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Never-ending vigilance: The Yugoslav State Security Service and Cominform Supporters after Goli Otok

Throughout the existence of socialist Yugoslavia, the Yugoslav State Security Service was the primary guardian of the communist party-state against “internal enemies.” Known colloquially as “the Udba,” under the leadership of Aleksandar Ranković it led the struggle against pro-Cominform elements in Yugoslavia after June 1948 and the establishment of the island prison camp on Goli Otok.¹ Understandably, this period of extreme repression has attracted the most interest from researchers. By contrast, this paper will explore the issue of surveillance of Cominform supporters after they had returned from Goli Otok. It will look at this issue up to the mid-1980s and will specifically deal with the problem of fear within the State Security Service of a Soviet-led attack against Yugoslavia after Tito’s death. The main argument is that while Soviet-Yugoslav relations ebbed and waned in the decades following the bilateral rapprochement in the mid-1950s, and an amnesty in 1955, the Yugoslav State Security Service maintained operational interest in the activities of Cominform supporters until the Yugoslav state began to collapse. Simply put, as long as socialist Yugoslavia existed, the fear of “Cominformism” never quite disappeared, even though the Cominform itself ceased to exist in 1956.

It is necessary for me to state at the outset that this paper is in many senses an impressionistic draft prepared for the purposes of participation in the June 2018 conference “The Tito-Stalin Split: 70 Years after.” As such, the paper will present qualitative observations and some very preliminary impressions but does not purport to present any systematic research on this topic or detailed conclusions. I leave further research on this matter to colleagues whose curiosity may be piqued by the ruminations contained in this paper.

1 The Yugoslav State Security Service during the course of its existence had a number of different names. For the purposes of this paper, the two most important names were *Uprava državne bezbednosti* (State Security Administration, UDB, 1946-1966) and *Služba državne bezbednosti* (State Security Service, SDB, 1966-1991).

Background

The political and ideological context of the Tito-Stalin split and the main repressive phase symbolized by the establishment of the Goli Otok prison camp and the incarceration of thousands of suspected Cominform supporters has been covered very well in the existing historiography and need not be summarized here.² While the focus on the massive human rights abuses committed by the Yugoslav communist regime on Goli Otok and related prisons such as those at Stara Gradiška and Bileća is understandable, it has led to a comparative neglect of the regime's ongoing vigilance towards, and repression of, suspected Cominformists after the repression at Goli Otok started to recede. Here it should be noted that there are strong indications that the leadership of the Yugoslav party-state knew very well by the early 1950s that a very large portion of those imprisoned in Goli Otok had in fact not been fervent supporters of the Cominform but had rather been hesitant or insufficiently enthusiastic in their support of Tito's stance, or had been the victims of denunciations motivated by various base motives. Alternatively, many of those identified as supporters of the Cominform had committed other kinds of crimes earlier, such as "espionage, banditry, sabotage" but also non-political crimes such as theft and fraud. Law enforcement and state security officials probably found it tempting to "uncover" and punish existing criminals by adding on political charges.³ Nonetheless, regardless of the awareness of the bloated nature of the rolls of *ibeovci* (Cominformists), vigilance remained.

Perhaps the key overriding point that must be emphasized when trying to understand the political context of Yugoslavia's existence is the profound sense of international isolation in which the country found itself after the June 1948 split. The later creation of the Non-Aligned Movement, assistance from the West and rapprochement with the Soviet Union somewhat attenuated this isolation, but the notion of Yugoslavia as a besieged outpost never completely abandoned the mindset of the Yugoslav leadership. As a corollary to this mentality, it is also critical to understand the notion of Yugoslavia being involved in an epic existential struggle in which it had to remain constantly vigilant against both internal and external enemies. A September 1947 document of the Bosnian branch of the Yugoslav State Security Service described how, "in our young state," a mixture of internal and external enemies "oppose and will continue to oppose everything that contributes to the economic strengthening of the state and towards political and cultural development. The activity of the enemy hitherto unfolds on all fields of social, political and economic life."⁴ The fight for the success of socialism was

2 See among other works Banac, *With Stalin against Tito*; Perović, *The Tito-Stalin Split*, pp. 32-63; Previšić, *Povijest informbiroovskog logora*.

