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Different Ideologies, Same Infrastructures: The Case of Yugoslav Stadiums

Introduction

Since the beginning of civilization humanity has developed all manner of sports activities as a way of channeling one's *agon*,¹ a force that is present within each individual. This *agon* combined with the spectators' need for fun makes a sports spectacle that requires infrastructure which meets the needs of both the sport and spectators.

Ancient Rome was the key builder of stadiums as it spread gladiator games throughout the Mediterranean. Stadiums were places where thousands would gather to cheer, shout, fight, cry, and rejoice. They were epicenters of emotion and the social life of communities as a whole, as they were structures that could fit vast numbers of people. The biggest and the most important one was the Colosseum in Rome, within which about 80,000 people could enjoy sport spectacles within its grandstands. Rome as an eternal city constituted the model for all cities to come – in its center as a significant element infrastructure lay a grandiose stadium.²

Constantinople was made to surpass the glory of Rome and as such had to have everything bigger. Next to Aya Sofija, stadium of Constantinople could fit 100,000 people within its walls and as such was an architecture wonder of the ancient world. However, it was here that stadium surpassed its sports and spectacle function and became an epicenter of political life. In the Nika rebellion, rebels chose stadium as a starting ground for the fight against the emperor Justinian. Two fractions of fans – Green and Blue – united, and in 532 AD started a joint rebellion. A new emperor Hypatius was proclaimed in the stadium itself, but the

¹ “One of the most cultural aspect of Hellenic nature was *agon* instinct, in fact instinct for a match, competition, rivalry for victory and not just for a sheer practical goal, not for material gains, not for some kind of cultic of magic goal, but just for reputation and honor, for being first and excellent, for praise and glory. The essence of *agon* manifestation is that it recognize fair play, it recognize the quality of the opponent and gives same opportunities as ones self; only such procedure enables to acquaint ones own effort and characteristics of every competitor, to judge correctly and to give credit that competitor deserves” (Милош Ђурић, *Културна историја и рани филозофски списи* (Београд: Завод за уџбенике и наставна средства, 1997), 35).

² Nigel B. Crowther, *Sport in Ancient Times* (London: Praeger, 2007), 103-123; Fernan Brodel, *Sredozemlje u starom veku: praistorija i antičko doba* (Novi Sad: Akademaska knjiga, 2007) 376.

whole rebellion was crushed with the swift reaction of Justinian. Hypatius had not managed to expand its power beyond stadium walls and was killed alongside his supporters.³ Nika riots showed just how significant role in society can stadiums have as infrastructure that could even become an epicenter for rebellion.

Architectural examples of Rome and Constantinople were followed with the development of modern sports at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Every city had to have a stadium as an essential part of its urban infrastructure. A whole history of public places could be written from the stadium, as stated by Michel Foucault: “a history of power – from great geopolitical strategies to small tactical habitats”.⁴ Yugoslavia, being formed as Kingdom of SHS in 1918, was part of this process. Unity of this new country with many different nations and ethnicities within its borders was fragile and sport was one of the methods to bring people together, to promote the Yugoslav national ideology and finally to establish a new Yugoslav identity.

Ideology of the state was based on a theory of one nation with three names (Serbs, Croats and Slovenes) and the uneven push for a new national identity – Yugoslav identity. Stadiums were infrastructural objects where this ideology would come to life through either Sokol rallies during the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, or Tito’s relays during the socialist Yugoslavia. In order to perceive just how important these infrastructures are we will take a closer look into three case studies analyzing construction and the destiny of three different stadiums: Sokol stadium and Stadium JNA in Belgrade and Town stadium in Vršac. We will take up their architecture, ideology behind them, their purpose, and finally their general history.

The Epicenter of Sokols – Stadium of 1930

The idea of Sokols was presented during the period of panslavism as a unique phenomena within the physical culture. They emerged as the realization of the ideas of Miroslav Tirš (1832–1884) who wanted to unite all Slavic nations through physical exercise. Sokols were an idea of a civil institution which emphasized both physical and moral education with the aim of building a new Slavic human that would unite all Slavic lands. The idea of Slavic brotherhood was manifested in Sokols rallies where the strength of Slavic people and their unity would be shown through performances and naive representations made by movements of their bodies.⁵ It is important to underline that Sokols were not a form of sport

³ Георгије Острогорски, *Историја Византије* (Београд: БИГЗ, 1993), 91f.; Edvard Gibon, *Opadanje i propast Rimskog carstva* (Београд: Nolit, 2007), 470-475.

⁴ Mišel Fuko, “Око моћи”, 12, available at: Džeremi Bentam, *Panoptikon ili nadzorna zgrada* (Novi Sad: Mediterran publishing, 2014).

