

## ARCHITECTURE IN UŽICE FROM 1918 TO 1941 - FROM ARCHITECTURE OF HISTORIC STYLES TOWARDS MODERN

*UDC 72(497.11 Užice)“1918/1941“=111*

**Duško Kuzović<sup>1</sup>, Nedeljko Stojnić<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Football Academy Belgrade, <sup>2</sup>Institute Jaroslav Černi Belgrade, Serbia

**Abstract.** *Modern architecture in southwest Serbia, in the mid and second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, played a significant role in the reforming society. Thanks to its conception it has enabled local communities to overcome major differences in industry, manufacturing, culture, private life development, by not relying on local traditions and standards, by introducing universal canons it allowed flow of knowledge. Local communities at the time had a number of problems caused by industrial and educational lagging behind: lack of building materials was a consequence of poorly developed traffic network and construction industry, lack of vocational schools limited worker skill at construction site etc. All of the above directed the construction industry not to develop but to rely on local knowledge sources, local customs, and tradition. At that moment Modern architecture appeared with simple and condensed forms, modest demands on the industry and builders and with acceptance of local way of life. It was gradually introduced in everyday life so after 1945 it became the general standard in the society. This paper is based on available archive material, written material, and documents encountered in the field work. Implications of the study are expected in the area of urban planning of cities, economy, and culture.*

**Key words:** *Historical styles, inter-war architecture, Modern, Serbia, Užice.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Period from 1918 to 1941 represents a brief and rare period of peace which allowed planning and construction. During these 23 years, with a delay, the 19<sup>th</sup> century finally finished. With it ends the period of application of historical styles architecture and process of absorption of Modern architecture (Roter-Blagojević, 2006; Blagojević, 2003; Blagojević, 2000) started. The new spirit will radically change the physiognomy and character of the town. From a small borough, Užice has grown into very attractive and prosperous urban area. The beginnings of change in urban, philosophical and economic sense lay in mentioned two decades between two World wars.

---

Received December 23, 2014

**Corresponding author:** Duško Kuzović

Football Academy Belgrade, Deligradska 27/III, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia

E-mail: dkuzovic@gmail.com

Available documentation on this time period is very scarce. A large part has been destroyed (World War II), and the rests are either in abroad (BiH Archive), or in private collections. It consists of a small number of designs, some documents, and several written works on architecture (Lazić, 1995; Marković, Stanimirović, 1990; Nestorović, 1974; Group of Authors, 1981) and urbanism (Maksimović, 1962; Macura, 1983; Macura, 1984). It is particularly well-studied period of early Modern architecture in Niš (Keković, Čemerikić, 2006; Keković, 2009). Structures in the field are largely changed during the service so that the most precious source is photo documentation.

## 2. DOCUMENTATION

### 2.1. General view

From 1918 to 1941 in Užice two concepts of architecture were simultaneously living: Historical style architecture and Modern architecture. The former concept was largely used in public facilities, public figures, and merchant families' homes. The latter concept was largely applied for construction of family buildings of intellectuals and educated individuals.

### 2.2. Historical styles architecture – overview of major facilities

In Užice, the public buildings and houses of public servants and traders were mostly built in the spirit of historical styles architecture. The period was not long enough, community economic power was not high enough, and changes in educational system and economy gave results just in the third decade, so that, effectively, period lasted only 10 years. The number of buildings is not high and the group of examples here presented are among them.



**Fig. 1** Užice, County district offices (1927)  
(Source: Historical Archive Užice)

*County district office and First Instance Court* is a facility built in the period since 1922 to 1927 according to the design by the architects from the Building Directorate of Kruševac. The complex consists of district building, courtroom, residential building, and auxiliary

building. The main complex building, district office, is located in prime part of location, on two plot borders, with a truncated angle where the main building entrance is. The volume of the structure is complex; primal cube has striped structure divided into individual sectors by and avant corps. In horizontal direction the façade is divided into high pedestal and plain plastered floors. Façade composition was completed with an emphasized cornice. Fenestration has a balanced rhythm and accentuated wall surfaces in relation to openings. Complex in volume and surface together with Gymnasium is the largest building of its time in Užice.

