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Digitizing Sources for the History of the Communist Movement in Slovenia

In Slovenia, there is yet no specialized digital on-line collection of sources dedicated to the history of the Slovene/Yugoslav/international communist and labour movement. In recent years, however, two distinguished projects had been launched which may in perspective provide an appropriate infrastructure for the research in question. These are: “Sistory – izobraževalni in raziskovalni portal slovenskega zgodovinskega [Educative and research portal of Slovene historiography]” (<http://www.sistory.si/>), and “dLib.si – Digitalna knjižnica Slovenije [Digital library of Slovenia]” (<http://www.dlib.si/>).

The project *Sistory* was launched in 2006 by the Institute of Contemporary History in Ljubljana under leadership of Dr. Mojca Šorn and became accessible to the public in 2008. The structure of the *Sistory* data base is divided into the following sections: Sources, Literature, Biography, History and School, Citation Index, Events, and Links. Even though the project had been planned as bilingual (Slovene/English), communist and labour movement related materials have been so far published only in Slovene language. Considering the fact that the project is still in an early phase of development, most of the digitized collections comprise older or more recent printed versions of already published historical sources. This approach is fruitful, because it provides the researchers with basic information and materials about the Slovene/Yugoslav communist movement as well as with past research results. “Prispevki za zgodovino delavskega gibanja (1960-1985)” [Contributions to the history of the labour movement] and “Zgodovinski časopis (1947-)” [Historical Review], the two most important periodical publications for Slovene historiography, are now completely digitalized, and constitute not merely scholarly reflections of historical sources of the past, but eventually became historical sources themselves. These periodicals tell us a great deal about how the distinctive chapters of local and international communist movement’s histories were investigated.

Applied methodologies and topics which always favoured local (national) history give us the key to understand the position of the scholarly and university apparatus in the socialist society – the continuities and discontinuities with the bourgeois pre-war period, that is with the positivist/narrativist “heritage” which still haunts Slovene historiography. For the same reason, the digitization of old Slovene history schoolbooks and manuals from 1900 until the 1950s, written by the most prominent Slovene historians such as Milko Kos, Ferdo Gestrin and Bogo Grafenauer, is a most welcome contribution for those who study the history of the development of ideological apparatuses at the European periphery. Other *Sistory* digital collections include the following material for the history of Slovene and Yugoslav communist movement:

- *Sources for the History of the Communist Party in Slovenia, 1919–1921* (Ljubljana 1980) provides a collection of various sorts of material illustrating the rupture in Slovene/Yugoslav social democracy soon after the WWI – such as: articles from communist journals (“Delo” [Labour], “Rdeči prapor” [Red Banner], “Proleter” [The Proletarian]), leaflets, petitions,

reflections on Soviet Russia, resolutions from congresses, early anti-Communist propaganda, police reports and observations etc.

- *Discussion on the National Question in the CPY [Communist Party of Yugoslavia] in 1923* (Ljubljana 1990) – a collection of articles and other documents relating the fierce discussions in the CPY in the early 1920s about federalism, autonomy and nationalities in the context of general aspirations for the early Soviet type of political organization of the multinational state.
- *Documents of the People's Revolution in Slovenia (DPRS)* (Ljubljana 1962-1989), 7 volumes (March 1941 – July 1943); *Documents of Bodies and Organizations of the National Liberation Movement in Slovenia* (Ljubljana 2001-), 3 volumes (January 1942 – September 1943);
- *Autumn 1942. Edvard Kardelj and Boris Kidrič Correspondence* (Ljubljana 1963). This collection provides the most basic material regarding the organization of the uprising against the Fascist invaders of 1941 in Slovenia and socialist revolutionary transformation of society, led by the Communist Party of Slovenia through the political organization of the Liberation Front of the Slovene Nation and several other economic, political and military forms of people's resistance. The collection illustrates the dilemmas concerning the character of the national liberation struggle in Slovenia/Yugoslavia (national struggle by form – socialist transformation by essence); it further illustrates the crisis in the liberation movement in late 1942 generated by the great human losses within the partisan movement during the Italian summer offensive, the communists' premature initiative to launch a "second (proletarian) phase of the revolution" and the chaos in partisan military organization, the violence against peasantry conducted by some local partisan commanders, the establishment of armed counterrevolutionary formations. A dispute was eventually settled by agreement between Communists, Christian Socialists and Sokoli [The Hawks, a patriotic gymnastic society] through the declaration usually known as the "Declaration of Dolomiti" in March 1943. The latter cancelled all attempts to form an independent political party.¹
- *Documents of the Federal Representative Bodies of the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia and the Federal Peoples' Republic of Yugoslavia* (1944-1946); transcriptions of discussions held by the Antifascist Assembly of the National Liberation of Yugoslavia, Constitutive Assembly, Provisional National Assembly.
- *Transcripts of the People's Assembly of the People's Republic of Slovenia* (1947-1963); transcripts of discussions of the Slovene legislative body in the period of building the Yugoslav state as federation of (socialist) republics and autonomous regions.
- *Statistical Yearbooks of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia* (Beograd 1929-1940), 10 volumes; indispensable sources for social history of the pre-war Yugoslavia, illustrating all relevant data that help to understand social conditions for the socialist revolution that followed.

