

Archives of the Soviet Communist Party and Soviet State. Catalogue of Finding Aids and Documents. First Edition.

PUBLISHED JOINTLY BY STATE ARCHIVAL SERVICE OF RUSSIA (ROSARKHIV), HOOVER INSTITUTION ON WAR, REVOLUTION AND PEACE, DISTRIBUTED BY CHADWYCK HEALEY, FIRST EDITION MARCH 1995. 88 PP.

Most recently has been published this catalogue of russian holdings and a commercial brochure. In reality this is the documentation of the beginning of a huge scientific and commercial publication - project of the Russian State Archival Service and the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace. Because of the importance of this event and the implications for scientific research we publish large partes of the the preface as well as the introduction to this volume (pp. III-XIV).

Preface

The State Archival Service of the Russian Federation (Rosarkhiv), the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, and Chadwyck-Healey concluded an agreement in April 1992 to microfilm the records and opisi (finding aids) of the Communist Party of the former Soviet Union, as well as other selected holdings of the State Archives. We are pleased to present to the library and scholarly communities this first edition of the project catalogue, which lists microfilms produced by the project and made available to date.

The project has three components: (1) the development of an archival and scho-

larly exchange program to benefit Russian studies; (2) the preservation of approximately 25 million sheets of archival documentation on microfilm; and (3) the distribution of the microfilm for scholarly research. Rosarkhiv is producing the microfilm with financial resources provided by the Hoover Institution. The microfilm is being published by Rosarkhiv and the Hoover Institution and distributed by Chadwyck-Healey.

Rosarkhiv and the Hoover Institution have established an Editorial Board of six scholars, which has made the selection of materials for filming. Board members include three persons representing Rosarkhiv (Prof. Rudolf G. Pikhoia, Prof. Nikolai N. Pokrovskii, and Col. Gen. Dmitri Volkogonov) and three scholars representing the Hoover Institution (Dr. Robert Conquest, Dr. John Dunlop, and Prof. Terence Emons). Professor Pikhoia, who is chairman of Rosarkhiv, also chairs the Editorial Board. Dr. Jana Howlett, University lecturer in the Department of Slavonic Studies at Cambridge University, is the project consultant, and serves as an ex officio member of the Editorial Board.

The selection of materials for filming is based on two principal criteria. First, the project is giving priority to the records of the highest policy-making organs of the Communist Party. Second, the project is filming record series in their entirety, rather than disparate files or documents selected on the basis of subject content. The project is intended to enhance access to the newly opened Russian archives as well

as to preserve them for future research. Complete sets of the microfilm will be deposited with Rosarkhiv for use by scholars in Russia, and at the Hoover Institution for use by scholars in the United States. In addition to this catalogue, a list of materials included in the project will be posted electronically with frequent updates on the Hoover Institution's World Wide Web server. The URL for the Hoover Institution is [HTTP:// Hoover.Stanford.Edu / WWW / Welcome. HTML](http://Hoover.Stanford.Edu/WWW/Welcome.HTML))

The agreement also establishes an archival and scholarly exchange program. In exchange for microfilm of the former Communist Party archives, the Hoover Institution has made a commitment to give to Rosarkhiv a microfilm copy of all its Russian archival holdings. To the extent that resources permit, microfilms of the Communist Party archives will be deposited at the U.S. Library of Congress and the Novosibirsk Regional State Archives.

It is a pleasure to note that this entire undertaking has been made possible by the timely and generous financial support of several major donors. We gratefully acknowledge these donors and extend to them - on behalf of all scholars who now and in the future will benefit from their generosity - our appreciation and thanks. They are: The Margaret W. and Herbert Hoover, Jr. Foundation, The Sarah Scaife Foundation, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, The John M. Olin Foundation, The Jaquelin Hume Foundation, and The Estelle Buel Simon Trust (Alice Phillips Rose, Trustee). Rudolf G. Pikhov, Prof., Dr. Chairman, State Archival Service of the Russian Federation. Charles G. Palm, Deputy Director, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, March 1995.

