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Influence of ideology on the architecture of Sokol houses in the kingdom of Yugoslavia

ABSTRACT: Sokol movement represented a very important and unique way of struggle for unification of Southern Slovenes; therefore its role in the constitution of Yugoslav identity in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians was significant. Nourishing sport as a symbol of harmony between body, soul, and spirit de facto promoted physical training as the road towards true Yugoslavism. The main purpose of this paper is to consider elements of ideology and propaganda which were present in the aesthetics and visual presentation in the Sokol architecture. It can be concluded by analyzing principles of Sokol movement to what extent it influenced architecture of Sokol houses. The connection between Sokol movement and Yugoslav ideology suggests a closer look at the political events which directly influenced the process of building-up and stylistic development of Sokol houses. The building expansion of Sokol houses throughout the Kingdom of Yugoslavia matches the dictatorship of King Alexander Karadjordjević I, which clearly implies there has been a strong connection and support between the Sokols and the crown. The political dimension of Sokol movement has undoubtedly communicated with the concept of true Yugoslavism. Changes which have ocurred in 1934, the assassination of King Alexander as well as problems with the Catholic Church considering the amount of influence Sokol movement had on Catholic members. This resulted in a major fall in building program of Sokols up until 1941. Through an analysis of political influence on architecture of Sokol houses, as well as aesthetics and ideology, a conclusion can be drawn about the social system of the time. Therefore, Sokol architecture can be interpreted as an example of political art.
KEY WORDS: architecture, ideology, Sokol movement, Yugoslavia, Yugoslavism.

The politicization of physical education among the Slavic people correlates with the fall of Bach's absolutism[1] in the Austro-Hungary in 1860. The Sokol movement was an all-Slavic organisation formed in 1862. by Miroslav Tyrš (Žutić 1991: 5–6). As a national movement, Sokol was stimulating, at first, the cultural and political regeneration of the Czech people (Hellebrandt, Krall 1939: 413), which then spread towards other Slavs.

[1] Baron Alexander von Bach (1813–1893) was an Austrian politician. The term "Bach's absolutism" referes to the regime that was present from 1851–1860, when Bach was the Minister of inner affaires. During that period there had been performed a forced germanisation.

After the First World War Slavic peoples gained their independence, therefore fulfilling the basic goal of the Sokols. Nevertheless, Sokols have been even more active during the interwar period and their ideals became the ideals of the newly formed states, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia (Timotijević 2006: 30).

On Vidovdan, 28 June 1919. all south Slav pre-war Sokol organisations decided to unite into Sokol Union of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. At the end of 1928, just before the beginning of King Alexander's dictatorship, the Sokol Union changed its name into Yugoslav Sokol Union. It was one of the first organisations in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes with a distinctive Yugoslav ideology and also the first one with the Yugoslav term in its name. Their program was a combination of organised sport and nationalism, which served as a connection between all citizens regardless of cultural and religious differences (Ignjatović 2007: 282).

Educational work of Sokols became present in the cultural politics of the state only after the declaration of King Alexander's dictatorship (Timotijević 2006: 43). The reason for the intense integration of the state in the physical education of youth, not just in Yugoslavia, but across Europe, can be explained as a consequence of the First World War and the fear of the potential next one. Through mass physical education the state tended to form good soldiers who will defend their country (Žutić 1991: 64, 76). Sokol ideology quickly became an example for physical and moral education. Sokols were perceived as the national army of the state (Vasić 1977: 95). Individuals were treated as part of community with a strong sense for collectivism (Dvorniković 1991: 58). Yugoslav culture was in many ways a deeply masculine culture: it honoured sports as a symbol of the harmony of the "body, soul and spirit". Through the Yugoslav Sokol Union, it promoted physical fitness, athleticism, and gymnastics as a path to the attainment of not only a true Yugoslav consciousness, but also a better Yugoslav "race" (Yeomans 2005: 698–699).

Sokol organisation attemped to promote the concept of the state, the Yugoslav national and religious tolerance. That kind of true patriotism was something King Alexander requested. The "firm hand" of the state would be supported by the moral discipline of Sokols. Patriotic tendency of Sokols was to become "the pillar of the fatherland" (Dimić 1996: 425, 427).

Englebert Gungle once declared: "One tribe, one blood, one thought, one will from the East to the West, from the North to the South. Brothers and sisters everywhere!" (Starc 2003: 917) Behind that sentence was the true meaning of Yugoslavism. "One people, one homeland and one Sokol organisation in it!" (Starc 2003: 923) was trying to rise above multinational and multiconfessional complexity of the state, which was the reality.

