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The Communist Party of Yugoslavia, 1919-1941

1. The Legal-Political Aspect

Under the influence of a series of concrete historical circumstances (the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the military and political predominance of the Kingdom of Serbia, the military and political weakness of the ruling circles in Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Voivodina, as well as the feebleness of the democratic forces) the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SCS)¹ was created on 1 December 1918² by the union of the State of the Slovenes, Croats and Serbs³ with the Kingdom of Serbia.⁴ The nations and national minorities which joined the new state⁵ had different economic, political and cultural heritages, different regional and religious characteristics, and important mental differences. Nevertheless, they were in many respects close to each other; above all they were ethnically related. At the very beginning the question arose as to the form of the new state: should it be centralised or federative. Their politically more advantageous international situation made it possible for the Serbians, who emerged victorious from the World War, to impose a centralized form of government on the state together with their hegemony over the other nations of the new kingdom (in spite of the fact that when it was promulgated, equality between the nations, fraternity, and democracy were expressly emphasized). This centralization was cleverly hidden behind the artificially created Yugoslav national unity which was (because of the interests of the market) also supported by the liberally oriented bourgeoisie of the other Yugoslav nations. This situation was legalized by the first Yugoslav constitution, promulgated on the day of St. Vitus, 1921 (the so-called St. Vitus' Day Constitution).⁶ According to this constitution, the state was a parliamentary monarchy (with one chamber only) ruled by the Karageorgevichi (Karadžorđevići) dynasty of Serbia. The idea of one unified (Yugoslav) nation and of the abolition of the regional peculiarities came most clearly to light in the administrative-territorial division of the state into administrative units which systematically bypassed the historical borders of the individual Yugoslav countries and even ignored their names. As regards the economic, social, and, to a certain extent, the cultural policy, this constitution imitated the progressive Weimar Constitution (on 28 February 1922 the rather liberal "Law for the Protection of Workers"⁷ was accepted which legalized several important rights and freedoms, as well as institutions for the protection of workers - the chambers of labour, trade unions, the right to strike). The main political factors in the state were - besides the royal government and the army, and, to a certain extent, the Catholic Church - the political parties. Among these, the strongest and most influential were two Serbian political parties: the National Radical Party (*Narodna radikalna stranka*; NRS), and the Yugoslav Democratic Party (*Jugoslovenska demokratska stranka*; JDS). They supported centralism and unity, and opposed autonomy for Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The non-Serbian nations gathered primarily around their own national parties: the Croatian Republican Peasant Party (*Hrvatska*

¹ *Kraljevina Srbov, Hrvatov in Slovencev* (*Kraljevina SHS*).

² B. Petranović, M. Zečević, *Jugoslavija 1918/1988*. Tematska zbirka dokumenata (Belgrade, 1988), pp. 135-144 (Proclamation of the Kingdom of SCS, 1. December 1918).

³ The State of the Slovenes, Croats and Serbs (*Država Slovencev, Hrvatov in Srbov - Država SHS*) existed from 29. October 1918, when Slovenes, Croats and Serbs seceded from Austria-Hungary.

⁴ Voivodina united with the Kingdom of Serbia on 25 November 1918 and the Kingdom of Montenegro, on 26 November 1918.

⁵ Petranović, Zečević, *Jugoslavija 1918/1988*, p. 138: According to the census made in 1921, 11,984,991 people lived in the territory of the new state (248,666 square kilometres).

⁶ *Službene novine kraljevstva SHS*, 28. June 1921 (the constitution of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes).

⁷ Petranović, Zečević, *Jugoslavija 1918/1988*, pp. 292-302.

republikanska seljačka stranka; HRSS), The Slovene People's Party (*Slovenska ljudska stranka*; SLS) and the Yugoslav Moslem Organization (*Jugoslovenska muslimanska organizacija*; JMO); they opposed centralism and the St. Vitus' Day Constitution and demanded its revision in the form of a federal reorganization. Besides these parties, two other class-oriented parties were important: The Socialist Party of Yugoslavia (*Socijalistička partija Jugoslavije*; SPJ), which, though unsuccessful in the parliamentary elections, was nevertheless influential in the workers' organizations (trade unions and chambers of labour); and the Party of Agricultural Workers (*Zemljoradnička stranka*) which won its seats in the agricultural sectors of Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Communist Party of Yugoslavia (*Komunistička partija Jugoslavije*; KPJ), which emerged from the 1920 elections for the Constituent Assembly as became the third strongest political party in the state, continued to work illegally with its reduced membership after its prohibition in August 1920.

During the twenties the crisis in the relations between Yugoslav nations continually deepened. It could not be solved either by frequent elections, held before the expiry of a parliament's term of office, or by the various temporary party coalitions. King Alexander could not attain national accord through parliament by means of an agreement between the parties and so he decided to stage a coup d'état on 6 January 1929.⁸ He suspended the constitution and parliament, he prohibited all political parties and, supported by the army, he seized absolute power, ruling by means of dictatorial decrees until 1931. The state was renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (*Kraljevina Jugoslavija*) on 3 October 1929. Administratively it was divided into nine banats.⁹ However, under pressure from domestic opposition and foreign countries (France, Czechoslovakia), the king promulgated an imposed constitution (1931)¹⁰ introducing a two chamber parliament (the House of Deputies and the Senate), enabling political parties whose organization covered the whole of Yugoslavia to be active; they were not, however, allowed to be organized on the basis of nation, class or religion. After the murder of King Alexander (October 1934) the country was ruled by vice-regents who tried to lessen the national frictions while preserving at the same time the orientation towards unity and centralization. For this reason the Yugoslav Radical Union (*Jugoslovenska radikalna zajednica*; JRZ) was created in 1935 as a state party from a merging of the NRS, HRSS and JMO. Intending to widen its influence, in 1936 the JRZ founded its own workers' section (the Yugoslav Labour Union) and in October 1937 also its youth organization. Yet in spite of having such influence, the JRZ never succeeded in lessening the national tensions in the state. Above all it did not succeed in settling the conflict between the Serbs and the Croats. A partial Serbo-Croatian agreement was eventually reached in 1939 between Cvetković and Maček, yet this agreement, the result of a compromise, remained incomplete and satisfied nobody. The quick collapse of Yugoslavia during the war of April 1941 (on 17 April the Yugoslav Army capitulated) proves that the regime did not succeed in solving any of the essential problems of Yugoslav society; indeed, the state had actually disintegrated on 10 April, with the proclamation of the Independent State of Croatia (*Nezavisne države Hrvatske*) in Zagreb.¹¹

The Economic Aspect

The Kingdom of Yugoslavia¹² was clearly an agricultural state, with the private property divided into small peasant possessions. According to most criteria it was, between the two world wars, one of the least developed states in Europe. The industrial revolution came slowly and late, a whole century later than in the better developed European countries. The reconstruction of the country and its economic development were hindered by the consequences of the war which had just ended, and in which the Yugoslav nations had suffered heavy

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 313 (proclamation by King Alexander).

⁹ *Službene novine Kraljevine Jugoslavije*, 5 October 1929.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3 September 1931.

¹¹ F. Čulinović (ed.), *Dokumenti o Jugoslaviji* (Zagreb, 1968), pp. 346-387.

¹² Branko Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918-1988*, (Belgrade, 1988), Vol. 1; G. D. Jackson, *Comintern and Peasant in East Europe 1919-1930* (New York and London, 1966).

losses of both population and material goods.¹³ Characteristic of the new state was the very low level of economic and cultural development,¹⁴ and a number of stark contrasts: between the economically relatively developed regions (Slovenia, Croatia and Voivodina) and the underdeveloped areas (Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro). In the northern and western parts of Yugoslavia, the economic and political positions of the capitalist class were based on the connections of the former feudal lords and the owners of factories and banks with foreign capital (French, British, German), which controlled enormous concessions in the fields of mining, industry, and banking. With the creation of the new state, the widening of the market and the expansion of the better developed parts was extended into the less developed areas. This united the interests of capital in all parts of Yugoslavia during the first years after the war. In the southern regions conditions inherited from the semi-feudal system continued to prevail. The agrarian reform, started in 1919,¹⁵ aimed to abolish feudal conditions (in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Kosovo and Dalmatia) and to distribute large estates among the small land owners and landless people. Altogether about 1,700,000 ha of agricultural land was distributed (leased).¹⁶ The agrarian reform continued into the thirties and was never fully completed.

3. The Periodization

In Yugoslav historiography the following periodization of the history of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1918-1941) has been agreed upon (and in this context also that of the Communist Party). The first period covers the time from the creation of the state up to its first constitution (1 December 1918 - 28 June 1921). This was the time of revolutionary turmoil in all the areas of Yugoslavia, the time of the formation of the Communist Party, the time when the Greater Serbian bourgeoisie, aided by the bourgeoisie of other Yugoslav nations, consolidated its class power, thwarted revolutionary development, and at the same time enforced the centralized state system. The second period covers the time of an apparently parliamentary system (1921-1929). This parliamentary democracy was limited to certain classes only (the KPJ was prohibited until the end of the existence of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia), and even within this framework it was further limited by the powers and activity of the king. The crisis caused by the unsolved social problems was a permanent factor. Above all there was the unsolved national question, which erupted with full force. The third period covers the time of the king's dictatorship (promulgated on 6 January 1929), when the king, as the representative of the high bourgeoisie, especially that of Serbia, tried, by abrogating the constitution and using his own absolute power, to suppress by force the unsolved national question, and especially, to annihilate the revolutionary workers' movement. Nevertheless this dictatorship was gradually forced to yield to bourgeois opposition and to reintroduce an appearance of parliamentary forms into political life. This relaxation had its deeper cause in the increased acuteness of the social problem resulting from the general economic crisis. The violent death of King Alexander (October 1934) did not immediately mark the end of the dictatorship (the imposed constitution of 1931, the electoral law, the law regulating the work of political parties, etc.), yet in spite of this it represented the beginning of a new period. The fourth period covers the time of the vice-regents' rule. It continued until the Fascist states attacked Yugoslavia (6 April 1941). Characteristic of this final period is, on the one hand, the definitive reconstruction and political consolidation of the illegal KPJ - within the framework of the struggle for the anti-fascist people's front - and, on the other hand, the ruling bourgeoisie's endeavours to consolidate its power by means of a new merging of political parties (JRZ). The defeat and disintegration of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia during the short

¹³ The material damage caused in all parts of Yugoslavia is evaluated at 23 billion French francs. The loss of population, based on the demographic estimation, was 10%.