*Weaving workers house* on Grain market was built in 30s on Užice main street. The building has a ground floor and two upper floors. The building volume of rectangle regular cube is divided with two laterals and one central avant corps. Horizontally, the façade comprises two segments: ground part and upper floor part that mutually differ in the way the façade plane was treated. Openings at the ground floor occupy a significantly greater area than the wall surface. Elevated floors fenestration is harmonized and mutually and with ground floor openings. The façade is composed in the rhythm of window openings that, depending on position, fulfill available wall surface with one or two window shafts. Façade on the roof level ends with accentuated roof cornice and attics formed above avant corps. All wall decoration was removed from the facility after World War II. . The building was demolished for the needs of construction Hotel “Zlatibor” at the end of 70s.



**Fig. 2, 3** Užice, Weaving workers house on Grain market (1938 and 1961)  
(Source: Historical Archive Užice)

*Trifunović family house* is located on St. Sava square. Its construction started around 1912 but because of war circumstances it was not ended immediately. The house design was probably done by Branko Tanazević because the building seems to have the characteristics of his style and because his father as a doctor served in Užice. The house is one-storied, on elevated ground level and with prominent central avant corps. The typical treatment of the main façade that resembles Tanazević’s manner.



**Fig. 4** Užice, Trifunović family house (state from 2012) (Source: Author)

"Sokol Society" House was built from 1931 to 1936 according to design by the architect Momir Korunović.



**Fig. 5** Užice, "Sokol Society" House (1936) (Source: Historical Archive Užice)

Public hospital in Krčagovo was built from 1912 to 1924.



**Fig. 6** Užice, Hospital in city district Krčagovo (1924) (Source: Historical Archive Užice)

### 2.3. Early Modern architecture – overview of major facilities

The first building constructed in the Modern spirit is Hotel “Palas” in the city center. After the hotel, the same architect constructed another family house nearby the hotel location and around the same time period - his own multi-family building at the Grain market. Other authors, who joined him, created very important and valuable works in the period from 1935 to 1941.

*Hotel „Palas“*, designed by architect Miladin Prljević, was built in 1933. The facility has a ground floor and two upper floors with prominent angle. The volume of the building is divided into three parts: two equal corps placed parallel to two streets with average floor number GF+2 and arc shaped angular part of average floor number GF+3. Façade is divided through surface treatment to the ground floor and upper floor parts. The windows on the upper stories are by specific facade treatment linked into accented horizontal strips. The volume ends with a horizontal cornice. After the World War II hotel was upgraded with one more floor.



**Fig. 7** Užice, Hotel “Palace” (1933)  
(Source: Historical Archive Užice)

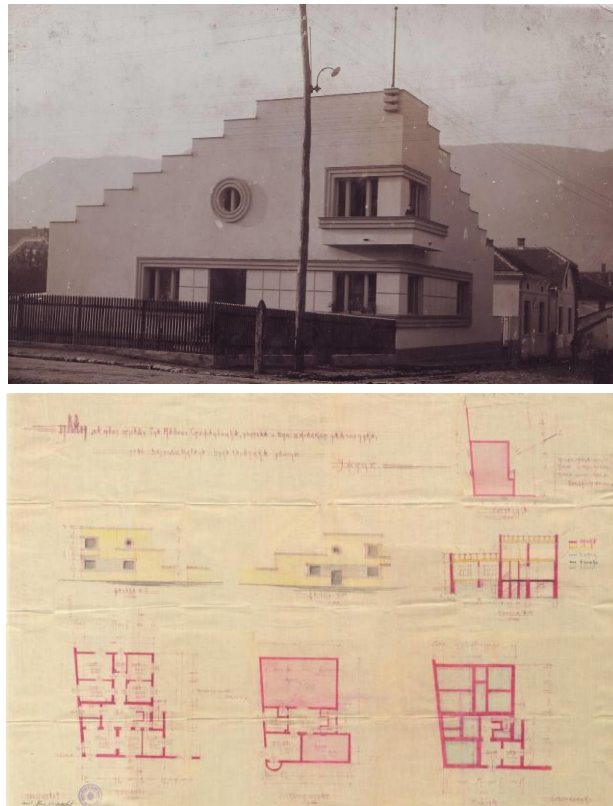
*Hotel „Zlatibor“* was built on two streets corner, across from the town house, in 30s of 20<sup>th</sup> century. The building façade is divided into two parts: the ground floor and upper floor parts. The ground floor has prominent height and it was constructed in a separate, darker, tone. The upper floor part has two floors with first floor windows significantly larger more than second floor windows. Each floor windows are connected into one unit with a prominent window bank. The façade ends with discrete final cornice. The color of the building is white. The building was demolished in 70s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