⁵ Nikola Žutić, *Sokoli: Ideologija u fizičkoj kulturu Kraljevine Jugoslavije 1929 – 1941* (Београд: Angrotrade, 1991), 5-10; Nikola Žutić, *Liberalizam i Srbi u prvoj polovini XX vijeka: iz historije ideologije građanskog liberalizma* (Београд: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2007), 157–178.

activity, but that they were opposing sports as a different form of physical culture. In Sokol movement there were no competitions, scores and other key aspects of modern sport. They emerged in the same time when modern sport started its expansion and with its own expansion within Slavic lands and for a brief moment threatened to dominate modern sports.

In Yugoslavia Sokols found a firm ground. With the formation of Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians and later Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Sokols got their prominent role to unify different nations and ethnicities within the borders of Yugoslavia with the idea of Yugoslavism and Pan Slavism. With such a goal in hand, government recognized Sokols as the most important aspect of physical culture and favored their organization as it represented the idea of one Yugoslav nation.⁶

Sokols were the embodiment of Yugoslavia and its idea and its homes were objects that had represented the architecture of the integral idea of Yugoslavism.⁷ Homes were projected as free-standing buildings suitable for physical culture and other cultural manifestations. They were more than sports objects – they had multifunctional character. Sokols homes were also epicenters of cultural promotion with many cultural contents within the objects. There were events such as dancing nights, concerts, theater show and various lectures. All of those cultural aspects were directed again towards the idea of one Yugoslav nation.⁸

However, rallies were Sokols main activities. In order to have All Sokols rally something new was necessary – a stadium so big that it could have all Sokols during the Rally and its thousands of spectators. The strength and the unity of Yugoslavia would be thus displayed in magnificent manner.⁹

The idea of the All Sokols rally was not so much an original idea as it was side consequence of Yugoslavia's political turmoil that led to 6 January Dictatorship established by King Aleksandar himself.¹⁰ As separatists movements grew stronger each day, a huge manifestation was needed in order to show the unity and strength of the country. Sokols were perfect for that task, but needed new stadium to reach their full potential.

The solution was found in the Belgrade city center. At the field of today's Technical Faculty, a new stadium had been built in 1930. The structure was huge – a wooden frame and 5100 square meters of timber have been used, making this it the biggest wooden construction in Central Europe. The idea came from architect Momir Korunović. The construction had been tested by three military regiments. When it was finished, the stadium had the surface area of 126,000 m² for 45,000 visitors. There were 35,000 sitting places, with an additional VIP lounge

⁶ Žutić, *Sokoli*, 9-15.

⁷ Владана Путник, "Соколски домови и стадиони у Београду", in Љиљана Гавриловић (i.a.), *КО је соко мај је југословен = To Be a Falcon is to Be a Yugoslav* (Београд: Музеј историје Југославије, 2016), 69.

⁸ Ibid. 69f.

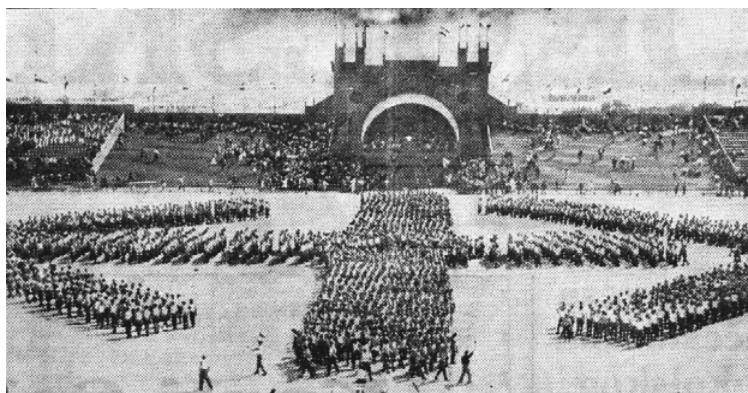
⁹ Ibid. 77.

¹⁰ Branko Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije: 1918-1988*, Vol 1: *Kraljevina Jugoslavija: 1914-1941* (Београд: Nolit, 1988), 176-212.

for 1,182 spectators.¹¹ The stadium was unique as it was not built for sports, but just for one rally. The way the stadium was built it was actually too big for sports – spectators would not be able to see clearly any kind of modern sport activities on the field. On the other hand, the structure had to be big for the rally in order to fit all the Sokols and to make room for their choreography.