¹⁴ According to the 1931 census, 76.3% of the population supported themselves with income from agriculture and fishery, while only 10.7% were employed in industry and skilled crafts. In all parts of the state except Slovenia more than half of the population was illiterate.

¹⁵ "Prethodne odredbe za pripremu agrarne reforme", *Službene novine Kraljevstva SHS*, 27 February 1919.

¹⁶ In 1921, 80.4% of the population of the Kingdom of the SCS lived on income from agriculture. According to the structure of possessions, 67.8% of all people lived on possessions that were smaller than 5 ha. Altogether they possessed 28% of the total land area.

April war was followed by the period of the war for national liberation and the people's revolution (1941-1945),¹⁷ which was succeeded by Socialist Yugoslavia.¹⁸

4. Available Sources

a) Archives

The central institution which keeps and collects the archival material connected with the creation and development since 1918 of the workers' movement and the Communist Party in Yugoslavia is the Archives of the Central Committee of the Union of Yugoslav Communists (*Arhiv CK KPJ*) in Belgrade. It was founded in October 1948. At the same time Party archives were founded in each individual republic. They collect and keep material with a regional significance. By now it is certain that all the sources preserved in the country have been collected and the more important papers and collections in the regional, national, and federal archives have been the object of research, as have the archives in the Eastern European countries (in these, important material concerning the history of the KPJ has been collected, covering also its co-operation with the parties of those countries, and the activities of the Yugoslav Communist emigrants there). The most extensive research was carried out in the Archives of the former Institute for Marxism-Leninism in Moscow, from where were obtained more than 200,000 microcopies and pages from selected archival material (these are predominantly Party documents that were sent by the KPJ to the Comintern). On the basis of such research the KPJ archives have been complemented.¹⁹

The party documents are very typical as regards their external characteristics, form and contents (while it was working illegally - 1921-1941 - the Party was forced to maintain methods of strict secrecy in its communications). Most frequently these documents have no stamp or seal, nor do they bear signatures. They rarely give the date and place of their origin. The documents written inside the country are usually full of abbreviations, codes, pseudonyms, frequently also ambiguities and allegorical meanings. Most of the written material (reports and other texts) was intended for the leadership of the KPJ, which had worked abroad for more than ten years. This is why a considerable part of the material has either been lost or can only be found preserved in foreign archives. The documents that were sent to the organs of the Comintern are mainly preserved. The documents drawn up abroad are in foreign languages (Russian, German). In the archives of the Central Committee (CC) of the KPJ there exist, among other things, the following important collections of unpublished archival material: documents concerning the CC of the KPJ, the CC of the Union of the Communist Youth of Yugoslavia (*Savez komunističke omladine Jugoslavije*; SKOJ), the Communist International, the Communist Youth International (CYI), the Peasant International, the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU), the Red Aid of Yugoslavia, Yugoslav students in the USSR, the Socialist Party of Yugoslavia and memoirs. After the self-abolition of the Union of Yugoslav Communists abolished itself in 1990, the archival material of the Party was transferred to the corresponding state archives of the individual republics; the material of the former Archives of the CC UYC, however, is now preserved in the Archives of Yugoslavia (*Arhiv Jugoslavije*) in Belgrade. The most important archival material covering the activity of the SPJ is preserved in the Archives of the Workers' Movement (*Arhiv radničkog pokreta*) in Belgrade: the archives of the SPJ; the collection of Vitomir Korać (a leading personality in the SPJ); the papers of the CI (documents by Communists concerning Socialists).²⁰

¹⁷ Branko Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918-1988*, Vol. 2: *Narodnooslobodilački rat i revolucija (1941-1945)* (Belgrade, 1988).

¹⁸ Branko Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918-1988*, Vol. 3 (Belgrade, 1988).

¹⁹ M. Bosić, *Arhivski izvori za istoriju SKJ do 1941 godine*, *Arhivski pregled*, 2/1969.

²⁰ Among the archives abroad, the largest number of documents on SPJ is preserved in the International Institute of Social History (*Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis*) in Amsterdam (Karl Kautsky archives, archives of the Second International, archives of the Labour and Socialist International).

b) Published Documents

A considerable part of the Communist Party's archival material has been published. Certainly all the more important material concerning the four congresses and five conferences has been published at some time in party newspapers and reviews. After the war, the surviving stenograms and notes covering individual party congresses and conferences were published together with the necessary scholarly accompaniment. The documents of the leading party organs, especially the correspondence between party leaders, has been used and published within the framework of the series of their collected works.²¹

c) The Press

A rich source for studying the history of the Communist and Socialist movements in the period between the two World Wars is also the press, calendars, May Day publications and other printed material of a similar character.²² During the legal period (1919-1921), the KPJ had at its disposal a rich variety of publications. Besides the daily newspaper *Radničke novine* (The Workers' Newspaper), the organ of the KPJ which had a relatively large circulation (15,000), there existed 15 more periodicals and one other newspaper, with a total circulation 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 KPJ endeavoured to start publishing several new legal and illegal papers. After the prohibition of the KPJ and up until the end of 1924 dozens of Party, Youth, and trade-union papers were published. Several were confiscated immediately on publication of their first number, others could continue appearing only for a very short time. In spite of the diminishing of the number of printed copies and in spite of the prohibition, there were two papers which continued to appear for a long time: *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 of the KPJ. It was started in January 1929 and it continued to appear for 14 years. Altogether 99 numbers were published.²³ It was printed in Zagreb, Vienna, Moscow and Brussels. The most important Comintern documents connected with the Yugoslav question were published by the Marxist newspaper *Klasna borba* (The Class Struggle), whose editors were the top leaders of the Party (1926-1937). In spite of the fact that it was conceived as a theoretical Party organ, this newspaper's primary role was to inform about the events in the life of the Party. From the middle of the thirties, the KPJ endeavoured to engage non-Communists, democratically and progressively oriented people, and with them to begin to publish new literary-social and political periodicals and newspapers: *Odjek* (The Echo), *Naše novine* (Our Newspaper), *Izraz* (Expression), *Pečat* (The Press), *Naša stvarnost* (Our Reality), *Pregled* (Survey). With the strengthening of the KPJ's influence in the youth movement, in women's organizations and in trade unions there 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 Yugoslav emigrants: *Pravda* (Justice) in Canada, *Radnički glasnik* (Workers' Herald) in Chicago, *Slobodna reč* (The Free Word) in USA.

Besides the Communist press²⁴ there was also plenty of press from the SPJ. The archival copies of this press are certainly completely preserved. This was not an anti-regime party. The SPJ had some thirty papers or party and trade-union organs, which appeared continuously or periodically in many of the larger towns of

²¹ Collected works of J. Broz Tito, E. Kardelj, B. Parović, M. Pijade, V. Vlahović, B. Kidrič, F. Filipović, Dj. Djaković, and others.

²² Milan Vasović, *Revolucionarna štampa u Kraljevini Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca 1918-1929* (Belgrade, 1980); M. Vasović, *Ilegalna štampa Komunističke partije Jugoslavije 1929-1941* (Belgrade, 1989).

²³ After the publication of the phototypographic edition (Belgrade, 1968) four more numbers were discovered; there are indications that, besides these, three more numbers were published.

²⁴ Reprinted editions: *Proleter* (The Proletarian), reprint: Belgrade, 1968; *Dimitrovac* (May-September 1937), reprint: Belgrade, 1968; *Radnička straža* (The Workers' Sentinel, a socialist paper, 1919-1929), reprint: Vukovar, 1980; *Borba* (The Struggle, 1922-1923), reprint: Belgrade and Zagreb, 1972; *Žena danas* (The Woman Today, 1936-1940), reprint: Belgrade, 1966; *Ženski svijet* (The Woman World, 1939-1941), reprint: Zagreb, 1979; *Klasna borba* (The Class Struggle, I: 1926-1929, and II: 1930-1934, 1937), reprint: Belgrade, 1984.

Yugoslavia: *Socijalist* (Socialist), *Socijalističke radničke novine* (Socialist Workers' Newspaper), *Radničke novine* (Workers' Newspaper), *Naprej* (Forward), *Radnički pokret* (Worker's Movement), and others.²⁵

d) *Memoirs, Biographies, Bibliographies*

The Yugoslav historiography of the Communist and workers' movement is rich in numerous autobiographical works concerning the activities of the Party in the period between the two World Wars. These are diaries, notes, memoirs, autobiographies and other works. Unpublished, but in good condition, is the diary of one of the founders of the KPJ, covering the period of his participation in the Spanish Civil War.²⁶ The memoirs of Rodoljub Čolaković are considered to be among the more important texts.²⁷ Also significant are the memoirs of other Communist activists and those of the bourgeois politicians.²⁸ Yugoslav institutions specializing in the preservation of 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 1,600 memoirs by Yugoslav participants in the October Revolution and published the most important ones in a separate edition.²⁹ When the 40th anniversary of the creation of the KPJ was celebrated, they collected more than 1,500 memoirs by the activists in the Yugoslav revolutionary movement and of these 650 have been published.³⁰ The memoirs of more than 300 participants in the Spanish Civil War have also been published in a separate edition.³¹ Noted among the biographical works are the biographies of exceptional Communist leaders in the pre-war period.³² Also the bibliographies of the Communist and workers' movement have been prepared and published.³³

²⁵ Toma Milenković, *Socijalistička partija Jugoslavije (1921-1929)* (Belgrade, 1974), pp. 709-712 (list of newspapers and reviews which appeared under the auspices of the SPJ).

²⁶ Vladimir Čopić, "Dnevnik 1935-1937", The Archives of the CC UYC, 2 Sp. IV-d/1.

²⁷ Rodoljub Čolaković, *Kazivanje o jednom pokolenju*, 2 vols., (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 KPJ and of the revolutionary movement.

