

# THE INDUSTRIAL COLONY OF BELIŠĆE: FACTORY FACILITIES, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND TRANSPORTATION ON GUTMANN'S ESTATE<sup>1</sup>

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Gutmann's company became involved with industrial wood processing in the mid-19th century, due to the demand for railroad ties for the purpose of building a railway network in the post-revolutionary Habsburg Monarchy. In the wood processing business, the company would hold its steady place for almost a century, until the Ustasha regime and then the Communist government put an end to its tradition. Its fate was finally sealed in 1946 by the District People's Court in Zagreb.

Belišće was founded in 1884 and within a few years acquired the form of an industrial settlement with factory facilities, warehouses, administrative buildings, cultural centres, and typical apartment buildings. By the end of the interwar period, Belišće had the population of a smaller urban settlement, with a post office serving a number of surrounding villages, factories, a port on the river Drava, and a railway network as a starting point in connecting Slavonia-Podravina with the foot of Mount Papuk in Voćin.

Gutmann's industrial plants, infrastructure and workers were the backbone of a successful family business, which consequently built the township of Belišće.

**Keywords:** Gutmann, Belišće, industry, urbanization, railway, workers

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## Introduction

This paper focuses on the development of the industrial colony of Belišće, owned by the noble family of Gutmann from Gelse (from 1904 barons of Gelse and Belišće).<sup>2</sup> They opened a sawmill there, which owing to a systematic plan of investments led to the emergence of an urban entity that kept growing during the given period.

The growth of the industrial colony was sustained by advanced equipment in modern factory plants, where wood processing localities were linked with the surrounding sites of forest exploitation, and all the essential facilities were interconnected along the existing line of production and management buildings. The Gutmanns built the Slavonia-Podravina Railway (hereinafter SPŽ), which functioned as a public transportation network for this part of Slavonia for more than 70 years, until the late 1960s.<sup>3</sup>

The development of wood industry was accompanied by the adoption and improvement of other industrial branches, primarily chemical industry, as well as a top-of-the-range repair workshop, which was later transformed into a machine factory. The scope of company's operations in Belišće grew to include the production of barrels, tannins, and dry distillation products. The latter branch turned into a whole range of chemical products for industry and export.

## Urbanization of Belišće and industrialization on Gutmann's estate

With the beginning of the plant's operation, workers' colonies were built with a regular layout, which testifies to specific urban planning. The first scholars who researched the urban planning of Belišće (during the early 1960s) noted a dual spatial development with a separate development of the basic

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<sup>2</sup> The founder of the family business was Samuel Heinrich Gutmann (b. 1806 in Gelse – d. 1890 in Nagykanizsa), who founded industrial plants for wood processing in Nagykanizsa in 1848. His sons Edmund (b. 1841 in Nagykanizsa – d. 1918 in Belišće), Vilim (b. 1847 in Nagykanizsa – d. 1921 in Budapest), Aladar (b. 1857 in Nagykanizsa – d. 1921 in Vienna), Izidor (b. 1845 in Nagykanizsa – d. 1918 in Vienna), and Ladislav (b. 1855 in Nagykanizsa – d. 1933 in Vienna) continued to develop the company. They opened branches in Budapest, Vienna, and Trieste, as well as wood processing plants in Belišće. They bought the Voćin estates from the Janković family, the Orahovica estate, and the estate of Duke Schaumburg-Lippe around Mikleuš, and with these investments, the family was now in possession of some 50,000 *katastarsko jutro* of forest (1 kj = 5754.64 m<sup>2</sup>). Cf. Tibor Karpati, "Kronologija razvitka organizacije kombinata Belišće od njegova postanka do 1978. godine" ["Development of 'Kombinat Belišće' from its foundation until 1978"], in *Zbornik radova "Kombinat Belišće" kao činilac prirednog razvoja*, ed. Josip Roglič (Osijek, 1980), p. 246.