Sokols had their three separated entrances to the stadium. Total of 3,500 participants have made a spectacular show on the field. There were four entrances for the audience and for the VIP, king Aleksandar, his family and diplomats, there was one special entrance that led directly to the lounge. Adding to this, there was also music pavilion and an observatory for the Sokols leader to conduct the exercises done in the field below.¹²

The whole project was made for one purpose: All Sokol rally in 1930, with King Aleksandar Karađorđević himself as a patron.¹³ The manifestation was advertised as “Our Olympics”.¹⁴ In June the same year thousands of Sokols arrived to Belgrade and walked the streets from the train station to the stadium. Around 3,500 Sokols represented the idea of Yugoslavia and its one Yugoslav nation.¹⁵ Besides Yugoslav Sokols, there were also representatives from USA, France, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Russians from emigration.¹⁶ First day of the rally was on June 27th, while the second was on the 28th, corresponding to *Vidovdan* (Saint Vitus Day) and the battle of Kosovo anniversary.¹⁷ On the third, final day there was a Sokol procession through the streets of Belgrade where civilians had cheered and greeted Sokols from all over Yugoslavia.¹⁸



Picture 1: All Sokols rally 1930 (Sokolski glasnik 9.7.1930)

¹¹ Путник, Соколски домови, 77; “Завршавање слетишта за свесоколски слет”, *Политика*, 18.4.1930.

¹² Путник, Соколски домови, 77.

¹³ “Nj. Vel. Kralj pokrovitelj svesokolskog sleta”, *Sokolski glasnik*, 11.4.1930.

¹⁴ “Na našu Olimpijadu”, *Sokolski glasnik*, 1.6.1930.

¹⁵ Јована Караулић, “Соколски слетови у Краљевини Југославији на примеру Свесоколског слета у Београду 1930. Године”, in Љиљана Гавриловић (i.a.), *КО је соко тај је југословен = To Be a Falcon is to Be a Yugoslav* (Београд: Музеј историје Југославије, 2016), 83-85.

¹⁶ “Naš prvi slat”, *Sokolski glasnik*, 9.7.1930.

¹⁷ “Drugi dan sleta – Vidovdan”, *Sokolski glasnik*, 9.7.1930.

¹⁸ “Treći dan sleta – Povorka”, *Sokolski glasnik*, 9.7.1930.

As soon the rally was over, the whole stadium disappeared. Its wooden frame was sold and in its place the Faculty of Engineering would emerge.¹⁹ For the Sokols of Belgrade, a place for exercise was found in the park Tašmajdan, way smaller (around 3,000 m²) and far less glamorous than the temporary stadium.²⁰ The message of the whole rally – the unity of Yugoslavia, displayed through Sokols, was short lasting as a decade after the stadium project the whole country was torn apart by the World War II.

As the embodiment of Yugoslavia, when the whole idea of one integral nation started to lose appeal amongst the people, Sokols started losing popularity rapidly. They themselves disintegrated as soon as the war started in Yugoslavia in 1941. Even before that, in Croatia they were persecuted as a Yugoslav instrument that was opposed to the idea of independent Croatia. Melko Čingrija, a prominent Sokol leader in Dubrovnik at that time, wrote in his diary how Sokols were perceived after the Cvetković–Maček Agreement: “Sokols, member of societies that the king patronized, are afraid for their lives. If anyone is proclaimed a Chetnik, he is soon to be perished.”²¹

Sokols movement as a whole could be regarded as one of the pillars of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia as it served an important ideological role. In essence, the stadium was a state infrastructure for the ideology and represented the material infrastructure behind the institution of Sokols.

The key issue for understanding why Sokol stadium was short lasting is in the Sokol ideology that was not appealing for everyone, as mentioned above. As its ideology was fragile, its infrastructure was far from resilient. It crumbled at the first sign of opposition. In essence, it was not the Croatian nationalism that brought Sokols to its end, it was the fact that modern sport was a form of physical culture that conquered the world. A stadium that was no fit for e.g. football, had little or no place in a society in the second half of the 20th century. In the end, Sokols and their Belgrade stadium remain as temporary, exotic phenomenon within the rich history of physical culture.

New Stadium for the New Class – Stadium JNA

In 1945 a new socialist Yugoslavia was born from the debris that was left from the World War Two. Country began to rise and develop in its socialist ideology system. Sport had a significant place in it and as such had to be remodeled in order to be aligned with the state’s ideology.²²

New socialist sport had been built around the ideological foundation of second Yugoslavia – its socialism and its Partisan struggle. Immediately after the war there were numerous sports societies formed across Yugoslavia, having

¹⁹ Караулић, "Соколски слетови", 85.

²⁰ Arhiv Srbije, Beogradsko gimnastičko društvo “Soko” – Beograd (1882-1944) 1882-1944, Bsoko – 1311, U vezi sa izgradnjom letnjeg vežbališta Beograda VII na Tašmajdanu, 12.8.1937.

²¹ Arhiv Đorđić, Ro – 162, Kutija br. 8, Dnevnik Melka Čingrije, 27.