Sokol houses were the central piece for practicing Yugoslav ideology, their cultural and educational mission. Sokol movement was seen as a new form of secular religion (Ignjatović 2007: 284). Sokol house was considered to be the "nest" of Sokols, and therefore was to be well built, with good appearance in "national spirit". Needless to say, Momir Korunović declared that in Sokol architecture "we must be our own" without following any fashionable style.[2]

Since Sokol houses were built mostly during the dictatorship of King Alexander, the support of the state was apparent. The concept of the Sokol house was similar to Casa del

[2] Report of the president of construction and artistic sector of the Yugoslav Sokol Union at the Second regular parliament of the Yugoslav Sokol Union (10. 4. 1932), 107–109.

Fig. 1. Unknown author, Casa del Fascio in Alfonsine, 1929.

Fascio in Italy (Fig. 1) or Halkevleri in Turkey during the same period. Architectural identity formed a picture of desirable values and ideals that were to be a part of national culture. National style was used both in Italy and in Turkey, and was very similar to Yugoslav concept of returning to national tradition and glorifying a healthy, national culture. Therefore, Sokol house had the same role as Casa del Fascio, for example. Both of them had a central auditorium with a stage, a library and their main purpose was to educate and influence youth of their country. The same situation was present in Turkey, which also had a totalitarian regime. In these countries, as well as in Germany, during the 1930s there was a strong campain considering pre-military physical training of the youth, which was partly expected from Sokol Union in Yugoslavia.[3]

Several styles were equally present in Sokol architecture: National style, Academism and Modernism. Although Momir Korunović, who was the president of construction and artistic sector of the Sokol Union, promoted a modernised version of National style, radical Modernism was the de facto the embodiment of Sokol ideals. All the Slav tribes were to be equally united on that level (Ignjatović 2007: 285–286).

[3] AJ, Fund MFE, f – 71 – 15 – 40, Report of the relationship between the Ministry of Physical Education and Sokol organisation, 1940.

The complexity of the construction and representation of Yugoslav identity through architecture is most visible through Sokol houses. On the end, there has not been one single style for Sokol houses.

Academism was more present in multi-ethnic regions, especially in Vojvodina and Slavonija. Common heritage from the Austro-Hungarian Empire made Academism the most adequate style for Sokol houses, alowing them to be in harmony with the surrounding architecture. Such architecture had very few or did not have any national features, which was acceptable in these regions. Such Sokol houses are in Osijek from 1928 by Victor Axmann and in Zrenjanin from 1925. by Dragiša Brašovan (Ignjatović 2009: 54, 59) (Fig. 2). Both buildings are constructed in pre-modernist period, therefore it can be concluded that Modernism inherited the concept of Academism's universality.

Momir Korunović believed that National style was the most adequate for Sokol architecture, and therefore all Sokol houses should be built in one distinctive style, with the elements of the region where it was to be built (Korunović 1930: 643). This was not the case in practice. Korunović was against Modernism and was constantly trying to form an ideal architectural image of Sokol identity. His Sokol houses mostly refer to a combination of neo-moravic style, cubism and expressionism that can be classified as national Art Deco (Manević 1990: 71, 75), often leaning towards folklorism (Putnik 2010: 197–198). This was an attempt to form a historical continuity and promote the "pure national spirit" through architecture (Ignjatović 2007: 401).

Korunović applied monumental geometrical shapes that were inspired by folklore ornaments. Many of his Sokol houses in correspond with local heritage, like Sokol house in Ku-

Fig. 2. Dragiša Brašovan, Sokol house in Zrenjanin, 1925.

Fig. 3. Momir Korunović, Sokol house in Kumanovo, 1931.

manovo from 1931 (Kadijević 1996: 71–72). (Fig. 3) Sokol house in Uroševac also has elements of traditional architecture, such as a doksat, a four-sloped roof and an arcade porch (Kadijević 1997: 122–123). Apart from these examples, Korunović projected a certain number of Sokol houses on the teritory of Bosnia and Hercegovina which were inspiried by local architecture, such as Sokol house in Bijeljina (Kadijević 1997: 308).

National style derived from vernacular architecture and therefore was the most adequate for claiming national continuity and authenticity. It greatly contributed in strengthening the borders of Yugoslav identity. One of the mechanisms in this mission was the idealisation of the village and its rural culture. The Yugoslav identity was artificially formed on several different ethnical, regional and local identities. Korunović openly glorified rural culture, claiming it was more beautiful, healthier and fresher than the urban one (1930: 643).

