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YUGOSLAVIA  
~~February~~ 15, 1983

Andrea Oppenheimer Dean  
The American Institute of Architects  
1735 New York Ave., N.W.,  
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Ms. Dean,

It is fine to hear that enjoyment of making the next issue on international architecture, started.

This time I could participate with publishing proposal of one recent Yugoslav project. That is a last year finished hotel "Dubrovnik II", built in Zagreb, designed by arch. couple - the Filipovičs. Erected in setting shaped at the beginning of century, this product of eighties caused a quite attention with us. Both specialists and laymen took stand in valuation of this work.

In the case you find it worth publishing, please let me know: I can send slides and additional information, or write short comment.

I wish you pleasant work and a lot of nice materials all over the world.

With my best,

Lenko Pleština

P.S. At the very last moment I enclose two proposals more: Mertojak in Split, and Zetra in Sarajevo, that I think are worth publishing, too. Hope that the consignment will be with you by March 10.

Lenko Plestina  
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March 16, 1983

Dear Lenko Plestina,

It was a pleasure hearing from you again. We would like to publish the Zetra Olympic complex in Sarajevo, and, on a smaller scale, the "Dubrovnik II" hotel in Zagreb. What is interesting about the second, I think, is the controversy that must have surrounded the hotel, and the fact that it does look like a foreign import. Perhaps you would like to talk about these things in a short (about 1500 words) article about the hotel. We would also need plans and (sorry, forget it. I have them, already.) Would it be possible to obtain some color slides or prints of the interior, in addition to the photoe you sent?

For the sports center, we would also want about 1500 words, and we need better photographs. Perhaps you can get some from the architect? Or can take some yourself. I very much like the fact that some of the photos you sent are full of people.

I would appreciate it if you could get the two articles to me by June 15. Is that all right?

With best regards,

*Andrea Oppenheimer*

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Andrea Oppenheimer  
senior editor  
A.I.A., 1735 New York Ave., N.W.  
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May 20, 1983

Dear Andrea Oppenheimer,

I send you the Zetra and the Dubrovnik Hotel supplements with a hope to be seen in the annual review. I tried my best, but anyway something might be superfluous and certainly some thoughts could be written in better way, so you are free to improve and fix it.

These days, I'm working on some smaller projects - somehow it is a time of decreased investments and there is not so much work for architects, overhere. At my work on the University, it is quite busy now - it is semester ending, students finishing their projects and there are a lot of final talks or corrections. In private, my little girl, mumbing waddler-toddler is decorating my free time.

I wish you pleasant work on the finalization of the magazine, and I am looking forward to see it by the end of summer.

With my best

Lenko Pleština

## Undulating Grid Over the Hotel in Zagreb

Last year, the new built hotel "Dubrovnik-2", designed by Ines and Nikola Filipović became an architectural topic in Zagreb, second large Yugoslav city. Actually it is an addition to the existing hotel from the 20s, now both functionally integrated into the 600 beds unity. Located in city center, corrugated glass curtain of the new building has drawn attention of many.

Zagreb is quite old by mention (already bishopric AD 1094) what often produces a sort of historic romanticism toward any kind of renewal or substitution in or near historic core, where new city center is formed in 19. century. The precise knowledge of oldness and adequate value is not as much important as an image that any kind of historically shaped buildings can provoke in the sense of "proved old value". Poetic sensibility is based on learnt or inherited space vocabulary which similarly had functioned until the appearance of modern architecture- even in some parts of modern, too. Base of that language are blocks and street corridors (on the orthogonal grid since AD 1880), strips of 3-4 floors facades, painted stucco hollowed wall, accentuated entrance and styled profilation of pilasters and columns on the front facades. (At that time only institution decorated facade with columns, and certainly the beauty of column appearance was not pure aesthetic but was mixed with respect or fear of institutional power). The modern omitted pitched roof, rose hightness for a floor or two, purified expression, yellow-brown palette was shifted a bit toward a pale grey, but somehow succeeded to merge with existing environment. The rough general expression was further on, windowed and plastered strips of elevations, and probably that was unifying motive.

In the area of plaster city <sup>center</sup> only some distinguished functions has been enveloped in better material as stone (cathedral, stock-exchange), brick (post office) and recently glass (among else and several headquarters of energy distributing firms, too). As before non-plaster dressing always produced unanimous admiration, the

least of laymen, glass interpretation has brought either polemics or dilemmas. The first semi-glass volume from the 60s had been attacked from different sides until compromise twenty years latter: grey metal parapets were painted in brown with a hope it would fit better yellow-brown square setting of different neo-styles. Glass buildings of 80s are not so fiercely resisted. Whatever, some as "Dubrovnik-2", are honoured with nice prizes.

