


VLADKO MAČEK'S APARTMENT IN ZAGREB AND FARM IN KUPINEC: SYMBOLIC PLACES OF POWER OF THE CROATIAN PEASANT MOVEMENT IN THE 1930S

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After the death of Stjepan Radić (1928) and the establishment of the dictatorship of King Alexander (1929), all political parties in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia were banned, and, even after the resumption of political life in 1935, the parties were not fully legalised. This fact decisively influenced the internal structure of the strongest Croatian political party in the interwar period, the Croatian Peasant Party. Instead of the previous party bodies (the Assembly, the Main Board), the key decisions were made by a narrow circle of party members gathered around the new party leader – Vladko Maček. His farm in Kupinec, as well as a law office in Deželićeva Street in Zagreb, became the real seats of the party and of the Croatian peasant movement, as well as symbolic centres of parallel political power. The aim of this paper is to analyse the meaning of new places of power and their ideological significance in the Croatian peasant movement in the 1930s.

Keywords: Vladko Maček, Croatian Peasant Party, law office, farm, Kupinec, political symbols

INTRODUCTION

In the recent decades, there have been a number of studies about the relationship between politics and public space in the 20th century (Cattini 2015; Pekár 2015; Čapo and Gulín Zrnić 2011; Rihtman-Auguštin 2000). In the late 1980s and in the 1990s, the concept

of a spatial turn was particularly discussed in the social sciences and humanities (see more in: Bachmann-Medick 2007). Within the anthropological literature, the questions discussed include how physical space is transformed into a symbolic place, how space is semantically shaped, what are the processes of creating a place, and what is the significance of the disputes around that space (Čapo and Gulin Zrnić 2011:10). One of the conclusions from these studies is that politics always include a symbolic dimension that is in some correlation with the material base of political power. To understand the political process, then, it is necessary to understand how the symbolic enters into politics, how political actors consciously and unconsciously manipulate symbols, and how this symbolic dimension relates to the material bases of political power (Kertzer 1988:2–3). As Kertzer writes, “symbols instigate social actions and define the individual’s sense of self,” which is why “they also furnish the means by which people make sense of the political process, which largely presents itself to people in symbolic form” (ibid.:6). In the 1980s, historian Eric Hobsbawm left a big footprint in the historiography of myths, symbols, and nationalism in the collection of essays edited with Ranger (1983) under the title *Invention of Tradition*. In that book, Hobsbawm points out that “official new public holidays, ceremonies, heroes or symbols, which commanded the growing armies of the state’s employees and the growing captive public of schoolchildren, might still fail to mobilize the citizen volunteers if they lacked genuine popular resonance” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983:265). After all, “political power is essentially invisible” and “we recognize it only by rituals and symbols” (Rihtman-Auguštin 2000:10). At the heart of this research is the connection between space and political symbols and the political party and its multiple centres.

In this paper, we start from the thesis that the Croatian Peasant Party (CPP) was extremely skilled at using symbols – flags and coats of arms (Jareb 2010), celebrations (Leček 2019), everyday objects (Grgić 2010) – in mobilising its supporters. Therefore, we ask the question of how did this Croatian political party, the strongest in the interwar period, use the symbolic power of the space in which new seats of power were formed? What role did the politicians who visited those seats play in the process, and what was the role of the media who presented them like that in their reports? What values did they symbolise? And in the end, how did this symbolic space influence the shaping of the political culture and the image of the peasant movement in Croatia?

In this regard, the Croatian peasant movement between the First and Second World Wars created a powerful system of symbols that was skilfully upheld by two pillars: a peasant ideology and its creator and preserver – the Croatian Peasant Party.¹ In this

¹ There are numerous studies related to the history of Croatia’s strongest interwar party. On this occasion, we will mention only the most important ones and, for other titles, see the bibliography: Boban 1974; Jelić-Butić 1983; Mužić 1990; Matković 1999; Biondich 2000.

research, we will concentrate on two symbols and will try to point out their importance in the context of the complex situation in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in the 1930s. At the time of the CPP's first party leader, Stjepan Radić,² when the CPP was the strongest Croatian interwar political party, it mainly operated and developed its methods and tactics as a legal political party. During the 1920s, there were broader opportunities to build the party's organisational structure and the work of its organisations on the ground, as well as to develop the actions of the party press (Cipek 2001; Leček 2006).

Furthermore, the party had its headquarters in the Croatian Peasant Home (Hrvatski seljački dom) in the very centre of Zagreb. In this former Vranyczany palace (today the National Museum of Modern Art, former Modern Gallery) on Nikola Šubić Zrinski Square, the CPP had its political centre as well as the seat of the party's economic and cultural organisations, the newsletters 'Dom' (Home) and 'Narodni val' (People's wave), a conference hall, an ethnographic collection, the Stjepan Radić museum, etc. (Kolar-Dimitrijević 1993:205). These were old symbols of party power, clearly recognised by party supporters but also by the authorities.