**Fig. 8** Užice, Hotel “Zlatibor” (1936.) (Source: Historical Archive Užice)

*House of Mališa Stefanović* was completed in 1936 and located in St. Sava square in accordance with the design by the architect Miladin Prljević. The building is on the corner

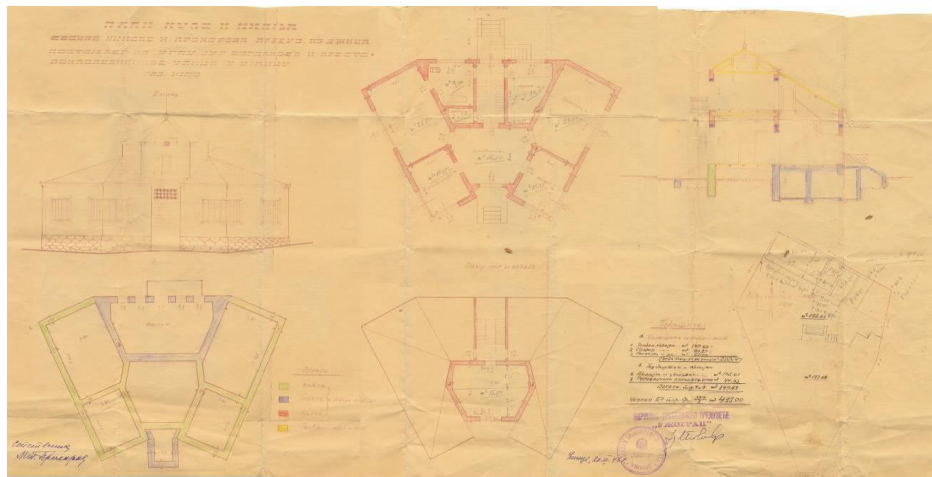
and has two representative facades. The building volume is composed using gradual rising towards a distinctive corner. The building has ground floor, plus an additional floor at the corner. Façade is prevalently horizontal. Horizontality is additionally accentuated by the windows connected into strips with façade treatment and accentuated final cornice. Circular window openings on upper floors give a balance to the appearance.



**Fig. 9a, 9b** Užice, Stefanović family house (1936) (Source: Historical Archive Užice)

*Prohorov family house* was built around 1936 on a plot located on a sharp corner of two streets. The facility is predominantly single-storied while the corner is accentuated by another floor. The building volume is composed of three parts: two rectangular cubes are parallel to lateral streets while the central part is slightly indented and has an upper floor. Lateral facades contain one large window opening in the wall surface and one on the corner which represents an architectural novelty. Horizontal composition is accentuated with a plinth and final cornice.

*Osipov family house* was built in 30s of 20<sup>th</sup> century and urbanistically is set back from the regulatory line. The building is residential. The volume is divided into several wholes carefully composed in terms of height and size. The main entrance is accented with an arched opening located in smaller volume attached to the main corpus. The staircase was placed in a separate highlighted height cube. The facility completes with a large roof terrace.