3 Archive of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina (henceforth, Archive of MUP BiH), Assistant Minister Svetislav Stefanović, Udba FNRJ to Assistant Minister, Udba BiH, 22 November 1949.

4 Archive of MUP BiH, Udba BiH to all district Udba offices, 13 September 1947.

a fight to the death. The deadly seriousness of the situation was of course reinforced by the witch hunt against “Titoists” in the Soviet bloc.⁵

Beyond Goli Otok

Without any doubt, the prison island of Goli Otok became the embodiment of the repression of real and alleged Cominformists in Yugoslavia. However, Goli Otok was in many ways not just the climax of this repression but also the beginning and not the end of the Yugoslav regime’s concerns regarding the Cominformist threat. As the dossiers of these prisoners in the Slovenian archives show, collaboration with the Yugoslav State Security Service was for very many of them a precondition for their release from the island.⁶ Returning to the mainland, they were deployed to uncover other suspected Cominformists and to check the loyalty of those former Cominformists who had (allegedly) recanted in order to be rehabilitated by the regime. Even when such agreements to act as informants were signed, former prisoners from Goli Otok and other prisons bore the mark of political shame and dishonour for many years. Many of them faced difficulty obtaining gainful employment or any form of career advancement. And anyone who has spoken to Cominformists or their descendants has heard stories of how they were shunned by former colleagues and even family and friends.

Yet the story of the continued interest of the Yugoslav State Security Service remains relatively unknown. It can be told in episodes that generally mimic the ebb and flow of the Yugoslav-Soviet bilateral relationship but also the internal crises experienced within Yugoslavia. For example, coinciding with the rapprochement in the mid-1950s, the Yugoslav government enacted an amnesty.

However, a decade later, in connection with the purge of Yugoslav Vice President Aleksandar Ranković and former head of the Yugoslav State Security Service in 1966, Cominformists again faced scrutiny.⁷ Every time a danger to the Yugoslav communist party-state materialized, it was necessary to manufacture a label that could be used to convey the nature of this danger, and the case of Ranković was no exception. The party-state leadership settled on the label of *birokratsko-etatistički* (bureaucratic-statist) deviationism. This label neatly summarized Ranković’s sins: his centralism and his opposition to (slight) political and (more considerable) economic liberalization. In the context of the time, these sins aligned Ranković with the Cominformists, and it was therefore to be expected that the Yugoslav State Security Service would be concerned about the establishment of a *sprega* (“nexus”) – one of the Service’s favourite words – that would consist of irate and powerful supporters of Ranković and unrepentant Cominformists. The fact that

5 For a thorough and detailed account of the other side of the conflict in one Soviet bloc country, see Vojtěchovský, *Iz Praga protiv Tita!*.

6 Archive of Republic of Slovenia (henceforth, AS), F. 1931, šk.1045-1050.

7 SK and BD book, but criticize its one-sided view of events.

many members of both these groups stemmed from the ranks of the Yugoslav army and the security services only increased the perceived danger that they posed to Yugoslavia.

In the event, the fall of Ranković passed without any larger counterattack on the Yugoslav party-state. Yet the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 again quickly raised concerns about the activities of Cominformists.⁸ The Yugoslav State Security Service claimed that it detected lively activity among Cominformists as a result of the events in Czechoslovakia. In addition to the obvious interest in Soviet Bloc citizens and intelligence agencies, the Yugoslav State Security Service once again fixed the spotlight on the “IB complex.”⁹ The latent network of informants among Cominformists was reactivated, and all former Cominformists underwent security checks again, “with the accent on the so-called ‘top’, possible ‘leaders’ and collaborationists,” and lists for the “isolation” of the most dangerous among them were revised. In Bosnia and Herzegovina alone, 1,087 “former Cominformists” were checked by mid-September 1968, while in Macedonia 375 *informativni razgovori* (interrogations) had been conducted.¹⁰ By contrast, and very surprisingly given the well-known disproportional representation of Cominformists in Montenegro, the republican state security service there had up until the invasion only actively monitored 13 former Cominformists. This rather shocking shortcoming appears to have been a function of severely insufficient staffing of the Montenegrin State Security Service.

