

# Archival Sources and documents for research of the Yugoslav communist movement for the period between the two world wars

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When we talk about historical studies on Comintern, Communism, Stalinism, and open access to the archival materials for this period we, as a matter of fact, must state that the former Archives of CC CPY in Belgrade was the central institution that - up to the fall of the Berlin wall and the opening of the Russian and East European archives - gave the access to researchers for historical studies on primary sources.

After the triumphant anti-fascist struggle (1941-1945) and the dispute with CPSU (during Informbureau) CPY took interest for this kind of studies. In this context in Belgrade was found the Institute for International Workers' Movement (now Institute for European Studies) that had engaged researchers for series of projects from all of Yugoslavia. Unfortunately most of the published documents and monographical studies

remained, to a wider public unknown, the reason being, they are written in Yugoslav languages.<sup>106</sup> However, today - after the break up of Yugoslavia - the interest in the new formed states on the grounds of former Yugoslavia, for this sort of research is unfortunately thoroughly different as it was before the year 1991.

Present outline gives basic information about the archival materials, printed documents, newspapers and memoirs that are of a great importance in researching Yugoslav as well as the international communist movement during two world wars.

## Archives

The central archival institution which keeps and collects the archival material connected with the creation and development of the workers' movement and of Communist Party in Yugoslavia /CPY=KPJ/ since 1918 are the Archives of

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106 See: Putnik Dajic, A Beograd Institute for European Studies Project, *The International Newsletter of Historical Studies on Comintern, Communism and Stalinism*, Vol. i (1993/94), No. 3/4, pp. 57-59-

the CC UCY=SKJ / Central Committee of the Union Communists of Yugoslavia/ in Belgrade. It was founded in October 1948 as Archives of the CC CPY. At the same time Party archives were founded in each individual Yugoslav republic: they collect and keep the material which has a regional significance. Up to now certainly all the sources preserved in the country have been collected and the more important funds and collections of the regional, national, and federal archives researched. Also examined have been the archives in the Eastern European countries (in these, important material for the history of CPY has been collected, covering also its co-work with these parties, and the activity of the Yugoslav communist emigration in these countries). The most extensive researches have been made in the Archives of the Institute for Marxism-Leninism in Moscow, from where more than 200.000 microcopies have been obtained, or pages from the selected archival material (these are predominantly Party documents that were sent by the CPY to the Comintern and to its executive-political organs). On the basis of researches thus made blanks have been filled up and the archival funds of the CC CPY and of its organs have been completed.<sup>107</sup>

The party documents are very specific as regards their external characteristics, form and contents (under the conditions of the illegal work /1921-1941/ the Party was

forced to maintain the methods of strict conspiracy in its communications). Most frequently these documents have no stamp or seal, nor do they bear signatures. Rarely they give the date and place of their origin. The documents written in the country are usually full of abbreviations, codes, pseudonyms, frequently also ambiguities and allegorical significations. The largest part of the written material (reports and other text) was written to the leadership of the CPY which had worked for more than ten years abroad. For this reason a considerable part of the material has been lost, or it can be found preserved in foreign archives. The documents that were sent to the organs of the Comintern are mainly preserved. The documents created abroad are in foreign languages (Russian, German). In the archives of the CC CPY there exist, among other things, the following important funds and collections of the unpublished archival material: of the CC CPY, CC UCYY (Union of the Communist Youth of Yugoslavia = Savez komunističke omladine Jugoslavije /SKOJ/), Communist International /CI/, The Communist Youth International /CYI/, the Peasant International, the Red International of Labour Unions /Profintern/, the Red Aid of Yugoslavia, Yugoslav students in USSR, the Socialist Party of Yugoslavia /SPY/<sup>10</sup>, the Yugoslav Volunteers in the Spain War<sup>1</sup>, Memoirs. After the self-abolition of the UCY (1990), the archival material of the Party

107 M. Bosić, *Arhivski izvori za istoriju SKJ do 1941. godine* (Archival Sources for the History of UCY Until 1941), *Arhivskipregled*, Beograd, 2/1969, pp. 33-48.