If dilikeness, that is not with a call for demolition, but deny with adequate respect.

Dealing in a protected urban area, means how to relate own freedom to certain obligations. Freedom of so many poetic sensation and information that an architect in this global village is getting and want to cope with - and an obligation of some abstract unity whose constituting principles is very hard precisely to define. There is no recipes of betterness: to be alike or different? Should an inspiration be rooted in the pre-industrial past, or should be drawn from the most contemporary building challenge? Many would say middle of the road, but is it a way to express own individuality in this very personalized time?

A hotel place is to give a different sensation and messages depending to the orientation either toward outside guests or to the local people. Besides maximum of the functional comfort, celebration, cheerful happenings and happy romances, that like both, out city people expect as much as possible lot of indigenious exotic specifics to avoid the sameness with hotels they left at home. (I doubt that foreign guests of "Dubrovnik-2" will find here a mark of Balkan.) Home people (say better established or richer, hotel consumers) may consider hotel place as a touch of the world glamour and it should stimulate a feeling of a forwardness. So, hotel expression is not a matter of exaggeration of local spices, often reduced to the "kitsch", but something that is contemporary and modern - architects could say post or late modern, too .

Doesn't matter of local or international expression, it seems that contrary to the professional sophistication, ordinary people prefer a hotel as a picturesque, narrative place. Ten years ago, Intercontinental Co. built in Zagreb a hotel with a lot of Ersatz styling. "Dubrovnik-2" is certainly contradicting it with decency that is oriented more to the eyes of professionals.

The approach was a search for building own identity, that would be expressed through refined abstract aesthetic, rather than recognizable elements and connotations - neither the sign of hotel is put on. Without a gate or porch invitation, entrance is quite enigmatic hidden behind shallow arcade. Get used on a wall-window presentation, here as with many glass curtain, it is uneasy to read if it is a big window or it is entire wall. Also, there is a puzzle with its heightness through a distortion of scale. The absence of the floors signums, slick skin membrane, upward put grid, produce a feeling of much bigger heightness than its 9 up floors actually are. Vertikality is also pointed because of neutral or horizontal composition of the neighbour surfaces, and probably that is made with purpose: vertikality could be a sign of urbanity. Glass facade lost relationship of full and void, tension of light and shadow, but brought a play of reflection and exciting modulation of only grid elements. At the first glance it looks that besides subordination to the block and presentation of building through main facade, there is not other references with its surrounding. But, curved elevation motives are somehow generated by some existing buildings: rounded corner building across the street, and lined up bay-windows on a nearby facade.

I would not here judge what was an immediate inspiration, and what came from abroad. Certainly, the authors were quite well informed with late work of the American slick-skin/ers, and it seems to me, they like very much undulating grid of Antony Lamsden. But contrary to the sculptural, solitary posted pieces of

foreigners, here it is an interpolation in the tight block-break, so that building is presented only in one facade. Anyway, depth and sculptural feeling is achieved by means of the basement arcade, ten mega-columns motives and recessed side top ending.

Expression of hotel didn't draw many inspiration from its in conventionally way put-up function. A room is not taken as a basic repetition unit to get some sizzle structure, what was quite popular these days. Unlike outside, inside expression came with spatial organization of rooms in two wings that form seven stories, diagonally glass covered hall. If there were not a visible elevator cabins moving up and down the hall, we might deny Portman's or Welton-Beckett's influence. Because inside of block across the hotel there is a four story neoclassicist styled octogon covered with glass dome, that could be an inspiration, too.

Choice of materials was to support an idea of decency. Glass, aluminum, polished stone, as a coolness that is a bit warmed up with light ash timber and some pieces of leather chairs. It is a curiosity that besides quite expensive used materials (thermoisolated reflective facade glass is even imported from the U.S.) the price of hotel per square meter is a bit cheaper than of multidwelling public housing overhere with us.

Written by: Lenko Pleština

/prillog pripremljen za AIA Journal  
-nije objavljeno

8/15/83

Sorry we couldn't publish  
the Dubrovnik Hotel.

I think Zetra came out  
quite well, though I had to  
cut the text to make it  
fit onto the page.

Best regards,

Andrea