Perhaps not coincidentally, the Yugoslav State Security Service the year after the invasion of Czechoslovakia updated its own procedures for wartime conditions, and the Yugoslav government found it necessary to redistribute the *Bela knjiga o agresivnim postupcima vlada SSSR-a, Poljske, Čehoslovačke, Mađarske, Rumunije, Bugarske i Albanije prema Jugoslaviji* (The White Book on the Aggressive Behaviour of the Governments of the USSR, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Albania towards Yugoslavia), which had been originally issued in 1951.¹¹ Likewise, in May 1972, the federal Yugoslav State Security Service (SSUP SDB) reported on aspects of renewed hostile Soviet activity against Yugoslavia.¹² During this time, Yugoslav-Soviet relations were also tense because of Yugoslav suspicions that Branko Jelić, one of the most important figures in the Croat emigration, was receiving support from the Soviet Union.¹³

8 See Akcija Sokol, AS, F. 1931, šk. 1187.

9 Slovenian State Security Service, Draft of the Contents of the Dossier for the Operation Sokol, 21 August 1968, AS, F. 1931, šk. 1187.

10 SSUP SDB, III. Sector, Official Note on Meeting with Republican SDB Inspectors, 19 September 1968, AS, F. 1931, šk. 1187.

11 Letter of SSUP SDB to Slovenian State Security Service, 26 February 1969, AS, F. 1931, šk. 1051.

12 SSUP SDB, Information on Some Forms of Newer Hostile Activity of the USSR against the SFRJ, AS, F. 1931, šk. 1203. The SSUP SDB provided this information to the commission that was preparing the June 1972 visit of Tito to the Soviet Union.

13 SSUP SDB, Information on Alleged Connections of Dr. Branko Jelić with the Soviet Intelligence Service and Other Factors in the USSR, AS, F. 1931, šk. 1203. For evidence that Moscow’s interest in Croat separatism also attracted attention in the West, see Clissold, *Croat Separatism*, pp. 7–8, 19.

A year later, in February 1973, the SSUP SDB analysed hostile Cominformist activities against Yugoslavia.¹⁴ Such activities included the sending of Cominformist propaganda to Yugoslavia from both the Soviet bloc and from Western Europe, an activity that according to the SDB had increased since a meeting of European communist parties in Moscow in 1969. The first packages with such propaganda arriving in Yugoslavia had been sent from Denmark and West Germany. Based on a later SSUP SDB report, it is likely that these packages contained similar propaganda to that which Soviet visitors to Yugoslavia and representatives in the country had been spreading during those years.¹⁵ “All these materials were printed predominantly in the Serbo-Croatian language from 1969 until 1974 in the edition of the agency *Novosti* in Moscow, which means that they were intended for our citizens. In them, the economic, technical and other accomplishments of the USSR and the leading role of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the life and activity of students and the youth in the USSR, the living standards of the Soviet working people, etc., are praised.”¹⁶ The Yugoslav authorities also watched with concern the visits of Cominformists and other Yugoslav citizens to the *Dom sovjetske kulture* (House of Soviet Culture) in Belgrade. Although visitor numbers had dropped after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, they recovered by the mid-1970s.¹⁷ Yet Yugoslav requests for similar cultural exhibitionism in the Soviet Union were consistently rebuffed. “Simply put, we have been put in the position that in the Soviet Union only that which corresponds to their criteria can be said about Yugoslavia.”¹⁸

