

VLADIMIR VINEK'S DRIBBLES: FRAGMENTS FOR THE PORTRAIT OF A FOOTBALL PLAYER AND A POLICE OFFICER FROM ZAGREB

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The paper attempts to shed light on the biography of Vladimir Vinek, a popular Zagreb football player during the early 1920s and one of the first real football stars in Croatia. It also attempts to explain his professional and private life, deeply connected with the contemporary social upheavals marked by repressive regimes of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and later of the Independent State of Croatia. After considerable success with football Vinek became completely dedicated to his police career, first serving to the regime of Yugoslav king Alexander Karađorđević and later on to the Ustasha regime of Ante Pavelić, which would ultimately lead to his demise.

Keywords: Vladimir Vinek, biography, football, HAŠK, Zagreb's police, Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Independent State of Croatia.

Hidden individuals

The name of Vladimir Vinek is not completely unknown to the general public.¹ This especially concerns football aficionados, since Vinek's participation in football coincided with the development of that sport in Croatia. On the other hand, his professional career (he was an amateur football player),

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¹ Some biographical information about Vinek has recently been published in: Mario Stipančević, „Stranputice Joje Vragovića: Ulomci biografije jednoga zagrebačkog policajca“, *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 52 (2020), no. 1: 110-113. The latter passage prompted me to undertake research about Vinek, resulting in this paper.

as well as his private life and final fate, is not well known even to his direct descendants who continue to live in Zagreb. In an attempt to shed some light on the latter this paper, using the available archival and other sources, will try to give the outline of his biography. To a certain extent, a biographical account such as this attempts to fill the gaps existing in a more general history of the first Yugoslav state, especially concerning its system of policing and state repression. This paper will mostly concentrate on Zagreb police during the mentioned period, but it also contains some information on Vinek's activities in the police of the Independent State of Croatia (Nezavisna Država Hrvatska, NDH) where he served after the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was torn apart by the Axis invasion in April 1941.

The descriptive approach is used in an attempt to outline the details from Vinek's life in a more vivid fashion, while his biography is also described through Vinek's contacts with other contemporaries, during that often-tempestuous period of Croatian 20th century history. It is often forgotten that individuals stand behind every social activity, although historical narrative often tends to replace them by wider institutional frameworks, which were or still are considered to be the basis and/or pillars of explanations regarding totalities of past social events. This approach is somewhat simpler because it presents an opportunity to fairly successfully generalize what are usually very complex interpersonal relationships, which form the basis of contemporary reality, as it is the case with our own reality. However, one must bear in mind that behind every institution and association there are individuals with names, surnames, personalities and more or less interesting (private) life. It is not easy to fit together the pieces of puzzles that constitute their lives based on available sources and sometimes such an approach cannot be completely efficient due to the difficulty of fathoming the zeitgeist solely from a single personality. This can be rectified to some extent, since acquiring such biographical fragments that are scientifically verifiable and behind which there have always been individual lives interrelated with others, it is possible to fathom the events witnessed by these individuals, now long gone from our own timeline, just like the events themselves.

Kašina roots

Vladimir Ivan Vinek was born on May 15, 1901 in Kašina, a settlement beneath Mount Medvednica, 12 kilometres north-east from Zagreb's city centre. His parents most probably met in Zagreb, where they were married in June 1897. Vladimir's father Franjo was a Kašina native and was listed in the church marriage register as "an accountant at the health insurance office",

whereas his mother Zora Ana was the daughter of Cecilija Berger, who was “self-employed”, of Jewish descent and faith. They resided at 97 Vlaška Street.² The reason why Vladimir was born in his father’s native settlement and not in Zagreb was of a business nature, since at that time Franjo worked in Kašina as a municipal sub-notary.³ Vladimir was the family’s third child. The eldest one, Mladen Nikola, was born in Zagreb on June 16, 1898, at the time when the family did not yet move to Kašina and was living at Zagreb’s central 25 Jelačić Square.⁴ Moving to the new surroundings must have happened not long after Mladen was born, since their second son Branko came into the world in Kašina on June 22, 1899. Just like when Vladimir was born the family was at that time living at the house number 4 in the settlement.⁵

Mladen graduated from Zagreb’s Lower Town Gymnasium in June 1916 and that same year he enrolled at the Faculty of Law in Zagreb, frequenting it until 1920. After becoming Doctor of Law he worked as solicitor. When Vladimir began his study of law his father was in Italian captivity as an Austro-Hungarian lieutenant. After the war Franjo Vinek returned to Zagreb by 1920, which was now part of the newly established Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SHS). Franjo found employment as city’s cashier controller.⁶ He died in Zagreb in 1935, at the age of 58.⁷

Available archival sources do not reveal much about Mladen. It is known that just like his youngest brother Vladimir he had at least indirect ties with Zagreb’s police. During the 1930s he was married to Vjekoslava (Slavica) nee Falica from Kašina. They had one child and later divorced. During the 1930s Slavica was employed as a typist in the Political Section of Zagreb’s police. She certainly divorced Mladen before 1940 when she was employed as a clerk at the Department for Technical Tasks of the Banovina of Croatia, still under her husband’s surname. She remarried later on, probably during the Second

² HR-HDA-1448-ZBMK, ZM-34C/1181, Kašina, župa sv. Petra i Pavla [Kašina, the Parish of St. Peter and Paul], MKR [Birth register] 1894.-1901.; HR-HDA-1448-ZBMK, ZM-34C/1205, Zagreb, župa sv. Petra [Zagreb, the Parish of St. Peter], MKV [Marriage register] 1878-1902.

³ HR-HDA-1448-ZBMK, ZM-34C/1181, Kašina, župa sv. Petra i Pavla, MKR 1894.-1901.

⁴ HR-HDA-1448-ZBMK, ZM-34C/092, Zagreb, župa sv. Marko [the Parish of St. Mark], MKR 1895-1998.

⁵ HR-HDA-1448-ZBMK, ZM-34C/1181, Kašina, župa sv. Petra i Pavla, MKR 1894.-1901.

⁶ HR-HDA-501-PF, Redoviti slušači pravo- i državoslovnog fakulteta [Full-time students of the Faculty of Legal and Administrative Sciences], register 231, 259.

⁷ Cf. *Billion Graves*. “Zlatko Vinek”. URL: <https://billiongraves.com/grave/Zlatko-Vinek/17521580>.

World War, and took the surname Rosandić.⁸ Mladen also remarried and died in his native city in 1956.⁹

There is even less information on Vladimir's second brother Branko, even though he was once a renowned Doctor of Medicine in Zagreb and the chief physician of the surgical ward at the local Sisters of Charity Hospital.¹⁰ He was married to Zlata (1897 – 1988) and they had a son named Zlatko, also a Doctor of Medicine and a chief physician in Zagreb. Branko died in 1957 and was buried in the family tomb at Zagreb's Mirogoj cemetery.¹¹

The first/real football star

There can be little doubt that the Vinek family held education in high regard. Like two older sons before him, Vladimir also went through school successfully. He followed the footsteps of his older brother Mladen. After graduating at Zagreb's Lower Town Gymnasium and obtaining his school-leaving certificate in July 1920, he enrolled that same year at the Faculty of Law in Zagreb which he frequented until 1924. The records reveal that at that time the family resided at 110 Ilica Street.¹² During this period, besides acquiring secondary and collage education, Vladimir had also been refining his considerable talent for football. The early 1920s were the period of his greatest successes of Zagreb's football clubs, whose players also played for the national team of the Kingdom.

He most certainly started to play ball at an early age, in Croatian Academic Sports Club (HAŠK), one of Zagreb's first modern sport clubs established in November 1903. When Vinek entered adolescence HAŠK turned into a true promotor of Zagreb's sport, particularly football, which unlike other disciplines did not require extensive financial means and was the only sport played in HAŠK since its establishment.¹³

⁸ HR-HDA-890-BHZZP, inv. br [inventory number]. 18322. Cf. i HR-HDA-1561-SDS RSUP SRH, br. [number] 010.3.7. (Izjava Zlate Horvat) [Statement of Zlata Horvat].

⁹ Cf. *Billion Graves*. "Zlatko Vinek." URL: <https://billiongraves.com/grave/Zlatko-Vinek/17521580>.

¹⁰ HR-HDA-890-BHZZP, inv. no. 11540. Cf. also Branko Vinek, "Operacije želuca zbog gastroduodenalnog čira," *Liječnički vjesnik* LIX (1937), no. 11: 523.

¹¹ Cf. *Billion Graves*. "Zlatko Vinek." URL: <https://billiongraves.com/grave/Zlatko-Vinek/17521580>.

¹² HR-HDA-501-PF, Redoviti slušači pravo- i državoslovnog fakulteta, register 276, 299.