²⁸ Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo, *Revolucija koja teče*, 3 vols., (Belgrade, 1971); Gojko Nikoliš, *Korjen - stablo - pavezina* (Zagreb, 1980); Rudolf Golouh, *Pol stoletja spominov* (Ljubljana, 1966); Jovo Jakšić, "Socijaldemokratska stranka Bosne i Hercegovine 1908-1941" (unpublished manuscript); Milorad Belić, "Uspomene" (typescript, Belgrade, 1962); Dragiša Lančević, "Poslednje godine u politici" (unpublished manuscript, Belgrade); D. Lapčević, *Začeci socializma i komunizma u Jugoslaviji* (London, 1960); Ivan Ribar, *Politički zapisi*, 4 vols., (Belgrade, 1949-1952); Milan Stojadinović, *Ni rat, ni pakt. Jugoslavija između dva rata* (Rijeka, 1970).

²⁹ *Jugosloveni u oktobarskoj revoluciji 1917-1921* (Belgrade, 1977).

³⁰ *Četrdeset godina. Zbornik sećanja aktivista jugoslovenskog revolucionarnog pokreta*, 4 vols., (Belgrade, 1960); *Bitka, kakor življenje dolga. Pričevanja o revolucionarnem in osvobodilnem boju Slovencev* (Ljubljana, 1975).

³¹ *Španija 1936-1939*, 5 vols., (Belgrade, 1971).

³² Djuro Djaković, *Život i djelo. Građa za monografiju* (Slavonski Brod, 1979); B. Gligorijević, *Između revolucije i dogme: Vojislav Vujović u Kominterni* (Zagreb, 1983); I. Očak, *Gorkič, život, rad, pogibija* (Zagreb, 1982); V. Dedijer, *Josip Broz Tito. Prilozi za biografiju* (Belgrade, 1953); I. Očak, *Braća Cvijić* (Zagreb, 1982); V. Dedijer, *Veliki buntovnik Milovan Djilas* (Belgrade, 1991).

³³ Žarko Protić, Milan Matić, Milan Vasović, *Socijalistički i radnički pokret i Komunistička partija Jugoslavije 1867-1941* (bibliography 1945-1969, Belgrade, 1972).

e) Other Sources

Besides the sources connected with the work of the KPJ, other sources are also important, such as the Kingdom of Yugoslavia government organs and the materials of various political parties. These are above all the legislative-normative acts, documents of government organs, army and police documents and those of organs specializing in the struggle against Communism, documentation of the courts of inquiry and 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, registering more than 80% of all members of KPJ. Before the war a large number of Communists was arrested and condemned to hard labour, and so large quantities of material have been preserved covering the life and work of Communists in prisons and at hard labour. 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 sets of archival papers from pre-war Yugoslavia. The archival material connected with the activity of state organs of the Kingdom of the SCS, as well as the varied material covering the activity of the bourgeois and opposition parties, are really preserved in their entirety and can be found in the Archives of Yugoslavia and in the Institute of Military History, both in Belgrade, as well as in the national and regional archives.³⁴ Bourgeois reviews and newspapers offer additional data.

5. The Formation and the Development of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia during the Legal Period (1919-1921)

a) The Labour Movement before 1919

Two facts are characteristic of the development of the Yugoslav nations during the transition from the 19th to the 20th century:

- a considerable lagging behind in the economic and in the general social development, when compared with the Western European countries
- the uneven development of individual Yugoslav nations and regions.

Both these characteristics are a consequence of various foreign influences under which the individual Yugoslav nations had to live for several centuries. The underdeveloped economy made a greater flourishing of socialist ideas and the workers' movement impossible.

In the Yugoslav regions the beginnings of the socialist and workers' movement emerge first during the seventies of the 19th century (parallel to the gradual breakthrough of capitalism). Most of the trade-union organizations and the Social Democratic parties, however, were founded in the period from 1893 to 1903. The ideological and political currents, characteristic in this period of the workers' movements in European countries, were reflected in the workers' organizations in the Yugoslav regions. The first propagators of Socialism (Svetozar Marković, Vasa Pelagić, Vitomir Korać, France Železnikar, and others), as well as the first workers' organizations, were under the influence of the socialist and workers' movement in Germany, Austria, and Russia. These Social Democratic parties were members of the Second International, and their ideological and political developments stayed therefore within the framework of its positions and programme. Throughout the Yugoslav regions (with the exception of Serbia, where the Social Democratic Party was legal during the whole period) workers' parties and organizations were persecuted, and at the outbreak of the First World War they were prohibited by law. At the outbreak of the First World War, the Serbian Social Democratic Party, guided by its exceptional leader Dimitrije Tucović, moved away from the positions of the Second International and embraced a revolutionary orientation. This found expression also in its attitude towards the imperialistic war.³⁵

From 1917 onwards, and especially in 1918, the Yugoslav territories, and especially those controlled by Austria-Hungary (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina) were caught up in the mass movements of

³⁴ R. Mirčić, *Arhivska grada centralnih institucija Kraljevine Jugoslavije 1918-1941*, *Arhivist*, XI (1971), pp. 80-90.

³⁵ S. Kesić, *Radnički pokret u jugoslovenskim zemljama do 1914* (Belgrade, 1976); Mira Bogdanović, "Serbia", in Marcel van der Linden and Jürgen Rojahn (eds.), *The Formation of Labour Movements 1870-1914. An International Perspective*, 2 vols., (Leiden, etc., 1990), vol. 1, pp. 421-438.

peasants, workers and soldiers. These were brought about by social misery and national suppression, and influenced by the October Revolution and the revolutionary turmoil in Europe. These movements were spontaneous and their development bypassed the Social Democratic parties. In this period the trade-union organizations were revived and ideological differences made themselves felt in the ranks of the Social Democratic parties. In the north-western parts of the area (Slovenia, Croatia, Voivodina, Slavonia) the leadership of the Social Democratic parties wanted collaboration with the bourgeoisie and participation in the regional governments and parliaments (ministerialism); on the other hand, the leaders of Bosnian and Serbian Social Democracy adopted the position of the revolutionary class struggle and the unity of the trade-union movement. Because of this, the Serbian Social Democratic Party refused to participate in the international conference in Berne (1919), convened with the intention of reviving the Second International.³⁶

At the same time, after returning to the country, the members of the Yugoslav group of Communists³⁷ formed the illegal Yugoslav Communist Revolutionary Union (9 March 1919). This organization did not only propagate the ideas of the October, and afterwards of the Hungarian Revolution, it also made organizational, military and political preparations for spreading the revolution into Yugoslavia. In a number of towns a revolutionary press emerged. At the beginning of 1919 the newspaper *Plamen* (The Flame) began to appear in Zagreb, in which well known Yugoslav intellectuals, authors, and publicists interpreted the character and the meaning of the October Revolution. Their interest helped to bring about the affirmation of Marxist ideas in the cultural sphere. In January 1919 intensive preparations began to be made for the unification of the Yugoslav workers' movement.

The call of the leadership of the Social Democratic parties of Serbia and of Bosnia and Herzegovina (January 1919) to convoke a congress with the purpose of creating "Yugoslav Social Democracy" was soon supported by the Yugoslav Communist Revolutionary Union, by the left-wing groups in the Social Democratic Party of Croatia and Slavonia, by the Dalmatian Socialists, by the Social Democratic organizations in the Slovene Littoral (in spite of the fact that this region was occupied by Italy), and by the restored Social Democratic organizations in Montenegro and Macedonia, and in the regions of Banat, Bačka and Baranja. All these organizations accepted the position that their future unified organization must have a class character and that it must not co-operate with the bourgeoisie (the anti-ministerial position). The initiative for the creation of a unified workers' party and trade unions was rejected by the leadership of the Social Democratic Party of Croatia and Slavonia, by the opposition group in the leadership of the Social Democratic Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina (the so-called *zvonaši*) and by the Slovene Social Democrats. They considered that, because of the regional and "racial" peculiarities, a federalistic organization would be best for the workers' movement.

b) The Unification of the Labour Movement

There were 432 delegates at the "Congress of Unification" in Belgrade (from 20 to 23 April 1919). They represented some 130,000 organized supporters of the workers' class movement from all parts of the state (with the exception of Slovenia). At this congress, which was marked by opposing positions towards the concepts of the revolutionary and reformist currents, the Socialist Workers' Party of Yugoslavia (Communists) (*Socjalistička radnička partija Jugoslavije (komunista)*; SRPJ (k)) was created. According to its statute, it was organized as a united party, and not as a union of parties. Its highest organs were the Congress and the Central Committee.³⁸ All other organs (the central and regional committees, the parliamentary group, the party press) were subordinate to them. The congress accepted the fundamental document containing the party programme, "The Basis of Unification". "The Basis of Unification" (it included the general part of the programme of the Serbian Social Democratic Party which was taken from the Erfurt Programme of German Social Democracy) stated that

³⁶ *Zgodovina Zveze komunistov Jugoslavije* (Ljubljana, 1986), pp. 18-57.

³⁷ The federation of foreign sections and groups was founded with the CC of the Russian CP in May 1918. It was the first organized attempt at gathering left-wing forces from the ranks of volunteers, prisoners of war and emigrants who were willing to carry to their countries the experiences and the message of the Russian Revolution. From 1918 to 1919 eleven sections were founded (the Yugoslav section, in Moscow in November 1918).

³⁸ Filip Filipović and Živko Topalović were elected secretaries, and Vladimir Čopić became organisational secretary.

capitalism was passing into its last phase and that the class struggle was developing "into large social revolutions", which created conditions "for the introduction of a Communist economy". The congress considered that "it was possible to demolish capitalism and to establish a Communist society, so that the proletariat could achieve political power". It found that the Second International was not able to cope with this situation. So it decided that the new party would join the Third International.³⁹

The strategic orientation towards a revolutionary struggle was not, however, accompanied by a corresponding concrete revolutionary programme. "The Practical Programme of Action" was completely oriented to a long-term political struggle within the framework of the capitalist system. It did not put forward any direct revolutionary demands on behalf of the working class, nor were its authors aware of the significance of the national and agrarian questions for the class struggle of the proletariat in a multinational and agrarian state such as the Kingdom of the SCS. The SRPJ (k) considered that constitutionally the national question had been solved in 1918. It supported the idea of a unified state with a republican organization and with local self-management for regions, districts and communities. It considered that a state organized in this way offered the best chance of abolishing the historical differences between Slovenes, Croats and Serbs and merging the three "tribes" into one nation, and that such a state also offered a way of successfully conducting the class struggle, because "federalism would also be dangerous to the unity of the working class itself, and to its movement, at a time when there is the possibility of a proletarian revolution". In this way the national movement, in a state which was shaken by deep social and national contradictions and revolutionary changes, remained outside the revolutionary strategy of the class struggle of the proletariat. With regard to the agrarian question, the congress limited itself to demanding the distribution of feudal estates among landless peasants and the abolition of feudal relations. It adopted the idea of a common class frontier of the industrial and agrarian proletariat, and not of a widely conceived union of workers and peasants. Solutions to the national, peasant and agrarian questions, suggested by the congress,⁴⁰ were not based on the objective socio-economic and political conditions that existed in the state; they were rather the results of a synthesis of the Social Democratic ideological heritage with the experiences of the October Revolution, or the consequence of a compromise between the reformist and revolutionary ideological currents.