Introduction

Now that historians have gained free access to Soviet archives for the first time in over seventy years, it may be difficult to remember why the history of the Soviet State is one of the most studied and least understood. Throughout most of its history, the Soviet state was a one-party monopoly, led by the Communist Party. The ideological justification for the organisation of this state was entirely based on historical arguments. The Soviet state relied for its legitimation on a historical construct in which the victory of Communism was to be the inevitable consequence of a process of transformation of human society from tribal formations, through feudalism, capitalism and socialism. More specifically, the transformation of the Russian Empire into the Soviet Union was interpreted as an expression of the will of many nations united in their support for the Revolution and led in the building of a Communist society by the only party in which they could place their trust.

This was a view of history which did not allow for discussion, yet it was contradicted by all the sources. It is not surprising that from the late 1920s the Communist Party leadership used all means at its disposal to ensure that archival information should not fall into the wrong hands: in the words of Stalin 'the Party must be militant and merciless in the struggle against the class enemy on the ideological front, and against rotten liberalism in relation to all perversions of marxism-leninism, and raise vigilance against attempts to smuggle counter-revolutionary Trotskyist contraband in the guise of a study of the past (and especially of the history of our Party)²⁸ Among the most effective means was the purge of academic institutions teaching history, and the trans-

28 Stalin's letter to the editors of *Proletarskaia revoliutsia* quoted in the preface to the first issue of *Uteraturnoe nasledstvo*, Leningrad, 1932.

ference of archives into the jurisdiction of the secret police. This meant that even historians of pre-Soviet Russia had difficulty with access to sources. But documents of the twentieth century were kept out of reach of all but the most reliable Party historians. Finding aids were only available to the employees of each archive - foreign researchers were not even allowed to look at card catalogues without supervision.

For Soviet historians the situation was not much better. Archives of the Communist Party, such the Central Party Archive of the Institute of Marx-Engels-Lenin (now RTsKhIDNI)²⁹, which contained materials documenting the history of the Communist movement, were accessible primarily to the historians working in the Institute. With a letter of recommendation from their own Central Committee, members of foreign Communist Parties could look at papers originating from their own Party, but only if permission was given by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR. Even during Gorbachev's perestroika little could be done to change the situation against the opposition of Party stalwarts. When the Central Party Archive started to open its doors to researchers, the Party historian V. Naumov warned the Central Committee of the dangers of allowing 'foreign scholars and Soviet institutions access to large numbers of photocopies of documents'. Typically, a collection of essays produced during perestroika with Naumov's participation cited only published works, even while using archival material.³⁰

A proprietorial attitude towards the past was combined with a tradition of paranoid conspiracy, which ensured that even within the Party leadership access to documents was restricted. Already on 8

November 1919 a Politburo minute records Stalin's statement that 'certain information about sessions of the Central Committee, admittedly in corrupt form, somehow reaches our enemies'³¹. Stalin therefore recommended the establishment of a procedure 'which would allow only a few of the comrades to get to know the protocols'. Until the very end of the Communist Party's monopoly of power access to Politburo protocols was governed by a decree which described them as 'conspiratorial material'. When the Communist Party's current archive, now TsKhSD, was transferred from the jurisdiction of the Central Committee, almost all of its holdings were classified as secret or top secret.

As late as 12 August 1991 a memorandum was sent to one of Gorbachev's deputies in the Central Committee of the Communist Party, stressing that the documents in the Communist Party archives should not be made available to the public, because they are 'the strongest weapon of political struggle'. Less than two weeks later, after the coup attempt which failed to reclaim the Communist Party's monopoly of government, President Boris Yeltsin signed a decree which transferred the archives of the Communist Party of the USSR into the jurisdiction of the state. Now no scholar wanting to study the Soviet State in the twentieth century can do so without reference to primary sources.

As a result of President Yeltsin's decree the formerly secret archives of the Soviet Party and State came under the administration of the Committee for Archives, now the State Archival Service of Russia (Rosarkhiv). The declared aim behind the archival reform was to make the archives accessible to all. In the implementation of this task, Rosarkhiv was faced with several formidable problems.