¹³ *Dvadeset godina rada Hrvatskog akademskog športskog kluba 1903-1923*. (Zagreb: HAŠK, 1923), pp.11, 64; Mario Jareb, "Temelj suvremenog hrvatskog športa: Hrvatski akademski športski klub (1903-1945)," *Hrvatska revija* (2005), no 4: 102-103.

During his entire football career Vinek remained faithful to the club where he reached maturity as a footballer. He started early, as one of the club's juniors, evolving into one of the central players during the years just after the end of the First World War and creation of the Kingdom of SHS. There can be little doubt that he became HAŠK's member as a schoolboy, due to the fact the club had its junior team since 1906, from which players for the first team had been selected.¹⁴

During the period of Vinek's rise as a footballer HAŠK was already a renowned club with a few dozen wins over Croatian, Hungarian, Austrian, Polish and even English teams. Apart from that, the club had also won the Cup of Croatia and Slavonia in the seasons 1912 and 1913, as well as 1917/18, although it must be pointed out that the cups of that time included only five or six Zagreb clubs playing against each other.¹⁵ It can be said with almost complete certainty that during that period, as well as in 1919, Vinek was not a member of the club's first team. He became one in 1920 at the latest, when he was in HAŠK's team during several matches against "The Greater Serbia", Serbia's oldest and best club which was renamed "Yugoslavia" after the unification. The matches were played in Zagreb and Belgrade and it was in the Yugoslav capital that HAŠK's team played for the first time in front of the regent Alexander Karađorđević.¹⁶

From then on, except when suffering from injuries, Vinek had been a member of the first team that in 1921 won the Zagreb Football Sub-Association (Zagrebački nogometni podsavez – ZNP) Cup, where clubs from Croatia and parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina were competing for the title.¹⁷ Because of his toughness, penetrating power, direct approach to the opponent's goal and his precise kick Vinek was nicknamed "HAŠK's tank". However, such moniker was also inspired by Josef "Pepi" Uridil, the first Austro-Hungarian, i.e. Austrian, football star and an excellent scorer who was well known outside the Viennese football circles and also nicknamed "Der Tank". Supporters of

¹⁴ "Naši najbolji nogometaši," *Svijet: Ilustrovani tjednik*, March 13, 1926, p. 108; *Dvadeset godina rada Hrvatskog akademskog športskog kluba 1903-1923.*, p. 69.

¹⁵ *Dvadeset godina rada Hrvatskog akademskog športskog kluba 1903-1923.*, pp. 70-94; Mario Jareb, "Temelj suvremenog hrvatskog športa: Hrvatski akademski športski klub (1903-1945)," *Hrvatska revija* (2005), no. 4: 104.

¹⁶ *Dvadeset godina rada Hrvatskog akademskog športskog kluba 1903-1923.*, pp. 98-100. Cf. also "Zagrebačkom Hašku trebalo bi ukazati materijalnu pomoć," *Vreme*, July 26, 1936, p. 7.

¹⁷ *Dvadeset godina rada Hrvatskog akademskog športskog kluba 1903-1923.*, pp. 101-104.



Figure 1. Vladimir Vinek as the member of HAŠK in 1922



Figure 2. Vladimir Vinek as “HAŠK’s tank”

HAŠK obviously knew about Uridil nickname and gave the identical one to Vinek.¹⁸

The public thought that Vinek’s “technique is not ideal, but he is one of those forward players that are the most dangerous for the opponent’s goal”, which is why he received universal acclaim from football kibitzers. He was at the top of his game during 1922 and 1923. During 1923 it was noted that Vinek scored more than 200 goals for HAŠK.¹⁹ Being a powerful and resourceful forward, a left inside forward (i.e. number 10 in the so-called WM football system which marked the entire interwar period) it was not uncommon for him to score several goals during a match.²⁰ For example, in January 1923 during a cup

¹⁸ *Dvadeset godina rada Hrvatskog akademskog športskog kluba 1903-1923.*, pp. 114; “Naši najbolji nogometaši”, *Svijet: Ilustrovani tjednik*, 13th March 1926, p. 108; *These Football Times*, “The glory of Josef Uridil, the first man to transcend football and celebrity in Austria”. URL: <https://thesefootballtimes.co/2020/05/07/the-glory-of-josef-uridil-the-first-man-to-transcend-football-and-celebrity-in-austria/>.

¹⁹ “Naši najbolji nogometaši”, *Svijet: Ilustrovani tjednik*, March 13, 1926, p. 108; *Dvadeset godina rada Hrvatskog akademskog športskog kluba 1903-1923.*, p. 114.

²⁰ Cf. *Nogometni leksikon*. “W-M sustav”. URL: <http://nogomet.lzmk.hr/clanak.aspx?id=2663>.

match HAŠK had won over Zagreb's "Šparta" scoring no less than 11:0, with three goals scored by Vinek.²¹ Only a month later, during the final for the ZNP Cup, Vinek scored two goals against "Slavija" from Osijek. The final score was 5:0, which made HAŠK a cup winner, qualifying it for the Yugoslavia Cup.²² In late May 1923 during a friendly match against Belgrade's "Yugoslavia", on the occasion of the celebration of its 10-year anniversary, Vinek scored as much as five of the total 8 goals.²³ He had many more similar undertakings.



Figure 3. Vladimir Vinek in 1923

His quality performance during that period meant regular invitations to Zagreb's football team which played matches against other city teams. Among others, he participated in wins against teams of Ljubljana (8:0), Belgrade (11:2), Novi Sad (7:1) and Subotica (11:1). Excellent performances resulted with invitations to the national team, where, just like in the Zagreb city team, he was part of the central assaulting threesome i.e. Vinek – Emil Perška – Branko Zinaja.²⁴ Unlike Perška, a lead player in "Građanski" i.e. HAŠK's greatest football rival from Zagreb, Zinaja was Vinek's teammate and a person with who he had the best rapport on the field.

²¹ "Prvenstvene utakmice u Zagrebu 7. 1.," *Sport: Ilustrovani tjednik*, January 11, 1923, p. 3.

²² "Finale za prvenstvo Z.N.P.-a," *Sport: Ilustrovani tjednik*, February 1, 1923, pp. 4-5.

²³ "Proslava 10-godišnjice „S. K. Jugoslavije u Beogradu," *Sport: Ilustrovani tjednik*, May 31, 1923, pp. 1-2.

²⁴ "Naši najbolji nogometaši," *Svijet: Ilustrovani tjednik*, March 13, 1926, p. 108.

He played his first national match on June 8, 1922, in Belgrade on "Yugoslavia" FC stadium against Romania during Friendlies. The team of the Yugoslav National Association (JNS) lost with the result 1:2. Some two weeks later he participated in the win result 4:3 against Czechoslovakia in a friendly match played in Zagreb. He gave his first goal for the national team on the home ground at Zagreb's Maksimir in a friendly match against Poland on October 1, 1922. Poland won 3:1 and Vinek's goal was the equalizer (1:1) in the 35th minute.²⁵ In the middle of the next year – on June 3, 1923 – he played again in the friendly match against Poland in Krakow when the Yugoslav team settled the score for last year's defeat by winning the Poles 1:2, even though Vinek shot several "goal-scoring chances".²⁶ He reached the zenith for the national team on June 10, 1923 during Friendlies in Bucharest in front of 20,000 spectators when he scored both times in a win against Romania with 1:2, during the 23rd and the 29th minute of the match. This match during which Zagreb's assaulting threesome Vinek-Perška-Zinaja proved their mettle to the utmost of their abilities returned to the Yugoslav national team King Alexander's golden "priceless cup". On their return team members were given an official welcome in Subotica, Vinkovci, Sisak and Zagreb. In Zagreb the crowd of enthusiastic kibitzers carried Zinaja and Vinek on their shoulders from the main railway station to Jelačić's Square, together with the cup they won.²⁷ "Hašk's Tank" played a match in the national team for the last time on the Olympic Games in Paris on May 26, 1924 when the Yugoslav team suffered a surprising defeat against the future cup winner Uruguay with 7:0. The press commented that the defeat was the result of the national team's conceit and underestimation of their opponent, as well as the gratuitous optimism of the Yugoslav public. Vinek also blended well with the greyness of the entire performance, since he was almost unable to get near the opposite goal, due to the excellent performance of the Uruguayan defenders, most notably the right half and one of the best players of the Olympics José Leandro Andrade.²⁸

²⁵ *Reprezentacija*. "Vinek Vladimir". URL: <https://www.reprezentacija.rs/vinek-vladimir/>; *Reprezentacija*. "(1922) Jugoslavija – Rumunija 1:2". URL: <https://www.reprezentacija.rs/004-jugoslavija-rumunija-1-2/>; *Reprezentacija*. "(1922) Jugoslavija – Čehoslovačka 4:3". URL: <https://www.reprezentacija.rs/005-jugoslavija-cehoslovačka-4-3/>; *Reprezentacija*. "(1922) Jugoslavija – Poljska 1:3". URL: <https://www.reprezentacija.rs/006-jugoslavija-poljska-1-3/>.