<sup>3</sup> More details in: Siniša Lajnert, "Likvidacija Slavonsko-podravske željeznice" ["Liquidation of the Slavonia-Podravina Railway"], *Radovi – Zavod za hrvatsku povijest* (Zagreb), 44 (2012): 406.

functions: “Valpovo as the historical seat of the feudal estate and Belišće as the industrial centre,” whereby “this separation shows most clearly that the former basic forces of urban development (administration, crafts, and trade) had changed.”<sup>4</sup> The construction of Belišće was adapted to the activities that took place in this area, which meant that industrial production was correlated with housing. In this sense, one can identify three macro areas where these activities were taking place: the housing area, the industrial area, and the space that was open to the future communal and urban development of the town. The traffic was taking place in a physical framework that “may be generally referred to as a channel or corridor, and if speaking of the circulation of people, goods, and information in a traditional city – the street. The characteristic of these corridors in Belišće was that they created an orthogonal spatial structure, while in Valpovo one typically finds a radial street network.”<sup>5</sup>

The sawmill was founded in 1884 and to the south, in its immediate vicinity, a settlement for workers and the company was emerging as an important factor for the construction of a township and the logic of its urban order. The first six houses for the workers were built a year later. According to a design of the water supply system from 1885, the settlement plan was a rectangular grid, “actually a cross-sectional layout in the beginning, around which the grid was later organized. The rectangular system was typical for newly founded settlements owing to its logic, simplicity, and convenience in terms of easy organizing and plot division – from Vis to the Roman *castra*...”<sup>6</sup> Thus, the rectangular system would also become a typical feature of capitalist urbanism in the 19th century. The main axis of the settlement was the first laid street connected to the Valpovo – Bistrinci road, which led to the river Drava. Perpendicularly to this street, there was a second axis connecting the sawmill with the administrative part of the company. Subsequent plot division continued to the south of the first constructions, at a right angle to the first streets, and in this way the settlement acquired its urban complexity. The first buildings were self-standing, one-storeyed apartment houses, one of them south of the administrative building, facing the street laterally, while the houses along Radnička Street were parallel to it. The planned construction of the settlement was continuous, and within 10 years, about fifty houses would form a township with streets and public buildings. The Hungarian “Pallas” lexicon stated in 1893 that Belišće resembled examples from American colonization. Its buildings were organ-

<sup>4</sup> Marijan Hržić, “Urbanizam Belišća” [“Urban planning in Belišće”], in *Zbornik radova “Kombinat Belišće”*: 547-549.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*: 549.

<sup>6</sup> Vladimir Bedenko, “Belišće – razvoj naselja” [“Belišće: Evolution of a settlement”], in *Zbornik radova “Kombinat Belišće”*, p. 544.

ized as a proper township, with a school,<sup>7</sup> a long row of workers' houses, a post office with a telegraph device, two large railway stations, and a church. The settlement was surrounded on all sides by industrial and transportation infrastructure: the sawmill to the north, the tannin factory to the east, and the railway line to the south. Along the two main longitudinal streets running parallel, a third street of the same direction ran parallel to the railway, with a railway station and railway houses. These streets were connected in 1911 by means of several streets of north-south orientation. The centre of the township was still linked to the above-mentioned road intersections along the factory-administration line of buildings. The first administrative building was built in 1885, and in 1892 it was extended eastwards. With the construction of Palej<sup>8</sup> in 1905, the centre obtained a new architectural character.<sup>9</sup>

From the original workers' houses of a provisional character, an urban entity was formed in which there were barely any farmers and its workers were mainly employed in industry, transportation, trade, and other services. "Their settlement enjoys all the advantages of an urban entity, from water supply and sewerage to electricity and other communal utilities."<sup>10</sup> Belišće's growth dynamics also influenced the population movement in the municipality of Valpovo. Compared to the settlements of the twelve municipalities of Podravina and north-eastern Slavonia, Valpovo had a constant demographic growth, which was not the case with other municipalities. The township of Belišće increased its share in the structure of the twelve municipalities of this region.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The private elementary school opened in 1886, with 66 pupils in two classes. The first teacher was Jelena pl. Czompó. Cf. Hrvoje Volner, "Drvena industrija Slavonije s posebnim osvrtom na obitelj Gutmann do kraja 1918" ["Wood industry in Slavonia, with special reference to the Gutmann family before 1918"], *Historijski zbornik* (Zagreb), 65 (2012), no. 2: 466-467.