108 The most important archival materials covering the activity of the SPY is preserved in the Archives of the Workers' Movement (Arhiv radničkog pokreta) in Belgrade: the Fund of the SPY, the collection of Vitomir Korac (a leading personality in SPY), the fund of CI (documents by communists speaking about socialists). Among the archives abroad, the largest number of documents on SPY is preserved in the funds of the MSH in Amsterdam: Archives of the Second International, Archives K. Kautsky (more than fifty letters of Yugoslav socialists). Archives of the Labour and Socialist International (reports and letters of the leaders of SPY - mostly of Tivko Topalović, a leading personality in SPY - to the executive committee of LSI and to Friedrich Adler).

109 D. Filipović, *Zbirka Jugoslovenski dobrovoljci u panskom ratu* u Arhivu CK SKJ (The Collection „Yugoslav Volunteers in the Spanish War” in the Archives of the CC UCY), *Arhivski pregled*, 2/1969, pp. 49-60.

was transferred into the corresponding state archives of individual republics; the material of the former Archives of the CC UCY, however, is now preserved in the Archives of Yugoslavia in Belgrade.

### The Published Documents

A considerable part of the material of the Party has been published. Certainly all the more important of the four congresses and five conferences have been published at one time in party newspapers and reviews. After the war, the preserved stenograms and notes covering individual party congresses (Prvi /osnivacki/ kongres SRP)(k) /Socijalisticke radnicke partije Jugoslavije (kommunista)/ (The First /Founding/ Congress of SWPY(c) /Socialist Workers's Party of Yugoslavia /communists/), Beograd 1990; Drugi /Vukovarski / kongres KPJ (The Second /Vukovar/ Congress of the CPY); Beograd 1983; Treci kongres KPJ (The Third Congress of CPY), Beograd 1986; Istorijski arhiv KPJ (The Historical Archives of CPY), vol. II: Cetvrti kongres KPJ (The Fourth Congress of CPY), Beograd 1950; U. Vujoevic, Cetvrti kongres KPJ - obracun sa "levim" i „desnim" frakcionatvom (The Fourth Congress of CPY - Settling Accounts with the „Left" and „Right" Factionalism), *Casopis za suvremeno povijest* (Review for the Contemporary History), Zagreb, 2-3/1979). Also the confe-

rences<sup>110</sup> were published together with the necessary scholarly apparatus, as well as stenograms and documents of UCYY<sup>111</sup> Workers' Trade Unions of Yugoslavia<sup>112</sup> and Comintern<sup>113</sup> The documents of the leading party organs, especially the correspondence between party leaders, has been use and published within the frame of the series of their collected works.<sup>114</sup>

### The Press

A rich sources for the study of the history of the communist and socialist movements in the period between the two world wars is also the press preserved in many numbers, the newspapers, calendars, May Day publications, and other printed material of a similar character.<sup>115</sup> During the legal period (1919-1921), the CPY had at its disposal a rich variety of printed publications. Besides the daily news-paper *Radnicke novine* (The Workers' Newspaper), the organ of the CPY which was published in a relatively large number of copies (15.000), there existed 15 more papers and one newspaper, with a total number of more than 70.000 copies. With the state law issued in 1921 all the Party papers were prohibited, and the printing establishments and Party property confiscated. The CPY endeavoured to start with the publication of several new legal and illegal papers. After the prohibi-

110 Istorijski arhiv KPJ (The Historical Archives of CPY), vol. II: 1-4. drCavna konferencija (State Conferences of CPY); Peta zemaljska konferencija KPJ (The Fifth State Conference of CPY), Beograd 1980.

111 Kongresi, konferencije i sednice centralnog organa SKOJ-a (The Congresses, Conferences, and Sessions of the Central Organs of UCYY), vol. I (1919-1924), vol. II (1925-1941), Beograd 1983.

112 Dokumenti Centralnog radnickog sindikalnog veka jugoslavije 1919-1921 (Documents of the Central Committee of Workers' Trade Unions of Yugoslavia 1919-1921), Beograd 1983.

113 Komunisticka internacionala. Stenogrami i dokumenti kongresa I-VII (The Communist International. The Stenograms and Documents of Congresses I-VII), vol. I-XII, Beograd, Gornji Milanovac, 1981-1983.

114 Collected works of F. Filipovic, Dj. Djakovic, J. Broz Tito, E. Kardelj, B. Parovic, V. Vlahovic, B. Kidric, and others.