²⁶ *Reprezentacija*. "Jugoslavija – Poljska 2:1 (1:0)," *Sport: Ilustrovani tjednik*, June 5, 1923, pp. [1-2].

²⁷ "Jugoslavija – Rumunjska 2:1 (2:0)," *Sport: Ilustrovani tjednik*, June 14, 1923, pp. 1-2; "Triumfalan doček pobjednika u Zagrebu," *Sport: Ilustrovani tjednik*, June 21, 1923, pp. 1-2; *Reprezentacija*. "(1923) Rumunija – Jugoslavija 1:2". URL: <https://www.reprezentacija.rs/008-rumunija-jugoslavija-1-2/>.

²⁸ "Uruguay – Jugoslavija 7:0," *Sport: Ilustrovani tjednik*, May 29, 1924, pp. 1-2; "Megalomanija," *Sport: Ilustrovani tjednik*, June 5, 1924, pp. 1-2; "Nogomet na olimpijadi u Parizu," *Sport: Ilustrovani tjednik*, July 3, 1924, p. 2.



Figure 4. The team of the Yugoslav Football Association (JNS) in 1923. Vinek is in the bottom row, second from the right.

In the next period Vinek became more and more susceptible to injuries. This probably pertained to the ones he got in earlier years and who were getting worse. At that time football was a rough sport and players suffering from major injuries were more a rule than an exception. With its intransigent approach to opponent's goal "The Tank" could not have fared better than he did.²⁹ Which does not mean he gave up easily. This is supported by the writings of the Zagreb press in March 1926:

"For a while Vinek took a break, he was completely battered, because he was always on a lookout for the biggest commotion and engaged into fight

²⁹ Regarding Vinek's injuries see for example "Prvi dan: Union-Žižkov – HAŠK 1:1 (1:0)," *Sport: Ilustrovani tjednik*, April 5, 1923, p. 2; "Zagreb – Graz 2:0," *Sport: Ilustrovani tjednik*, April 26, 1923, p. 1 and especially "HAŠK – SAŠK 2:7 (2:2)," *Sport: Ilustrovani tjednik*, October 25, 1923, pp. 3-4 and "GAC – HAŠK 3:5 (1:1)," *Sport: Ilustrovani tjednik*, June 12, 1924, p. 3.

in the most dangerous situations. Now he is back in full shape and makes a welcome addition to our HAŠK, and he will also certainly be of use to the city and the national team.”³⁰

Still, the best days of his football career were behind him. After another injury and a long break, he tried one more comeback to the field. In late 1927 he played once again for the club he loved. In a cup match against Zagreb's "Željezničar" he contributed to the 3:0 win with a goal. This was, however, his swan song. Even though the public continued to praise his performance, some of the press described his addition to the first team as a "necessary evil" for HAŠK, not as possibility for a long-term return, which in the end proved to be true.³¹

The end of his football career did not mean his complete parting with sport. In May 1933 he was elected a member of the Supervisory Board of the Yugoslav Association of Czech Handball,³² and in May 1934 he became a vice president of Zagreb's Football Association.³³ Both as a Doctor of Law and a successful civil servant Vinek remained faithful to one of his biggest passions that marked the important part of his life and because of which as a young man he was well-known to the general public of the time, the first real football star in Zagreb and Yugoslav state.

Born to be a police officer

With the zenith of his football days slowly becoming a thing of the past Vinek dedicated himself to the legal profession, preparing to take over a duty as a civil servant. Judging by his later successes he possessed a superior talent, as it was the case with football. He passed a "judicial theoretical final exam" in December 1926 and a "state-scientific" one in June 1927. The latter gave him the title of Doctor of Law. In September 1927 he was employed as a judiciary probationer at the District Court in Sisak and in May 1928 he was appointed as a scrivener at the Administrative Court in Zagreb. Less than a year later he put in for a transfer to Zagreb's police. This was certainly not a coincidence, bearing in mind that few months before, in January 1929, King Alexander

³⁰ "Naši najbolji nogometaši," *Svijet: Ilustrovani tjednik*, March 13, 1926, p. 108.

³¹ "HAŠK – Željezničari 3:0 (1:0)," *Vreme*, November 14, 1927, p. 3; "Prvenstvo Zagreba," *Pravda*, November 16, 1927, p. 6.

³² Czech Handball – type of an outdoor ball game similar to contemporary handball.

³³ "Skupština Jugoslavenskog hazena saveza," *Pravda*, May 30, 1933, p. 3; "Na skupštini Zagrebačkog potsaveza izabrana je uprava sa g. Bergerom na čelu," *Pravda*, August 21, 1934, p. 10.

proclaimed an overt dictatorship in the Kingdom. Apparently Vinek saw it as an opportunity for his own advancement in the police force. Most probably he also had the support of Janko Bedeković, who was, at that time, head of the Zagreb police. Bedeković knew Vinek from before and thought he fitted the exigent type of personnel needed by the police. This is supported by the official letter Bedeković attached to the request for transfer that Vinek sent to Milovan Zoričić, the county prefect of Zagreb. Bedeković demanded Vinek's transfer to the police as fast as possible "due to the increasing amount of work at this police headquarters" and because "the abovenamed is familiar with circumstances in Zagreb." Hence, it is easy to conclude that for a police force lacking quality personnel Vinek was an exigency for fighting communists and other political enemies of the regime who the dictatorship outlawed. Prefect Zoričić confirmed this in his official letter sent to the Ministry of the Interior in Belgrade, stating that he personally knows Vinek as a "proper and ambitious civil servant" and that he is much needed by the Zagreb police "particularly now when a strong action against the disruptive communist activities has begun".³⁴ As a former distinguished sport functionary, one of the founders of HAŠK, the first Croatian football referee and the translator of football rules, Zoričić must have already known Vinek also because of "the most important of all unimportant things"³⁵ and that was the reason for the wholehearted recommendation he gave to his superiors. Accordingly, on July 31, 1929, Vinek was appointed "a political-administrative probationer" at Zagreb's police department. With the backing he had his career in police was guaranteed and, being "a proper and dependable [civil servant] of a great will and ambition", he participated with all his might in police actions headed by the chief of Zagreb's police.³⁶

Bedeković's endeavours to transfer Vinek to Zagreb's police were not gratuitous. The contemporaries remember this police chief as the embodiment of state terror, a persecutor of the opponents of the Yugoslav regime in Zagreb and Croatia, "the most dangerous police officer",³⁷ and "a refined butcher".³⁸ It was during his second term as the head of the Zagreb police that he took Vinek on as his collaborator. His first term was during the first half of 1925 when it was necessary to deal with Stjepan Radić, the champion of the oppositional Croatian Republican Peasant Party, and his subversive attitudes.

³⁴ HR-HDA-890-BHZP, inventory no. 18327.

³⁵ *Dvadeset godina rada Hrvatskog akademskog športskog kluba 1903-1923.*, pp. 14-15.

³⁶ HR-HDA-890-BHZP, inv. no. 18327.

³⁷ Enes Čengiđ, *S Krležom iz dana u dan: Balade o životu koji teče* (Zagreb: Globus, 1985), p. 102.

³⁸ Josip Horvat, *Živjeti u Hrvatskoj 1900-1941.: Zapisci iz nepovrata* (Zagreb: Sveučilišna naklada Liber, 1984), p. 309.

After Radić's complete political reversal and recognition of the constitutional order of the Yugoslav state, he was immediately released from prison, where he ended after Bedeković arrested him, and became a minister in the Yugoslav government. After this the ruling circles in Belgrade were forced to withdraw Bedeković from Zagreb and he was transferred to Belgrade at the disposal of the Ministry of the Interior. This lasted until April 1929 when Bedeković returned to the position of head of Zagreb police, at the time when the King opted for a more brutal crackdown on the political opponents in Croatia.³⁹ It is worth remembering that at the same time Vinek put in for a transfer from judicial to police duties, hence, it is not improbable that he shared a similar violent character with Bedeković as it was later claimed by some of his opponents, as well as collaborators.