29 See on this matter also the previous article (Note of the redaction).

30 Urok daet istoriia. Moscow, 1989

31 RTsKhIDNI, fond 17, opis 3, delo 37.

The first was the lack of appropriate legislation. In the summer of 1993 a law governing access to the archives of the Russian Federation was passed, the first such archival legislation in Russia's history. Legislation defining the concept of 'state secrets' and its application to the archives was also passed. As a result de-classification of materials issued by State and Communist Party institutions could begin. Automatically classified are 1) materials affecting the security of the State, and 2) materials containing confidential information about the lives of private citizens. In practice the former Party archives have de-classified most material not belonging to the above categories for the years up to 1942. Documents from later periods have to be de-classified either by commissions within the archives themselves or by a special government commission.

The second task faced by the Archival Service was practical. As the numbers of scholars wishing to consult the newly accessible documents grew, it became clear that few archives were equipped to cope with such an influx. The most pressing need was for microfilm of documents, which could be issued to readers, so that unique originals could be protected.

The closing down of a great number of USSR ministries and administrative bodies, as well as the privatisation of former state companies has meant that millions of files originating from such organisations are now kept by Rosarkhiv. In the last few years the volume of documents, especially on the history of the USSR, for which Rosarkhiv is responsible has increased almost three times.

The microfilms listed in this catalogue are the result of an unprecedented agreement between Rosarkhiv and the Hoover Institution, with the participation of ChadwyckHealey. This was Rosarkhiv's first major international agreement.

The Rosarkhiv-Hoover agreement has facilitated the solution of the following problems:

1. Making of microfilm copies of the most important documents for the history of the USSR and its Communist Party. This has necessitated enormous work on the analysis, processing and de-classification of documents. The obtained microfilm copies will become available to researchers in Russia and abroad.

2. The creation of microfilm copies aids the preservation of unique documents, most of which had never been intended for use in research.

As part of the agreement Hoover is donating to Rosarkhiv microfilm copies of its holdings on the history of Russia and the Russian Empire. A considerable part of these materials is being microfilmed specially for Rosarkhiv.

The finding aids and documents filmed under this agreement contain a wealth of new information about all aspects of the life of the Soviet State and Communist Party from 1917 until 1991.

Participating Archives

The three archives represent the key archives of the Soviet State and the Soviet Communist Party.³²

a) *Archives of the Soviet State*

The State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF)

b) *The former Soviet Communist Party Archives*

The Russian Centre for the Preservation and Study of Documents of Most recent History (RTsKhIDNI)

Materials Selected For The Collection

The selection of material for filming is based on two criteria. Priority is given to the records of the highest policy-making

32 This chapter of the introduction has been shortened.

organs of the Communist Party. Secondly, the project is filming record series or fondy in their entirety, without selecting documents from different fondy on the basis of the documents' content.

None of the archives described above has, as yet, detailed printed guides to their collections. Both GARF and RTsKhIDNI have now produced printed guides, but they describe materials only at the fondy or opisi level. TsKhSD does not yet have a full catalogue of its collections. Moreover, no printed catalogue could contain the wealth of detail that the opisi contain. The Editorial Board felt that scholars should receive as soon as possible a comprehensive overview of the holdings. Eleven finding aids of de-classified holdings documenting the activities of the Soviet Communist Party and the Soviet State have been selected for filming.

a) Finding aids

The Russian term for finding aids - opisi - is, somewhat confusingly, identical to the term describing the first subdivision level of a fond.

The finding aids are usually introduced by information about the organisation or person which is the subject of a given collection. The information in the opisi themselves depends on the nature of the material contained in the collection. Opisi for working documents of central organisations, such as the protocols of the Politburo, contain only information about dates of sessions and numbers of pages in each protocol. In the case of protocols of subdivisions, such as subcommissions, the opisi are more informative, giving a general idea of the questions discussed.