Figure 1: Hrvatski seljački dom (Croatian Peasant Home)
(Hrvatski državni arhiv u Zagrebu, fototeka)

² Stjepan Radić (Trebarjevo Desno 1871 – Zagreb, 1928), the first party leader and, together with his brother Antun, the founder of the party. The party was founded in 1904 under the name Croatian People's Peasant Party and it changed its name several times. After the first parliamentary

After the death of Stjepan Radić (1928)³ and the establishment of the dictatorship of King Alexander (1929), all political parties in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia were banned, and even after the death of King Alexander Karađorđević (1934) and the restoration of political life in 1935, the parties were not fully legalised. Despite the initial moves to relax press censorship, ease restrictions on public assemblies, and release over one thousand political prisoners, Milan Stojadinović, the new Yugoslav Prime Minister, was reluctant to reach a significant compromise with either the Croatian or Serbian opposition (Pavlaković 2014:53). This fact decisively influenced the internal structure of the Croatian Peasant Party. After six years of dictatorship, the classical political activity of the party had also undergone a certain transformation. The party was not officially legalised, but their actions were tolerated (“ex-CPP”), so the focus shifted from large rallies to less “confidential meetings”, and the party’s leadership was taken over by a (somewhat informal) circle of Maček’s closest confidants and confirmed party officials (Leček 2015:32). The party had developed special tactics and forms of actions and focused on the systematic and persistent renewal of the party structure. In fact, the CPP renovated its old organisation or created new ones, including Economic Concord,⁴ Peasant Concord,⁵ Croatian Peasant Protection,⁶ the Croatian Workers’ Association,⁷ etc., and launched its own newspapers *Hrvatski dnevnik* (Croatian daily) and *Seljački*

elections in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in 1920, it changed its name to the Croatian Republican Peasant Party, and, after a great turn and recognition from the monarchy and constitution, it changed its name again to the Croatian Peasant Party. S. Radić was the main organiser of the party and the undisputed leader of the Croatian political opposition in the 1920s.

³ Radić died in August 1928 as a result of the assassination of Croatian MPs in Belgrade on June 20, 1928. His funeral in Zagreb was a manifestation of great national unity and resistance to politics in Belgrade.

⁴ Economic Concord or *Gospodarska sloga* was an economic organisation of the Croatian peasant movement, whose main task was to raise the economic and social standard of the Croatian peasantry. It acted through various movements and actions, and especially distinguished itself by organising the diet of the poor peasantry in passive areas. For more about the organisation, see: Šute 2010; Matićka 1977.

⁵ Peasant Concord or *Seljačka sloga* was a cultural and educational organisation of the Croatian peasant movement. It was active even before the introduction of the dictatorship of King Alexander in 1929, but had to stop its work during that period. One of the most important activities was the holding of literacy courses, as well as the organisation of peasant festivals. For more about *Seljačka sloga*, see: Leček 2003; Ceribašić 2003; Leček 2005.

⁶ Founded in 1935 with the aim of protecting villages from frequent gendarme violence. The protection was organised according to the military pattern, in swarms, platoons, companies, and battalions. Although it was an illegal formation, the authorities tolerated it. Somewhat later, Croatian Civil Protection was established. For more about the CPP’s paramilitary organisations, see: Karaula 2015; Ramet 2011.

⁷ An organization that primarily operated among the workers in the cities as a kind of trade union

dom (Rural Home), and so on. Such a policy gave the party a new physiognomy, new features, and new methods of action. In the middle of 1938, the CPP managed to replace the previously mentioned palace on Zrinjevac Square with a house at Marulić Square 12, which was much more suitable for social work, and, at the same time, this transaction rehabilitated the business of the cooperative Hrvatski seljački dom (Croatian Peasant Home), which could not get rid of its debts. The palace on Zrinjevac was bought by the State Mortgage Bank. In addition, the cooperatives Seljačka sloga and Zemlja moved their headquarters into these premises on Marulić Square; Gospodarska sloga was also nearby, which significantly facilitated and improved the work of those who worked in the CPP leadership (Kolar-Dimitrijević and Petrić 2015:242).

But the most significant change occurred in terms of how the party was led and how crucial party decisions were made. Instead of the previous party organs (the Assembly, the Central Committee), crucial decisions were carried out by a narrow circle of party members gathered around a new party leader – Vladko Maček. His law office in Deželićeva Street in Zagreb, as well as his farm in Kupinec, became the real seats of the party and the Croatian peasant movement, as well as symbolic centres of parallel political power.

In the following sections, we will first analyse the design of the symbolism of Maček's office and then the construction of the symbolism of his agricultural farm through the aspects of exemplary production, the way of life, clothing, etc.