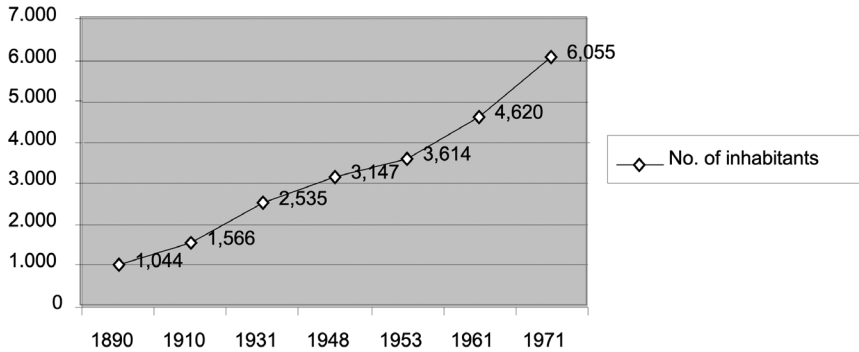
<sup>8</sup> Palej is the most representative monumental historicist building in Belišće, the Gutmann family palace. Its name Pale(j) comes from the French word *palais*. The building was designed by Ernst von Gotthilf, a famous architect and builder of Vienna. It was built for residential purposes and also contained offices. The palace has been a registered cultural monument since 1993. Cf. Milan Salajić, *Staro Belišće, kulturno-povijesni vodič* [*Old Belišće: A cultural-historical guide*] (Belišće, 2012), p. 45.

<sup>9</sup> Bedenko, "Belišće – razvoj naselja ...", pp. 543-545.

<sup>10</sup> Vladimir Stipetić, "Utjecaj 'Belišća' na stvaranje urbane aglomeracije Belišće" ["The impact of 'Belišće' on the development of Belišće as an urban agglomeration"] in *Zbornik radova "Kombinat Belišće"*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>11</sup> Stipetić, "Utjecaj 'Belišća' ...", p. 25: "... including the city of Osijek... as many as thrice since 1910 (in 1910, it was 3.6 ‰ and grew to 10.9 ‰ by 1971.)"

Fig. 1: The population of Belišće according to the censuses



Source: Vladimir Stipetić, “Utjecaj ‘Belišća’ na stvaranje urbane aglomeracije Belišće,” in: *Zbornik radova “Kombinat Belišće” kao činilac privrednog razvoja*, ed. Josip Roglić (Osijek, 1980), p. 25

The development of Belišće, and consequently its surroundings, was linked to the development of wood industry. The first railway line to the forest, 16 km long from Belišće, was put into operation on November 25, 1884. Logs were transported on simple waggonets with wooden frames (without joints or similar shock absorbers). “For the transportation of longer logs, there were pairs... of the so-called *truk* or *gip* elements, connected to each other by the logs that were loaded on them.”<sup>12</sup>

In the period from 1884 to 1894, the S.H. Gutmann company used up the purchased forest areas of the Valpovo estate and paid the contracted amount to the seller. Already in 1889, they signed a contract on the exploitation of forests on Majlath’s estate of Donji Miholjac. In order to connect this new exploitation site with Belišće, the company had to meet the requirements of the public administration (which was the first time in case of such exploitative constructions) that the railway line had to be open for civilian use and was not to be privately owned.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Josip Hakenberger, “Povijesni osvrt na bivšu Slavonsku Podravsku željeznicu (SPŽ)” [History of the Slavonia-Podravina Railway (SPŽ)], in *Zbornik radova “Kombinat Belišće”*, p. 201; cf. Salajić, *Staro Belišće*.