Modern architecture reflected a modern liberal society and was the most suitable style for promotion of Integral Yugoslavism.[4] In multiethnic regions, Modernism in Sokol architecture, without any of national, regional, ethnic or religious symbols, was well accepted. A good example for that concept is the Sokol house in Tuzla built in 1932. (Fig. 4)

[4] The term "Integral Yugoslavism" refers to an ideology with which the regime tried to unify Yugoslav society by erasing tribal diferences, as well as diferent cultural models.

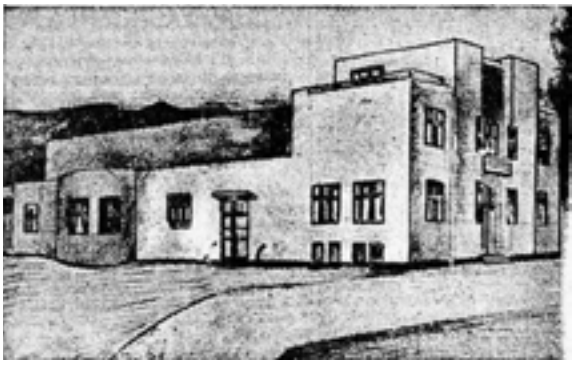

Fig. 4. Ivan Mukahirn, Sokol house in Tuzla, 1932.

Sokol house in Makarska built in 1928. by the architect Mate Baylon is both modern and traditional. Its architecture represents an idealised vernacular Mediterranean architecture. The sculpture of a falcon ("sokol" in Slavic languages) was a common motif (Ignjatović 2007: 287). But National style was not present in most of smaller towns and villages as an artificial version of vernacular architecture, but as a traditional way of building. A good example of this architecture was the Sokol house in Olovo. The building was vaulted by a double sloped roof under which the walls were decorated by wooden slats.[5]

Another architect that built several Sokol houses in Vojvodina was Đorđe Tabaković. His comprehension of Sokol architecture was diametrically different from Korunović's. Tabaković's Sokol houses in Novi Sad (Fig. 5), Inđija and Sremski Karlovci reflected a pure minimalist architectural expression. He used red brick in Novi Sad with a clear and emphasized modernist mark (Mitrović 2005: 105, 111). Using the red brick was present in Sokol modernist architecture, partly because of the symbolic red colour. Red was deliberately chosen as the colour of "Slav blood" (Ignjatović 2007: 416). Sokol house in Subotica by Franja Denegri also resembles the one in Novi Sad with the choice of materials and colours. Architect Svetomir Lazić also had similar tendencies as Tabaković. His project for the Sokol House in Sremski Karlovci from 1937. has a dominant tower with a sculpture of a falcon placed on top of it. That is the only motif that connects the building project with the Sokol organisation. The tower as a symbol of Sokol movement is an exceptional visual dominant in contrast with ground-floor building (Damljanović 2004: 283).

Although radical modernism was present in the architecture of Sokol houses during the 1930s, it was never a dominant style. There were many examples of elclectic modernism, with some elements of national style, or even Art Deco.

In order to understand the close connection between Yugoslavism and Sokol movement, it must be considered which were their similarities and common interests. Heroic spirit that Yugoslavian ideology nurtured coincided with the principles of Sokol movement. An ideal Yugoslavian physical type was promoted through the mass propaganda and it became equalised with the ideal Sokol in the phrase: "Beeing a Sokol = beeing a Yugoslavian" (Ignjatović 2007: 283).

When a Sokol house was to be built, the entire town was involved through donations, helping in construction, collective events for gathering money etc. This was not only the matter of Sokol organisation, but of the entire municipality. The choice of style was very important in larger cities, and was often specified in the contest for the project, for example, like for

[5] AJ, Fund MFE, f – 71 – 17 – 47, Sokol organisaton in Olovo asks for finantial help to finish the Sokol house, 16. 11. 1936.

Fig. 5. Đorđe Tabaković, Sokol house in Novi Sad, 1936.

the Sokol house in Sarajevo, where the modern style was favorised (Milošević 1997: 185–186). On the other hand, smaller towns were often provided with a free project of an architect who was in the Sokol organisation, such as Momir Korunović, or Martin Pilar. In these cases, the question of style was irrelevant to the organisation, because there were more important issues to solve, such as the financial problem of erecting the building.

Sokol houses were often named after King Alexander, Miroslav Tyrš, Prince Peter II or some other politically or culturally significant person. Portraits of King Alexander and Miroslav Tyrš were present in most of Sokol houses. Statues of Prince Peter II were also very common, since he was symbolically placed in charge of the Yugoslav Sokol Union (Žutić 1991: 42).