MAČEK'S OFFICE

As mentioned before, Maček's law office became a kind of party headquarters and its synonym. Not only was Maček's law office located in this building near the Croatian National Theatre, but his apartment was as well, where he lived together with his wife Josipa, his two children – Andrej and Agneza – and his father, Ivan. Josipa Maček, born Jurak, was Andrej and Agneza's aunt (they were children born to Maček's second wife, Marija, who died in 1927 and was Josipa's sister). After the death of her sister, Marija, Josipa took care of her children, dedicating her life to their upbringing. She married Vladko civilly after his return from prison in 1934 and ecclesiastically only in 1951, after the death of Maček's first wife Paula Grumešić (Maček and Škrabe 1999:15–16). The history of this apartment is very interesting. Maček's father Ivan was

organisation. It fought to increase wages, ensure better working conditions, and conclude collective agreements. The Croatian Workers' Association vehemently opposed communist-controlled unions and had a strong anti-Marxist character. For more about the Croatian Workers' Association, see: Janjatović 1983.

an engineer by profession, and he built roads and buildings, especially churches in north-western Croatia and Slavonia. He also built numerous roads in the Jastrebarsko area, including roads to Stojdraga, Plešivica, Sveta Jana, and the road from Zdenčina to Pisarovina (ibid.:7). Because of his father's business, Vladko Maček moved from his little hometown of Jastrebarsko to Zagreb in 1889, when he was only ten years old. With his savings, and probably with a bank loan, Ivan Maček had built a two-storey family house in Prilaz Street, i.e., at today's Prilaz Đure Deželića Street 9 (Perić 2003:30). For young Maček, Zagreb was a "whole new world", and he says:

There was no orchard behind the house, not even the forest. There was a slippery floor, because of which I had to take off my shoes and put on slippers; and the hardest thing was that I could not fit in with the other city school children; on the one hand, they were too fancy and, on the other, too rowdy, and that's why we often fought, which never happened in the village. (Maček 1992:13)

Vladko Maček was born in Jastrebarsko in 1879. He finished elementary school in his hometown and high school in Zagreb, where he studied law. Maček finished his law studies at the University of Zagreb in 1903 and he lived in the city until the outbreak of the First World War. After the war, Maček sold his law office in Sv. Ivan Zelina near Zagreb and, for two years, worked exclusively as a politician, living off the income from this former office. As the funds were running out, Maček decided, in mid-1921, to reopen a law firm in Zagreb. From now on he was simultaneously an attorney and a high member of Croatian Peasant Party.⁸ At the beginning of 1922, after a long illness, his mother died and Maček decided to continue living in the same household with his father, Ivan. At that moment, Maček particularly stressed his already strongly expressed nostalgia for rural life, although it is only thirty kilometres from Zagreb to Jastrebarsko (Maček 1992:13). In 1928, one year after his first wife Marija died, Maček succeeded Radić as the party leader. In times of political persecution during the dictatorship of King Alexander (1929–1934) and Maček's frequent stays in prison, the family lived on the paternal grandfather's retirement, until his death in 1933. After the weakening of the dictatorship and his return from prison in late 1934, Maček became actively involved in leading the party. In his memoirs, written in emigration and published in 1964 in Washington D.C. under the title *In the Struggle for Freedom*, he writes that from then

⁸ In 1905, Maček joined the Croatian People's Peasant Party and became a member of the Main Board. In 1920, he was elected deputy leader of the party. At the end of 1924, Maček was, for a short time, the first vice-president of the National Assembly in Belgrade. In the 1920-27 elections, he was elected as a member of parliament, and, in 1927, he was president of the Zagreb Regional Assembly and president of the Zagreb Regional Savings Bank.

on, all of the party's political activities were entrusted to him.

From later memories, we can today reconstruct the everyday atmosphere in this *unique apartment-office-party headquarters*. In the period from 1935 to 1941, at least one man was always in Maček's apartment in Prilaz every night, while in Kupinec these people usually stayed for several days. They were called 'guards' and, for the Maček family, they represented permanent security. They came from all over the Croatian provinces, especially from Dalmatia and Hercegovina. Because the 'guards', especially during night shifts, usually played tarot or preference, the only game that Maček actually loved, he sometimes played cards with them (Maček and Škrabe 1999:81). It is interesting to note that not one of the 'guards' was paid for their services, nor did they receive any financial support. Maček sometimes made recommendations for some jobs or, if they were students, for a scholarship. They all did their personal service to the party chairman and his family because of their political beliefs and because they were loyal members of the CPP. Due to his party business, upon his release from prison in 1934, Maček employed his associates in his office, as well as former political prisoners (ibid.:82).

On the ground floor there were two rooms; in one of them, students lived for free, and they occasionally had lunch with the Maček family. And in this way, for safety reasons, there were mostly men in the house. One of them was Mladen Veža, later a famous Croatian painter (ibid.:82–83). Maček's son Andrej remembers that one of the 'guards', Tomo Tošić, was a native of the Dalmatian Zagora and that he lived near Maček's building. Tošić was extremely devoted to the Maček family and he took care of many things in the house and often accompanied Maček personally. The other 'guard' that Andrej Maček also remembers was Zvonko Polić. He was one of the few wealthier 'guardsmen' because he owned a hardware store in Ilica Street. In addition to protecting Maček and his family, he was also their car driver (ibid.:81–82).