<sup>13</sup> Hakenberger, “Povijesni osvrt.” Provincial railway connections in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy were a matter of private capital according to Article 31 from 1880 and its amendment (Article 4) from 1888. Construction of vicinal railways was also allowed to private persons, who were stimulated by various tax and other benefits. In turn, companies opened their public transport for public

Thus, the joint stock company Slavonia-Podravina Railway (hereinafter: SPŽ) was founded, based in Budapest and registered on April 1, 1889. That same year, the company extended its industrial track to Prandaunovci, connecting it to the already existing line towards Donji Miholjac.<sup>14</sup> The line was 34 km long in civilian traffic, with the stations Beliše, Veliškovac-Gat, Črnkovci, Podravski Podgajci, Sveti Đurađ, Donji Miholjac, Gloždje, and Viljevo Kapelna, and numerous industrial tracks for individual forests splitting off. The use of a standard track (143.5 cm) was not considered because it was too expensive and the 100 cm diameter was also more stable compared to the 76 cm models. At first, the Gutmanns knew that no railroads would be built on the Valpovo – Donji Miholjac line except theirs, which also explains the later aspirations of Baron Ladislav Gutmann to buy the neighbouring estate, that of Count Majlath. Vilim held Voćin, and Edmund Orahovica. If buying Majlath's estate, the Gutmanns would own the area of the former Požega *sanjak*. The profit gained from SPŽ reduced the cost of transporting wood.<sup>15</sup>

The expansion of construction works in the nearby forests led to the expansion of the narrow-gauge railway network, with the track width comparable to Zagreb's present-day tramline. SPŽ was very important for the area of Slavonia-Podravina and the foot of Mount Papuk. In the same year, SPŽ requested permission to construct a Beliše-Viljevo Kapelna railway line (built in April 1890). The largest structures on the railway line were two bridges over the river Karašica, made of iron and industrially produced. Considering the public and industrial function of this traffic line, various signals and other traffic signs had to be installed: road and pathway crossings and special traffic lights for the existing forest railway. The first locomotives were delivered to the Beliše port on a ship that sailed on the Danube and the Drava from Vienna, where they had been purchased from a suburban railway in liquidation. Made in 1874 and 1876, they were named No. 11 Valpo and No. 12 Gustav. Later on, new locomotives were bought from the Krauss factory in Munich: No. 21 Miholjac in 1884, No. 22 Stefania in 1888, and a second-hand one from the Thurn and Taxis company from Leknik, produced in 1878: No. 23 Obod. For the needs of the public transport railways, more locomotives were purchased. The last locomotives of SPŽ that had a name along with the number were pur-

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use, and the law stipulated that the state should buy the railroad after some time, or that after 90 years it should become state property for free. Ibid., 202, 205.

<sup>14</sup> Dušan Klepac, Ivo Dekanić, and Đuro Rauš, "Šumsko bogatstvo Slavonije i gravitacijskog područja 'Beliša' u vrijeme postanka 'Kombinata Beliše' i danas" ["Forest riches in Slavonia and the gravitational area of "Beliše" at the time of foundation of 'Kombinat Beliše' and today"], in *Zbornik radova "Kombinat Beliše"*, p. 40.

<sup>15</sup> Hakenberger, "Povijesni osvrt," pp. 203-204; Državni arhiv u Osijeku [State Archives in Osijek, DAOS], fund no. 123, box no. 2463, "Dr. Hugo Spitzer, advokat Osijek, Meine Erlebnisse im Hause Gutmann, An Baron Arthur Gutmann."