At the end of the first day of the congress (20 April) a conference of women Socialists was convened. It led to the unification of all previous women's movements into the United Socialist (Communist) Woman Movement (*Jedinstveni ženski socijalistički (komunistički) pokret*). The newly founded movement adopted completely the programme of the SRPJ (k). It decided to form its own regional and area movement leaderships of and to start its own paper *Jednakost* (Equality).⁴¹

At the same time as the Party congress, the congress for the unification of the trade unions⁴² took place in Belgrade (from 20 to 23 April 1919). Its participants were mainly the same delegates (432). This congress, too, adopted the principle of the unity of the class movement of workers and of the mutual alliance of the Party and trade unions. The congress founded a united centre of trade unions, The Central Committee of Workers' Trade Unions of Yugoslavia (*Centralno radničko sindikalno veće Jugoslavije*; CRVSJ),⁴³ which represented the majority of the workers organized in trade unions. The close alliance between the CRVSJ and the CPY found expression, among other things, in the fact that they had common leaderships and that the Party papers were also trade-union organs. In the period 1919-1920 the CRVSJ organized many political and economic actions against employers and state authority: the typographers' strike (1919), the general strike on 20 and 21 July 1919 organized against the interventions in Russia and Hungary, the tobacco-industry workers' and railwaymen's strikes (April 1920), the strike by workers in the state mines of Bosnia and Slovenia (December 1920), and

³⁹ From its creation in April 1919 the KPJ was always a member of the Comintern (until the dissolution of the Comintern in May 1943).

⁴⁰ *Prvi (osnivački) kongres SRPJ(k)* (Belgrade, 1990).

⁴¹ Jovanka Kecman, *Žene Jugoslavije u radničkom pokretu i ženskim organizacijama 1918-1941* (Belgrade, 1978).

⁴² *Radničke novine*, 1 May 1919; T. Milenković (ed.), *Dokumenti Centralnog radničkog sindikalnog veća Jugoslavije 1919-1921* (Belgrade, 1983), pp. 78-79.

⁴³ CRVSJ was one of the founders of the Profintern in 1921.

others. In this period the working class of Yugoslavia gained the introduction of the eight-hour working day, increased wages, and the improvement of working conditions, the participation of trade-union organizations in the conclusion of collective agreements, the election of workers' commissioners, and the right of workers to work.

The Party congress did not discuss the proposals for the creation of independent Communist youth organizations which were emerging both at home and abroad. Thus it was that in Yugoslavia the idea of creating an independent youth organization was born first among people at school and students who had studied abroad during the First World War. The return of these young people, after the October Revolution and the big changes in the workers' movement, speeded up the creation of the Union of the Communist Youth of Yugoslavia (*Savez komunističke omladine Jugoslavije*; SKOJ). The SKOJ was founded in Zagreb on 10 October 1919 at a conference of representatives of the Communist youth clubs and local associations, as an autonomous and independent organization. The conference elected its temporary leadership and decided to publish the paper *Crvena zastava* (The Red Banner) as the organ of SKOJ. In Zagreb, too, its central committee, also temporary, was formed. It resolved to begin forming Communist youth associations throughout the country. The regional leaderships of the SKOJ were founded in Ljubljana, Belgrade and Sarajevo. The SKOJ had at that time about 3,000 members, organized in 37 local associations. At the time of its first congress (Belgrade, 10-14 June 1920) it had some 8,000 members. Despite being founded with the consent of the inner leadership of the SRPJ (k), the creation of the SKOJ was not conformable with the statutes and programme of the SKPJ (k). This caused the centrists in the SKPJ (k) to oppose the creation of the Communist youth organization. This opposition became even greater when the SKOJ adopted the programme of the CYI (November 1919), which, with its avant-gardism, differed from the programme of the SKPJ (k). In January 1920 the SKOJ published its programme, which aimed at introducing socialist revolution into the Kingdom of the SCS. Although still small in number, the SKOJ led - together with the SKPJ (k) and with the revolutionary trade unions - a series of political actions up to the time of the *Obznana*, that is the decree prohibiting all Party activity passed on 29/30 December 1920.⁴⁴

Communist participation in the social and political disturbances in 1919⁴⁵ and 1920, and the Party's gains in many towns and villages during the local elections in Croatia and Montenegro, caused increased government pressure against the SKPJ (k). At the same time an ideological split developed in the Party between the centrists and the leftists. The former, who followed ideologically the example of the reformist workers' movement in Austria, Germany and France, stressed that the Kingdom of the SCS was an industrially underdeveloped state with a small working class and therefore only a gradual capitalist development could bring about conditions favourable to a future proletarian revolution. Besides this, its success would also depend on the revolutionary processes and proletarian revolutions in the developed capitalist states of Europe. They favoured the playing down the class struggle and they opposed the close connection between the political and trade-union movements of the working class. Others, convinced Communists, tried to prove that the prerequisites for a revolution already existed in Yugoslavia and that their development required an ideologically and organizationally united proletarian party and the closest possible alliance of the political and trade-union movements. In the shadow of this conflict, which took place on the pages of the Party press, preparations were made for the second party congress.

c) The Second Party Congress: the Split with the "Centrists"

In an atmosphere of clarifying the relations between the Communists and the "centrists" - who in a formally united Party differed from the former in their views on the strategy and tactics of the class struggle - the second congress of the SKPJ (k) took place at Vukovar (20-24 June 1920); 347 delegates from all parts of the state participated. They represented more than 800 organizations with more than 65,000 members, while at the same time the united trade unions had more than 208,000 members. The congress rejected the counter-proposals of

⁴⁴ *Kongresi, konferencije i sednice centralnog organa SKOJ-a 1919-1924* (Belgrade, 1983); *Kongresi, konferencije i sednice centralnih organa SKOJ-a 1925-1941* (Belgrade, 1983); Slavoljub Cvetković, *Napredni omladinski pokret u Jugoslaviji 1919-1928* (Belgrade, 1966); Miroljub Vasić, *Revolucionarni omladinski pokret u Jugoslaviji 1929-1941* (Belgrade, 1977).

⁴⁵ More than 200,000 organized workers in the larger towns participated in a strike on 1 May 1919, manifesting their unity and solidarity with the world proletariat and supporting the young Soviet Republic.

the minority - the centrists - and adopted the Communist proposals of the Party programme, statutes and resolution; it decided that the Party should be renamed the Communist Party of Yugoslavia.⁴⁶ Its programme, which was submitted by Filip Filipović, was based on the platform of the CI adopted at its First Congress.⁴⁷ Proceeding from the evaluation that the imperialistic phase in the development of capitalism had begun the programme stated that therefore the epoch of the proletarian revolution had started. The programme foresaw the struggle of the KPJ to introduce the dictatorship of the proletariat and create the Soviet Republic of Yugoslavia as a member of the Soviet Federation of the Balkan-Danubian Republics. It demanded the expropriation and socialization of production and trade, the separation of church and state and the abrogation of state debts. It stated that the CPY would use all possible means to realize these aims and that it would assume power only when the majority of the proletariat and the working masses had accepted the Communist programme and aspirations. In line with this programme it adopted a resolution on the political situation and the tasks of the KPJ, which laid especial stress among the fundamental party tasks on: propaganda for the revolution; the formation of a united front by the revolutionary proletariat of the Balkan-Danubian states, in agreement with the resolution of the Balkan Communist Federation;⁴⁸ the defence of the Soviet Union; the popularization of the new forms of proletarian democracy and of the Soviet way of organizing society and the state. The congress, however, ignored the warning about the multi-national character of the Yugoslav state, which urged that the national question should play a greater role in the policy of the Communist Party. On the contrary, the KPJ continued to support the idea of national unity, convinced that the national question had been solved with the creation of the Yugoslav state. The structure of the Party, too, only temporarily took into consideration the peculiarities of the historical ethnic regions (for as long as the regional governments continued to exist). With the decision of the congress - with its statute - the Party became centralized. The regional Party leaders were nominated by the Central Party Committee, and the local Party leaderships were also responsible for administering the regional trade unions. The conditions for admitting new members were made stricter. Only an employed worker could apply to become a member of the Party and then only if he had been a member of the united trade unions.

The centrists drew up a "political declaration" (D. Lapčević) in opposition to this Communist programme. In it they expressed their disagreement with the Party's evaluation of the situation and the tasks it agreed to undertake ("the central task of the Party should be to work for social reform"). They demanded that the adoption of the programme should be postponed until the next congress. They also unsuccessfully opposed the centralized organization of the KPJ and its organizational association with the trade unions. After that they left the congress. Thus an exclusively Communist Party was elected at the Vukovar congress.⁴⁹

After the split at the second congress and the adoption of Bolshevik ideology by the socialist movement in the Yugoslav countries, we find among the ranks of the centrists opposition also to the ideas of the October Revolution, and especially to the policy of the CI. The well known Socialist Božidar Adžija considered that the Comintern, with its distinctly Bolshevik character, had become deviationist and that its programme could not be practically applied under the specific conditions prevailing in various countries.⁵⁰ The centrists published their

⁴⁶ *Drugi (vukovarski) kongres KPJ* (Beograd, 1983).

⁴⁷ *Komunistička internacionala. Stenogrami i dokumenti kongresa*, Vol. 1ss. (Gornji Milanovac, 1981ss.), Vol. 1, pp. 137-142.

⁴⁸ The Balkan Communist Federation (BCF) was founded at the third conference of the Balkan Social Democratic parties in Sofia on 15 January 1920, as a union of the Communist parties of Bulgaria, Greece, Yugoslavia, and Romania. The BCF joined the CI and became its Balkan section with the task to harmonize the decisions and actions of the Balkan Communists and to endeavour to create the Balkan Soviet Socialist Federative Republic.