Vladko Maček received visitors in his office from eight o'clock in the morning until lunch at one o'clock in the afternoon. Apart from giving interviews to journalists from all over the world, from the United States to Bulgaria and Turkey, Maček had several hours of talks with twenty to thirty people, each day, mostly peasants from all Croatian regions who came to his office for consultations. He said:

The situation was such that I should not have to go anywhere, but the representatives of party organisations came to me, either in Zagreb or in Kupinec. Here we solved all the problems of the political struggle, which mainly consisted of the passive resistance against the regime. (Maček 1992:118)



Figure 2: Maček in conversation with a peasant deputy in his apartment (Glojnaric 1936)

Many foreign correspondents who interviewed Maček stressed the symbolism of his office. Most of them said that Maček received them “in his modest law office” (French journalist Marcel Dunan, the Paris correspondent of *Le Temps* in 1932; Glojnaric 1936:137) or in the “small, modest law office which was always full of Croatian peasants, who made their complaints to *father Maček*” (correspondent of *The New York Times* in 1935; Glojnaric 1936:278). The law office of party leader Maček was “always full of peasants and politicians [so] that [it] was impossible to talk calmly with the leader of the Croatian people” (Glojnaric 1936:263), writes the editor of the newspaper *Slovak*, Alexander Mach, who visited Maček in Zagreb and Kupinec in the mid-1930s. It is no wonder that the political life of the party was regularly reported in the party newspaper *Croatian Daily* (*Hrvatski dnevnik*) in a special column, which was named ‘From Maček’s Office’. The party was perceived not as a political organisation in today’s sense of the word, but as a result of decisions taken by the party leadership after consultation with party leader Maček in his office.

It is through the example of Maček’s office that a layered process, in which ordinary space is gradually transformed into a space of power, can be observed. At the same time, two ways in which this symbol was created were visible: the vertical, in performing political affairs ‘at the top’, as well as the horizontal, in communication with the masses, i.e., ‘ordinary people’, who came to visit Maček or were present during birthday celebrations. The whole process of turning Maček’s apartment/office into a symbol of political power was strongly covered by the media. In other words, the process gained considerable media attention and contributed to the public perception of the office as a new centre of power.

Maček’s apartment and office also became the location of large events, such as Vladko Maček’s birthday parties on 20 July, when the whole of Zagreb was ‘occupied’ by a great number of wishers who came from all over Croatia and other parts of Yugoslavia to gather themselves in front of his apartment in order to congratulate him

on his birthday. The idea came from a 'spontaneous' gathering of Zagreb citizens in 1935, just two months after the parliamentary elections that marked the end of the dictatorship. The party leadership recognised the potential and, already the next year, organised celebrations and congratulations throughout Croatia (Leček 2019:408). In the following years, these were the largest public political events, well organised and structured, and with a procession that passed through the city for hours and ended right in front of Maček's office where he received congratulations. At the same time, Maček's law office became the unofficial political centre of Croatia. On the other hand, the objects of the then-administration were symbolically avoided (such as the building of the abolished Parliament or the Banski dvori). This spatial boycott of the Old Town, which housed state institutions, clearly showed contemporaries their imposed character, but also where the real national political centre had been moved (ibid.:411).

All of the party's political and organisational power was concentrated in this building, which made it obvious that the CPP's political opponents, the nationalists and the communists as well as others in Croatia and Yugoslavia, associated the party with Maček's home address. That's why they pointed their criticism towards the "decisions from Prilaz" (Prilaz Đ. Deželića 9, i.e., shortened version of his home address), "gangs from Prilaz", "opinion of the leadership from Maček's office", and so on. For example, they wrote in the Ustasha newsletter *Nezavisna Hrvatska Država* (Independent Croatian State) in July 1938 that their objective (one of the Ustasha groups in the country, author's comment) is "to remove the *rogues from Prilaz* from the National Leadership" because, as they put it, "the Croatian people should be rid of the leeches from the leadership of the Croatian Peasant Party" (Boban 1965:266). In the same way, the newsletter *Nezavisnost* (Independence) was also against the CPP leadership in the country and they accused Maček with the following statement: "after the elections from 5th of May (in 1935, author's comment) *the leadership from Prilaz* number 9 made numerous, serious errors" (ibid.:266).