chased in the early 20th century and were called No. 41 Majlath, No. 42 Osijek, and No. 43 Zagreb. The railway connected Valpovo and Donji Miholjac, towns that were not connected to the Osijek-Našice-Podravska Slatina-Noskovci-Sv. Lovrenc line (1895). The SPŽ railroad line would later connect Osijek (29 km long, put into circulation in 1908) and the entire Slavonia-Podravina all the way to the foot of Mount Papuk in Voćin (56 km long, put into circulation in 1907). The company would have reloading stations for regular-width railway loads in Prandaunovci, Novskovici and Čačinci. For the needs of increased traffic on the extended SPŽ network, the number of waggons was increased for both passenger and freight transportation.<sup>16</sup>

Designs of Belišće and the company from 1908 show that the company had a complete structure in its industrial area: a sawmill, a sawmill furnace, a repair shop, a tannin factory, a dry distillery factory, a parquet factory, a barrel factory, a laboratory, a pumping station on Drava river, a water tower, various factory warehouse buildings, a factory railway, a freight train station, a railway furnace, and a railway passenger station with a warehouse, a furnace, a lamp room, guard rooms, and a canteen.<sup>17</sup>

## Development of factories and production in Belišće

In 1884, the Gutmann company constructed a large sawmill with 160 hp, 8 gang saws,<sup>18</sup> 11 circular and 15 blade saws, boiler rooms with five boilers and two added dryers, a covered locomotive depot, mechanical workshops, etc. These facilities were “very accomplished, of a solid design and with the best systems”<sup>19</sup> in this branch. From the forest of Gradina, a 1 m wide and 16 km long railroad led to the sawmill in Belišće, where it split into three arms. “In order to reach all the machinery lines, the tracks run from the front and the back of the building with the sawmill to the transversal line with 5 rotary plates, from which 5 tracks passed through the sawmill hall and the material warehouse between the hall and the river Drava.”<sup>20</sup> All the buildings erected over the summer of 1884 were very attractive, especially the large sawmill hall with a beautiful, artistic roof structure and a machine park with appliances. At that time, it was probably the largest sawmill in Slavonia, with an annual capacity of 50,000 m<sup>3</sup> of logs. The number of head saws was later increased

<sup>16</sup> Hakenberger, “Povijesni osvrt ...”, pp. 207-209.

<sup>17</sup> Karpati, “Kronologija razvitka organizacije ...”, p. 245.

<sup>18</sup> See: “Gater” or “jarmača”, Bratoljub Klaić, *Rječnik stranih riječi*, (Zagreb 1986), p. 471.

<sup>19</sup> Klepac, Dekanić, Rauš, “Šumsko bogatstvo ...”, p. 40.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

to 11, with the capacity of cutting an average of 70,000 m<sup>3</sup> of logs:<sup>21</sup> usually oak, beech, and ash tree, as well as elm. From the first day, there were some 500 workers at the sawmill. According to the preserved data on the sawmill performance, in the period from 1925 to 1940 as much as 45,000 m<sup>3</sup> of logs were processed per year, and from 1967 to 1976 the quantity was 37,000 m<sup>3</sup>, of which 84 % was poplar wood. At first, the factory processed only oak wood, and with time other types as well: from 1884 to 1918 oak prevailed, and from 1919 to 1960 it was beech sawmill logs, later poplar. According to the data from 1893, the Gutmann sawmill was the largest oak producer in Europe. "From the port at the Drava, sawmill products were shipped mainly to England, France, and Belgium."<sup>22</sup> The port was located in the area of the Belišće, Bistrinci and Valpovo conurbation.

In the following period, the production was extended to barrels (1889), parquet (1902), wooden wool (1948), and final wood processing (1952). The Gutmann company thus developed a self-sufficient, export-oriented production. Manufacture production of barrels was transformed into industrial, with a capacity of 30,000 barrels (of 250 litres) per year, according to the data from 1924. The produced barrels were primarily used for the packaging of tannins and products of wood distillation, but also for export. Occasionally, vats made of fir wood were produced for the needs of other factories.<sup>23</sup>