115 M. Vesovic, *Revolucionarna stampa u Kraljevini Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca 1918-1929* (The Revolutionary Press in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes 1918-1929), Beograd, 1980; M. Vesovic, *Ilegalna stampa KPJ 1929-1941* (The Illegal Press of the CPY 1919-1941). Beograd, 1989.

tion of the CPY and until the end of 1924 there appeared several tens of Party, youth, and trade union papers. Several were confiscated already at the time of the publication of their number, others could appear over a very short time only. In spite of the lowering of the number of printed copies and in spite of the prohibition, there were two papers which continued to appear longest in press, *Borba* (The Struggle) in Zagreb, and *Radnik* (The Worker) in Belgrade. Among the Party press, an important place was held by *Proleter* (The Proletarian), the organ of the CC CPY: it was started in January 1929, and it continued to appear during full 14 years. Altogether 99 numbers were published.<sup>116</sup> It was printed in Zagreb, Vienna, Moscow, and Brussels. The most important documents of the Comintern connected with the Yugoslav question were published by the Marxist newspaper *Klasna borba* (The Class Struggle), whose editors were the highest leaders of the Party (1926-1937). In spite of the fact that it was conceived as a theoretical Party organ, this newspaper played nevertheless above all the role of an informer on the current events in the life of the Party. From the middle of the thirties, CPY endeavoured to engage the non-communists, the democratically and progressively oriented people, and with them to begin to publish new literary-social and political papers and newspapers (*Odjek* /The Echo/, *Nae novine* /Our Newspaper/, *Izraz* /Expression/, *Pecat* /The Seal/, *Naa stvarnost* /Our Reality/, *Pregled* /Survey/). With the strengthening of the influence of the CPY in the youth movement, in the organisati-

ons of women, and in trade unions emerged - in the thirties - a series of reviews and newspapers, both legal and illegal. The problems of the working class were also represented by the numerous papers published by the Yugoslav emigratio (*Pravda* /Justice/ in Canada, *Radnicki glasnik* /Workers' Herald/ in Chicago, *Slobodna rec* /The Free Word/ in USA).<sup>117</sup>

Besides the communist press there was also a very numerous press of the Socialist Party of Yugoslavia. The archival copies of this press are certainly completely preserved. This was not an anti-regime party. SPY had some thirty papers or organs of the party and of trade unions which appeared continuously or periodically in many larger towns of Yugoslavia (*Socijalist* /Socialist/, *Socijalisticke radnicke novine* /Socialist Workers' Newspaper/, *Radnicke novine* /Workers' Newspaper/, *Naprej* /Forward/, *Radnicki pokret* /Workers' Movement/, and others).

### Memoirs, Biographies, Bibliographies

The Yugoslav historiography of the communist and workers' movement is rich in numerous autobiographical works which represent authentic testimonies by the leaders of the Communist Party and other participants, speaking of the activity of the Party in the period between the two world wars. These are diaries, notes, memoirs, autobiographies, and other works. Unpublished, yet preserved, is the diary of one of the founders of the CPY: it covers the period of his participation in the Spanish Civil War.<sup>118</sup> The memoirs of R. Colakovic are considered to be among the more im-

116 After the publication of the phototypographic edition (Beograd 1968) four more numbers have been discovered.

117 Reprint editions: *Jena danas* (The Woman today, 1936-1940), Beograd 1966; *Dimitrovac* (May - September 1937), Beograd 1968; *Proleter* (The Proletarian), Beograd. 1968; *Borba* (The Struggle), Beograd - Zagreb, 1972; *Jenskisvijet* (The Woman World. 1939-1941), Zagreb, 1979; *Radnicka strana* (The Workers' Sentinel, 1919-1929 /a socialist paper/), Vukovar, 1980; *Klasna borba* (The Class Struggle), vol. I (1926-1929) and vol. II (1930-1934,1937), Beograd, 1984.

118 Vladimir Copie, *Dnevnik 1935-1937* (The Diary 1935-1937), The Archives of the CC UCY, 2 Sp. IV-d/i.

portant texts with the richest contents.<sup>119</sup> Significant are also the memoirs of other participants in the communist movement and of the bourgeois politicians. Yugoslav institutions specializing in the preservation of the Party archives have used the occasion of various celebrations and jubilees to collect systematically the memoirs of various individuals: thus, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution they collected some 1600 memoirs of the Yugoslav participants in the October revolution, and published the most important ones in a separate edition<sup>120</sup> on the occasion of the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the creation of the CPY, more than 1.500 memoirs were collected of the activists in the Yugoslav revolutionary movement, and of these 650 have been published.<sup>121</sup> In a separate edition have also been published the memoirs of more than 300 participants in the Spanish Civil War.<sup>122</sup> Noted among the biographical works are the biographies of exceptional communist leaders in the pre-war period.<sup>123</sup> Also the bibliographies of

the communist and workers' movements have been prepared and published.<sup>124</sup>