²² Nikola Mijatov, *Sport u službi socijalizma: Jugoslovensko iskustvo 1945-1953* (Beograd: Čigoja štampa; Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2020), 67-106.

socialist ideology in its name, often a pale copy of Soviet model. However, Partizan sport society stood up as it was made to represent the whole Yugoslavia and not just one republic or a state. Partizan was a sport society founded by the Yugoslav People's Army in 1945 and its first president was the future Chief of the Yugoslav General Staff Koča Popović. As such, Partizan had to be different, had to stand out among other sport societies as well. That was especially true for its football club, as it was the most popular sport.²³ It was favored by high-ranking politicians in order to enhance that status.

Footballers of Partizan played for years without their own stadium, but in 1948 it was about to change. The state embarked on a huge project of constructing the stadium of the Yugoslav People's Army – JNA. It is important to mention that in those years Yugoslavia was practically still in ruins, and its renewal was organized by the “Five-year plan”, marked by numerous difficulties. The population lived in poverty and the country was basically on the brink of starvation.²⁴ Nevertheless, the project made by architects Mihajlo-Mika Janković and Kosta Popović began in June the same year.²⁵

The same month, on the 28 of June 1948, the Resolution of Cominform was issued and Yugoslavia, still fragile from the war, found itself isolated in the world divided by the Cold War. The West was skeptical towards the communist state, while on the other hand other communist countries were on the brink of war with Yugoslavia.²⁶ Be that as it may, the stadium project continued unbothered which shows the ideological significance of the new socialist sport, Sport Society “Partizan” and its future epicenter – the stadium JNA.

The cost of the whole project was 250,000,000 dinars.²⁷ The sum is enormous as we compare it to the whole budget of the Committee for Physical culture for the entire year consisting of 129,000,000 dinars.²⁸ Thus, one stadium was priced more than the financing of all the sport activity of Yugoslavia for a year. As such, project had to raise some doubts not just in material sense, but in moral as well especially regarding the socialist ideology that promised well-being and sport for all of the working people and not momentous stadium for dominantly professional football players. In the memoirs of the high ranking politician and a fanatic Partizan fan – Svetozar Vukmanović Tempo – we find that Koča Popović (even though he was the president of Partizan) and Ivan Gošnjak, high ranking Yugoslav general, were against such an expense. In the meeting where Josip Broz

²³ Mijatov, *Sport u službi socijalizma*, 223-227.

²⁴ Branko Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije: 1918-1988*, Vol. 3: *Socijalistička Jugoslavija: 1945-1988* (Beograd: Nolit, 1988), 263-287.

²⁵ Милојко Р. Тубић, *Југословенски спорт: корени, развој, раздруживање* (Нови Сад: Музеј Војводине, 2005), 265.

²⁶ Darko Bekić, *Jugoslavija u Hladnom ratu: Odnosi sa velikim silama 1949-1953* (Zagreb: Globus, 1988), 29.

²⁷ AJ-321, Komitet za fiskulturu, f-8, Izveštaj o radu Komiteta za fiskulturu Vlade FNRJ u toku 1947.

²⁸ AJ-836, Kabinet Maršala Jugoslavije, II-6-c/2, Pregled rada Komiteta za fiskulturu Vlade FNRJ, odnosno odgovarajućih organa narodne vlasti za 1946. godinu.

Tito was present, Gošnjak said directly: “We are building huge stadium and spending huge amount of money in a situation where thousand of officers don’t have a place to live”.²⁹ Apartments for the military personnel’s were obviously of little or no significance as the stadium project continued unbothered by the Gošnjak’s remark.

It took just a year to complete the stadium. In 1949, the year in which Yugoslavia was isolated, impoverished and still in ruins from the war, stadium was ready to accept 60,000 visitors. There were one main and an accessory field for football, two tennis courts, two basketball courts and a swimming pool. Adding to this, there were dressing rooms, showers, a gym, boxing court, ambulance and workshops. The complex of the stadium had snack bars, shops, restaurant, hotel and a radio center.³⁰



Picture 2: Stadium JNA (source: <https://partizan.rs/stadion/>)

Stadium was the biggest in Yugoslavia and as such has represented the triumph of newly formed Yugoslav socialism. However, one detail stands out regarding the state’s ideology: the construction of the VIP lounge. As every stadium, JNA also had, and still has, a VIP lounge where nobody could enter “without a proper invitation”. Thus, a new place for the new class – the red bourgeoisie – has been set and from which they would observe all kinds of sport events, in the stadium that have been built in the ideological promise of an equality. The stadium was advertised as “a product of a labor of our working people”.³¹ Still, doors to VIP lounge were firmly shut for the working-class, just as they were in every capitalist state.

²⁹ Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo, *Revolucija koja teče: meomari*, Vol. 3 (Beograd: Komunist, 1971), 317.

³⁰ Мирослав Креачић, *Спорт у Југославији* (Београд: Југословенска књига, 1950), 15f.

³¹ *Политика*, 9.10.1949, 3.11.1949.