Later, just before the outbreak of the Second World War, Maček received Hitler's emissary W. Malletke at the office, who, after the coup in Belgrade in March 1941, had failed to convince Maček to take the leadership in the future independent Croatian state (Maček 1992:152). During the war, Maček spent most of his time in internment on his property in Kupinec or in an apartment of the commander of the notorious Jasenovac concentration camp, Vjekoslav Maks Luburić. Only toward the end of the war and after the partisans entered Kupinec at the end of 1943 did Maček and his family again relocate to his home/office in Zagreb. In a ground-floor room, where Maček's 'guard' usually resided before the war, there was a constant Ustasha guard who strictly controlled who visited Maček and how often they visited him. Occasionally, Maček communicated with some Ustasha officials (V. Luburić and A. Moškov) and

individual members of the banned Croatian Peasant Party (Lj. Tomašić). After the failed Vokić-Lorković coup in the summer of 1944, all visits to Maček were banned, and his family was no longer allowed to go for a walk or go to church. Even the family doctor and Ustasha officer Dr. Hinko Kovačić was forbidden to visit Maček in his apartment (Maček and Škrabe 1999:109). However, at the end of the war, Maček was already better informed about events at home and abroad. Only a few days before the fall of the Independent State of Croatia did the Ustasha regime ease control over Maček and then he was able to freely visit relatives and friends. Among others, he was visited by the archbishop of Zagreb, Alojzije Stepinac. Maček and his family finally left the apartment/office in Zagreb and Croatia itself before partisan units entered Zagreb on May 6, 1945 (Maček 1992:178).

THE SYMBOLISM OF KUPINEC

When compared to the urban apartment/office, Maček's farm in Kupinec represented the ideal type of peasant economy, a perfect model for the entire Croatian peasantry. Various modern livestock, the use of machinery, and sustainability were the main prerequisites of building a modern economy, which was the main topic of Croatian peasant ideologists at that time.⁹ The 'right hand' of the first leader of the CPP and an economic ideologist of the party in the 1920s – Josip Predavec – actually lived on such a farm in Rugvica near Zagreb. He also wrote in his famous book *Se/o i seljaci* (The Village and the Peasants), which was released after he was murdered at the time of the dictatorship, about the methods of keeping property and running its economy (Predavec 1934). In a way, Maček's Kupinec was a continuation of the Rugvica 'project', but at a higher level since the owner of Kupinec was the new party leader. Positioning himself in the role of the peasant/farmer, not just civilian politician, Maček wanted to approach the national type of politician who lives for his peasant nation and with the peasants, as well as being their immediate, next-door neighbour. There are no significant Croatian and Yugoslav newspapers that have not published pictures of Maček in the typical peasant costume of the region, riding around his estates, involved in the ploughing, talking to peasants, etc.

In his memoirs, Maček explained the reason for buying the property. At the time of the dictatorship and the Great Depression, his legal work did not make any profit.

⁹ Zsuzsanna Varga's research on the symbolism of the Bálbona farm in Hungary is particularly interesting for this topic. About how the farm that originated and developed during the Austro-Hungarian Empire became a cultic place for Hungarian agriculture in socialism, see more in: Varga 2010:161–180.



Figure 3: Maček on his estate in Kupinec (Glojnarčić 1936)

His potential clients were afraid to come to his office because of the constant police surveillance of Maček's apartment. In addition, the courts were corrupt and Maček thought that it was still impossible for him to base his whole existence on the legal profession. For all these reasons, he decided to find additional sources of revenue, first of all from his own small-scale economy. In early 1932, he bought the Kupinec estate, barely 30 km away from Zagreb, and began to deal with its economy. This approach corresponded to the peasant ideology, which valued and glorified life in the countryside. At the same time, Maček's turn to the countryside in a way represents a modern type of return to nature. With this move, Maček showed by his own example that he lived the ideas he represented, which would have an extraordinary effect on people. Dealing with that kind of physical labour and frequent stays in the countryside in Kupinec was a real refreshment for him:

A new way of life, going to bed early and getting up early, concern about livestock and pigs, especially riding and the permanent residence in the fresh air revived me in a few months. If I was not tied to the old father, who of course could not leave his town lifestyle, I would get together with the

children and completely move to Kupinec. This is how I lived the dual life, but I'm personally most of my time in Kupinec. (Maček 1992:93)

At the time when Maček bought the estate in Kupinec, it was already a big property of about 300 acres. The previous owners of this estate were Czechs, the family of Vaclav Vostřel, who was later a member of the County Committee of the Communist Party in Virovitica. Maček bought only part of this great estate, then 150 acres of land, while the other half was owned by the Rajmund family until the second half of the 1930s when Rajmund's part was divided into several pieces and purchased by local people in Kupinec (Maček and Škrabe 1999:76).