Unlike them, Cvjetko Horvat Deanović, who was from 1920 to 1929 an employee of Zagreb's police and the police chief in Subotica and Split, had nothing but words of praise for Vinek, as it can be seen from the statement he gave when interrogated by Yugoslav communist authorities in 1948. Horvat Deanović claimed that Vinek, among all other junior civil servants, "had the greatest personal abilities for the police", and was also "the most intelligent". His only drawback was the occasional lack of seriousness. Deanović also noted that Vinek had always thought of himself as "a Yugoslav", even though his parents were ethnic Croats. He also mentioned that together with Bedeković and several other distinguished Zagreb policemen in the 1930s he was conducting investigations against communists. During the interrogations Vinek often beat the prisoners, who, according to Deanović, did not hold it much against him, since he was a well-known football player from Zagreb (!). In any case, Horvat Deanović thought Vinek to be the best expert on communism in Zagreb police force and also a policeman who managed to establish connections among the communist youth.⁴⁰

The fact that he did not lack capabilities was proved by Vinek's exemplary manner, successful attending to his duties in the "political section", as well as his further advancement in service. Although there is no information on his military service, it is known that he had the rank of an infantry lieutenant in reserve.⁴¹ After he passed his "political-administrative qualification exam" in April 1930, he stayed for a while at Zagreb's police, most probably until Bedeković ceased to be its chief, certainly until the end of 1930 when he is

³⁹ More about Bedeković in: Mario Stipančević, *Redarstveni bestijarij: Portreti međuratnih upravitelja zagrebačke policije* (Zagreb: Hrvatski državni arhiv, 2022), pp. 101-156.

⁴⁰ HR-HDA-1561-SDS RSUP SRH, no. 010.3.7. (Izjava Cvetka Horvata) [Statement of Cvetko Horvat].

⁴¹ "Na znanje," *Službeni vojni list*, August 2, 1935, pp. 1203-1204.

mentioned as one of the interrogators of Ljubomir Kremzir, then 19-year old member of the Croatian nationalistic youth. Among other things, Kremzir noted how Vinek threatened to get back at everyone who called him a butcher and a murderer.⁴² Archival records state that in late 1932 Vinek was the head of the city police in Gospić, and in March 1933 he became a police commissioner in Osijek police.⁴³ Although it is not known why Vinek left the service in Zagreb, it could be assumed that Stanoje Mihaldžić, the new head of Zagreb police, did not want to keep Vinek who remained loyal to Bedeković.

But it is also possible that Vinek was needed to fight communists in other parts of the country, since the arrival of Mihaldžić did not change the climate at Zagreb's police for the better. On the contrary, persecutions of political opponents of the regime and terror towards the arrested individuals only intensified.⁴⁴ Vinek could only profit under such circumstances. To be more precise, unlike Bedeković, Zoričić and Horvat Deanović, who only had words of praise for him, there are also testimonies of a different kind. A former employee of Zagreb's police, a typist Zlata Horvat, later testified before the Yugoslav communist authorities that Vinek treated the detainees he interrogated very brutally, threatened them and used force against them. Sometimes he even tried to drive the suspects to commit suicide by jumping through the window of the room where the interrogation took place. She also noticed that he was "an utter yob and a ruffian" and that he used to subject her to sexist insults if she would defy him in any way or did something he did not like. At the same time, she continued, he was very impressed by the favour he won from his superior Bedeković and he enjoyed talking to him in "an intimate and friendly manner".⁴⁵

In any case, Vinek's traits were quite desirable for the police apparatus of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. In late March 1933 during his service in Osijek he was promoted to police commissioner and was soon transferred to the post of deputy police chief in Split and the deputy of the political section of Split police, which brings us to conclusion that he was assigned to fight the political opponents of the regime even in the central Dalmatian city. But it appears he did not stay for long in the capital of the Littoral Banovina. Already in early November 1934 he was transferred yet again to assume a duty of the police

⁴² Stjepan Matković, "Nepoznato svjedočanstvo o odnosu jugoslavenskih vlasti prema političkim protivnicima iz doba Šestosiječanjske diktature: Slučaj Ljubomira Kremzira," *Politički zatvorenik XXIV* (January, February, March 2016), no 266: 28-29.

⁴³ HR-HDA-890-BHZZP, inv. no. 18327.

⁴⁴ Cf. Mario Stipančević, *Redarstveni bestijarij. Portreti međuratnih upravitelja zagrebačke policije*, pp. 226-245.

⁴⁵ HR-HDA-1561-SDS RSUP SRH, no. 010.3.7. (Izjava Zlate Horvat) [Statement of Zlata Horvat].

chief at Cetinje, the capital of the Zeta Banovina.⁴⁶ His task there was probably once again to neutralise the activities of the communist movement. In Cetinje he continued to use the well-trying methods of "torture and violence" he brought from the Zagreb police.⁴⁷

This is confirmed by the memoirs of Vlado Dapčević, a Montenegrin communist, who later, during World War II, took part in the communist led People's Liberation movement. In his memoirs Dapčević wrote that Vinek, as head of the Cetinje police, ordered the beating of those who took part, during 1935, in protests against the murder of Mirko Srzentić, a Belgrade law student. Dapčević was among those communist orientated protestors who were arrested and he personally encountered Vinek and even attacked him:

"When I was taken to the police station approximately 50 protestors had already been arrested. I was brought inside. They had set up a cordon of policemen on both sides of the wall, headed by the chief. One of the policemen said to Vinek:

- This one is very dangerous, sir.
- How can I be dangerous, I haven't killed anybody.
- Who gave you permission to speak?
- What else am I to do with my mouth?

Vinek slapped my face and I kicked him in the stomach and punched him right across the face as hard as I could, so that he hit his head against the wall. Then he shouted:

- Hit him!

Policemen grabbed my hair and arms... They clubbed me mercilessly."⁴⁸

Dapčević spent the following 30 days in prison, where he was tortured. Finally, the deputy police chief Miša Vujsić, father of the future well-known Yugoslav actor Pavle (Paja) intervened and stopped the further abuse of the detainees. Besides this, Dapčević also noted that Vinek was supposedly sent to Cetinje on punishment because of "some connections he had with the members of the HSS or something of that kind".⁴⁹ This is not accurate, since Vinek

⁴⁶ HR-HDA-890-BHZP, inv. no. 18327; "Novi upravnik policije na Cetinju," *Pravda*, November 8, 1934, p. 18.

⁴⁷ HR-HDA-1561-SDS RSUP SRH, no. 010.3.7. (Izjava Matilde Justin). [Statement of Matilda Justin]

⁴⁸ Vladimir Dapčević, *Ibeovac: ja, Vlado Dapčević* (Beograd: "Filip Višnjić", 1990), pp. 24-25.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

was transferred to Cetinje from Split and not from Zagreb. Nevertheless, the possibility that Vinek maintained good relations with representatives of opposition such as HSS makes an interesting point. Later events will show that Vinek's ability to develop contact with those opposite him was not a rare occurrence.

Vinek stayed in Cetinje for almost four years. Unfortunately, there are few other information about that period of his life. Still, it seems that Vinek and his associates used their spare time at Cetinje to go hunting for wild animals.⁵⁰ In early October 1938 he was transferred back to Zagreb at his own request. The typist at Zagreb police Matilda Justin later testified that Vinek was removed from Cetinje because of his brutal treatment of detainees and also because he received death threats. It is also possible that he was reappointed in Zagreb police at the request of Josip Vragović, its new (old) chief, who back in 1936 took over the duty from the infamous Mihaldžić. According to Justin, Vragović choose Vinek as his right-hand man after the latter reassumed the position of the chief of the Department for Public Safety of Zagreb police.⁵¹

Matilda Justin, similarly to Zlata Horvat, did not have a good opinion of Vinek. She described him as an irascible and harsh man. Justin knew him since her childhood, and they both took part in the sport activities of HAŠK. As Justin later testified, when the news about Vinek's return to Zagreb police broke out, police officers who knew him claimed that Vinek is "horrible" and his return would lead to a reign of terror wider then during the Bedeković's tenure. It appears that such rumours came true. After he returned to Zagreb police, Vinek was unwilling to intervene even for his close relatives. Vinek's first cousin, Žarko Vimpulšek, was detained and abused on several occasions as a communist sympathizer. After the war Vimpulšek was a judge of the Supreme Court of the People's Republic of Croatia, best known as the president of the tribunal in the trial of Zagreb archbishop Aloysius Stepinac. Even though Vinek did not personally question or abuse him, he also did not intercede on his behalf or take any other measures to make his stay at Zagreb's police more bearable. After he returned to Zagreb, Vinek also attempted to acquaint himself with all important activities in the police department. Justin later testified that Vinek always endeavoured to have "moles" within the police. During his service in Cetinje he (mis)used "a hump-backed and ugly switchboard woman" who informed him on conversations between the

⁵⁰ "Tri divlje svinje, jednog kurjaka, četiri lisice i veliki broj zečeva i jarebica ubili su u jednom lovu cetinjski lovci," *Pravda*, November 11, 1937, p. 8.

⁵¹ HR-HDA-1561-SDS RSUP SRH, no. 010.3.7. (Izjava Matilde Justin) [Statement of Matilda Justin]. More about Vragović in: Mario Stipančević, „Stranputice Joje Vragovića. Ulomci biografije jednoga zagrebačkog policajca“: 110-130.