This contradiction was surely obvious to many, but everybody kept silent. However, Milovan Djilas, a high-ranking politician and a member of the Politburo, shouted out. In his article “Anatomy of a moral”, Djilas puts the epicenter of the story into a new VIP lounge of the “new and grandiose football stadium”. In it, a young woman, in fact Milena, a spouse of General Peko Dapčević, is being mocked and rejected by her husband’s friends and colleagues, all of which high ranking politicians, and their wives as well. Milena was a former ballerina and as such was regarded as not important enough amongst the new class of communist elite. When she came to the VIP lounge, she did not know “who has and who does not have the ‘right’ to sit there”. When the football match started, the atmosphere amongst the elite was tight, there was no cheering – former partisan fighters and comrades acted as aristocrats with their fine manners. Cheering from the VIP lounge was unacceptable because, as Djilas highlighted in the article, it would be considered “strange, unusual, even incomprehensible in this lounge of people too obsessed with state thoughts and a statesmanlike look to be able and to dare to let them selves to such prosaic emotions”.³²

Djilas faced condemnation from the Communist party for the article and soon was striped from all political functions which paved his way of dissidence. However, the VIP lounge remained as a symbol of the new “red bourgeoisie”.³³

Stadium JNA remained a key object of the sports society Partizan and an epicenter of sports life in Yugoslavia. Besides football and other sports, stadium was used as the final destination for Tito’s rallies, organized across Yugoslavia with an aim to hand the baton to Josip Broz Tito himself in a key rally. Tito would stand in the VIP lounge and in a festive manner would accept the baton from hands of the chosen athlete. The whole event was the symbol of Yugoslav socialism and its unity as the baton had been carried thought Yugoslavia to finally finish in Tito’s hands.³⁴

Stadium JNA served its purpose until the end of socialist Yugoslavia and actually outlived its creator and its ideology. Stadium is still in operation today and serves as one of the key infrastructures for modern sport in contemporary Serbia. It was natural for stadium to adapt to new market rules after the breakup of Yugoslavia as its architecture was no different from other “capitalist” stadiums. As ideologies changed, stadium JNA remained unbothered as an example of resilient infrastructure. Half of the century has passed and stadium JNA, although to some extent dilapidated, is still used to his purpose as the second biggest stadium in contemporary Serbia.

³² Milovan Đilas, *Anatomija jednog morala*; Available in: Momčilo Đorgović, *Dilas: vernik i jeretik* (Beograd: Akvarijus, 1989), 325-339.

³³ More about the “red bourgeoisie” in: Milovan Djilas, *Nova klasa* (Beograd: Narodna knjiga, 1990).

³⁴ Mijatov, *Sport u službi socijalizma*, 108-116; Димитар Григоров, “‘Рачунајте на нас’. ‘Одломак’ о Титовој штафети или штафети младости”, *Годишњак за друштвену историју* 1-3 (2008), 108f.

Nazi Architecture for Socialist Sport – Town Stadium of Vršac

According to socialist ideology, sport had to be available to everybody. Socialist government of Yugoslavia after the WW2 embarked on a long journey of countries reconstruction where building of new sports fields and stadium was just one segment of the whole picture.

In a small town of Vršac a couple of football players started an initiative in 1945 to build a football field in order to have a place for trainings and matches. The initiative did not stop there, and it soon started demanding more – a whole stadium. The initiative came at the right time as government was aiming to reconstruct and improve sports life in the country.³⁵

Situation in Vršac after the WW2 was no ordinary one. Vršac had had a significant German minority and as a part of Banat was a subject of German occupation during the war.³⁶ At the end of the war around 200,000 Germans in Banat were regarded as unfaithful and a potential problem for the new socialist Yugoslavia.³⁷ Josip Broz Tito himself wrote to his General Peko Dapčević in October 1944: “Send me urgently through Bela Crkva to Vršac one the best stronger brigades, eventually from Krajina. I need it to cleanse Vršac from Germans”.³⁸ A brigade led by Stevo Rauš came soon with the mission of “cleansing Vršac, Pančevo and the surroundings”.³⁹

It was the looting that began first. German houses were targets of both Soviet and Partisan troops. Secondly, plundering was followed by massive raping of German women mainly by Soviet troops.⁴⁰ Finally, Germans and Hungarians were taken prisoners and led to camps.⁴¹ In the process racial laws were introduced. Thus, Germans in mixed marriages were spared, while those in non-mixed were imprisoned.⁴² Adding to this, Germans were forbidden to be outside after 6 o'clock in the evening while “all the other ethnicities up until 10 o'clock”.⁴³ The process of imprisonment was brutal but efficient, leaving Vršac with a significant number of German prisoners. They included not only local Germans, but also POWs brought into the Camp 233 at the outskirts of the city.