Figure 4: Maček's house on the Kupinec estate (Glojnarčić 1936)

The second level of display was Maček as the father of a family and an exemplary husband. Therefore, among the photographs from the estate one can often find photos of the whole family in a happy and harmonious state or portrayal, including his children Andrej and Agneza and his wife Josipa. It is no surprise that the famous journalist who faithfully followed Maček on his travels and recorded his speeches, Mirko Glojnarčić, in his book *Vodča govori* (The Leader Says), also published numerous photos of Maček with his family and on his farm in Kupinec (Glojnarčić 1936). In the photos from the farm, members of the Maček family are regularly dressed in peasant clothes. I do not deal with this aspect of their visual identity, as it is the subject of other scientific research. The community and solidarity of all the members of Maček's family in turn symbolised and encouraged unity and solidarity from all members of the CPP and the Croatian nation. In the same way, the photos embody the basic community, i.e., the family and its physical space, home, which, at the same time, represents the economic base and the presupposition of independence and individual freedom. It is the 'family' and the



Figure 5: Maček and his children, Agneza and Andrej, under a tree in Kupinec (Glojnarčić 1936)

'home' that are the basic foundation of the entire peasant ideology, with 'home' being the most common term in the ideological discourse of the CPP. Namely, the term 'home' implied three important and intertwined aspects of the community: the private, as well as a narrower (village) and wider community of 'home', i.e., the nation. After all, at the time when the party developed its activities through a number of actions through their economic, cultural, educational, labour, and other organisations, a sense of community and belonging to the same order were the prerequisite of their final success.



Figure 6: Maček with his family (Glojnarčić 1936)



Figure 7: With his son, Andrej (Glojnarčić 1936)

Recalling his childhood spent in Kupinec, Maček's son Andrej said that, for him and his sister Agneza, Kupinec was something special. They loved to stay there, and they were eager to come for school holidays in order to 'escape' from Zagreb to this picturesque village. Kupinec provided them with great freedom and unimagined possibilities for play and learning how to ride, which was Maček's favourite hobby. They fed the Simmental cattle, which were kept both for breeding and for milk production (Maček and Škrabe 1999:75). There were all kinds of animals on the farm. In addition, they had four or five horses, two of which were for labour and two or three for riding, as well as two large shepherd dogs that the children adored. They also had great Hungarian oxen, pigs, and poultry, and the entire maintenance of the property led to precise



Figure 8: Maček with his wife Josipa at leisure (Glojnarčić 1936)

bookkeeping. Andrej admits that his father's desire was to build a model economy for all farmers in Croatia. They only sold milk and cream and sometimes calves for breeding. The property was managed by the so-called *špan*, Mirko Žigmund, who lived with his family in the house and who had a friendly relationship with the Maček family. Some of

the permanent workers lived on the estate too. Some of them were from Kupinec or from the surrounding area and even from neighbouring Slovenia (ibid.:75).

The third level of symbolic importance of Kupinec was political. This can be especially seen after the Croatian-Serbian Agreement was reached in 1939 and the Banovina of Croatia was formed.¹⁰ Although the political centre was in Zagreb, and although it was symbolised by Ban Ivan Šubašić, it was clear that all important political decisions in Croatia were made in consultation with Maček and with his permission. In the so-called 'Time of Glory', from the mid-1930s to the beginning of the war in 1941, Kupinec was a kind of Croatian 'Yasnaya Polyana'¹¹ and a place of *pilgrimage* for many Croatian, Yugoslav, and foreign politicians, journalists, artists, and other prominent persons from public life. Many foreign journalists visited Kupinec just to talk with the leader of the Yugoslav political opposition and to inform their readers about the Yugoslav political situation. These articles are particularly interesting because they show us foreigners' impressions of Kupinec, the Croatian countryside, and Maček himself, not only as a politician but as a peasant leader. On this occasion, we will mention some of them. In late November 1935, only a few months after the parliamentary elections and a few months after he was visited by the editor of the Bulgarian newspaper *Zora*, Maček hosted a French journalist, a correspondent of the newspaper *La République*, on his estate.¹² After the conversation in a friendly atmosphere, the reporter wrote an article entitled 'A Day with Maček'. He pointed out that his Croatian colleagues in Zagreb constantly urged him "(...) to visit Maček on his farm in Kupinec, where he lives as a farmer." After a short consideration, he finally decided to go to Kupinec. Comparing this part of the Croatian countryside with a region of France near the Pyrenees, this reporter continues:

Our car (...) has been recognized by passers-by on the road which connects Zagreb with Kupinec. In their solemn suits, peasants invited us to stop at their homes. In one of these houses, we stayed in a spacious room where there were the beds of the whole family, the inscriptions "God and Croats" and "Work is salvation" on the walls, and, facing us, were Radić and Maček's portraits, hanging alongside pictures of the Mother of God. (Glojnarčić 1936:221–222)

¹⁰ For more about the Croatian-Serbian Agreement and the Banovina of Croatia, see: Boban 1965, 1974/vol. I-II.

¹¹ Jasnaja Poljana is the former home of the famous writer Lav Tolstoy in Russia, about 12 kilometres south-west of Tula and 200 km from Moscow.

¹² In the second half of 1932, Maček was tried before the Court for the Protection of the State and sentenced to three years in prison for his statement to the journalist Roubau from the French newspaper *Le Petit Parisien* who visited him in Kupinec after the signing of Zagreb Punctuations (Zagrebačke punktacije) in 1932.