Just like the Yugoslav State Security Service feared the destructive potential of a nexus of the “fascist emigration” – particularly Croats in Western Europe and overseas – with NATO and recalcitrant nationalist elements in Yugoslavia, so the SDB worried constantly about the links between the Cominformist emigration with the Warsaw Pact and obstinate Stalinists in Yugoslavia. And in the case of Kosovo Albanians, Stalinist or pro-Hoxha leanings blended with Albanian irredentism, which was a point of perennial concern within the Yugoslav security services.¹⁹ From the point of view of the SDB in 1973, “It can be said that since the so-called normalization of relations in 1955

14 SSUP SDB, Review of Hostile Activity towards the SFRJ by the Extreme Portion of the IB Emigration in East and West in Recent Times, AS, F. 1931, šk. 387.

15 SSUP SDB, Overview of Intelligence and Propagandistic-Subversive Activity of Soviet Experts on Temporary Work in Yugoslavia and Counteraction by the SDB, April 1975, AS, F. 1931, šk. 1209.

16 SSUP SDB, Subversive-Propagandistic Activity of the Soviet Union against Yugoslavia, 9 January 1975, p. 5, AS, F. 1931, šk. 1209.

17 *Ibid.*, pp. 6-8.

18 *Ibid.*

19 SSUP SDB, Newer Intelligence Regarding Hostile Activity of the Extreme Portion of the IB Emigration in East and West and the Reaction of the External and Internal Enemy Regarding the Arrest and Trial of a Cominform Group, 1 October 1974, p. 18, AS, F. 1931, šk. 1208. See also SSUP SDB, Intelligence of the SDB about Current Events in NR Albania and the Relationship towards the SFRJ, 1974(?), AS, F. 1931, šk. 1208.

until today, and this is also confirmed by our most recent intelligence, there has not been a correct and frank relationship towards Yugoslavia as regards the IB emigration in these countries.”²⁰ The Cominformist emigration continued to receive support from the Soviet Union and the Yugoslav authorities had intelligence suggesting that émigrés continued to be present on active service in the Soviet army “as well as in almost all institutions which are directed towards Yugoslavia.”²¹ The SDB focused on the “discovery, surveillance, documentation and interception of subversive-propagandistic and other enemy [Cominformist] activity.”²² At the end of 1972, 98 persons in Yugoslavia (51 in Montenegro, 1 in Croatia, 23 in Slovenia, 23 in Serbia, none in Bosnia-Herzegovina or Macedonia) were under active “operational processing” by the SDB.²³ The methods applied by the SDB included surveillance, occasional interrogations, warnings, interception of mail and forced resettlement.

In December 1974, Yuri Andropov, who was at that point the chief of the KGB, met with Yugoslav federal secretary for internal affairs Franjo Herljević in Moscow. Hostile Cominformist activity against Yugoslavia was among the topics discussed, though both agreed that Soviet-Yugoslav relations were improving and both promised to prevent any hostile activities against the other’s state.²⁴ Herljević told Andropov that it would be a shame to let the misguided deeds of a few dozen people ruin the bilateral relationship. Andropov further promised that the KGB would keep an alert eye on Yugoslav Cominformists residing in the Soviet Union and restrict their movements, and he offered to provide his Yugoslav counterpart with reports on their activities. For good measure, Andropov also offered to sell technical equipment for intelligence and counterintelligence operations to Yugoslavia and to assist if needed as regarded the “Yugoslav extreme emigration in Western Europe.”²⁵

In this context, it is worth recalling the Yugoslav State Security Service’s focus on the unrepentant Cominformist Vlado Dapčević, who had fled Yugoslavia in 1948, settling in Belgium after stays in Albania, the Soviet Union and other countries.²⁶ In 1975, Dapčević was arrested in Bucharest and extradited to Yugoslavia, where he was originally sentenced to death. The sentence was commuted to twenty years’ imprisonment. Dapčević was also featured in an October 1974 SDB analytical report on the hostile

20 SSUP SDB, Review of Hostile Activity towards the SFRJ by the Extreme Portion of the IB Emigration in East and West in Recent Times, February 1973, p. 20, AS, F. 1931, šk. 387.