**Fig. 10** Užice, Prohorov family house (1938) (Source: Historical Archive Užice)



**Fig. 11** Užice, Osipov family house (1938) (Source: Historical Archive Užice)

*Family house* in Nikola Pašić Street number 9 was built in 30s of 20<sup>th</sup> century as a commercial-residential object. The volume is proper with object division to a ground floor and upper floors. The ground floor contains large windows surfaces. Wall surfaces were covered in a darker tone. The upper block has two floors which are treated as a single unit. Window fenestration is regular and includes two window shafts associated by façade treatment way into one unit at each floor level and through two adjacent façade planes. The façade ending is an accented final cornice.

*National Bank building* was constructed in period from 1938 to 1941 and designed by the architect Bogdan Nestorović. The complex was intended for National Bank in war time and it consists of two buildings and underground galleries. One building was intended for the bank management, and the other buildings for officers housing and underground galleries for the workshops. Urbanistically, buildings were placed over narrow side, angled, and together

with the entrance in underground galleries form a small square. Object shaping has character of regular cube with absence of ornamentation, facade composed in plain, flat plastered upper floors, roof hipped etc. The façade contains horizontal partition into lower rustic part treated in spalled stone and higher floor part covered in flat plaster. Fenestration is regulated through seven window verticals spreading over each of three floors.



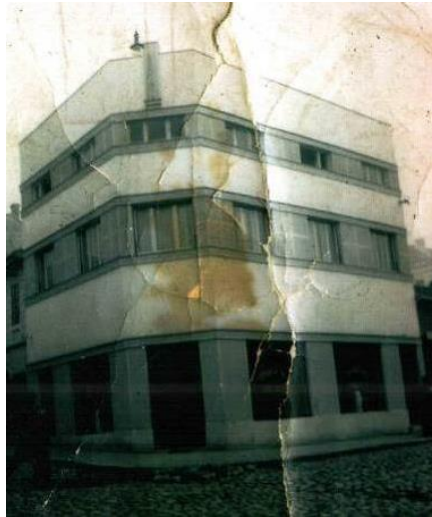
**Fig. 12** Užice, Family house Nikola Pašić Str. no. 9 (1938)  
(Source: Historical Archive Užice)



**Fig. 13** Užice, National Bank (1938)  
(Source: Historical Archive Užice)



*Pharmacy building* was constructed in 1938 as a commercial and a residential building at the corner of the main and side street. The building volume is simple and contains truncated angle to allow entry into ground floor business building part. By façade treatment object was divided into ground and upper floors part. Upper floors object part includes two etages. Façade is composed by emphasizing horizontality: the ground floor was treated as one entity and the first and upper floors part as different one. Ground floor includes accentuated exhibition spaces covered in glass. Wall surfaces between shop windows were covered in darker shade. At each storey part windows were treated in lighter tone that continually outreaches entire upper floors part height.



**Fig. 14** Užice, Pharmacy building (1938)  
(Source: Historical Archive Užice)

### 3. DISCUSSION

In the period from 1918 to 1941 two architectural styles simultaneously lived in Užice: Historical styles architecture and Modern architecture. One concept was used for public buildings, where investor was the state, buildings for prominent employees in state administration and for wealthiest individuals' objects.

The historical styles architecture is characterized by way of shaping and decoration of structures which represented a kind of a statement on material and social status for investors, and for the state an expression of continuity in society Europeanization process (Hičkok, Džonson, 1992; Gideon, 1969). This method of forming buildings had absolute primacy in construction since 1920 until 1930. The shaping concept implied gradation of volume by emphasized areas, horizontal façade division, opening organization into window verticals, respecting the gravity in setting elements one to other, application of façade plastic, respecting canons on formation of façade elements etc.