⁴⁹ Pavle Pavlović and Jakov Lastrić were elected presidents of the Central Party Committee, Sima Marković and Filip Filipović for its secretaries, and Vladimir Čopić for its organisational secretary.

⁵⁰ Božidar Adžija, *Politički položaj i socijalna demokracija* (Sarajevo, 1920), pp. 29-31.

Manifesto³¹ on 25 September 1920. In it they: denied the Marxist character of Bolshevism; stated that the October Revolution was an irrational deed; linked the destiny of the world revolution with the revolutionary changes in the developed capitalist countries. They considered that in Russia the Bolsheviks had committed violence on the course of history because in Russia no economic and social conditions existed for the introduction of Communism and that this premature leap and overthrow determined the Bolsheviks' and the Russian government's whole international and foreign policy. The Manifesto asserted that the Bolsheviks wanted to impose their domination over the Third International and thus transform it into an instrument for the implementation of the USSR's foreign policy. "The Bolsheviks try to use all foreign parties as their own blind agents only. They act very rudely to all individuals and groups who preserve their own independent views. They misuse the great authority of one proletarian revolution and the great material resources of one state intending thereby to shatter the workers' world movement. Because of social weaknesses in their own country they are unconditionally forced to try to provoke as soon as possible armed uprisings in other countries in order to make their own revolution universal".³² Furthermore, the Manifesto submitted to sharp criticism the Conditions for Admission that had been adopted by the Second Congress.³³ They considered them to be a dictate by Russian Bolsheviks which would lead to a general split in the international workers' movement, claiming that "they introduce a strict military centralization and the dictatorship of the leaders, they abolish internal party democracy, they transform the parties into closed sects". They rejected also the CI's opinion about the unavoidability of civil war and revolution and judged that a submission to Russian interests would have disastrous consequences for the workers' movement in Yugoslavia. The final conclusion of the Party opposition was: "The decisions adopted in Moscow regarding the organization of the Third International serve one purpose only: to impose by all means Russian political methods on other parties. We do not adopt this policy of a premature provocation of the revolution by force, of a damaging and premature seizure of power, because we believe that such a policy would ruin not only our Party, but also the whole working class as a class - therefore we are opposed to such an organization of the Third International."³⁴ In December 1920 the opposition published the pamphlet "Contributions to our questions of dispute",³⁵ which shows the wider, European context of its standpoint and of its criticism of the Third International. It supported the European positions in the criticism of Bolshevism, declaring itself opposed to the acceptance of Russian experience as a universal way to a new society. Reprinting a certain number of articles written by well known critics of Bolshevism (Friedrich Adler, G. Ruehle and others) in its pamphlet the opposition referred also to some critiques which had appeared within the Third International itself. In this way some critically slanted articles became accessible to the Party members, including some that had appeared in the Soviet press, discussing the excessive centralization and bureaucratization of the Bolshevik party. Others revealed the views of Ukrainian Communists on Russian centralism, etc. Within a month the 53 signatories of the Manifesto were excluded from the leadership of the KPJ (on the recommendation of the CI representatives), while 62 members were given Party punishments because they had expressed solidarity with the signatories.³⁶ Thus ended the first phase in the differentiation and political polarization in the Yugoslav workers' movement. For a time the centrists worked under the name of the Socialist Workers' Party of Yugoslavia (*Socijalistička radnička partija Jugoslavije*). In December 1921 they united with the Social

³¹ *Naša sporna pitanja. Manifest opozicije Komunističke partije Jugoslavije* (Belgrade, 1920), pp. 3-42. This Manifesto was signed by the 53 most distinguished "centrists" from Belgrade; subsequently 62 "centrists" from Bosnia have also expressed their agreement with the Manifesto. The author of this document was Živko Topalović.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 25s.

³³ *Komunistička Internacionala*, Vol. 2, pp. 392-396.

³⁴ *Naša sporna pitanja*, p. 41.

³⁵ *Prilozi za naša sporna pitanja* (Belgrade, 1920).

³⁶ "Odluke Centralnog veća KPJ povodom akcije 'centrumaša'", *Radničke novine*, 28 November 1920; *Drugi (vukovarski) kongress KPJ*, pp. 268-270.

Democrats to form the Socialist Party of Yugoslavia.⁵⁷

d) *The Elections for the Constituent Assembly and the Prohibition of KPJ Work*

In the elections for the Constituent Assembly (28 November 1920), in which 22 political parties participated, the KPJ reached third place, winning 12.36% of all votes and 58 seats out of the total number of 419 places in the parliament. The Social Democrats gained 2.9% of the votes and 10 seats.⁵⁸ The strengthening of the revolutionary movement and the increased influence of the KPJ gave rise to growing anxiety in the ruling class. Making use of the ebb in the revolutionary movement in Europe, and especially the defeat of the revolution in Hungary, the government decided to settle accounts with the workers' movement. The immediate cause was the miners' strikes in Bosnia and Slovenia in November 1920, during which, because of the brutality of the police, there was even some armed fighting.

Using the pretext that the KPJ was making preparations for a revolution, the government promulgated the *Obznana*⁵⁹ in the night from 29 to 30 December 1920. All Communist activities were prohibited until the adoption of the new constitution. Many Party and trade-union leaders were imprisoned and the property and archives of the Party confiscated. Adapting itself to the new situation, the KPJ adopted the decision of April 1921, to make preparations for a transition to operating illegally. In June it speeded up its reorganization. It decided to form an Alternative Central Party Leadership which could lead the Party if the Party leadership was arrested. At the same time the prohibited trade unions fought to win legal status. The permission to re-start the work of the CRVSJ was given by the government (23 May 1921) on condition that the leaders publicly renounced all contacts with the KPJ. In spite of the fact that the Plenum of the CRVSJ adopted the resolution of political neutrality for the trade unions (June 1921), the authorities did not give permission for its work to be re-started. The leadership of the KPJ then initiated a proposal for the creation of "Independent Trade Unions". This suggestion was realized at the conference of 12 trade union associations in Belgrade in September 1921. The reformist trade-union leaders, who supported the idea of subordinating trade unions to the state organs, increased their activity at the same time.

Confronted with police terror and with the prohibition of the KPJ, the party members were losing their belief in the revolutionary perspective. Anarchistic or individual terror as a legitimate means in the struggle of the youth organization began to spread to the SKOJ during the first half of 1921. It was in this spirit that the terrorist organization The Red Right (*Crvena pravda*) was formed, which organized assassination attempts on the Regent Alexander and his minister M. Drašković. The consequence of this was the introduction of a special law which prohibited all Communist activity (2 August 1921).⁶⁰ At the same time all the Communist Members of Parliament were arrested. After this the Party operated illegally until 1941.

⁵⁷ Milenković, *Socijalistička partija Jugoslavije*, p. 73.

⁵⁸ Narodna skupština Kraljevine SHS (ed.), *Statistički pregled izbora narodnih poslanika za Ustavotvornu skupštinu (28 November 1920)* (Belgrade, 1921).

⁵⁹ *Službene novine Kraljevine SHS*, 31 December 1920.

⁶⁰ "Zakon o zaštiti javne bezbednosti i poretka u državi", *Službene novine kraljevine SHS*, 13 August 1921.

6. The Activity of the KPJ during the Period 1921-1929

a) The Illegal Party's Breakthrough into Public Political Life

The prohibited KPJ continued with its secret activity both at home and abroad as a section of the CI, yet without the possibility of making its presence felt, which alone could have made it an influential factor in the political life of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. In spite of the fact that it was excluded from political life, in the eyes of the regime the Party remained its main adversary. The KPJ was considered as an agent working for foreign interests (the CI and the USSR), as a force which was trying to use violence to reach a change in the constitutional order. Up to the end of 1921, some 70,000 Communists and trade-unions members were arrested while, at the same time there was also a large number of members who no longer carried out Party work.⁶¹ At the conferences and congresses of the CPY reasons were discussed for the defeat of the KPJ in 1921, the questions of its organization, the factional conflicts between the "left" and "right" wings of the Party, the peasants and trade-unions problems.

After the Party became illegal, a split developed in the Alternative Central Party Leadership (Kosta Novaković, Triša Kaclerović, Moša Pijade), which was then leading the Party, as to the question whether the KPJ should concern itself with reconstructing the legal forms of its work, or whether it should concentrate on its illegal activity. In September 1921 the Executive Committee of the KPJ in Emigration was formed by a group of Party leaders (Sima Marković), which created in practice a double Party leadership. This was also the beginning of the factional conflict in the KPJ. In order to co-ordinate their activities, the two Party leaderships met at the first state conference (Vienna, 3-17 July 1922).⁶² In their discussions two opposing standpoints were formulated: Marković considered that the revolution had been temporarily postponed and so it was necessary to direct activity towards the achievement of constitutional changes; Novaković, on the other hand, judging on the basis of positions formulated at the Third CI Congress regarding the crisis of capitalism,⁶³ thought that this crisis ought to be exploited in order to reach a rapid revolutionary change. Even though the views of Marković won the support of the majority, the disagreements in the Party leadership⁶⁴ concerning the question of the subsequent development of the Yugoslav Communist movement continued. The Executive Committee of the CI (ECCI) intervened, supporting the legitimate leadership of the majority (the "right wing"), at the same time paying attention to the standpoint of the minority (the "left wing").⁶⁵ In its resolution on the Yugoslav question⁶⁶ the Fourth CI Congress came to the conclusion that in 1921 there were objective reasons for the defeat of the KPJ, to which the weaknesses of its internal organization (the inclination to use the parliamentary forms of struggle) also largely contributed. It considered that the conflicts in the KPJ leadership were of a personal character.

Parallel to the process of reconstructing Party organizations (up to 1923) the KPJ also ran a successful action for the renewal of the legal work of the Independent Trade Unions. These represented a counterbalance to the reformist trade unions (30,000 members) which founded - at the "congress of unification" (Belgrade, 7-8 January 1922) - the Central Workers' Union of Yugoslavia (*Glavni radnički savez Jugoslavije*; GRSJ) which joined the International Federation of Trade Unions in Amsterdam.⁶⁷ These Independent Trade Unions organized

⁶¹ The membership of the KPJ decreased from 65,000 in June 1920 to 1,000 in January 1924.