³⁵ Božidar Grbić, *Gol linija: monografija fudbalskog kluba “Vršac”* (Vršac: Književna opština Vršac, 2005), 197f.

³⁶ Zoran Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito: The disappearance of the Vojvodina Germans* (Belgrade: Z.Janjetović, 2000), 57f., 67-72.

³⁷ Ibid. 196.

³⁸ “Tito Peku Dapčeviću”, Josip Broz Tito, *Sabrana djela*. Vol. 24: Ed. Pero Damjanović (Beograd: Komunist, 1982), 88; Vladimir Petrović, *Etničko čišćenje: Geneza koncepta* (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju; Arhipelag, 2019), 188.

³⁹ Petrović, *Etničko čišćenje*, 188.

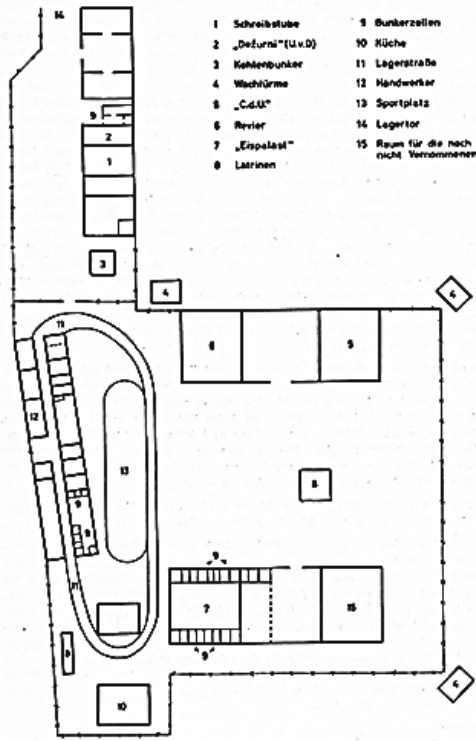
⁴⁰ Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito*, 196-211, 220.

⁴¹ Digitalni centar Instituta za savremenu istoriju (DISI), Kolekcija veštačenja: Srđan Cvetković, Veštačenje u procesu rehabilitacije Jozefa Bera pred Višim sudom u Pančevu, Reh. br. 08/18, 4; Petrović, *Etničko čišćenje*, 188.

⁴² Istorijski Arhiv Bela Crkva, Fond Narodnog odbora Opštine Vršac, 1944, Mesni narodnooslobodilački odbor Komandi mesta Vršac, 18.12.1944.

⁴³ Istorijski Arhiv Bela Crkva, Fond Komanda mesta Vršac, 1944, 167, Komadna mesta Vršac, 4.12.1944.

Skizze des Lagers Werschetz (Vršac) 1949



Aus WK.II. Die deutschen Kriegsgefangenen in Jugoslawien 1941-1949 von K.W. Böhme

Picture 3: Plan of Camp 233

Forced labor was organized and all imprisoned Germans from 12 to 60 years of age had to work and contribute to the reconstruction of Yugoslavia.⁴⁴ There were several camps with German prisoners in Vršac and its area. They worked various jobs on the reconstruction of Vršac, while those in other camps in Gudurica and Veliko Središte were woodcutting. Prisoners in all of the camps were malnourished and illtreated.⁴⁵ At the same time when Germans were imprisoned and persecuted, stadium had to be built. Several expert boards had been formed in order to manage the construction of the new stadium and a suitable place was found just above town park in Vršac. Enthusiasm was not lacking, but the expertise was, as none of the members was an architect. Solution was found at an unusual place: among captured and imprisoned German soldiers and officers in Camp 233 on the outskirts of Vršac. One of its inmates, dr Wilhelm Keze, played a special role in it. He claimed to be among the great twelve Germans

⁴⁴ Ibid. 212-221.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 229f.

architects that had constructed numerous stadiums for Hitler's government. Those were the epicenters of Nazi sport and hosted Olympic Games in 1936.⁴⁶ Although his reputation could not be corroborated, Keze could not be left out of this project.

Project was made as a part of the Five-year plan and the construction began in 1946. Keze as the main architect had one condition – to employ prisoners for the Camp 232 in exchange for their preferential treatment. Thus, the workers core of the project was 120 war prisoners. We can assume that they were mostly German. Alongside with the prisoners, voluntary builders joined the project. In those years Yugoslavia's youth was mobilized through the country in massive voluntary actions that were aimed at rebuilding of the whole country. One segment of those action was the making of Town stadium in Vršac, unique insofar that here youth activist workers would work with the prisoners of war.⁴⁷

It took three years of hard work to complete the stadium. Twice a day a column of German prisoners would march through the whole city from the camp to the construction site.⁴⁸ Adding to this, numerous youth action activists were organized in order to mobilize and encourage youth to take part and to join the work that the prisoners had started. Stadium was finished in 1948, two years before schedule.⁴⁹ However, it was not until the 1 October 1949 that the stadium was opened with the sports parade in which athletes participated as well as the stadium builders.⁵⁰ However, main builders of the stadium were not even mentioned. Camps for German prisoners were gradually disbanded by March 1948.⁵¹ We can assume that the German prisoners were there to see the stadium finish but did not have the chance to see and to participate in the stadium opening.