Opisi for all other types of collections are far more detailed, providing information about the date and provenance of the material in a given collection, together with an abstract of the documents filed. For example fond 558 is a collection of documents written by or about Stalin and gathered as part of the preparations for a celebratory edition of his works. The cata-

logue entry for delo 3162 in opisi 1 is a letter from Stalin to Georgii Dimitrov, then General Secretary of the Executive Committee of the Comintern. The opisi tells us that the document was transferred to the fond in December 1945 from the papers of the secretariat (office) of G. M. Dimitrov, that it is an autograph in red ink dated 25 October 1934, and that it has 3 folios. The contents are summarised as follows: 'Letter to G. M. Dimitrov informing him of Stalin's ideas about a review of Comintern's working methods and organisation, with address on envelope'.

b) Documents

The NKVD fond in GARF contains nearly 5 million pages on the work of this organisation from 1917 to 1930. The NKVD is known primarily as 'Stalin's secret police', but such a description does not do justice to the extraordinary scope of the organisation's jurisdiction. The NKVD papers provide information about virtually every aspect of the life of Soviet society. The NKVD oversaw the work of local Soviets, and therefore the fond contains protocols of these organisations. Through its registration bureaux the NKVD collected materials on the issuing of passports for travel abroad, permissions for marriages between Soviet and foreign nationals, applications for Soviet citizenship, changes of name and marital status. Its policing duties including supervision of prisons, labour camps, constructions sites using forced labour, as well as the better-known counter-revolutionary and counter-intelligence duties.

The reasons for the selection of materials from the Party archives will be evident from figures 1 and 2 above. It should be noted that the materials show not only the decisionmaking process from above, whether through the work of the Congresses or the Central Committee, but also from below, in the reports that were received by the Central Committee as well as in the materials of the Central Control Commission, which supervised the lives of Party

members in minute detail, from their political convictions to their private lives.

Classified Material

All the material microfilmed under the present project has been declassified in accordance with the laws of the Russian Federation. Where a fond or opisi contains material that has not yet been declassified, this is stated in the list of microfilms and in a target on the microfilm itself. Material declassified at a later date will be added to the series as it becomes available.

Acknowledgements

The Editor owes a debt of gratitude not only to Rosarkhiv and the directors of the three archives, but also to the archivists who have generously provided the information on which this catalogue is based. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mrs Liudmilla Kosheleva and Mrs Larissa Rogovaia of RTsKhIDNI, Mr. Ivan Shevchuk of TsKhSD and Mr. Evgenii Lunacharskii and Mr. Oleg Nitseevskii of GARF. I would also like to thank Mrs Natalia Volkova, who provided the original translations of most of the 2,800 titles listed in this catalogue.

Dr. Jana Howlett, Jesus College, Cambridge, March 1995

How To Order Microfilm

Archives of the Soviet Communist Party and Soviet State is available for purchase in a number of ways to suit the varying needs of libraries and researchers. There are advantageous prices for complete collections of opisi and dela and for standing orders. Individual reels of microfilm are available to purchasers who wish to be more selective. These can be chosen by using the catalogue as described above. The price charged per reel is based on the total number of reels ordered.

Individual Orders:

Any combination of opisi and dela may be ordered at one time. 1 reel, **2-10** reels, 1-99

reels, 100-249 reels, 250-499 reels, 500-749 reels, 750-999 reels, 1,000+ reels

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The opisi are essential keys to the Archives, and many libraries will wish to make the complete set available to their users. A 10% discount is applied to orders for the complete opisi series, which is expected to comprise approximately 600 reels. 450 reels are already available, c.600 reels £63.00 per reel c.£37,800. The complete opisi series may also be ordered in units of 100 reels at a price of £7,200 per unit. The total number of opisi reels is subject to final confirmation.

Standing Orders

Standing order for the complete collection, opisi and dela: £55 per reel. Institutions placing a standing order for the complete collection qualify for the lowest price of £55 per reel. Those wishing to place standing orders for parts of the collection are invited to discuss their requirements with Chadwyck-Healey. Prices exclude VAT and delivery and are subject to change without notice.

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