Ministry of the Foreign Affairs and Banovina administration in Cetinje. In return, he gave her money, tickets for theatre and cinema and had intimate relations with her. In the identical manner, after he returned to Zagreb, Vinek asked Justin to inform him about the activities of head of police Vragović. After she refused, he threatened to dismiss her from service. Vinek carried out his threats and reported to his chief, Vragović, that Justin was spreading rumours that one of the high-ranking police officers in Zagreb was selling passport to Jewish refugees. After this report, Vragović dismissed Justin from service in April 1940.⁵² She was dismissed despite the fact that in early 1939 her work in Zagreb police was graded as "very good". In fact, in September 1939 Vragović himself proposed to the Banal Authority of Banovina Hrvatska to increase Justin's wage, which was accepted. But it all changed in 1940 when her dismissal from Zagreb police, after almost nine years of service, was explained by a fact that she was married to a senior railway official and has no children, therefore her service is not necessary as a source of income.⁵³

It is important to note that Matilda, Vinek's childhood acquaintance, had been married since October 1929 to Janko Justin, a civil servant of the State Railways.⁵⁴ In fact Janko Justin was also a well-known football player, a long-time centre-forward of Zagreb's HAŠK,⁵⁵ where he played with a slightly younger Vinek, who he must have known well. All this makes Vinek's treatment of Janko's wife Matilda even more difficult to grasp, from offering her bribe and intimate relations in exchange for supplying confidential information, to extorting her dismissal from the police force.

From the time of Vinek's second tenure in Zagreb's police it is also known that several days before Christmas 1939 he was invited for "a replacement service" at the branch office of the Ban's authority of the Banovina Croatia in Split,⁵⁶ probably as a police official who previously served in Split and was well acquainted with the local situation. It is also known that in August 1940, six months before he left Zagreb's police force, he was transferred from the post of the head of the Section of the Public Safety and Police Agents to manager of the Administrative Section, whereas his old post was filled via the decision of the police chief Vragović with Zlatko Obertinsky, who until then was the manager of the Registration Section.⁵⁷

⁵² HR-HDA-1561-SDS RSUP SRH, no. 010.3.7. (Izjava Matilde Justin).

⁵³ HR-HDA-1561-SDS RSUP SRH, no. 010.3.7. (Izjava Matilde Justin); HR-HDA-890-BHZP, inv. no. 15810.

⁵⁴ HR-HDA-890-BHZP, inv. no. 15810; HR-HDA-1448-ZBMK, ZM-34C/667, Zagreb, župa sv. Marko, MKV 1926-1929.

⁵⁵ *Dvadeset godina rada Hrvatskog akademskog športskog kluba 1903-1923.*, p. 118.

⁵⁶ HR-HDA-890-BHZP, inv. no. 18327.

⁵⁷ "Promene u zagrebačkoj policiji," *Vreme*, August 9, 1940, p. 5.

It is not possible to undoubtedly claim that this was a foreshadow of future events, even though Vinek's relief from the post of the (most) important police section head and his transfer to a less important administrative section could be perceived as a demotion within the service, which would consequently mean that Vragović lost trust in Vinek. That this could have indeed been the case is further demonstrated by the fact that after the arrival of Rikard Vikert as the new chief of Zagreb's police Vinek soon had to leave not only Zagreb's police force, but also police service as such. Perhaps his policing methods became too harsh even for the likes of Vragović and Vikert, even though the latter has not been remembered for moderation in the persecution of regime's political opponents.⁵⁸ At a time when any acceptable solution for the survival of Yugoslavia was required Vinek was obviously not exigent to the police apparatus and in February 1941, on the eve of the war, he was transferred to the post of deputy head of District of Pakrac.⁵⁹ One cannot help feeling that this also meant an additional loss of his official status. While Vinek served in Pakrac, Axis invaded Yugoslavia in April 1941 and shortly after Independent State of Croatia (NDH) was proclaimed.

Initially Vinek did not inspire confidence in the minds of new powerholders, "because during the Yugoslavian dictatorship he abused and gave orders for the abuse of Croats who were political prisoners". Already on April 20, 1941 NDH authorities ordered the arrest of Vinek and he was taken to Zagreb. But Vinek somehow managed to clear himself of charges and was released on May 8,⁶⁰ and already the following day he returned to police duties and sent to serve in police in Banja Luka, in north-western Bosnia.⁶¹ There he was welcomed by Viktor Gutić, a notorious head of the Ustasha movement in Banja Luka.⁶² Vinek was most probably saved from further persecution of the NDH authorities by his former chief Vragović, who became an important official in the NDH police, taking the duty of the assistant head of the new Directorate for public order and safety.⁶³ Vinek also became lecturer at the NDH police school.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ More about Vikert in: Mario Stipančević, "Tragom Rikarda Vikerta, posljednjega međuratnog upravitelja zagrebačke policije", *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 53 (2021), no. 1: 185-219.

⁵⁹ HR-HDA-890-BHZZP, inv. no. 18327.

⁶⁰ HR-HDA-259-ROZ, inv. no. 5949c.

⁶¹ HR-HDA-223-MUP NDH, inv. no. 4613.

⁶² More on Viktor Gutić in: Nikica Barić, "Banja Luka 1941. – 1942./1943. godine: previranja unutar vlasti Nezavisne Države Hrvatske," *Pilar: časopis za društvene i humanističke studije* XIII (2018), no. 25-26 (1-2): 93 and the following pages.

⁶³ Cf. Mario Stipančević, „Stranputice Joje Vragovića. Ulomci biografije jednoga zagrebačkog policajca“: 119.

⁶⁴ HR-HDA-1549-ZIG NDH, oznaka [designation] I-100, 607.

In Banja Luka Vinek soon took over the duty of the deputy chief of the newly established County Police Department, remaining at this post until June 1942, when he was transferred to the duty of head of the branch office of the County Police Department in Bosanski Brod, while at the same time he was also the deputy chief of the County Police Department in Brod na Savi. It appears he never formally took over the duty in Bosanski Brod, because the branch office was soon abolished, or it never started operating in the first place. In September 1942 at the latest Vinek took over the duty of the chief of the County Police Department in Brod na Savi.⁶⁵

Very few information has survived regarding this part of his career. Measures against Serbs and NDH state terror soon caused uprising of ethnic Serbs in various parts of NDH, and especially in Bosnia. The uprising gradually developed into Communist led People's Liberation Movement and its partisan forces and nationalist Serb Chetnik movement. NDH police, both in Banja Luka and in Brod na Savi operated against the uprising and against all who supported it.⁶⁶

Idriz Lađarević, was head of the archives at Banja Luka's County Police Department and worked under Vinek. They must have met before through football, since Lađarević had at one point been the player in Zagreb's "Građanski" first team. Later, in his memoirs, Lađarević claimed that Vinek was "a wonderful man, of a strong character and honesty". Lađarević collaborated with the People's Liberation Movement and provided its members with permits for free movement in the territory of the County Police Department. The permits were signed by Vinek, who never inquiring who were they meant for and what was their purpose (but probably guessing it all the same). Because of this Lađarević claimed that Vinek was a "progressive man" who formally served NDH, but in fact disliked it and probably hated it. Lađarević also claimed that Vinek, while serving in Banja Luka, used to socialize with Rudi Čajavec, who later joined the partisans and was, after the war, hailed by the communists as "people's hero".⁶⁷

This does not mean, however, that already at that time many people who were deemed undesirable by the NDH regime had not been sent to concentra-

⁶⁵ HR-HDA-223-MUP NDH, inv. no. 4613.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ *Arhipedija*. "Moj rad u Župskoj redarstvenoj oblasti u Banjoj Luci i oblici ilegalnog rada." URL: http://arhipedija.com/uploads/r/btzk-xstb-a8cw/7/1/3/713c6f4e6a7f18a10f2ca2908fb74aa9008bb38b70fc25445977834a00c2366f/ARSBL_0209___005-156.pdf. Cf. also *Glas Srpske*. "Zapisi iz arhiva: Stasavanje banjalučkog sporta (4): Veliko rivalstvo Krajišnika i Balkana." URL: <https://www.glassrpske.com/lat/plus/istorija/ZAPISI-IZ-ARHIVA-Stasavanje-banjalucckog-sporta-4-Veliko-rivalstvo-Krajsnika-i-Balkana/235130>.

tion camps i.e. almost certain death, with one stroke of Vinek's pen. Hence, on June 19, 1942 in accordance with the decision of the Banja Luka's County Police Department 12 individuals, and the next day 20 more of various nationalities were deported to the Jasenovac concentration camp.⁶⁸ Vinek continued with similar activities after he was transferred to County Police Department in Brod na Savi. On September 28, 1942 he ordered the deportation of 36 persons to the Jasenovac camp and 17 were deported to Stara Gradiška concentration camp. On October 8 he ordered the deportation to concentration camp of eight Jews from Gradačac, a town in north-eastern Bosnia.⁶⁹ Seven persons from Brodski Varoš, who attempted to join the partisans were arrested in October 1942 and Vinek also ordered their deportation to concentration camp.⁷⁰ He apparently continued with the same practice during the following years. In late May 1943 he ordered the deportation of two persons to Stara Gradiška camp.⁷¹ Just like in all other cases, Vinek was (just) an obedient executor of orders that came from superior NDH police authorities and it is not difficult to understand why the NDH authorities though Vinek was useful enough to keep him as a police official for more than three years.