Equally obscured is the fate of its chief main architect – dr Wilhelm Keze. After the completion of the stadium Keze apparently married a local whose only surname is known: Georgijević. With her he left Yugoslavia to Germany.⁵²

The story behind the construction of the stadium, its main architect and its (in)voluntary builders from Camp 233 was kept out of the public eye. Town stadium of Vršac was even used as a positive example how athletes through hard work and dedication can build stadium by themselves. It was also pointed out that the athletes had worked so hard that they alone collected stones from the Carpathian Mountains and carried them to construction site. In fact, stadium stands were made from these stones.⁵³ We can assume that all of this hard work had been

⁴⁶ Grbić, *Gol linija*, 198.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 198-199.

⁴⁸ Aleksandar Milenković, *Urbani sentimenti (Anahronika lepe varoši)* (Vršac: Društvo Vršac lepa varoš, 2000), 210-211.

⁴⁹ Креачић, *Спорт у Југославију*, 16.

⁵⁰ Grbić, *Gol linija*, 199.

⁵¹ Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito*, 289.

⁵² Milenković, *Urbani sentimenti*, 211.

⁵³ AJ-117, SSI, f-20, Savetovanje predstavnika Fiskulturnog odeljenja Centralnog odbora SSI sa predstavnicima glavnih i oblasnih odbora i mesnih sindikalnih veća, 8-9.10.1949; Креачић, *Спорт у Југославију*, 16.

done by prisoners, but that fact was kept from public. Even today, original stone stands are still and visitors still sit on them and watch football, American rugby or athletic competitions.



Picture 4: Town stadium Vršac

(source: <http://fudbalvrsac.blogspot.com/2018/01/vrsacki-gradski-stadion.html>)

Conclusion

When it comes to stadiums as parts of infrastructure – “history matters” because “formations put in place in early stages of an institutional or policy life effectively come to constrain activity after that point”.⁵⁴ Or more simply put: “The past influences the future”.⁵⁵ In order to understand the complexity of stadiums and ideologies that aim to control them we had perceived the long process of usage of stadium in societies from their beginnings in the antique world to Yugoslavia.

Old stadiums with old ideologies were used by successors that had made a strict ideological turnover but in same time had used stadium in similar manner as before as a projection surface of power. In the context of path dependence it

⁵⁴ Ian Greener, “The Potential of Path Dependence in Political Studies”, *Politics* 25:1 (2005), 62.

⁵⁵ James Mahoney, “Path Dependence in Historical Sociology”, *Theory and Society* 29:4 (2000), 507.

could be explained as “rational cost-benefit calculation”.⁵⁶ From the antique era stadium have been key features of political life and as such are “change-resistant”.⁵⁷ Their characteristic is inflexibility as “the farther into the process we are, the harder it becomes to shift from one path to another”.⁵⁸ The process began in ancient Greece and continued through Rome and Byzantine empire and in the 20th century amongst other through Yugoslavia. All of these states no longer exists but stadium as resilient infrastructure continue to flourish no matter of ideologies. Example of Yugoslavia only confirms the statement above: stadium JNA is still being used today along side with the Towns stadium in Vršac. Just how “change-resistant” stadiums are we can see if we look upon the construction of Towns stadium in Vršac where the main architect was German and he incorporated his practice from building stadiums for Hitler’s Germany. Different ideologies of Socialist Yugoslavia and Nazi Germany were no obstacle for the construction of this stadium as stadium as a infrastructure could even stand above current ideologies.

On the other hand, Sokol stadium had no place in new ideology as it was not a stadium for sport but a temporary stadium for the unique form of physical culture that emphasized different ideology. When its ideology of Panslavism and Yugoslavism crumbled Sokols perished as well. If we apply morphogenetic social theory in which there are structural and cultural system on Sokols the context becomes more clear. Structural system would be stadium while cultural would be ideology that would shape sports manifestation on the stadium themselves.⁵⁹ The structural system remains the same while cultural has changed from first to second Yugoslavia. In Kingdom of Yugoslavia cultural system was Constitutional Monarchy with the emphasis on Sokol movement while in Socialist Yugoslavia it was Socialism with emphasis on relays and modern sports. Adding to this, on the Sokol example we can perceive just how much “history matters” as new Socialist Yugoslavia wanted a strict ideological turn from its predecessor – Kingdom of Yugoslavia – and as a part of its ideological cleansing Sokol found their end in 1941 and were not even considered as a form of physical culture in 1945. Thus, Sokols were forgotten and replaced by modern sports.