⁶² Prva zemaljska konferencija KPJ, Archives of the CC UCY, KI 1922/16-11.

⁶³ *Komunistička internacionala*, Vol. 3.

⁶⁴ Elected into the new Party leadership - The Central Party Council (*Centralno partijsko vijeće*) - were S. Marković, Dj. Djaković, S. Kaurić, L. Radovanović, L. Stefanović, M. Todorović, L. Klemenčić, M. Barajević and D. Bukvič.

⁶⁵ The ECCI confirmed the decisions of the first conference, with the only difference that it nominated Kaclerović for the Party leadership, instead of Klemenčić and Kaurić.

⁶⁶ *Komunistička internacionala*, Vol. 5, pp. 823-826.

⁶⁷ Milenković, *Socijalistička partija Jugoslavije*, pp. 594-633.

alone, without the support of the GRSJ, several economic and political actions (e.g. in 1922 about 90,000 workers participated in the tariff and strike actions), and had nearly 30,000 members. With the creation of the Independent Trade Unions and also of other legal organizations - The Union of Workers' Youth of Yugoslavia and the Independent Workers' Party of Yugoslavia (*Nezavisna radnička partija Jugoslavije*; NRPJ) - the KPJ succeeded in re-opening for itself a way into public political life. The NRPJ, founded in Belgrade (13-14 January 1923),⁶⁸ emerged at a time of internal Party conflict, which had a negative influence on its results in the parliamentary elections of March 1923, when it won only 1% of the votes only and no seats. This electoral failure deepened even more the ideological and political disagreements between the left and right wings of the Party leadership.

b) The Struggle for a New Orientation for the Party Programme and for the Unity of the Party

The second state conference of the KPJ (Vienna, 9-12 May 1923)⁶⁹ adopted the suggestion of the left wing: to create an illegal Party based on the system of cadres and organized on the principle of democratic centralism. At the same time the decision was taken that the leadership of the Party⁷⁰ must work inside Yugoslavia. It was concluded that the KPJ must expand their influence in workers' organizations (cultural associations and sports clubs) and that combat units must be formed to defend the Party from attacks by Fascist-Nationalist organizations and, finally, that discussion should begin on the agrarian and national questions.

The debate on the national question, one of the most important discussions held by the KPJ since May 1923,⁷¹ brought about a completely new ideological and political Party strategy. In this discussion strong arguments were brought forward to support the thesis that the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes became a nation at the moment of their unification within the framework of Yugoslavia and so the theory of "national unity" (i.e. that these three peoples ought to form one nation) had no justification. Such a conclusion naturally also opened the discussion concerning the structure of the Yugoslav state and of the Party. Two concepts finally crystallized in this connection: the autonomic principle (as a substitution for the centralizing concept of the organization of the state) and the federative principle (as the best form for free economic and cultural development and for realizing the republics' national sovereignty). The majority considered (under the influence of the CI) that the Balkan Federation ought to be their first aim as an intermediate stage on the way to the creation of a Danubian-Balkan Federation. The resolution on the national question, adopted by the third state conference of the KPJ (Belgrade, 1-4 January 1924)⁷² summarized the results of the debate conducted in 1923. It supported the concept of a federative state with a republican constitution and with fully developed local self-management. Nevertheless, these KPJ decisions regarding the national question did not remain in force for very long. The Fifth CI Congress (1924) disavowed this standpoint on federative organization. In its resolution on the national question in Yugoslavia⁷³ it demanded the division of Yugoslavia into a number of states, requiring Slovenia, Croatia,

⁶⁸ *Istorijski arhiv KPJ*, Vol. 2 (Belgrade, 1949), pp. 272-279. The NRPJ was organized on the same principles as the legal KPJ had been. At the end of 1923 it had 3,500 members. The bourgeois press sharply opposed the founding of this party (with the explanation that the Communists were again organizing themselves, under a new name), so did the Socialists, who maintained that the working class had no need of another party besides the SPJ.

⁶⁹ Archives of the CC UCY, KI 1923/29-6. The conference took place in the presence of 34 delegates from the country, 4 emigrants and 2 CI representatives.

⁷⁰ Elected as the new leadership of the KPJ were the minority representatives: T. Kaclerović, Dj. Djaković, S. Miljuš, Dj. Cvijić, M. Trifunović, and others.

⁷¹ *Razprava o nacionalnem vprašanju v KPJ leta 1923. Dokumenti o oblikovanju federativnega nacionalnega programa KPJ*, with an introduction by Latinka Perović, (Ljubljana, 1990).

⁷² *Istorijski arhiv KPJ*, Vol. 2. About fifty delegates participated in this conference, representing 1,000 members of the illegal KPJ.

⁷³ *Komunistička internacionala*, Vol. 7, pp. 1000s.

and Macedonia to abandon the state of Yugoslavia and create their own independent republics. The idea of Yugoslavia's breaking up had begun to ripen in the ranks of the Balkan Communist Federation, undoubtedly with the support of CI, towards the end of 1923. Believing from the evaluation that in Western Europe a temporary stabilization of capitalism had taken place, the CI judged that the peasantry and the unsolved national question could be used in the Balkans as a means for creating a new revolution. For this reason its main attention was concentrated on Yugoslavia as the least stable link in the group of Balkan states and it proclaimed that, as an artificial creation of Versailles, Yugoslavia should be broken up.

The third conference also discussed the fundamentals of the strategy and tactics of the KPJ. In the opinion of the new leadership of the KPJ,⁷⁴ the problem of organization was of essential importance for Party activity. It decided that the illegal KPJ must be strengthened by the creation of Party cells in the workplaces and should seek support above all among industrial workers. It paid special attention to the schooling of Party cadres⁷⁵ and to the publication of the illegal press. It supported the idea of a common class struggle by the Party and trade unions (for the tactics of a united proletarian front),⁷⁶ demanding that all Communists in the trade unions must strictly adhere to and pass on the Party's views on trade-unions policy. The new organization led to an increase in the number of Party members (from 1,000 to 2,500 at the end of 1924).

Based on the conclusions of the third conference, a referendum was organized in the Party concerning its fundamental documents. They were accepted by the majority of its members, with the exception of the Belgrade Party organization. The Belgrade "Party opposition" voted against all the documents resulting from the third conference and it did not accept the newly elected leadership of the KPJ, which followed the directives of the CI. The nucleus of this opposition was formed by 15 trade-union functionaries from Belgrade (their leader was the Party theoretician Marković), who had their largest stronghold among the independent trade unions in Belgrade. These conflicts deepened especially after the intervention of the CI and its demand that the slogan of "self-determination of nations" must be understood as a demand for the "separation of suppressed nations and the creation of separate republics".⁷⁷ The opposition objected to this standpoint. It considered that there was no chance of a revolution in the Balkans in the immediate future, and that there was no need for the Yugoslav state to be split up. This conflict grew even more acrimonious when the Croatian Communists (following a CI directive) openly supported some separatist movements and parties (the VMRO in Macedonia and the HRSS in Croatia), and when they began to speak publicly of the hegemonic behaviour not only of the Serbian bourgeoisie, but also of the Serbian people. In a renewed Party debate (in autumn 1924) the opposition suffered defeat and left the Party. These conflicts in the leadership of the KPJ were discussed at in a special commission of the ECCI in which Stalin himself participated. The Yugoslav question was placed on the agenda of the Fifth Plenum of the ECCI (April 1925). It condemned the views of Marković⁷⁸ as "Social Democratic and opportunistic" (identical with the views of the SPJ),⁷⁹ because he had not supported the CI's demand that the KPJ must struggle for the breaking up of Yugoslavia.

At this point it was decided to convoke a Party congress and to overcome the conflict within the

⁷⁴ Elected into the leadership were mainly the supporters of the "left wing" (T. Kaclerović - secretary, F. Filipović, K. Novaković, S. Miljuš, V. Čopić) who demanded the Bolshevization of the KPJ.

⁷⁵ Yugoslavs studying in the USSR, Arhiv CK SKJ.

⁷⁶ The Communist understanding of the united proletarian front was rejected by the SPJ: "The SPJ unconditionally supports the organizational unity of the working class (both in the Party and in trade unions), yet it categorically rejects the Communist policy of a united front and of partial common actions [...]. An organizational unification can be made only if the Communists renounce their Communist principles and tactics and adopt the Socialist ones." Milenković, *Socijalistička partija Jugoslavije*, p. 581.

⁷⁷ G. Vlačić, *Jugoslovenska revolucija i nacionalno pitanje 1919-1927* (Zagreb, 1984), pp. 454-458.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 390-394; Sima Marković, *Nacionalno pitanje u svetlosti marksizma*, (...), 1923).

⁷⁹ Cf. Milenković, *Socijalistička partija Jugoslavije*, pp. 658-688.

leadership. The third Party congress (Vienna, 17-22 May 1926)⁸⁰ agreed with the evaluation reached at the Fourth CI Congress, and by the ECCI, of the reasons for the "collapse of the CPY" in 1921 and judged that the third state conference "had laid the foundations for its ideological and political Bolshevization". It agreed also with the evaluation that Yugoslavia was a product of the imperialist World War and that it suffered from its unsolved national and peasant questions. It saw a solution to this crisis in the destruction of bourgeois power and in the creation of a Balkan federation of workers' and peasants' republics. It adopted the new statute (membership in the Party is possible only if the candidate accepts the programme and the statute of the CI and the KPJ, and if he is willing to carry out their decisions), it created the Central Committee (CC) as its highest organ and added to the name of the Party: Section of the CI. At the congress representatives of the both "left" and "right" wings practised self-criticism and expressed a desire to establish ideological and political unity within the Party. As a result of this, representatives of both factions were elected to the CC of the KPJ, as well as some neutral young activists.⁸¹ Nevertheless, not even now was the unity really established in the KPJ. The difference and the conflicts in the leadership began to spread into the party organizations and came to light also in the activity of the Independent Trade Unions, whose strength and influence began to decline (membership fell from 30,000 in 1923 to 21,000 in 1927). The right wing, which believed that the trade unions' main effort should be directed towards the skilled craftsmen, was defeated at the congress of Independent Trade Unions (1927). The congress adopted the position of the Party "left": that the main effort should be concentrated on work among the industrial workers.