### Other Sources

Besides the sources connected with the work of CPY and SPY, other sources are also important, such as those of the government organs of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the source materials of various political parties. These are above all the legislative-normative acts, documents of government organs, of the army and police, of organs specialized for the struggle against communist, documentation of the courts of inquiry, official records of economic, social, and cultural institutions. In various ministries there existed special departments for the struggle against communist activities; the organs of town police prepared special card indexes of communists which registered more than 80% of all members of CPY. Before the war a large number of communists was condemned to hard labour, and so large quantities of material have been preserved covering the life and work of communists in

119 Rodoljub Colakovic, *Kazivanja o jednom pokolenju* (Speaking about a Generation), HI, Sarajevo, 1966-1972. With these memoirs one of the oldest Yugoslav communists gave his vision of the time (1919-1941), its actors and their mutual relationships, aspirations, and destinies, the rises and falls of the CPY and of the revolutionary movement.

120 *Iugoslaveni u oktobarskoj revoluciji 1917-1921* (Yugoslavs in the October Revolution 1917-1921), Beograd 1977.

121 *Cetdeset godina. Zbornik secanja aktivista jugoslovenskog revolucionarnog pokreta* (Forty Years. An Anthology of Mémoires of the Activists of the Yugoslav Revolutionary Movement), I-IV, Beograd 1960.

122 *Spanija 1936-1939* (Spain 1936-1939), I-V, Beograd 1971.

123 Djuro Djakovic, *Zivot i djelo. Gradja za monografiju* (Djuro Djakovic, His Life and Work. Materials for a Monography), Slavonski Brod 1979; I. Ocak, *Vojnik revolucije. Zivotni iborbeni put Vladimira Copica* (A soldier of the Revolution. The Life and Fight of Vladimir Copie), Zagreb 1980; V. Dedijer, *Josip Broz Tito, Prilozi za biografiju* (Josip Broz Tito, Contributions to His Biography), HI, Beograd 1953-1981; I. Ocak, *Braca Cvijic* (Brothers Cvijic), Zagreb 1982; B. Gligorijevic, *Izmedju revolucije i dogme. Vojislav Vujovic u Kominterni* (Between Revolution and Dogma: Vojislav Vujovic in the Comintern), Zagreb 1983; I. Ocak, *Gorkic: Zivot, rad , pogibija* (Gorkic: His Life, Work, Ruin), Zagreb 1988.

124 Z. Protic, M. Matic, M. Vesovic, *Socialisticki i radnicki pokret i KPJ 1867-1941* (Socialist and Workers' Movement and the CPY 1867-1941). Bibliography 1945-1969, Beograd 1972. See also: A. Lenik, *Bibliographical Choice of Historical Studies on Communism and Stalinism in Yugoslavia*, *The International Newsletter of historical Studies on Comintern, Communism and Stalinism*, Vol. I (1993), No. 1-2, pp. 75-76.

prisons and at hard work. According to the data thus preserved more than 1.500 court proceedings of a political character took place in the period between the two world wars; in these more than 10.000 persons were tried. The documentation covering the examinations before the courts of inquiry represents one of the richest archival funds of the prewar Yugoslavia. The archival material connected with the activity of state organs of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, as well as the varied materials covering the activity of the bourgeois and oppositional parties is really wholly preserved<sup>125</sup>: it can be found in the Archives of Yugoslavia (Arhiv Jugoslavije) in Belgrade and in the Institute of Military History (Vojnoistorijski institut) in Belgrade, as well as in the national and regional archives of former Yugoslavia. These archival sources, literature, and the socialist and communist press is complemented by the large number of bourgeois reviews and newspapers. They offer not only additional data, they help us also to reconstruct and correct individual CPY positions.

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125 R. Mircic, Arhivska gradnja centralnih institucija Kraljevine Jugoslavije 1918-1941 (Archival Materials of the Central Institutions of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia 1918-1941), *Archivist*, Beograd, XI (1971), pp. 80-90.