The visit to Maček's family impressed him even more. The French journalist was fascinated by the simplicity and humility of the interiors in Maček's rural home. He noted that "he was kindly greeted by Maček's wife in the common hall where they conducted their evening, where – except for a large desk, a chair, and an oven – there was no other furniture at all" (Glojnarčić 1936:222). He noticed a portrait of the late peasant leader Stjepan Radić on the wall, but also the portrait of "another great teacher of our host", the Russian writer Lav Tolstoy. In the description of Maček, the Frenchman emphasised his strongly pronounced rustic character: "Maček is a Doctor of Law, an engineer's son (...). His eyes are blue, energetic and penetrating, his face unshaven, his fingers hard" (ibid.:222).

Another French journalist visited Maček even earlier, in September of the same year. It was F. Dominois, a journalist from the socialist newspaper *Le Populaire*. The sharp eye of the socialist could not help but notice that Maček's house was "more modern than other houses in the village", but he immediately pointed out that Maček "lives back in the country as an equal among his brethren, not asking for more than the house to be hygienic and without pretensions (...)" (ibid.:257). Dominois was also impressed with simplicity of the interior of the house:

They're meeting with us in a spacious room of a typical Croatian house, which today is cold, but during the winter it will be heated by a huge fireplace, when people come here to sit in heavy boots, full of snow. They will sit at a large wooden table where you can see traces of spilled wine and brandy. I was waiting for Mr. President to talk with him about the tactics of the Croatian Peasant Party. With him alone? No, but also in the spirit of the people whose images are the only decorations in the room: portraits of Maček's little son in a beautiful folk costume and Stjepan Radić and Lav Tolstoy. (Glojnarčić 1936:257–258)

Like the above-mentioned French journalists, other visitors also noticed these two images. First of all, there was Stjepan Radić, who, along with his brother Antun, was the founder and the first leader of the party. However, the image of Lav Tolstoy becomes even more significant if one considers that Maček was a great admirer of Tolstoy's entire literary oeuvre. Other journalists from all over the Kingdom of Yugoslavia shared almost the same enthusiasm as their foreign colleagues about Maček's rural image, simplicity, and modesty. For example, a correspondent from the Belgrade magazine *Ekonomska politika* (Economic policy) reported that the Maček house consists of "simple rooms, several armchairs, one laden with a vast amount of telegrams and newspapers, and a few pictures on the wall and that's all (...)". He stated that in Kupinec, "a new concept of farmers' faith and a rural tradition is contained", different from the one in

the city and from the other members of the political elite in Yugoslavia. In his report, a correspondent of the Montenegrin newspaper *Zeta* stressed that the leader of the Yugoslav opposition held an interview with him on an ordinary lawn “where he was sitting with four other farmers.” He explained to his readers that Maček “lives with the peasants, he teaches them, learns from them, and works with them.” (Glojnarčić 1936:239). In his diaries, the famous professor from the University of Belgrade and legal expert Mihailo Konstantinović, who participated in the elaboration of the legal Croatian-Serbian agreement in 1939, wrote about his impressions of Kupinec:

You could see through him [referring to Maček, author's comment] that he is very proud of what he's done. We were pleased that he showed us the silo feed. In the horse barn, he showed us, obviously with pleasure, a white horse on whom he rode through Zagreb, which was discussed in the Parliament. Some of the followers knew by heart Whole of Kupinec. (Konstantinović 1998:28)

Many farmers and supporters of the party also came to the estate to visit Maček, but most of the guests were national deputies, who came for consultation on some issues of the political life in the country. Among the writers who came to visit Maček, it is worth mentioning Mile Budak, later a minister in the government of the Independent State of Croatia, and Slavko Kolar, a writer and agronomist who, during the Banovina of Croatia, served as Head of the Department of Peasant Economy. The famous sculptor Ivan Meštrović would also occasionally visit Maček in Kupinec. Among the prominent politicians worth mentioning are the Slovenian politician and former president of the Yugoslav government and Interior Minister Anton Korošec, Prime Minister Dragiša Cvetković, with whom Maček signed the Agreement in 1939 establishing the Banovina of Croatia, Milan Pribičević, Svetozar Pribičević's brother, Democratic Party leader Ljubo Davidović, and – on the eve of the Second World War – the most prominent guests, Prince Pavle and Princess Olga Karađorđević.