It soon became obvious that the ECCI's insistence on reconciling the factions was ineffective. Instead of pursuing concrete political work they conducted endless theoretical discussions. In the years 1927-1928, however, a resolute struggle against factionalism⁸² began to be waged among the Party cadres who had come from the ranks of the industrial workers. In January 1928 Djuro Djaković appealed to the CI, attacking both groups because of their factional conflicts and because of the complete blockage of Party work, which marginalized the KPJ in the political life of the state. At the eight conference of the Zagreb Party organization, in February 1928, the antifactional group, led by Josip Broz, A. Hebrang and others, was victorious: it condemned the activity of both groups as politically damaging. After that a special consultation was organized by the ECCI in Moscow (April 1928), which replaced the members of the CC of the KPJ with a temporary leadership.⁸³ At the same time it addressed an "Open Letter"⁸⁴ to the Party members, ordering them to contribute to the liquidation of factionalism in the Party. This letter found support in all the Party organizations, with the exception of Belgrade (the ECCI called this a "right deviation").

The fourth congress of the KPJ (Dresden, 5-16 November 1928)⁸⁵ was convened in an atmosphere of support for the "Open Letter". This congress, the climax in the KPJ's Bolshevization, was characterized by sharp criticism of the factions that had existed till then, and especially of Marković, who was ordered to obey the decisions of the Party organs. He accepted the criticism and addressed a letter - an "Appeal" - to the Belgrade

⁸⁰ *Treći kongres KPJ* (Belgrade, 1986). At this congress 36 delegates participated with full voting right and 12 with a consultative voice. Also present were the representatives of the CI.

⁸¹ Elected into the CC were: S. Marković (political secretary), R. Vujović (organisational secretary), D. Gustinčič, R. Jovanović, Dj. Salaj, L. Stefanović, M. Žorga, K. Novaković, G. Vuković, V. Jelaska, J. Domanji, I. Krndelj, Dj. Cvijić, N. Kovačević, and F. Filipović (members).

⁸² Zagreb Party organization became the stronghold of the antifactional group. It was at the same time also one of the strongest Party organizations in the state (Dj. Djaković, B. Parović, J. Broz, J. Kraš).

⁸³ The ECCI demanded the creation of a leadership composed of workers, explaining that "the intellectuals who had led the Party so far had failed". Djaković was nominated as the secretary with the task of preparing the Party congress.

⁸⁴ *Klasna borba. Marksistički časopis. Organ KPJ*, 7/1928 (reprinted: Belgrade, 1984), pp. 327-333.

⁸⁵ *Istorijski arhiv KPJ*, Vol. 2; U. Vujošević, "Četvrti kongres KPJ - obračun sa 'levim' i 'desnim' frakcionaštvom", *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, 1979/2-3. 26 delegates participated in this congress. They represented 2,122 members who were organized in 365 Party cells. The CI sent to this congress P. Togliatti and D. Manuilski and the Communist Youth Organisation, M. Gorkić.

Party organization, which under his influence had left the KPJ. The conclusions of this congress were: that the KPJ must continue to be reconstructed on centralistic principles; its leadership must be composed of industrial workers;⁸⁶ its members must be educated in the spirit of Leninism. On the basis of evaluations made by the Sixth CI Congress,⁸⁷ that in Europe the revolutionary crisis was growing and that the time of revolutionary conflicts was approaching, the congress of the KPJ forecast the imminent outbreak of a democratic-bourgeois revolt which would quickly turn into a proletarian revolution. Agreeing with the CI's judgment that the Social Democracy was a "twin of Fascism" and the main danger to the revolutionary workers' movement, it prohibited KPJ members from joining the reformist trade unions or aligning themselves with the masses gathered around the opposition bourgeois parties. The congress again adopted again the CI's standpoint⁸⁸ on the splitting up of Yugoslavia and the creation of independent national states within its territory.⁸⁹ The KPJ and the CI supported this position until 1935.

7. The Struggle of the KPJ against the Monarchial Dictatorship (1929-1934)

a) The KPJ's Attitude towards an Armed Revolt

With encouragement of this sort from the congress the Yugoslav Communists indulged in political adventurism, which found expression in their "Appeal to the working class and peasants", in February 1929, to start an armed uprising. This was the KPJ's answer to the act with which King Alexander had introduced dictatorship on 6 January 1929.⁹⁰ This appeal by the Party to start an armed fight against dictatorship was strictly observed by the majority of the communists. However, their actions remained isolated; reduced to the distribution of the proclamation and to occasional clashes with the police.⁹¹ The appeal gave the authorities grounds for their repressive actions against the KPJ, which in 1929 was a small party (about 3,500 members), sectarian, without any real influence on the wider masses and without allies among the petty bourgeoisie and peasants. In the period 1929-1931 the regime persecuted the Party, making numerous arrests and killing the top Party and SKOJ leaders. The KPJ as an organization was destroyed. Its CC moved to Vienna (April 1930) and lost contact with the remaining organizations in the country.

b) The Reconstruction of the Communist Party

The experience of its unsuccessful conflict with the dictatorship provided the KPJ with a starting point for its gradual liberation from revolutionary schemes and sectarianism. After 1932 the KPJ began reconstructing itself by putting to work the new cadres, who could independently (without the influence of the CI and the KPJ⁹²) start and lead the actions of the dissatisfied masses (workers, peasants and students) at a time of great economic

⁸⁶ The CC consisted of 16 members, of whom the following were elected to the Politbureau: J. Mališić (political secretary), Dj. Djaković (organisational secretary), Dj. Salaj, Ž. Pecarski, L. Stefanović (members).

⁸⁷ *Komunistička internacionala*, Vols. 8-10.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. 10, pp. 1373-1378 and 1753.

⁸⁹ *Istorijski arhiv KPJ*, Vol. 2, pp. 230-238.

⁹⁰ *Službene novine Kraljevine SHS*, 6 and 11 January 1929.

⁹¹ The constitutional crisis, deepened by the national conflicts, was not really a general state crisis and the beginning of the disintegration of the bourgeois social system, as the Party thought. The Party turned to the peasants as the most numerous social group, yet it did not have footholds in the villages, so its appeal found no wider response among the masses.

⁹² The changes made in the period 1929-1934 by the CI in the membership of the CC of the KPJ, which worked outside the country, were without influence since all this bypassed the Party organizations and the CC had no contact with the actual situation in the country.

crisis. Because of the parliamentary crisis, numerous cultural workers joined the revolutionary movement and began to publish papers with a Marxist orientation. The membership of the CPY grew from 300 (January 1932) to 2,834 (December 1934). The CC⁹³ finally succeeded in establishing contact with the organization inside the country and in contributing to the revitalization of the work of the Party.

The fourth state conference (Ljubljana, 24-25 December 1934)⁹⁴ was a manifestation of the KPJ's reconstruction and its penetration of the political life of the country. The Conference was begun at a time when the Communist movement had not freed itself from its sectarian concepts (the concept of the revolution in two stages, of the destruction of Yugoslavia, of the formation of a "revolutionary trade union opposition" within the reformist trade unions), yet the conference pointed already to the new task of KPJ: the struggle against the danger of Fascism, and for the creation of the Popular Front. The activity of the Party, based on such concept, helped to break the limitations of illegality during the subsequent period.

8. The Formation of the Antifascist Popular Front (1935-1941)

In the middle of the thirties the KPJ's activity was primarily directed at putting into effect the CI's Popular Front policy. With the decision of the Plenum of the CC of the KPJ (Split, 9-10 June 1935)⁹⁵ a change occurred in the KPJ's attitude towards the creation of a front for national freedom.⁹⁶ In its national policy it no longer emphasized the division of the country but rather the right of each nation to self-determination and the possibility of a solution of the national question within the framework of Yugoslavia; this indicated a transition to the federative concept.⁹⁷

The attempt to create an anti-Fascist front from above, by bringing about an agreement between the illegal KPJ and the legal opposition parties and groups, did not succeed, as the opposition bourgeois politicians did not wish to revolutionize the masses and give them a place in the political struggle. So the KPJ now turned its attention to working in the mass organizations (of workers, peasants, youth, intellectuals, petty bourgeoisie) in order to create from below and with their help (through the fight against Fascism and for "bread, peace, and freedom") a Popular Front. The KPJ's new course, which obliged its members to work in the legal trade unions, helped to strengthen the trade-union movement. The Communists were especially influential in the United Association of Workers' Trade Unions of Yugoslavia (*Ujedinjeni radnički sindikalni savez Jugoslavije*; URSSJ), which fought for political and trade-union rights, for the democratization of the regime, against the danger of Fascism and war and against the high cost of living.

This widened political activity helped to speed up the process of the organizational re-ordering of the KPJ. The dynamic development of political conditions in the country and the KPJ's more lively political activity made even more obvious the difference between the leadership abroad and the Party at home. So in the middle of 1935, the CC of the KPJ decided to create a "National Bureau" (*Zemaljski biro*) to lead the Party directly from inside the country. This organ initiated a whole series of actions, but even so there were ever more frequently calls within the Party for the CC to return home from abroad. Leading the Party grew more and more complex because of the large number of Communists who lived abroad, working in the apparatus of the CC of the KPJ, in the CI, or studying in Moscow. Towards the end of 1935 there were altogether 4,500 KPJ members living as political emigrants. This was the greatest number since the time when the Party was declared illegal. The increased KPJ activity provoked the authorities to react with sharp, repressive measures against the KPJ. In the

⁹³ In December 1934 the Politbureau of the CC of the KPJ consisted of the following members: M. Gorkić (secretary), K. Horvatin, B. Parović, J. Broz, A. Muk (members).

⁹⁴ *Istorijski arhiv KPJ*, Vol. 2, p. 220.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Dušan Živković, *Narodni front Jugoslavije 1935-1945* (Belgrade, 1978).

⁹⁷ L. Perović, *Od centralizma do federalizma* (Zagreb, 1984); J. Pleterski, *Komunistička partija i nacionalno pitanje 1919-1941* (Belgrade, 1971). The reason for the transition to the new (federative) national programme, which was confirmed by the ECCI in August 1936, was the strengthening of Fascism on the Yugoslav borders.

spring of 1936 about 1,000 members were arrested and in all some 2,000 Communists saw the inside of a prison before the end of that year. Almost all the members of the National Bureau, a large number of the members of the regional leaderships, as well as some members of the CC living abroad, were arrested. The ECCI was not happy with the work of the KPJ. At the consultation in Moscow (middle of August, 1936) the CC of the KPJ was therefore subjected to sharp criticism, and there the decision was also made to nominate a new KPJ leadership⁹⁸ and transfer the CC's seat to inside the country.