21 Ibid., p. 21.

22 Ibid., p. 23.

23 Ibid., p. 24.

24 Janez Zemljarič, Official Yugoslav Note Regarding Meeting on 4 December 1974 of Yuri Andropov and Franjo Herljević, 10 December 1974, AS, F. 1931, šk. 383.

25 Compare, however, with SSUP SDB, Subversive-Propagandistic Activity of the Soviet Union against Yugoslavia, 9 January 1975, AS, F. 1931, šk. 1209; SSUP SDB, Overview of Newest Intelligence Regarding the Subversive Activity of Representatives of the USSR in the SFRJ, AS, December 1975, F. 1931, šk. 1209.

26 Regarding Dapčević and other *neoibeovci*, see Cvetković, *Između srpa i čekića 2*, pp. 469–95.

activities of the Cominform emigration and their reaction to the arrest of Cominformists in Yugoslavia who had been working on establishing “a new Communist Party of Yugoslavia.”²⁷ The arrest of Dapčević and the trial of the so-called “Bar Group” highlighted the continued repression of Cominformists.²⁸ According to SDB analysts, “Bureaucratic-dogmatic forces and other structures of the internal enemy are attempting to exploit this event to spread propaganda about the difficult state of affairs in the country, the creation of a psychosis of tension and unsolved politico-economic conditions.”²⁹ Worryingly for the SDB, Aleksandar Ranković had also expressed interest in the recent arrests, as had his deposed ally Vojin Lukić.³⁰ By contrast, the ousted liberal Serb communist Latinka Perović and dissident Milovan Đilas had expressed concerns that the Soviet and Cominformist threat was not being taken sufficiently seriously.³¹

Operation “*Center-80*”

This mentality would later become less anxious and urgent than it was in the immediate aftermath of June 1948, but it never quite disappeared and could and did flare up, most critically in the period preceding and immediately following Tito’s death in May 1980. By the beginning of the new decade, even the most zealous admirers of the president for life had to admit that Josip Broz Tito was mortal.

Around 3 January 1980, Tito was hospitalized in Ljubljana. The Slovenian State Security Service in mid-January initiated an operation named *Center-80* in connection with Tito’s deteriorating health and the security implications surrounding it.³² Any “bearers of hostile activity” were to be identified and neutralized during this period, whose critical nature was exacerbated greatly by the recent Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on 25 December 1979. The invasion retraumatized the Yugoslav security services, reawakening memories of 1956 and 1968, both of which had also triggered renewed

27 SSUP SDB, Newer Intelligence Regarding Hostile Activity of the Extreme Portion of the IB Emigration in East and West and the Reaction of the External and Internal Enemy Regarding the Arrest and Trial of a Cominform Group, 1 October 1974, AS, F. 1931, šk. 1208.

28 SSUP SDB, Information on the Terrorist and Other Subversive Activity of the Yugoslav Emigration in East and West and the Relations of the Official Organs of Individual Countries towards This Activity, 21 June 1976, p. 18, AS, F. 1931, šk. 387.

29 SSUP SDB, Newer Intelligence Regarding Hostile Activity of the Extreme Portion of the IB Emigration in East and West and the Reaction of the External and Internal Enemy Regarding the Arrest and Trial of a Cominform Group, p. 16, 1 October 1974, AS, F. 1931, šk. 1208.

30 SSUP SDB, Newer Intelligence Regarding Hostile Activity of the Extreme Portion of the IB Emigration in East and West and the Reaction of the External and Internal Enemy Regarding the Arrest and Trial of a Cominform Group, p. 18, 1 October 1974, AS, F. 1931, šk. 1208.