The problem of sawmill waste was solved by constructing a tannin factory (1889), which ensured a constant supply of raw material for chemical industry.<sup>24</sup> Tannin was exported to England in transport containers of 250 to 300 litres. The factory had a capacity of 10,000 to 12,000 tons of extract. From 1922 until the closure of the plant in 1975, it produced an average of 17,441 t of oak and 71,000 Ft of tannin extract: oak and chestnut. It also produced *belitan*, which was used when drilling the soil for oil and gas extraction. The residues of tannin extraction were used to make "plates, furfural, wood hydrolysis, cellulose, or semi-cellulose."<sup>25</sup> According to the estimates, during its 86 years of production the factory processed 1,809,254 t of wood and produced 81,092 Ft of tannin extract.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>22</sup> Stanko Bađun and Marijan Brežnjak, "Povijesni razvitak 'Kombinata Belišće': Mehanička prerada drva" ["Historical development of 'Kombinat Belišće': Mechanical wood processing"], in *Zbornik radova "Kombinat Belišće"*, pp. 133-135.

<sup>23</sup> Bađun, Brežnjak, "Povijesni razvitak ...", p. 136.

<sup>24</sup> Ivo Opačić, "Povijesni razvitak 'Kombinata Belišće' – kemijska prerada drva" ["Historical development of 'Kombinat Belišće': Chemical wood processing"] in *Zbornik radova "Kombinat Belišće"*, pp. 139-141.

<sup>25</sup> Klepac, Dekanić, Rauš, "Šumsko bogatstvo ...", p. 76.



Dry distillation of wood started in 1900 with the mechanical processing of beech wood and had a similar developmental path as the tannin industry. The primary product of dry distillation was retorted charcoal. "The need to exploit beech wood, especially its importance and demand in metallurgy and chemical industry, were the main reason for processing beech wood in this way."<sup>26</sup> The first raw material was large quantities of beech wood (class I) from the forests that the company had purchased on Mount Papuk. Within 15 to 20 years, this type of wood became a valuable technological raw material, and thus class II was given for distillation, and later other types and varieties of wood. Transitions to poorer wood quality strongly affected the utilization and quality of products. Around 1920, distillation was restructured (production in solid retorts of the "Margina" type) in order to exploit the gas and steam by-products of the process. High-quality charcoal was exported to the countries of Western Europe on the river Drava.

The first power plant was built for the sawmill needs in 1884, and the second for the needs of the dry distillation and tannin factory. "All machines and devices were powered by mechanical belt transmission."<sup>27</sup> Electricity was used to illuminate the sawmill and the warehouses, and also the workers' apartments in their immediate surroundings. It was only with the installation of a suction gas engine in 1924 that a general electrification of Belišće began. Chemical plants could not function without a steady water supply, partly for technological needs, but mostly for the cooling systems. Therefore, a water pump station was built on the river Drava, some 450 meters from the tannery power station. Drinking water was obtained from the wells, and the owners had it brought by train from a spring in Radolovac (about 70 km from Belišće).

The machine factory emerged from the repair workshop (1886), which served to maintain the waggons of the company's narrow-gauge SPŽ. At first, there was a railway furnace with the locksmiths', blacksmiths', and other workshops. As early as 1890, a group of expert masters was founded and "it was the core of the first repair workshop for maintaining the wagons and repairs within the factories."<sup>28</sup> This unit was named "Main Workshops" and in 1950 it became the Machine Factory. Its size can be inferred from the fact that

<sup>26</sup> Franjo Vitner, "Povijesni razvitak proizvodnje drvnog ugljena u Kombinat Belišće" ["Historical development of charcoal production at 'Kombinat Belišće'"] in *Zbornik radova "Kombinat Belišće"*, p. 145.

<sup>27</sup> Đuro Hamm, Stjepan Savić, Željko Buchwald, Antun Stačanac, and Zdravko Papić, "Energetika Belišća od početaka do danas" ["Energy supply in Belišće from the beginnings until the present day"] in *Zbornik radova "Kombinat Belišće"*, pp. 158-159, 162.