The modern architecture started its life in Užice in 1933 from constructing hotel "Palas" building. The building had a lot of elements of classical architecture: volume

composition, symmetry, mass grading, façade division into ground floor and upper floors, ways of emphasizing corners, applying fenestration on upper floors, using darker tone on the ground floor and lighter on higher etc. However the conception of façade surface and façade decoration relation certainly represented innovation and kind of a novelty.

The next step in development of Modern architecture is Mališa Stefanović family house built in 1936. The form was a novelty for its time environment. Until then, regular cubes without any leaps outside basic overall dimensions ruled, ending with a gabled or hipped roof. The building was articulated on two levels via two floors and provided completely new relations in terms of masses and tension in the façade, thus respecting the proclaimed Modern principles. A question remains of how such structural concept is compliant with the local climate and requirements.

The next major step was Pharmacy building located in the Main Street. The building volume is simple and originated by urbanistic requirements. The corner part is truncated to allow the entrance into business ground floor part – identical to objects built in previous time spirit. The building is divided horizontally into three levels: plinth, ground floor, and upper floors. Ground floor was separated through specific treatment of upper floors part. Novelties in shaping on this building are in way of interconnection of each storey windows.

Prohorov, Osipov, and Djokić family houses represent interesting but not crucial objects for local construction development. Their forms remain unique in architectural practice of the city.

Based on exposed examples, it can be stated that Modern architecture started its life through residential objects. In such cases, project program was simple and question of form was decision of only one person or family. Educational level of investors, who chose Modern forms, was very high (teachers, judges, engineers, and educated persons abroad).

After the World War II Modern architecture was over the entire social space. Apart from the cultural reasons for Modern style implementation, another important factor was very strong labor and social-democratic movement which announced a completely different social and cultural spirit of the society.

Historical styles architecture is very complex and demanding way of building shaping that requires extensive knowledge and work from an architect, great craftsmanship from the builder, and high demands from construction industry. At the time, Serbia was not able to realize all ideas of its architects because of the lack of appropriate industry of materials and building construction. This lack caused weak decoration of most buildings made in central part of Serbia. Only those who had enough funds to purchase decorative material in European countries, or to hire trained and educated craftsmen, managed to get high quality façade. Therefore, the adoption of this style, despite its indisputable qualities, was very limited.

Provincial environment, that had not enough handcraft skills and strong construction industry, needed an architecture demanded a style expressing high education and sense of the architects while not placing such high demands on the contractors and suppliers. On the other hand, the new shaping method could not interfere in traditional family life (through home organization), traditional business way (through commercial space organization), traditional construction way (through selection of structural system and applied materials), into degree of environmental industrialization (through type of required materials), or into degree of transport development (for import or export of bulky building materials). At the same time new style was supposed to make possible to design without much knowing local traditions and enable mixing of cultures within a certain region.

## 4. CONCLUSION

Modern architecture has played a major cultural role in the society reformation in southwest Serbia during mid and second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century. It enabled the local society to gain living space by contemporary standards despite large lagging behind in industry, handcraft, culture, and private life development. It enabled flow of knowledge and cultures because it was not referring to local tradition and standards but introduced universal canons. By looking at the local communities, the lack in industry growth manifested through limited material choice (due to poorly developed construction industry), limited object size possible to be done (due to absence of major construction companies), limited construction material offer (due to poorly developed transport network), weak vocational competence of workers in new construction techniques (due to lack of vocational schools) etc.

Such a situation directed the building sector to traditional practices, customs, and construction modes. In these conditions historical styles architecture could not develop. This architecture style is demanding in terms of engineering and design, also materials and building methods. Although the state and loyal individuals tried for this style to come in life in practice, it all ended on valuable public facilities and residential houses. At such time appeared Modern architecture. By its simple and adjusted lines, small demands for contractors and by respecting local ways of life it was step by step implemented in quotidian life. After World War II it became general social standard by promoting the industry, education, and personal life of provincial areas in Serbia.