31 Ibid., p. 19.

32 Information Sheet on Operation “*Center-80*,” 23 April 1981, AS, F. 1931, šk. 378; SR Slovenia, Republican Secretariat for Internal Affairs, Enemy Activity Related to the State of Health of the President of the Republic – Proposal for the Establishment of an Operation”.

vigilance against Cominformists. In this context, “numerous speculations” appeared, including regarding “possible Soviet aggression in Yugoslavia.”³³

Although *Center-80* was initiated by the republican state security service in Slovenia, the SSUP SDB was of course also informed and involved. In a manner that seems in hindsight somewhat ridiculous, the pseudonym “Goran” was used to refer to the dying leader. Already on 15 January 1980, the SSUP SDB wrote that “members of all groups of internal enemies are using the intervention of the USSR in Afghanistan and the state of health of ‘Goran’ as a reason for the intensification of their propagandistic activity, networking, evaluation of the situation and advocacy of concrete hostile activities.”³⁴ Of course, many of these “internal enemies” were not Cominformists, but of the 450 persons identified by the SDB as having acted hostilely since the Soviet invasion, more than half – approximately 250 – were identified as being from the “bureaucratic-statist group,” and 190 were Cominformists, with the remainder stemming from the group condemned along with Ranković at the Fourth Plenum of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in 1966.³⁵ “The largest group desires and expects the intervention of the USSR in our country.”³⁶ Certain individuals even claimed to know that the Cominformist emigration had already formed a “government” awaiting the death of Tito.³⁷ Some even spread rumours about an impending Third World War that would be worse than the Second World War. By contrast, “internal enemies” of “anarcho-liberal” liberal and nationalist stripes tended to think that the West would not permit Soviet intervention in Yugoslavia.

On 27 February 1980, the SSUP SDB issued further evaluations of the evolving situation.³⁸ This analysis highlighted three strategies of those actors exploiting the current situation. First, they sowed doubt about the stability of the “self-managing socialist system.” Second, they tried to provoke and exacerbate panic and “psychosis” among Yugoslav citizens, especially by highlighting the alleged risk of Soviet intervention in Yugoslavia. Third, they sought to attract new adherents to their anti-Yugoslav views. By this point, the Yugoslav State Security Service had registered negative remarks from approximately 2,000 persons, of which half had been made from the “bureaucratic-statist” position.³⁹ Of these 1,000 persons, 577 had in turn earlier been registered as Cominformists, and 60% were currently under the “treatment” of the SDB.⁴⁰

33 Information Sheet on Operation “*Center-80*,” 23 April 1981, AS, F. 1931, šk. 378.

34 SSUP SDB, Important Characteristics of the Activities of the Internal Enemy Regarding the Newest International Situation and Events in Our Country,” 15 January 1980, p. 1, AS, F. 1931, šk. 378.

35 Ibid., pp. 1, 4.

36 Ibid., p. 2.

37 Ibid., p. 3, AS, F. 1931, šk. 378.

38 SSUP SDB, Some Evaluations and Characteristics of the Activities of the Internal Enemy Regarding the Events in Afghanistan and the State of Health of the President of the Republic, 27 February 1980, AS, F. 1931, šk. 378.

39 Ibid., p. 5.

40 Ibid., p. 7.

The comments of these people conformed closely to statements by Soviet diplomats in Yugoslavia. As reasons for desiring Soviet intervention, they highlighted the alleged endangered nature of socialism in Yugoslavia and the poor economic situation. "They glorify the military might of the USSR and its readiness to fulfil 'international obligations'."⁴¹ The SDB displayed concern that these views might align with those of Serb nationalists, Serbian Orthodox clergy and Macedonian nationalists. Moreover, the fear of Aleksandar Ranković and his allies rearing their heads again remained present. However, the SDB also admitted that most of the pro-Soviet sentiment remained on a rhetorical level, and that those uttering such views did not seem ready to convert their sentiments into concrete actions. Many pro-Soviet elements continued to fear repression from the Yugoslav authorities. As a matter of fact, 12 alleged Cominformists had just been expelled from the League of Communists in Vojvodina.