<sup>28</sup> Ladislav Podobnik and Drago Šuštar, "Remontne radionice i održavanje proizvodnih kapaciteta od osnutka do danas" ["Repair workshops and the maintenance of production plants from the foundation until today"] in *Zbornik radova "Kombinat Belišće"*, pp. 187-189.

in the period from 1911 to 1914 there were 34 scientists of various professions working there, and in 1924 there were 179 employees, engaged at the maintenance of their own factories at Belišće, “as well as other facilities and factories owned by S.H. Gutmann outside Belišće. It also offered various services to third parties, mainly overhauls.”<sup>29</sup>

## Everyday life at Belišće

As a planned settlement, Belišće had to foster social relations between its inhabitants, controlled both during the working hours and in the leisure time. Within the observed period from 1884 to 1941, I will concentrate here on the very beginnings, which speak of accumulated labour. The immigrants and earliest inhabitants of the township in 1884 mostly spoke Hungarian, while the official language was German. “Isolated from other places and factories, bound to the Gutmann through employment and housing,”<sup>30</sup> Belišće’s workers lived under the close surveillance of the management. Lower clerks had somewhat more favourable living conditions than ordinary workers, and although exploited by the management, they enjoyed better housing and a special centre for cultural life and entertainment. In fact, they had only as many rights as they had power, and they had the most power during the upheaval late in 1918. In Belišće, everything was owned by the Gutmann family: the apartments, the lighting, the waterworks, roads and streets, the school, the swimming pool, the Workers’ and Clerks’ Centre, the cinema. The capitalist estate owner supplied the wages as well as food (the so-called “approvisation”), and the local store sold only food produced at the estate. The estimates of the salary of a working family are subject to subjective interpretation, as it should be taken into account that everyone could find work there and live on their total family income, but hardly without the farm work and the approvisation. The latter was a consequence of the corporate character of the relationship between the S.H. Gutmann company and the Gutmann estate.

The company had a central place in ensuring that the workers at Belišće would also enjoy some social life, but the trade union had the main say in its organization. As for the first twenty years of the sawmill and the settlement, there is no evidence on cultural or humanitarian activities. The development of industry led to various organized forms of social and cultural life, and the need for buildings where such social activities would take place. The social

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 188.

<sup>30</sup> Mira Kolar-Dimitrijević, “Razvitak radničkog pokreta u Belišču od kraja XIX stoljeća do 1941” [“Development of the workers’ movement in Belišće from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century until 1941”] in *Zbornik radova “Kombinat Belišće”*, pp. 421-422.

division of labour was mirrored in the construction of specific public buildings: the Workers' Centre (built in 1892, renovated in 1922, and demolished in 1966) and the Clerks' Centre (built after 1918), with different forms of social and cultural life.<sup>31</sup>

The Workers' Centre was built in the "L" form, with its longer front and entrance from Kolodvorska Street, and the shorter side in Radnička Street. To the left of the entrance, there was a library with several rooms, "while in the slightly longer part to the right there was a passage through the middle of the building, so that the elongated reading room faced the street,"<sup>32</sup> both probably established before World War I. Opposite the reading room, facing the yard, there was a bar. In the part of the building facing Radnička Street, there was a cinema theatre. According to the data from 1937, the library had 4,000 volumes selected for their socio-economic topics. The library was owned by the General Workers' Union of Yugoslavia (ORS), which remained the main negotiation partner for the company until its dissolution late in 1939.<sup>33</sup> In addition to Croatian books, the reading room had around 100 books in Hungarian and approximately as many in German, and was moreover subscribed to various newspapers: *Jutarnji list*, *Politika*, *Obzor*, *Hrvatski list*, *Socijalna misao*, *Radničke novine*, and according to other sources also to *Slovenski poročevalec*, *Novosti* and *Pravda*. Before the liberation of 1945, the library changed its name to "Library of the Croatian Workers' Union" in 1939 and then to "Trade Union 'Belišće Kombinat': Library and Reading Room."