Shortly after he took over the duty of the chief of the County Police Department in Brod na Savi, an event occurred that indirectly sealed Vinek's fate. While returning from a business trip to the Bosnian town of Čelić, on November 25, 1942 he was captured together with Vladimir Sabolić, the prefect of the Posavje County, by the local Chetnik unit under the command of a certain Ljubo Petrović, a former railway worker. The reasons for their capture, even though at that time Chetniks collaborated rather well with the NDH authorities by jointly fighting the partisan units on the Majevica Mountain,

⁶⁸ Cf. "Odluka Župske redarstvene oblasti Banja Luka od 19. juna 1942. zapovedništvu koncentracionog logora Jasenovac za upućivanje 12 lica u logor" i "Obaveštenje Ustaške nadzorne službe od 8. jula 1942. godine opunomoćenom ministru unutrašnjih poslova Oskaru Turini o licima koja se nalaze u koncentracionom logoru Jasenovac," Antun Miletić, ed., *Koncentracioni logor Jasenovac*, vol. I (Beograd – Jasenovac: Narodna knjiga – Spomen područje Jasenovac, 1986), pp. 333, 375-377.

⁶⁹ Cf. "Obaveštenje Župske redarstvene oblasti Slavonski Brod od 28. septembra 1942. Velikoj župi Posavje o upućivanju trideset šest lica u koncentracioni logor Jasenovac i sedamnaest lica u logor Stara Gradiška" and "Izveštaj Župske redarstvene oblasti Slavonski Brod od 8. oktobra 1942. Velikoj župi Posavlje o upućivanju Jevreja iz Gradačca u koncentracioni logor," Antun Miletić, ed., *Koncentracioni logor Jasenovac*, vol. I., pp. 484-485; 506-507.

⁷⁰ Cf. "Izveštaj Župske redarstvene oblasti Slavonski Brod od 29. oktobra 1942. Velikoj župi Posavlje da je uhvaćena jedna grupa komunista koja će biti sprovedena u logor," Antun Miletić, ed., *Koncentracioni logor Jasenovac*, vol. I, pp. 521-522.

⁷¹ Cf. "Obaveštenje Župske redarstvene oblasti u Brodu na Savi od 26. maja 1943. Velikoj župi Posavje o upućivanju Ljubice Odošahić i Save Ždere u koncentracioni logor Stara Gradiška," Antun Miletić, ed., *Koncentracioni logor Jasenovac*, vol. I, p. 622.

concerned the arrest of Petrović's sister and a few other ethnic Serbs from the area of Brčko, Bjeljina, Tuzla and Zvornik. Their release and the expulsion of several local Ustasha military or civil officials were stated as Petrović's conditions to release Sabolić and Vinek. The decisive role in negotiations between NDH authorities and Petrović was played by Zvonko Cebalo, a lawyer from Brčko, a town in north-eastern Bosnia.⁷² Vinek's contacts with Cebalo would prove fatal for Vinek several years later.



Figure 6. Zvonko Cebalo

Cebalo, born in Sarajevo, after finishing law school in Zagreb was a solicitor before the war, just like his father Ante. He married a daughter of another solicitor from Brčko – one Milan Kostić – an ethnic Serb who departed from Brčko when war broke out, leaving his considerable property to Cebalo. Cebalo was connected with the mentioned Chetnik commander Petrović as his best man, probably via his wife Mara, which is why he was able to participate in negotiations for the release of Vinek and Sabolić. Cebalo died in 1989 and his biography is also very interesting. During World War II he collaborated not only with Chetniks, but also with partisans, which is why he was arrested three times by the German and NDH authorities. On one such occasion, when he was arrested in Brčko during 1943 and accused together with his wife for helping partisans, they were saved from harsh consequences by none other than Vinek, who, according to Cebalo, wanted to return the favour because

⁷² HR-HDA-1549-ZIG NDH, designation II-44, 179, 183, 187, 205, 207.

less than a year ago Cebalo saved him from Chetniks' captivity. After returning from the detention Cebalo settled in Zagreb and had a private law practice. He was arrested and released after communists took power and at one point he was employed by the Land Commission for the Investigation of War Crimes of the Occupiers and Their Collaborators. Due to his murky past he was removed from this post after a while and during 1950s he again started to run his private law practice, mostly representing business interests of companies from West Europe. He was enthusiastically devoted to chess and bridge which enabled him to come into contact with numerous individuals in Yugoslavia and abroad. In view of this, it comes as no surprise that from 1951 to 1984 he was an active collaborator of the Yugoslav communist state security under the codenames "Lawyer" and "Krešimir".⁷³

Despite everything, it would appear that in spite of Vinek's loyal service in NDH police, he never completely managed to get away from his image of a former Yugoslav policeman who persecuted Croatian nationalists. At least that is the testimony left to us by archival sources from the period of his management of the County Police Department in Brod na Savi. In November 1943, an NDH informant reported that several peasants were taken as hostages because of sabotages committed on the railway lines in Brod na Savi region. The informant concluded that it would be in the interest of NDH to put under control "police chief VINEK, doctor of medicine DUFEK and the principal of the railway personnel in Slavonski Brod rather than take quiet peasants as hostages, who had nothing to do with blowing up the railway line". All this under the suspicion that Vinek was bribed by the partisans, which made him release the arrested members of that movement, whereas doctor Dufek "being a great Yugoslav and an anglophile" supported anti-government activities by spreading false information about the return of the Croatian Peasant Party and its president Maček to power. Similar views were held about an unnamed railway principal who supposedly had connections with partisans by informing them on timetable of railway transports.⁷⁴

More information is available on doctor Dufek. He was born on August 16, 1888 in Brod na Savi as Henrik (Hinko) Franjo Duffek, a child of Ivan, a telegram manager in Trebinje and Emilija nee Lösch (Leš). In 1913 he graduated from the medical school in Vienna and that same year he was drafted into the Austro-Hungarian military service as an assistant doctor. Only 6 months later he was appointed "a senior doctor in active service" and in August 1914 he was transferred to "the N° 1 Garrison Hospital in Vienna". After two years

⁷³ HR-HDA-1561-SDS RSUP SRH, inv. no. 248.671; HR-HDA-1549-ZIG NDH, designation II-44, 211, 213.

⁷⁴ HR-HDA-1549-ZIG NDH, designation I-32, 511-512.

he was appointed for service to “the N° 2 Mobile Epidemical Hospital”. After the end of the Great War and the establishment of the Kingdom of SHS he was appointed in mid-1920 as head of the military hospital in Brod na Savi, with the rank of a medical major. It is interesting to note that the medical diploma he acquired in Vienna was acknowledged by the Faculty of Medicine of Belgrade's university as the body of authority only in 1926, thusly equalizing it with those acquired at domestic universities.⁷⁵ In 1927 Duffek left the military service and opened a private medical practice in his native town. The fact that he filled the post of the town's mayor from 1932 to 1934 proves that he was held in high regard by his fellow-townsmen.⁷⁶

It appears he was a private physician and a medical lieutenant-colonel in reserve during the breakup of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. After the establishment of the NDH he put himself at the disposal of the new authorities by organizing the medical service in Brod na Savi, where he stayed until February 1944 when he received a permit from the Zagreb City Physician Institution for a private medical practice at 24 Novak Street. He was at the same address when the war ended. Despite the fact that in May 1945 he joined the medical service of the Yugoslav Army as an epidemiologist, he was soon dismissed, since his collaboration with NDH authorities, together with his fraternisation with the high-ranked German officers had not been forgotten. He was arrested as soon as August 1945 and accused by the communist authorities for collaborating with the occupiers and for felonies against the people and the state. In January 1946 he was sentenced to 10 years in prison, loss of political and civil rights for 5 years and the confiscation of entire property. He was pardoned in January 1951 by the act of the Presidium of the People's Assembly of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and did not have to serve the rest of his sentence, which until that point he served in Stara Gradiška, Tenja near Osijek, Sisak, Niš, Zabela near Požarevac, forestry worksites near Visoki Dečani in Kosovo and Kukavica near Leskovac and finally in the prison hospital in Zemun. After his release he returned to Zagreb and took residence at the first floor of 59 Petrinjska Street. He asked for a permit to continue to privately practice medicine, which was granted in a few months' time. He died in Zagreb in 1973.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ HR-HDA-890-BHZP (Zdravstvo) [Health care], Personalni dosje [Personal file] Dufek dr. Henrik, box 102.

