in other cultures and they are generally resistant to “foreign” material. The many large bookstores cater to the lowest common denominators in literature, so that serious books and works in translation are seldom prominently displayed. However, there

is a literate minority that seeks out literature from around the world. Because they are so scattered, it takes some time for notices about new books to reach them. That is our on-going task with these books. We’ve gotten them into bookstores; now we are marketing them to libraries and universities. The latter are especially important because of academic programs in Central and Eastern European history, Slavic languages and cultures, and world literature.

Is there an interest in the literature of small countries like Croatia? Do Americans even know where Croatia is?

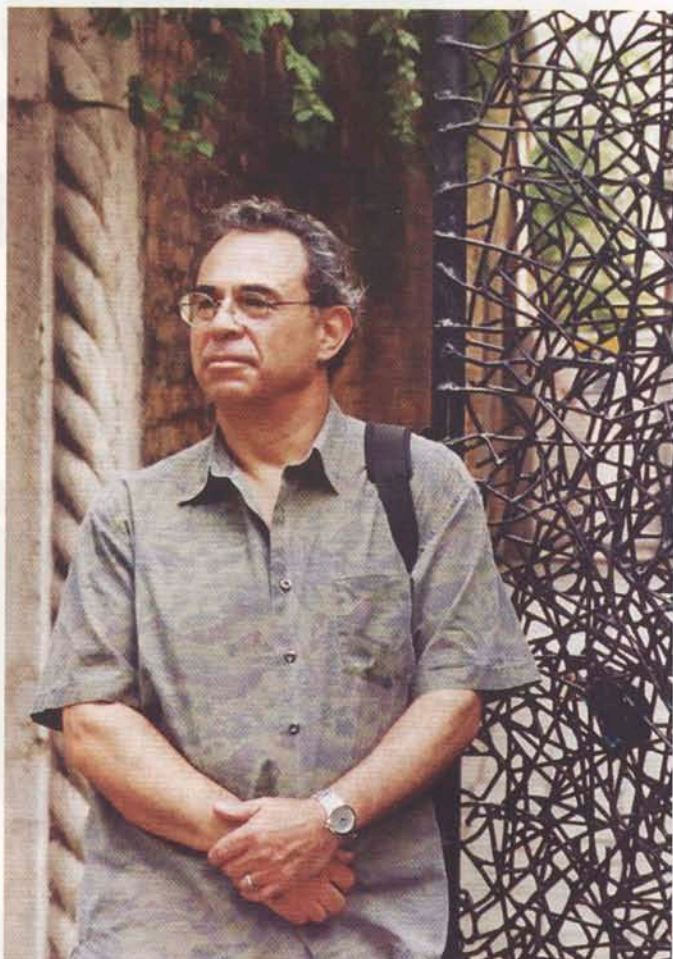
Most Americans, even those who may have traveled as close to Croatia as Italy, would be challenged to find the country on a map. Those who have heard of it, learned what little they know from news reports during the time of the Homeland War. Most probably don’t know that Zagreb is the capital. The city that more Americans know, though few have visited it, is Dubrovnik.

How would you characterize the three books and what insights do they provide into the country?

Because of the range of ages and experiences of the three authors—from Dubravka Oreic Tolic to Edo Popovic to Gordan Nuhanovic—their three books give wonderful insight into the period from the end of WWII to the present. Dubravka’s extraordinary epic poem, *American Scream*, is a gateway to understanding the end of the old Yugoslavia and the emergence of an independent Croatia. The East meets the West here. Popovic represents the generation of adults who fought the Homeland War, now dealing with all aspects, good and ill, of the changes they made. You can see it in the middle-aged ennui and angst of Edo’s characters in Zagreb, *Exit South*. There’s a scorecard of gains and losses. There’s cynicism but there’s hope. With Gordan Nuhanovic’s short stories in *Survival League*, there’s a different sense of absurdity at play. There’s a different focus. The world is out there, rather than in here. Or, perhaps, it’s always out of reach and doesn’t matter.

Does Ooligan intend to continue the “New Croatia” series and publish additional Croatian authors?