In mid-January 1940, Prince Pavle and his wife Olga officially visited Zagreb. On that occasion, Prince Pavle signed the *Decree on the Electoral Order for the Croatian Parliament (Uredba o izbornom redu i ustrojstvu Sabora Banovine Hrvatske [1940]:3–35)*. However, his visit had a much broader meaning for the policy of implementing and supporting the agreement. In addition to an official visit to Zagreb, Prince Pavle also visited Maček and his family on the estate in Kupinec. The British consul in Zagreb, T. C. Rapp, described this visit with particular enthusiasm. He emphasised that only once before in Croatian history a monarch had ceremoniously returned a visit to one of his subjects (referring to the visit of the Emperor and King Francis Joseph to Zagreb in 1895, author's comment). Paying such respect to Maček, the Prince paid respect

to the entire Croatian peasantry, which especially noticed this gesture (Boban 1974/ vol. II:164). The whole atmosphere from that visit to Kupinec can be seen in the film *Historical Days* (Historijski dani), which was shown all over Croatia after the visit of Prince Pavle (Majcen and Kukuljica 2003:234). Maček's son Andrej recalled in an interview that the prince approached him and his sister and asked a banal question about which areas of the house they most resided. Andrej also noted that the secretary of the CPP Juraj Krnjević was talking on the bench, situated around a big stove in the dining room (Maček and Škrabe 1999:80). Apart from politicians, Maček was also visited by peasants. The daily guests were local peasants from Kupinec, while others came occasionally, especially during the peasant festivals.

During the war, Kupinec was at one time Maček's place of internment by the Ustasha. In other words, the place of free and idyllic life on the farm became a home prison for the Maček family during the war. After a short stay in the Jasenovac camp, from March 1942 to the beginning of 1943, Maček was in strict isolation in Kupinec and after that in the apartment of V. Luburić in Zagreb until mid-March 1943. Maček was then transferred to Kupinec again, where he remained until December 1943. The family lived on the first floor where the bedrooms and bathroom were. The Ustasha guard took over two rooms on the ground floor, at the bottom of the stairs, which led to the first floor. In this way, they controlled the approach to the family. In one of those two rooms was a telephone, which they regularly used for their own purposes (ibid.:101). At the end of 1943, Maček was finally transferred with his family to his Zagreb apartment on Prilaz. After the war and the departure of the entire family to the United States, the estate was confiscated and divided by the communists. The destruction of this large estate was also the symbolic act of trying to annul the significance of the space that the farm in Kupinec had before the communists came to power.

CONCLUSION

The article presents two symbolic places of power of the Croatian Peasant Party between the two world wars: the apartment/office and the farm of the party leader Dr. Vladko Maček.

In the 1930s, Maček's law office became a kind of party headquarters and it's synonym. On the other hand, the symbolic significance of the farm was multi-layered. In the country and abroad, it was recognised as the informal headquarters of the Croatian peasant leader and a symbolic centre of the peasant movement, but it was also an exemplary peasant farm (in terms of modern agriculture). It was also a symbol of the party leadership's commitment to democracy and social equality. Kupinec was

a place of 'pilgrimage' for many prominent Croatian and Yugoslav politicians, local and foreign journalists, and public persons, as well as for ordinary people, especially farmers. Both of these examples also testify to new models of conducting national policy, characterised by the so-called the 'people's' approach, i.e., the openness and accessibility of the national leader to his followers and the whole nation. At the same time, his private places (apartment, farm) become places of contact with the highest political authority. The farm also had an additional socio-economic aspect. In both cases, these two places became symbolic places for the Croatian peasant movement in the second half of the 1930s. Not only political power was concentrated in them. Both the apartment in Zagreb and the farm in Kupinec were a symbiosis of a political figure, that is, a 'leader of the Croatian people' and peasants, Vladko Maček. Both seats were accepted by political followers and opponents as anchor points of power of the Croatian Peasant Party. Their significance was fatefully connected with the person of Vladko Maček and the strength of the Croatian peasant movement. With the outbreak of the war and after the CPP simply disappeared from the political scene, and its leader ended up in a concentration camp or under house arrest and finally in emigration, the mentioned places would lose their pre-war importance.

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Stan Vladka Mačeka u Zagrebu i farma u Kupincu: Simbolička mjesta moći

Ivica Šute

Nakon smrti Stjepana Radića (1928.) i uspostavljanja diktature kralja Aleksandra (1929.), sve su političke stranke u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji bile zabranjene, a ni nakon obnove političkog života 1935. stranke nisu bile u potpunosti legalizirane. Ta je činjenica presudno utjecala na unutarnju strukturu najjače hrvatske političke stranke u međuratnome razdoblju, Hrvatske seljačke stranke. Umjesto dotadašnjih stranačkih organa (Skupština, Glavni odbor) ključne je odluke donosio uski krug članova stranke okupljenih oko novog predsjednika – Vladka Mačeka. Njegova farma u Kupincu, kao i odvjetnički ured u Deželićevoj ulici u Zagrebu, postali su pravo sjedište stranke i hrvatskog seljačkog pokreta, kao i simbolična središta paralelne političke moći. Cilj ovoga rada je analizirati značenja novih mjesta moći i njihov ideološki značaj u hrvatskom seljačkom pokretu tridesetih godina 20. stoljeća.

Ključne riječi: *Vladko Maček, Hrvatska seljačka stranka, odvjetnički ured, farma, Kupinec, politički simboli*



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