⁷⁶ *Opća bolnica “Dr. Josip Benčević” Slavonski Brod*. “1918.-1940. Između dva svjetska rata.” URL: https://arhiva.bolnicasb.hr/povijest_2.htm; *Acta Croatica*. “Memories: Duffek.” URL: <https://actacroatica.com/en/memory/Dufek/>.

⁷⁷ HR-HDA-890-BHZP (Zdravstvo), Personalni dosje Duffek dr. Henrik, box 108; *Acta Croatica*. “Memories: Duffek.” URL: <https://actacroatica.com/en/memory/Dufek/>.

It would appear that Vinek's fate was also at least indirectly determined by his acquaintance with Duffek. Namely, Duffek's daughter had from 1944 been married to Vilko Butorac,⁷⁸ an Ustasha captain, who in that same year seems to have played an important part in Vinek's removal from the post of the police chief in Brod na Savi.

The fact that Duffek and Vinek seem to have been close collaborators during the war is confirmed by another document from 1943, in which both were accused of sabotaging the Brod authorities, and Vinek was also described as "an old butcher of the Croatian youth", which was probably a reference made by the authors of the official letter regarding his career at Zagreb's police before the war.⁷⁹ Vinek was certainly already known to some of the more prominent Ustasha members in Brod na Savi, since they have complained to Ministry of the Interior, its Main Directorate for Public Order and Safety, as well as to the Main Ustasha Headquarters in Zagreb against his appointment as the police chief and his subsequent activities in favour of "the rebels". Against this "thug from the Zagreb police who used to kill people while the gramophone was playing" there were already serious accusations made during the inter-war years when one of the Ustasha émigré newspapers supposedly published Vinek's biography.⁸⁰ Bearing in mind what was already mentioned about Vinek's activities at Zagreb's interwar police, it can be concluded that at least some of these accusations were founded and that the former member of the Yugoslav football national team was indeed brutal in carrying out his police tasks, including using a well-known method of stifling the cries of detainees during torture by playing loud music from worn-out gramophone records.⁸¹

In early 1944 some of Vinek's fellow townsmen inclined towards the Ustasha were exasperated by his actions to such an extent that they not only accused him in public reports for collaborating with the partisans, but also for a supposed excellent collaboration with the Germans, which enabled his high-handed behaviour and circumvention of the direct orders of the higher NDH authorities. The irksomeness caused by his behaviour reached such an extent that it could be heard how "honest Croats and Ustasha from Slavonski Brod say that unless Vinek is removed they themselves will go to the forest, since even Partisans are better Croats than the likes of Vinek".⁸²

⁷⁸ HR-HDA-890-BHZP (Zdravstvo), Personalni dosje Duffek dr. Henrik, box 108.

⁷⁹ HR-HDA-1549-ZIG NDH, designation I-32, 521.

⁸⁰ This most probably concerns pre-war issues of bulletin *Ustaša: Vijesnik hrvatskih revolucionaraca* (1930-1934) which unfortunately are not available, hence, it is not possible to verify this claim (HR-HDA-1549-ZIG NDH, designation I-32, 540).

⁸¹ Mario Stipančević, *Redarstveni bestijarij: Portreti međuratnih upravitelja zagrebačke policije*, pp. 136, 148.

⁸² HR-HDA-1549-ZIG NDH, designation I-32, 555.

In the end all these accusations could not had been left unacknowledged. There are indications that the main part in Vinek's removal was played by Vilko Butorac, the already mentioned son-in-law of Henrik Duffek, a physician from Brod.⁸³ It appears he was the one who "unmasked" Vinek by supplying his superiors with irrefutable evidence that brought upon his removal and arrest. Perhaps there was also a touch of personal animosity, since Butorac must have already known Vinek from Banja Luka when the war began, while working there as a scrivener for Ustasha official Viktor Gutić.⁸⁴ In any case, Vinek remained a police chief of the County Police Department in Brod na Savi until October 12, 1944, when he was arrested due to "anti-State activity". The fact that he was deprived of freedom while on duty of a police chief was explained as follows:

"Already during Yugoslavia was Dr Vinek prominent for his activities against the Ustasha Croats, while after the establishment of the NDH he continued with his anti-Croat activities. He was connected to Zvonko Cebalo, a well-known Chetnik and during his tenure as the police chief in Brod na Savi he sent him a letter in which he wrote against civil servants, especially against Mr. Tolj,⁸⁵ calling him a butcher. In the same letter he disclosed official secrets by supplying him with names of individuals sent to camps and other similar things."⁸⁶

The above suggests that it was Vinek's collaboration with Cebalo, together with the fact that they saved each other's lives on several occasions as mentioned before, that finally sealed his fate. It must be pointed out that Vinek's relationship with this informer of several warring factions was probably only

⁸³ Butorac survived the Second World War. He managed to escape to Argentina via Austria and Germany, and later on to Venezuela. There he kept a low profile and did not have links with other post-war émigrés. Being an Ustasha captain in 1947 he was proclaimed a war criminal by the decision of the ZKRZ of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He was born in Novi Vinodolski on May 24, 1907. (HR-HDA-1561-SDS RSUP SRH, inv. no. 121.120).

⁸⁴ *Glas Srpske*. "Zapisi iz arhiva: Svi stožernikovi ljudi (2)." URL: <https://www.glassrpske.com/lat/plus/istorija/zapisi-iz-arhiva-svi-stozernikovi-ljudi-2-gutic-i-momcinovic-inicirali-ilindanski-pokolj/222394>.

⁸⁵ Most probably Ivan Tolj (Veljaci, Bosnia and Herzegovina, March 18, 1901 – Vinkovci, July 1945). In April 1942 he was appointed a district head of the Vinkovci District and the chief of the city police, later also the chief of the branch office of the County Police Region in Vinkovci. He was responsible for the deportations of Jews to Auschwitz and Jasenovac during 1942. In late 1944 he escaped from Vinkovci and was arrested and sentenced to death in 1945 (Rajka Bućin, "Transport upućen u Auschwitz iz Vinkovaca," *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 53 (2021), no. 2: 616, f. 21, passim).

⁸⁶ HR-HDA-259-ROZ, inv. no. 5949c.

a trigger for his arrest since it is quite clear that long before his removal Vinek fell out of favour with many local Ustasha members and sympathisers.

Considering the accusations, the consequent punishment for Vinek could not have been lenient. On October 28, 1944 the Main Directorate for Public Order and Safety decided to sentence Vinek to 2-year enforced stay in a camp and the sentence was due to finish on 12th October 1946. He never lived to see that day. After several months which he most probably spent at Zagreb's prison on Savska Street, on January 18, 1945 he was transferred to the Lepoglava camp.⁸⁷ According to available information he stayed there until the very end of the war when he perished with other prisoners during when train carrying them was attacked at Blinjski kut near Sisak. The train was supposed to transfer them to the Jasenovac camp. The train car containing Vinek and other prisoners was supposedly doused with petroleum and set on fire, which is why they all died a horrible death inside of it.⁸⁸

Spies for the Gestapo

Not much is known of Vinek's private life. However, even little information that is available proves that it was not monotonous. One period of his life was certainly marked by a rather unhappy marriage. On September 10, 1927, he married Blanka Horvath, the daughter of Željko Horvath, the post and telegraph director, and Marija nee Hadži. Even though her father was a Catholic, unusually for this period Blanka was christened in her mother's Serbian Orthodox religion and later married Vinek in a Catholic church. She was born on October 15, 1907 and until her marriage lived with her parents at 10 Jurković Street.⁸⁹ Unlike Vinek she had a respectable family background. Besides her father who filled the above mentioned distinguished social post and was the director of Zagreb's Postal Savings Bank, her mother was the daughter of Pavle Hadži, an esteemed Serb from Zagreb, at one point also a director of post and telegraphs and assistant minister in the Yugoslav government. Blanka also had two uncles on her mother's side: Jovan, a zoologist, and a university professor, and Stevan, a lawyer and a well-known sport functionary, once also a viceban of the Sava Banovina.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ HR-HDA-1561-SDS RSUP SRH, no. 010.3.7. (Izjava Matilde Justin).

⁸⁹ HR-HDA-1448-ZBMK, ZM-34C/1306, Zagreb, župa sv. Blaž [the Parish of St. Blaise], MKV 1926-1930.

⁹⁰ HR-HDA-1561-SDS RSUP SRH, inv. no. 303.247. Cf. also *Hrvatska enciklopedija*. "Hadži, Jovan." URL: <https://www.enciklopedija.hr/natuknica.aspx?id=24036> te *Hrvatska enciklopedija*.