The last report which will be examined here is the SSUP SDB's report on the topic of threats to Yugoslav state security issued in late May 1980, a few weeks after Tito's death.⁴² According to the report, the amount of hostile activity seemed to have declined during the most recent period compared to the period between January and March. Rather ironically, and perhaps affected by the general emotional shock that pervaded Yugoslav society at the time, "a number of bearers of hostile activities spoke about Tito as a great statesman, especially emphasizing his enormous contribution during the People's Liberation Struggle [i.e., the Second World War] and the postwar development of the country. They especially highlight his contribution to the strengthening of the reputation and role of our country abroad and internal stability. Related to this, a significant number of these people as well express the conviction that much more complex circumstances will arise."⁴³ However, the SDB believed that the danger of Cominformist activity in alliance with other hostile actors remained significant. Cominformists still dominated those engaged in making hostile comments.⁴⁴

The activities to suppress and neutralize Cominformist plans would therefore continue, now in the context of Operation *Jedinstvo* (Unity), which had been initiated by the SSUP SDB.⁴⁵ Two years later, in May 1982, it was "business as usual," with the SSUP SDB continuing to monitor and analyse the activities of approximately 1,000 persons (of whom a quarter were under "treatment" throughout Yugoslavia identified with "bureaucratic-statist positions and their nexuses with the IB emigration."⁴⁶ A new

41 Ibid., p. 8.

42 SSUP SDB, Basic Characteristics of the Recent Activities of the Internal Enemy Regarding Current Events Abroad and at Home, with Special Focus on the Period after the Death of Comrade Tito, 23 May 1980, p. 3, AS, F. 1931, šk. 378.

43 Ibid., p. 3.

44 Ibid., pp. 5, 7.

45 Letter of Federal Secretary of Internal Affairs Franjo Herljević, 4 May 1980, AS, F. 1931, šk. 378.

46 SSUP SDB, Hostile Activity of Some Persons with Bureaucratic-Statist Positions and Their Nexuses with the IB Emigration (1980-1981), AS, F. 1931, šk. 2332. See also SSUP SDB, Hostile Activity of Newly Exposed Bearers of the Bureaucratic-Statist Concept from 1980 to 1981, p. 13, AS, F. 1931, šk. 2332.

coordinated dossier on this matter had been established in December 1980. In addition to the previously noted views, the SDB also commented on the misinterpretations of the “counterrevolutionary events in Kosovo” since mass demonstrations had started there and also in their opinion specious comparisons of the situation in Yugoslavia with that in Poland, where martial law had been imposed. As regarded Kosovo, the Cominformists expressed the opinion that “it would not have come to this had Ranković been in power.”⁴⁷

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to cast light on the relatively neglected topic of the surveillance and repression of real and alleged Cominformists in Yugoslavia after Goli Otok. The threat of nationalist émigré terrorism was in many ways much more relevant and concrete—many more Yugoslav lives were lost in the protracted struggle between the Croat emigration and the Yugoslav State Security Service than in IB-related activities. But the threat of a total destruction of Yugoslavia by the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies loomed large until the Gorbachev era.

It is to be hoped that this topic will receive more attention in the future. Much more research is certainly required on this matter, and the relevant archives are slowly becoming more accessible. It would be particularly interesting to move beyond the programmatic and analytical documents predominantly cited in this article and look at the personal dossiers of a select group of persons suspected of maintaining Cominformist sympathies for decades after 1948. Perhaps the best evidence of the enduring nature of the Yugoslav State Security Service’s enduring interest is a list of Cominformist émigrés who were banned from entering Yugoslavia. The list stems from July 1990, only shortly before the collapse of Yugoslavia.⁴⁸

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48 List of Persons from the IB Emigration Banned from Entering Yugoslavia, 27 July 1990, Croatian State Archives (HDA), f. 1561, šifra 1, 10/33.

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Summary

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Never-ending vigilance:

The Yugoslav State Security Service and Cominform Supporters after Goli Otok

The paper will explore the issue of surveillance of Cominform supporters after they had returned from Goli otok. It will look at this issue up to the mid-1980s and will specifically deal with the problem of fear within the State Security Service of a Soviet-led attack against Yugoslavia after Tito's death.