

Ivo PERIĆ, *Vladko Maček. Politički portret (Vladko Maček. A Political Portrait)*, Golden marketing - Tehnička knjiga: Zagreb 2003, 325 pages

Dr. Vladko Maček (1879-1964) is one of the most conspicuous people on the Croatian political stage of the 20th century. His political activity has undoubtedly left a profound trace on the contemporary history of the Croatian people.

The political figure and personality of Maček was written about amply already during his lifetime (M. Petanjek, B. Murgić, et al.) but also after his death (B. Pešelj, A. Maček, N. Škrabe, et al.). The historians Lj. Boban, J. Jareb, F. Jelić-Butić and H. Matković shed light on certain stages of the life of this distinguished Croatian politician each from their own perspective.

Dr. Ivo Perić, author of numerous noted historiographic texts, undertook the task of writing the biographies of reputable Croatian politicians on many occasions. The focus of his scientific interest and research have been A. Trumbić,<sup>1</sup> F. Supilo,<sup>2</sup> A. Radić<sup>3</sup> and S. Radić<sup>4</sup> The political portrait of Maček logically follows the biographies of the aforesaid people, with whom Maček was not only a contemporary but also the closest associate, particularly of Stjepan Radić.

During his relatively long life Maček was witness to a great number of events that marked contemporary history. He lived to see and survived both World Wars, which determined the fate of the Croatian people in the long term, each in its own way. During his lifetime and active political involvement, Maček saw the Croatian people and their ethnicities organised into five different administrative-legal units — the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes/the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the Independent State of Croatia, and the Communist Yugoslavia.

Maček started his political career while still at school. Perić notices well that Maček was then inspired “by patriotic and politically-oppositional emotions”. His then political programme

fully corresponded to the term — “the interests of the Croatian fatherland”. The sole political party Maček joined and remained loyal to for the rest of his life was the Croatian Peasant Party (CPP) founded by the Radić brothers.

Practically ever since the very establishment of the CPP, Maček was one of its Standing Committee members (1906).

Once the centralistic Yugoslav Monarchy was constituted, Radić’s CPP fought for the constitution of the “Neutral Peasant Republic of Croatia”. Having ardently advocated the realisation of this political goal, Maček was imprisoned twice in the first few years after World War I (1919/1920 and 1925).

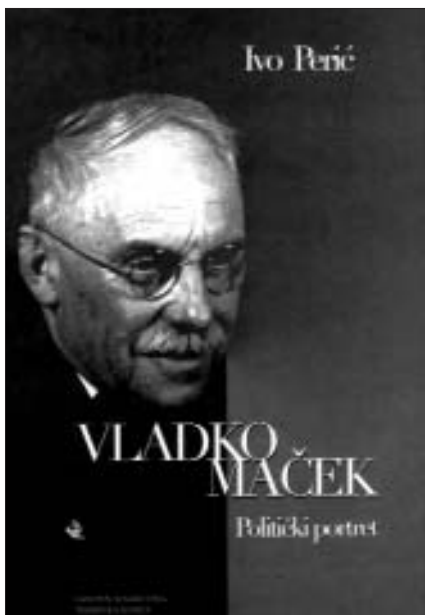
Following Radić’s violent death that came soon after the bloodshed at the Parliament of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, Maček, the then Vice President of the CPP, was appointed President for Life of the CPP.

Continuing the fight for the right of the Croatian people to sovereignty, Maček was imprisoned twice during the period of the 6th January Dictatorship.

As President of the CPP — as rightly emphasised by Perić — Maček became the leader of the Croatian people in the second half of the 1930s. The Croatian Peasant Movement, organised into the CPP, became “a Pan-Croatian national movement”.

The constitution of the Autonomous Banovina of Croatia, which embraced the territories inhabited mostly by Croats, was the peak of Maček’s political career (1939). Although this was a Yugoslav solution to the Croatian question, the Croatian people, nevertheless, gained a certain level of autonomy in the unwanted state.

The downfall of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in the short-lived April War (1941) placed Maček in an unenviable position — he was unwelcome to both the Ustasha regime in the Independent State of Croatia and to Communist partisans. During the War Maček was held by the Ustasha Government in the Jasenovac Concentration Camp for some time, and later in confinement in Kupinec and Zagreb. During the dissolution of the Independent State of Croatia Maček decided to leave his homeland on the eve of the arrival of the Communist forces. He



was helped in this by factions of the crumbling Ustasha security system.

As a political emigrant Maček spent some time in Paris (1945-1947) and then moved to Washington, where he died.

During the years of his life as an emigrant Maček did not renounce politics. When in 1947 the International Peasant Union was founded in Washington, President of the CPP was one of its leaders.

Reflecting on the fate of the Croatian people in the renewed Yugoslav state under Communist rule, Maček initially held that the union should — naturally without the Communists — be organised as it was about to be in 1939, when the Autonomous Banovina of Croatia was constituted. Towards the end of his life he changed his opinion and advocated a confederative constitution of Yugoslavia, in which each nation would lead its own life independently, while only some of the most essential common interests would be arranged by a confederal agreement. It was in this sense and within this framework that Maček supported an independent Croatian state, as is rightly highlighted by Perić. Interestingly, in his statements Maček was convinced — this is particularly underlined by

Perić — that the Croatian people would ultimately achieve their independence, but that he would not live to see that day. This prediction proved to be true. Thirty-two years after Maček's death his remains were transferred from the United States of America to the sovereign Republic of Croatia.

The political biography of Maček penned by Ivo Perić is yet another precious piece in the mosaic of the Croatian political history of the last century.

• Zlatko MATIJEVIĆ

<sup>1</sup> I. PERIĆ, *Ante Trumbić na dalmatinskom političkom poprištu (Ante Trumbić in the Dalmatian Political Arena)*, Muzej grada Splita, Split 1984.

<sup>2</sup> I. PERIĆ, *Mladi Supilo (The Young Supilo)*, Školska knjiga, Zagreb 1996.

<sup>3</sup> I. PERIĆ, *Ante Radić 1868.-1919. Etnograf, književnik, političar (Ante Radić 1868-1919. Ethnographer, Writer and Politician)*, Dom i svijet, Zagreb 2002.

<sup>4</sup> I. PERIĆ, *Stjepan Radić 1871.-1928.*, Dom i svijet, Zagreb 2003.

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*Narodne novine. Zbornik uz 170. obljetnicu neprekinutoga izlaženja 1835.-2005. (Narodne novine. An Anthology Marking the 170th Anniversary of Uninterrupted Publication, 1835-2005)*, Ivan Bekavac (ed.), Narodne novine d.d.: Zagreb 2005, 381 pages

Big anniversaries are always proper occasions to raise a glass in honour of the one celebrating and to wish them success in the future, but also to draw a line and analyse the achieved. Seventeen decades of uninterrupted publication of a newspaper is a rare jubilee not only in Europe but also the world, which can leave no one indifferent, least of all those who are well aware of the importance of the media today. The path of *Narodne novine* from Zagreb has been marked by revolutions, both World Wars, and the rises and falls of world ideologies — Fascism, Communism and National Socialism. Both its editors and contributors not only witnessed, but also frequently actively partook in the turbulent changes of Central Europe in both