A special clerks' library existed even before World War I, as evidenced by its older editions and the German library name on some of the volumes. The clerks also had special entertainment evenings such as masquerades or music shows from as early as 1905. A special cultural centre was built for them after World War I, which included a cinema theatre, a library, a casino, and a reading room. The casino had club seats and was frequented by numerous businessmen, who were subscribed to various French, German, and English journals and illustrated magazines, foreign and domestic newspapers. This library had over 10,000 volumes, and all activities of the Clerks' Centre (the casino and the library) were financed by the company. The library was named "Library of the Clerks' Centre Belišće."<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Vesna Burić, Dragutin Gibičar, and Jovan Lalić, "Kulturno-povijesna, zdravstvena i humanitarna djelatnost" ["Cultural-historical, health care, and humanitarian activities"] in *Zbornik radova "Kombinat Belišće"*, pp. 497-500.

<sup>32</sup> Burić, Gibičar, Lalić, "Kulturno-povijesna, zdravstvena i humanitarna djelatnost ...", p. 500.

<sup>33</sup> Hrvoje Volner, "Odnos poduzeća S. H. Gutmann d.d. prema sindikatima" ["The attitude of S.H. Gutmann corporation towards unions"], *Studia Lexicographica* (Zagreb), 2 (2008), no. 2(3): 108ff.

<sup>34</sup> Burić, Gibičar, Lalić, "Kulturno-povijesna, zdravstvena i humanitarna djelatnost ...", pp. 500-502.

There were two cinema theatres in Belišće, both operated by the company: “Radničko kino” (Workers’ Cinema) and “Činovničko kino” (Clerks’ Cinema). Representatives of MGM and 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Fox came to Belišće twice a year and agreed upon the film programme for the next period. Josip Hofman and Ljudevit Karpati were in charge of the cinema theatres and there was a special committee working on a voluntary basis. Only a cinema operator and a cashier in each of the cinema theatres were paid, while the ushers were volunteers. In the era of silent film, the union string band accompanied the screenings; in 1937, a “Nadlton” was introduced, then the “Lichtton”, and two projectors of the “Ernemann” company. The clerks’ cinema theatre was situated on the ground floor of the Clerks’ Centre, and all members of the Casino had free access. There were 200 seats. The workers’ cinema theatre had 300 seats on benches with an aisle in the middle and one loggia.<sup>35</sup>

Cultural monuments in Belišće must be viewed from a sociological point of view, because they tell us about the lifestyle, production, and living conditions in the settlement, as well as among the workers as the representatives of modern labour. Therefore, structures that testify to the above have been preserved in Belišće as cultural monuments. An example is a rural house made of mixed materials, facing the street laterally. It was built in 1884 as an office building, but was later repurposed as an apartment building for the workers. Another example is a one-storey residential building built in 1884-1885, made of mixed materials, which was first used as an office building, from 1905 as a Hungarian school, later on for housing, and after World War I as gendarmerie. Since the 1970s, it has been used as the Museum. Other residential buildings built in the 1890s or the early 20<sup>th</sup> century have been preserved. Among the larger structures, there are the administration building, the railway station, the Gutmann family palace, as well as a memorial train, gang saws, and the firefighters’ equipment as examples of technical culture.<sup>36</sup>

## Conclusion

The industrial colony of Belišće, today a town of the same name, developed towards forming a conurbation with Valpovo and Bistrinci. This led to an increase in the population of Belišće, which in 1890 constituted 5 % of the population of the town of Valpovo, and in 1931, 11 % of the population of the Valpovo district. That year, Belišće had 2,524 inhabitants or about 70 % of the

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 505.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pp. 510-511.

total population of the town of Valpovo (3,655 inhabitants in 1931). Such urban growth can be explained by the need for labour in industrial plants.

The workers' colony grew within the economic system of the S.H. Gutmann company from Nagykanizsa and Vienna, for which Belišće was the next phase in the development of their previous business. The factories, technologically improved, maintained, and expanded, catered for the needs of wood industry and transportation, which modernized the traffic of the Slavonia-Podravina region.

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