## REFERENCES

1. Group of authors, (1981) *Istorija Titovog Užica*, (History of Titovo Užice) Book 2, Užice.
2. Hičkok, H.R., Džonson, F., (1992) *Internacionalni stil*, (International Style) Beograd, Građevinska knjiga, pp. 39.
3. Lazić, G. (1995) „Istorija i arhitektura objekata na trgu sv. Đorđa u Užicu“, Narodni muzej Užice, *Užički zbornik*, broj 24, pp. 165-176.
4. Marković, Ž., Stanimirović, A., (1990) “Kulturno-istorijsko spomeničko nasleđe Titovog Užica”, Narodni muzej Užice, *Užički zbornik*, br. 19, pp. 75.
5. Nestorović, B., (1974) “Pregled spomenika arhitekture u Srbiji 19.v.”, *Saopštenja*, br. 10, Beograd, pp. 166.
6. Gideon, S., (1969) *Prostor, vreme, arhitektura*, Beograd: Građevinska knjiga.
7. Roter-Blagojević, M. (2006) *Stambena arhitektura Beograda u 19. i početkom 20. veka*, Beograd: Arhitektonski fakultet with the Orion art.
8. Blagojević, Lj. (2003) *Modernism in Serbia: The Elusive Margins of Belgrade Architecture, 1919-1941*, MIT Press in association with the Harvard University Graduate School of Design.
9. Blagojević, Lj. (2000) *Moderna kuća u Beogradu, 1920-1941*. Beograd: Zadužbina Andrejević.
10. Keković, A., Čemerikić, Z., (2006) *Moderna Niša 1920 – 1941*. Niš: Društvo arhitekata Niša.
11. Keković, A., (2009) *Modern style Housing Architecture in Niš*, Beograd: Zadužbina Andrejević.
12. Maksimović, B. (1962). *Urbanizam u Srbiji, osnivanje i rekonstrukcija varoši u 19. veku*. Beograd: Građevinska knjiga.
13. Macura, V. (1983). *Urbano planiranje u Srbiji 19. i 20. veka*, Beograd: Beograd projekt, Centar za planiranje urbanog razvoja.
14. Macura, V. (1984). *Čaršija i gradski centar*, Niš: Gradina.

## **ARHITEKTURA U UŽICU OD 1918 DO 1941.- OD ARHITEKTURE ISTORIJSKIH STILOVA DO MODERNE**

*Moderna arhitektura u jugozapadnoj Srbiji, tokom druge polovine 20. veka, je odigrala značajnu ulogu u reformi društva. Zahvaljujući svojoj koncepciji omogućila je da lokalne zajednice prevaziđu velike razlike u razvijenosti industrije, zanatstva, kulture, privatnog života itd. time što se nije pozivala na lokalnu tradiciju i standarde. Uvodeći univerzalne kanone omogućila je strujanje znanja. Lokalne zajednice u tom trenutku su imale niz problema uzrokovanih industrijskim i obrazovnim zaostatkom: nedostatak građevinskih materijala je bio posledica slabo razvijene saobraćajne mreže i nerazvijenosti građevinske industrije, nedostatak stručnih škola je ograničio veštinu radnika na gradilištu itd. Sve navedeno je usmeravalo građevinsku operativu ne na razvoj već na lokalne izvore znanja, lokalne običaje i tradiciju. U tom trenutku se pojavila arhitektura Moderne sa jednostavnim i svedenim formama, skromnim zahtevima pred industrijom i izvođačima i prihvatanjem lokalnog načina života. Postepeno ona se uključivala u život da bi nakon 1945., postala opšte društveni standard. Ovaj rad je baziran na raspoloživom arhivskom materijalu, pisanoj građi i dokumentaciji snimljenoj na terenu. Implikacije ovog rada se očekuju u oblasti planiranja gradova, privrede i kulture.*

Ključne reči: *istorijski stilovi, međuratna arhitektura, Moderna, Srbija, Užice.*