The *Sistory* portal (Literature section) further includes several (fully digitalized) historiographical works by Slovene historians and sociologists dealing with the communist movement or socialist/revolutionary transformation of Slovenia. This act of putting the absurdities of copyrights aside is a welcome gesture for the researchers as well as the broader public. Online are, for example: Zdenko Čepič, *Agrarian Reform and Colonization in Slovenia, 1945-1948*, Maribor 1995 (in Slovene); Bojan Godeša, *The Slovene National Question During the Second World War*, Ljubljana 2006 (in Slovene), Vida Deželak Barič, *The Communist Party of Slovenia and the Communist Movement*, Ljubljana 2007 (in Slovene), Primož Krašovec and Igor Ž. Žagar, *Europe Between Socialism and Neoliberalism*,

¹ See: Izjava Komunistične partije Slovenije, slovenskega sokolstva in krščanskih socialistov dne 1. Marca 1943 o okrepitvi politične in organizacijske enotnosti Osvobodilne fronte pod vodstvom KPS [Communist Party of Slovenia – Slovene Hawks – Christian Socialists Declaration on strengthening of the political and organizational unity of Liberation Front under Leadership of CPS], *DPRS* 6, pp. 13-16.

Ljubljana 2011 (in Slovene). The section containing sources also includes video interviews with participants of the national liberation struggle.

To sum up, *Sistory*'s potential as a portal is big. Further digitization of historical sources should include materials from the 1930s (the People's Front period of the communist movement), not to mention documents after 1945 until the collapse of Yugoslavia. Since the archives (local and foreign /Belgrade, Moscow etc.) store a vast amount of materials, the problem of selection cannot be resolved otherwise than through resolving the problem of development of the scientific object of communist and labour movement history.

The *Digital Library of Slovenia (dLib.si)* is a web library, a project developed by the National University Library at Ljubljana in corporation with partners from distinguished universities, institutes and private companies. The concept of *dLib.si* was developed in 2003 and became publicly accessible in 2005. Its collections include texts (journals, books, and scientific reports), photos (maps, photographs, posters) and multimedia (virtual exhibitions, sound recordings). The most valuable collections for the history of Slovene/Yugoslav/international communist and labour movement are probably the digitalized volumes of daily bourgeois newspapers published in Slovenia from the second half of the 19th century until 1945, such as the liberal "Jutro" ("Morning", 1920-1945) and "Slovenski narod" ("Slovenian Nation", 1868-1945), and the catholic-conservative "Slovenec" ("Slovene", 1873-1945). The articles provide analyses of the communist movement, testimonies of anti-communist propaganda and perception of anti-capitalism since the 19th century and the development of the USSR in general. The digitization of cultural-scientific periodicals such as "Sodobnost" ("Modernity", 1933-1941) and "Ljubljanski zvon" ("The Bell of Liubliana", 1881-1941) provides articles written by the communist ideologues and activists that penetrated traditional or progressive magazines in the 1930s. As far as the post-1945 history is concerned, the digitization of scientific publications such as "Problemi" ("Problems", 1962-), "Časopis za kritiko znanosti" ("Journal of the Critique of Science, 1973-) is indispensable for researching the development of Marxist thought in Slovenia and Yugoslavia, its deep criticism of orthodoxy (Stalinism) but also Yugoslav self-management and the evaluations of the Yugoslav model of developmentalism, especially the unequal development of the federation (the problem of Kosovo since the early 1980s). All the materials mentioned above are unfortunately so far accessible in Slovene language only.

Sistory and *dLib.si* both provide important material for studying the history of local and global communist movement(s). A comparison between digitized material, especially Slovene historiographical journals and philosophical/sociological journals, offers an outlook to intriguing contradictions of Slovene socialist society, contradictions that persist until this day. How was it possible that major turning points and steps of the development of Marxist theory, the theory of ideology-discourse and radical (Marxist or world-system theory) political economy had so little or no impact on traditional production of historiography? It is still fashionable in Slovenia to describe the *ancient regime* as totalitarian or authoritarian and yet, the case of Slovene historiography – narrative and positivist –, reveals its immunity to political, theoretical and ideological turning points that occurred in that period. It might be argued, however, that socialist society in Slovenia/Yugoslavia developed several autonomous social spheres which were very similar to those in modern bourgeois states. It might be further argued that the hegemony and dominance of the communist party was fading through the course of that development. How exactly this happened is a matter of future research. *Sistory* and *dLib.si* portals offer enough good material to start research of this kind.