Some of the leaders, including Broz, returned to the country in December 1936, where they continued to pursue an anti-Fascist policy both at home and abroad. The KPJ initiated a broad action for solidarity with the Spanish people 1936-1939. Organizations were created for sending volunteers to Spain. Their centre was in Paris, where the Yugoslav volunteers (1,660) were received and afterwards sent to their destination.⁹⁹ There was also a Yugoslav section with the Commissariat for the International Brigades. Half of the Yugoslav volunteers died on the Spanish battlefields.¹⁰⁰

The crisis in the KPJ continued, affected by the conditions in the USSR and the CI. Stalin's purges affected the KPJ, too. More than one hundred leading Communists were arrested and most of them were shot.¹⁰¹ Almost all those who had been leading the CC were victims: F. Filipović, S. Marković, J. Mališić, M. Gorkić.¹⁰² Factional struggles (the existence of a parallel KPJ leadership in Paris), irregular contacts with the leadership of the CI, the lack of clarity in the position of the mandatary, Broz, as regards his task of forming a leadership inside the country and the cessation of financial aid, were, in 1937, signals which foretold a possible dissolution of the KPJ. After the liquidation of the centres of factionalism among the emigrant Communists and those in prison, Broz won the confidence of the ECCI and set up a temporary leadership inside the country (May 1938). In August 1938 he went to Moscow and with the help of Dimitrov he succeeded in removing the accumulated misunderstandings and feelings of reserve towards the CPY.¹⁰³ He was given a mandate to form the CC inside the country. In practice this was a confirmation of the temporary leadership created earlier.¹⁰⁴ The structure of the new, ideologically united organization, with its 4,500 members, hierarchical and monolithic, was already obvious at the KPJ activists' consultation (June 1939). Broz succeeded in removing all those with factional ambitions and, to a large extent, in establishing the KPJ's financial independence.

The news of the purges, the character of Stalin's power and his domination of the CI gave rise to polemical discussions among part of the left intelligentsia as to the suitability of KPJ policy, which it considered to be Stalinistic. The most forcible public disagreement was expressed by M. Križna in the review *Pečat*, which was gathering place for Zagreb and Belgrade intellectuals. This polemic caused confusion, especially among the Party intelligentsia. Tito defined the position of the Party leadership ("above all it is necessary to find solutions above all for the problems of one's own country") in the review *Proleter*. With this he opened the controversy known as the "quarrel on the literary left", which deepened even more after the Soviet-German Pact. While accepting the CI's evaluation of the imperialistic character of war, the KPJ insisted at the same time on the right to defend the country and intensified its social demands. The KPJ's rather independent policy towards the CI permitted a gradual cessation of polemics.

Economic difficulties, which increased with the outbreak of the World War and with the binding of the

⁹⁸ Nominated to the Politbureau were (in November 1936): M. Gorkić (general secretary), J. Broz-Tito (organisational secretary), S. Žujović, R. Čolaković, P. Voranc, I. Krndelj (members).

⁹⁹ D. Filipović, "Zbirka 'Jugoslovenski dobrovoljci u španskom ratu' u Arhivu CK SKJ", *Arhivski pregled*, 2/1969; *Španija 1936-1939*, 5 Vols., (Belgrade, 1971).

¹⁰⁰ Vladimir Čopić, "Dnevnik 1935-1937", *Arhiv CK SKJ*, 2, Šp. IV-d/1.

¹⁰¹ B. Gligorijević, *Između revolucije i dogme. Vojislav Vujović u Kominterni* (Zagreb, 1983); I. Očak, *Braća Cvijić (Djuka i Štefek)* (Zagreb, 1982).

¹⁰² I. Očak, *Gorkić. Život, rad i pogibija* (Zagreb, 1988).

¹⁰³ P. Damjanović, *Tito pred nalogami zgodovine* (Ljubljana, 1977).

¹⁰⁴ The CC's new assembly was constituted in March 1939: J. Broz-Tito (general secretary), and E. Kardelj, F. L. ... M. Marinko, J. Kraš, M. Djilas, A. Ranković (members).

Yugoslav economy to the economy of Fascist countries, the rapid decline in the living standard and the reactionary measures taken by the government (including the setting up of concentration camps) created a more favourable climate for the strengthening of the revolutionary-democratic movement and the affirmation of the CPY. In order to weaken KPJ actions, in December the regime prohibited the URSSJ, whose membership at that time was more than 150,000 workers. In this period demonstrations, and other forms of political actions organized by the KPJ, developed the character of sharp conflicts with the regime.

On the initiative of the CC the KPJ made an extensive analysis of its policy and strategy. From May till September 1940 regional organizations convened conferences in which 1,500 members participated (out of a total of 7,000 KPJ members and 17,800 SKOJ members). After that the fifth state conference was held (Zagreb, 19-23 October 1940).¹⁰⁵ In the resolution of the conference the Party's fundamental tasks in the coming period were especially stressed: firstly, the determined struggle to defend Yugoslavia's independence and prevent its transformation into a colony of the Fascist powers and, secondly, the mobilization of the masses and their inclusion in the struggle to solve the most acute internal social and national problems.

9. Armed Resistance in 1941

After the Fascist powers invaded Yugoslavia on 6 April 1941,¹⁰⁶ the CC of the KPJ decided that the Party must continue to fight the aggressors, whatever the outcome of the war might be. A War Committee was founded in Zagreb (10 April 1941) with the task of making preparations for the Liberation War - for "national and social liberation".¹⁰⁷ The opening of the Eastern Front (22 June 1941) created favourable conditions - according to the judgment of the KPJ - to start armed fighting. On the same day the CC of the KPJ issued its "Proclamation to the nation of Yugoslavia", calling upon it to take up arms against the occupying forces and their collaborators in the country.¹⁰⁸ The KPJ's international solidarity with the USSR expressed its conviction that the defence of the USSR also served the interests of the nations of Yugoslavia. This was also the meaning the KPJ attached to the telegraphic message from Moscow (22 June 1941) in which the CI stressed that at the present stage it was necessary to help the USSR and not to continue the struggle for the social liberation of the subjugated nations. This established the new international watchword: the CI had abandoned its earlier evaluation of the war as imperialist¹⁰⁹ and demanded the postponement of revolutionary changes (the so-called second stage). This influenced the KPJ, which in its proclamations increasingly stressed patriotic and libertarian keynotes at the expense of the revolutionary perspective. With the declaration of the National Liberation War (*Narodno-oslobodilačka borba*; NOB) the KPJ stressed the unity of all the anti-Fascist forces in the country; this, however, did not mean abandoning the class character of the War. The Party changed the contents of its slogans, responding in this way to the directives of the CI, yet it did not change its programme of seizing political power by means of the War. The formation of the National Liberation Committees (*Narodno-oslobodilački odbori*; NOO) as the new organs of state authority during the first year of resistance is, on the one hand, proof of the KPJ's revolutionary perspective within the framework of the National Liberation War and, on the other hand, an indication of the extent to which the instructions of the CI regarding the postponement of the "second stage" were tacitly ignored

¹⁰⁵ *Peta zemaljska konferencija KPJ* (Belgrade, 1980), pp. 221-241.

¹⁰⁶ *Aprilski rat 1941. Zbornik dokumenata* (Belgrade, 1987).

¹⁰⁷ Branko Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918-1988*, Vol. 2: *Narodnooslobodilački rat i revolucija 1941-1945*, (Belgrade, 1988), pp. 483-491 (bibliography).

¹⁰⁸ Petranović-Zečević, *Jugoslavija 1918/1988. Tematska zbirka dokumenata* (Belgrade, 1988), pp. 496s. (the Proclamation).

¹⁰⁹ Cases of defeatism in the KPJ 1939-1940 (after the rapid shift in the line of the CI in autumn 1939) had only a temporary and sporadic character: for a number of years the KPJ had actively combated Fascist ideology in Yugoslavia.

during the war.¹¹⁰

10. CPY and the Comintern: Summary

From its creation in April 1919, the KPJ was always, without interruption, a member of the CI. The CI treated the KPJ as it did other parties: frequently intervening in its internal problems; making decisions in connection with its internal situation; constituting and dissolving its leaderships; issuing directives and recommendations to its members. At a rough estimate the CI - at its congresses, sessions of its executive organs, and within the framework of the Balkan Communist Federation - dealt about 100 times with various aspects of the situation in the KPJ. Ten special decisions were made in connection with the "Yugoslav Question". The most important ones are: the resolutions of the Fourth and Fifth CI Congresses, of the Fifth Enlarged Plenum of the ECCI (1925); of the Presidium of the ECCI (1926), and the "Open Letter" of the ECCI to the members of KPJ (1928). Some 20 CI proclamations were made concerning various political events in the KPJ and in Yugoslavia. Within the framework of the ECCI, two enlarged consultations of the leading KPJ organs were organized (April 1928 and September 1936). Ten times a "Yugoslav Commission" was formed by the ECCI to examine the problems of the KPJ, and eleven times it made changes in the leadership of the KPJ. Many CI instructors, entrusted with special tasks, were sent to Yugoslavia. Some 150 Yugoslav Communists participated in the CI Congresses and Plenums and the sessions of its commissions and organs. About 20 KPJ members worked in the highest CI organs (Presidium, ECCI, Secretariat, CYI, Sportintern, etc.). During the War the KPJ maintained close contacts with the CI by means of radio and other channels of communication. The CI was regularly informed on the progress of the National Liberation War. The KPJ leaders entirely supported the proposal and argumentation for the dissolution of the Comintern (May 1943).

¹¹⁰ P. Moraca, "Odnosi između KPJ i Kominterne od 1941-1945", *Jugoslovenski istorijski časopis*, 1-2/1969.

Appendix: KPJ Membership

Year	Membership
April 1919	130,000
June 1920	65,000
January 1924	1,000
January 1925	2,500
November 1928	2,122
January 1932	300
January 1933	1,400
December 1934	2,834
December 1935	4,500
June 1939	4,500
September 1940	7,000
April 1941	8,000
July 1941	12,000

TÜRKİYE SOSYAL TARİH ARAŞTIRMA VAKFI