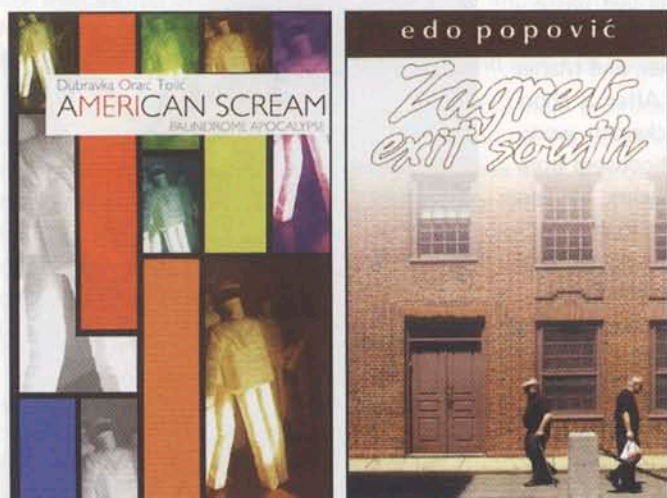
The press would love to continue this project. First, we get to read some awesome literature. Then we get to share it. We know that building a readership for any “unknown” author is a long-term commitment. We serve that commitment better by continuing to publish more writers who Americans have never met before. In fact, Ooligan would love to expand this area of



our publishing. It seems like this is a particularly ripe moment to do so. The generational and historical sweep I mentioned a moment ago has stirred the creative juices of those who survived the caldron of war--and the political, social, and economic upheaval that's still a raw wound. Throughout the region, storytelling--like other arts--appears to be thriving. Ooligan would like to turn those stories into books for serious American readers.

You visited Croatia in conjunction with the joint publishing project. What impressions did you take back to the States?

I think I recall every single minute of that trip. And it was a trip of a trip. Before this project, I knew little more than most Americans about Croatia. So, I read a couple of books before coming and practiced as much tourist Croatian as I could, and my wife



Linny and I made the trip to Zagreb by train from Trieste via Ljubljana, alternately reading the three manuscripts of the authors we were about to meet and watching the stunning scenery along the Sava out our window. It felt as if we were merging with another time and place.

We were met by the authors and translator at the main station. For the next several days, it was intense. Not only a magical new place, but the rare pleasure of being introduced as insider/outside to our fellow writers and publishers and others who live in Bookland together, no matter where we get our mail. We were among friends. On the 2nd day we met with the Minister of Culture and the Assistant Minister to confirm their support and partial sponsorship of the three books. The importance of that support cannot be minimized; it would be naive to ignore the overwhelming force of external culture pounding on the doors of smaller nations and cultures every day. If they do not promote themselves, their voices will be lost. All of us would lose. We're pleased if we can help keep that from happening. Spending days immersed in Zagreb's literary world was a treat.

Zagreb was fascinating, but it did not prepare us for the amazingly beautiful coast. We worked our way slowly from Rovnjaska to Dubrovnik before flying home. We returned to Oregon with a much richer, deeper understanding of Croatia, and a desire to return. We tell everyone about it. ■

Interliber

The 29th International Fair of Books and Teaching Aids – 07. - 11.11.2006.

The International Book and Teaching Appliances Fair presents the publishing business and educational literature with the largest supply of books under a single roof. It is held under the auspices of the Croatian Ministry of Culture.

The successful cooperation of the Association of Publishers and Booksellers at the Croatian Chamber of Economy and the Zagreb Fair will be fully confirmed at Interliber.

By introducing partner countries (Hungary in 2003, Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2004 and Croatian Heritage Foundation in 2005), the Interliber fair surpassed the national boundaries and gained international significance.

This year's Interliber fair will feature presentations, appearance of a large number of publishers and writers, as well as a rich programme of professional-accompanying and cultural events at the Zagreb Fair grounds and in the City of Zagreb.

The Zagreb Fair and the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts (HAZU) will allot the traditional "Josip Juraj Strossmayer" award for the most successful scientific works and publishing ventures in the field of social, human, medical, natural, technical and information sciences..

In parallel with INTERLIBER the following fairs will be held – INFO (International Information Technology, Telecommunications and New Media Fair) and EDUCA Plus (International Exhibiton and Conference on Lifelong Learning and Human Resources Management in organization of the Zagreb Fair and the Croatian Chamber of Economy).

Exhibition Programme:

- Newspapers and magazines
- Fiction
- School and educational literature
- Religion/theology, literature
- Trade literature, science
- Art
- Children's and young adults' books, picture books, comics
- Monographs
- Maps, travel guides and charts
- Reference, dictionaries
- Multimedia/Electronic Publisher
- Audio/video publishing
- Trade and economic associations, institutions, agencies
- Libraries/galleries/museums
- Cabinet, laboratory and other teaching appliances

Info: www.zv.hr