The Sokol movement was one of the most powerful mediums of Yugoslav ideology, strengthening the regime's foundations. Therefore, Sokol houses played a very important role in the Yugoslav society. With their elements of "national neo-romanticism", Sokol houses represent monuments of ideology. Sokol political rituals, ceremonies and "historical" lectures transformed their architecture into national sanctuaries. Since Sokol movement was a form of secular religion, it was a threat to other confessions, especially the Catholic church (Ignjatović 2007: 419). From that threat a major political conflict occurred.

By becoming a state institution in 1929. Sokol Union of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia became a threat to the Catholic Church (Dimić 1996: 425). The reason was the struggle for domination in the sector of education. Increasing conflicts with the Catholic Church caused

the state to change its attitude towards Sokols. After the assassination of King Alexander in 1934. Sokols became a less and less popular and desirable organisation. Political changes influenced state ideology. This issue raised another one – the rise of Croatian nationalism. From 1935. up until the end of the Second World War numerous Sokol houses were devastated by the Ustaše (Žutić 1991: 125, 130). Yugoslav Sokol Union was losing its privileged position within the state. Financial help was also less present (Žutić 1991: 160), which resulted in numerous unfinished Sokol houses during the period from 1935. until the beginning of War in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1941.[6]

Around 1939. there has been a debate weather National houses should replace Sokol houses (Petrović 1939: 2), due to their political neutrality. Since Sokols were not favorable in the regime at that point, it was natural to replace the term "Sokol" with "National". In the moment of crisis a significant question arose – should Sokol houses be replaced with National houses, who would be more econimical and functional. In that case Sokols would not be the first in the town to erect a public institution of this type. Sokols were merely subtenants in National houses (Petrović 1939: 3).

Sokol houses represented multifunctional buildings that promoted ideals of an all-Slavic cultural and sports movement (Timotijević 2006: 49). They were also centres of political life in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (Starc 2003: 911). Jacob Jesih wrote (1931: 1) that Sokol movement cannot have an ideology behind it. Although Sokol movement might have not had an ideology, it was undoubtedly embraced by the ideology of Yugoslavism. Desirable motives were deliberately chosen to be presented on the façades of Sokol houses. Ethnic tradition which would be adequate was selected to form a bridge between different entities within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The façades of Sokol houses reflected a strong visual message, revealing the same ethnical roots of all Slavs, transposing it into authentic national spirit from the past into the present (Ignjatović 2007: 405, 407).

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[6] Among the unfinished Sokol houses are the Sokol house in Priboj, Doboj, Kovačica etc. AJ, Fund MFE, f – 71 – 16 – 46, f – 71 – 17 – 47.

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Владана Путник

УТИЦАЈ ИДЕОЛОГИЈЕ НА АРХИТЕКТУРУ СОКОЛСКИХ ДОМОВА У КРАЉЕВИНИ ЈУГОСЛАВИЈИ

Резиме

Соколски покрет је представљао веома важан и јединствен начин борбе за уједињење Јужних Словена, па је његова улога била од изузетног значаја у конструисању југословенског идентитета у Краљевини Срба, Хрвата и Словенаца. Неговање спорта као симбола хармоније између тела, душе и духа је промовисало физичко васпитање као пут ка интегралном југословенству. Циљ овог рада је да се размотре елементи идеологије и пропаганде који су били присутни у естетици и визуелној презентацији соколске архитектуре. Кроз анализу соколске животне филозофије може се закључити до које мере је она утицала на архитектуру соколских домова. Веза између Соколског покрета и југословенске идеологије је имплицирала детаљнији увид у политичке догађаје који су директно утицали на процес градње и стилског развоја соколских домова. Експанзија подизања соколских домова широм Краљевине Југославије се поклапала са диктатуром краља Александра I Карађорђевића, што јасно указује да је постојала снажна веза и подршка између Сокола и монархије. Политичка димензија Соколског покрета је без сумње комуницирала са концептом интегралног југословенства. Промене које су се десиле 1934. године, атентат на краља Александра, као и одређени проблеми са Римокатоличком црквом, резултирали су осетним смањењем подизања соколских домова све до 1941. године. Кроз анализу политичког утицаја на архитектуру соколских домова, као и њихове естетике и идеологије, може се извући закључак о тадашњим друштвеним приликама. Одатле следи да се соколска архитектура може интерпретирати као пример политичке уметности.