Nevertheless, Stadium tend to be, as Michel Foucault would say for prison, an “strict institution for complete re-education”.⁶⁰ However, as prisons can have riots, stadium also have the possibility of “deviant outcomes”.⁶¹ The biggest was in Constantinople and the Nika rebellion where suddenly the stadium has become an place of war rather than sport. As it was built for “bread and games” it has become an epicenter of rebellion. In Yugoslavia as well: stadiums have been places where ones political opinions could be freely expressed in an

⁵⁶ Greener, *The Potential of Path Dependence*, 63.

⁵⁷ Paul Pierson, “Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics”, *The American Political Science Review* 94:2 (2000), 262.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 253.

⁵⁹ Greener, *The Potential of Path Dependence*, 65.

⁶⁰ Мишел Фуко, *Надзирати и кажњавати: рођење затвора* (Београд: Просвета, 1997), 259.

⁶¹ Mahoney, “Path Dependence”, 508.

one party system.⁶² Today stadiums are often places where racism and chauvinism are to the certain extent freely expressed, and as such stadiums as a phenomena should be considered within the unique “ideology of stadiums”.⁶³

If we take a closer look at socialist stadium, JNA in particular, and apply “the explanation of institutional reproduction” the whole case get clearer meaning. When it comes to power explanation – “Institution may empower an elite group that was previously subordinate”.⁶⁴ The new elite, or the “new class”, were the leaders of the Communist party. However, in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, they were not just subordinate but from the other side of the law as they were considered as a terrorist organization.⁶⁵ However, when the new elite came to power they reproduced institutions as they believed “it is morally just or appropriate”.⁶⁶ Regarding the ideology in architecture Michel Foucault came to the same conclusion: “Same forms of power have found themselves in socialist societies; the transfer was immediate”.⁶⁷ Surely, there were notions that it is wrong to invest in stadium JNA and that that money should have been directed to resolution of social issues, but still project went on nonetheless. The function of the stadium was more important than the states ideology as the stadium itself would paradoxically host many events that would praise Communism and its achievements on a infrastructural object that in its essence does not represent that ideology. Furthermore, after the fall of socialism in Yugoslav wars, football clubs and their fans had become an epicenter for nationalistic and chauvinistic ideologies. Thus, stadium JNA often witnesses praises for chetniks of Draža Mihajlović, although the name of the club is Partisan. There were some initiatives for rebranding of football clubs after the fall of Berlin wall but they remain the same with the communist ideology in its core.⁶⁸ Through this postmodern chaos, stadium JNA proudly stands unbothered by the fall of socialism and transition of its country.

In the end, are stadium resilient infrastructures? It depends on their purpose. We have analyzed three stadiums of which two still stand to this day. Stadium of Vršac and Stadium JNA have overcome the socialist ideology and continued their work in the 21th century. This is mainly because these stadiums were built for modern sports that had a prominent role in society and still have it. On

⁶² More about socialist hooligans of Yugoslavia in: Mijatov, *Sport u službi socijalizma*, 376-387.

⁶³ Sandra Radenović, *Sport i društvo: sociologija sa sociologijom sporta, sociologija sporta* (Beograd: Fakultet sporta i fizičkog vaspitanja, 2017), 168; Dragan Koković, *Doba nasilja i sport* (Novi Sad: Oko, 1990), 94.

⁶⁴ Mahoney, “Path Dependence”, 517.

⁶⁵ More about communist party of Yugoslavia before WW2 in: Kosta Nikolić, *Boljševizacija KPJ 1919-1929* (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1993); Stefan Gužvica, *Before Tito: The Communist Party of Yugoslavia during the Great Purge (1936-1940)* (Tallinn: Tallinn University Press, 2020).

⁶⁶ Mahoney, “Path Dependence”, 517.

⁶⁷ Fuko, “Oko moći”, 23.

⁶⁸ Sandra Radenović, “Rebranding of Red Star and Dynamo sports societies – a consequence of transition and/or postmodern chaos?”, in Sanja Šalaj, Dario Škegro (Eds.), *9th International Scientific Conference on Kinesiology, 2021, Opatija, Croatia, Proceedings* (Zagreb: University of Zagreb, Faculty of Kinesiology, 2021), 533-536.

the other hand, Sokol stadium was built just for the purpose of the All Sokols rally and when the rally was over the stadium was dismantled. Sokols were a temporary phenomenon in the long history of physical culture in which from all different form of physical culture it is the modern sport that has prevailed. Consequently, stadium that were built for that purpose no matter of the states ideology that built them, are still standing and are being used. In essence, it is the ideology of sport that makes stadium resilient.

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