Figure 6. Blanka Vinek

She had spent her childhood and adolescence in Zagreb, finishing elementary school and later also a real gymnasium (1918-1922), as well as a merchant academy (1922-1926). During the school year 1937/1938 she enrolled at the High Economic and Commercial School (today Faculty of Economics & Business) where she graduated in June 1941. During the seven years of marriage to Vinek (1927-1934) on January 29, 1929 she gave birth in Zagreb to a son named Reno, who later became a distinguished handball and table tennis player at HAŠK and one of our best sport journalists.⁹¹ It appears that Reno spent his entire childhood after his parents divorced, with or without his mother, at the home of Željko and Marija, his grandparents, in Jurković Street.⁹² Sadly, as a 16-year old he lost both of his parents in a matter of months.

Blanka's life was full of contradictions, to say the least. According to her own testimony in front of the communist investigative authorities during 1945, she met Vladimir in 1925 when he was not yet a policeman. Supposedly she was expressly against him taking on a police duty, thinking it would be

dija. "Hadži, Stevan." URL: <https://www.enciklopedija.hr/natuknica.aspx?id=24036>.

⁹¹ HR-HDA-1549-ZIG NDH, designation II-96, 207. Cf. also *Večernji list*. "Haškovac zlatnog pera." URL: <https://www.vecernji.hr/sport/haskovac-zlatnog-pera-801474> te *Večernji list*. "Umro sportski novinar Reno Vinek." URL: <https://www.vecernji.hr/sport/umro-sportski-novinar-reno-vinek-853279>.

⁹² HR-HDA-1549-ZIG NDH, designation II-96, 207.

much better for him to practice law like his older brother Mladen. Vladimir did not take much notice, so in 1929 he asked to be employed in the Zagreb police via Blanka's uncle Stevan Hadžija, who was at that time viceban of the Sava Banovina. According to his wife, Vinek could not come to terms with the fact that he would only be "a tiny judicial civil servant", which is why in the end she had to consent for him to be employed by the police. In other words, Blanka's story on how her husband joined the police service does not contradict earlier claims from official documents, since it is not hard to imagine that Bedeković and Zoričić readily accepted orders from higher administrative authorities and installed Vinek at the police without much procedural hesitation.⁹³

However, the marriage did not last long, partly because of what was mentioned above. Apart from his police duties that Vladimir wholeheartedly pursued and because of which he had to move to Gospić, Osijek and Cetinje, it appears that the reason for a rather quick divorce from his wife also concerned his intimate relationship with "a ballerina from Zagreb's theatre", who he supposedly wanted to marry, but she left him after only 2 months. Blanka used this adultery to leave a relationship in which apparently neither of them found joy. She saw her former husband only rarely after that, usually when he came to visit their son who lived with her and her parents and for who Vinek regularly financially provided.⁹⁴

As mentioned, after the divorce Blanka dedicated herself to her academic career, firstly by finishing the High Economic and Commercial School in Zagreb and then by getting her doctorate at Vienna's Hochschule für Welthandel (today known as Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien i.e. Faculty of Economics in Vienna) with a thesis concerning Yugoslavia's maritime law and with an oral exam. Her departure to this faculty in the middle of the war, as well as the events that followed, were of crucial importance for Blanka. While studying in Zagreb she met and got intimately involved in November 1940 with a certain Emerik Belen, an industrialist born in Pula in 1903. After her graduation, probably in the second half of 1941, she tried to leave Croatia with him and her son Reno via Crikvenica, according to her own words, so that they could defect to the Allies and leave the NDH, a state with which "as a Serb" she did not want anything to do with. This attempt failed because, among other things, they did not have valid passports, so they again returned to Zagreb in October 1941. Blanka then managed to get the NDH passports through regular procedure (and by formally accepting the Catholic faith) for herself and Belen, so that they could leave together for Vienna, supposedly to continue schooling, and in reality – as she claimed to the investigative authorities in

⁹³ HR-HDA-1561-SDS RSUP SRH, inv. no. 303.247.

⁹⁴ Ibid.



Figure 7. Emerik Belen

1945 – to reach together the liberated territory in that way. After a while this also did not materialize, so they had to finish schooling and when it did end Blanka acquired a doctorate, as it has already been stated.⁹⁵

When Belen finally managed to obtain Italian passports, they went via Zagreb and Belgrade to Sofia, where they were supposed to establish contact with the Royal Yugoslav Legation in Ankara in order to get to the Allies and start to work “against the fascists”. At the end of 1942 i.e., that same year Blanka met her former husband Vladimir for the last time while in transit in Brod na Savi, supposedly to prevent the possible attempt of the NDH authorities to take away her passports and Vinek promised to assist her. However, the journey through the areas under German control went without major difficulties, so with the help of the Yugoslav legation they finally went from Ankara to

⁹⁵ Ibid.

Alep, where they were received and interrogated by the members of the British intelligence. After that, probably during the first months of 1943, they were sent to the Yugoslav legation in Jerusalem, where Blanka got employed at the economic section of the local Royal Delegation for the Near and Middle East, whereas Belen continued to Cairo, where he found employment as an interpreter for the English language at the local Yugoslav military mission. After a lapse of time Blanka joined him at Cairo, until Belen decided in May 1944 to leave for Yugoslavia via Bari. Blanka then decided to join “the Antifascist Council” in Cairo with the intention to help in the refugee camp at El Shatt in the Sinai Peninsula. According to her own words, at the same time she tried to return to the liberated territory in Yugoslavia, which she finally succeeded at the very end of January 1945, when she reached Belgrade via Alexandria and Bari.⁹⁶

However, the new communist authorities did not welcome her with open arms. She was arrested only several days after her arrival to the Yugoslav capital and was charged together with Benek of being a Gestapo spy. The interrogations lasted from late May to late September 1945 and in the end, Blanka did not manage to convince the other party that her own motives were pure. The new authorities thought her leaving Zagreb, studying in Vienna and then joining the Royal Government in exile were incontestable proofs of hiding her intelligence activities i.e., directly collaborating with the occupiers. Her final destiny is not certainly known. If a short jotting that spells “death” next to her and Belen’s name is to be believed and which can be found in a document sending these two supposed collaborators to an unnamed police/judicial body on an unknown date, Blanka most probably ended her life in late 1945 or early 1946 in Belgrade, before reaching the age of 40.⁹⁷

From the stars to the camps

Vinek’s life is almost worthy of a film screenplay. A beloved sportsman and Zagreb’s football icon during his youth, a perspective Doctor of Law in front of who the doors laid open for a career of a solicitor or a judge, he steered his fate into troubled waters when he decided to join Zagreb’s police. This probably reflected that same character which made him renowned on the football field. The question remains which way his life would have taken had he by chance heeded the advice given to him at one point by his loved ones and subsequently gave up the intention to become a police employee.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

The police most certainly left its mark on him. It can be concluded from the available sources that he did quite well for himself within the repressive apparatus. In any case, that was the realization of his wishes and did not happen due to the combination of circumstances. Apart from this, another interesting trait to observe in Vinek's character concerns the changes of his ideological views, if it is expedient to mention it based on the research of the sources. A jump from a dedicated and ruthless persecutor of communists during the Karadžević regime to a furtive supporter of the partisans during the NDH did not prove in his case to be insurmountable. He seemed to have been playing both sides of the fence no matter what master he was serving at a certain moment. It would be interesting to see what would have happened had he lived long enough to witness the change of government in 1945. If we can speculate based on what is known, he would probably find a way, just like Zvonko Cebalo did, whose life he once saved by returning a similar favour from the beginning of the war.

Vinek was undoubtedly a distinctive personality. This is supported by the fact that at one point he married Blanka Horvath, who admittedly he fairly soon divorced, but with who he shared the unbreakable bond of having an offspring. After she left her husband, this native Zagreb lady dedicated herself to achieve academic career, but also partook in shady dealings during the war which the communist authorities later on proclaimed to be an overt collaboration with the occupiers. Available sources cannot undoubtedly confirm such claims. Still, it is not an exaggeration to claim that her post-war biography which she submitted to the investigators after her return to Yugoslavia was full of holes that could not have been easily plugged. There can be no doubt that some of the allegations she was charged with were meant for her husband, who from the point of view of the communist authorities was also a direct collaborator of the defeated regime, despite the fact he ended his life as a prisoner of the Ustasha.

Finally, if based on everything that has been said so far one had to pass a succinct judgement on Vladimir Vinek, it would not be foolhardy to claim that the fate that befell him in the end was not entirely unexpected. Both in his private and professional life the HAŠK's "Tank" had features similar to those he demonstrated on a football field. It is not always simple to run over an opponent, to penetrate into his space and score a goal with the stentorian cheering of the supporters. Particularly without "the ideal technique" which he did not always seem to have, including during his career at the police. At any rate, strikers have always been supporters' favourite target when things go awry. Irrespective of football Vinek had to be aware of that. He most probably was, but only when it was far too late.

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