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THE HISTORY OF INSTITUTIONS – THE BASIS OF WORK WITH ARCHIVAL RECORDS

Abstract

Purpose: *This paper elaborates on the work done on drafting the publication “The Public Administrative Apparatus in the Federal, People’s and Socialist Republic of Croatia 1945-1990”.*

Method/approach: *On the basis of nothing else but regulations promulgated in the Official Gazettes of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) and the Socialist Republic of Croatia, the book in preparation precisely identifies the creators of archival records and provides an overview and history of bodies of the public administrative apparatus in Croatia during the period between 1945 and 1990. This paper descriptively lists the problems that arose in the preparation of the publication, as well as the importance of regulations both for archivists’ work and for those who use the records.*

Results: *The creators of archival and documentary (registry) records are those legal entities whose operation and work leads to the creation of such records. The history of institutions is a constituent part of archival science. The history of institutions defines the creators, their operation, organisation and competences. An accurate knowledge of the history and purview of any specific body within the apparatus is the starting point of the overall work of archives and archivists, with the purpose of providing correct, credible and meaningful information to users of archival records.*

Conclusion: *The past is constantly being reinterpreted, represented and explained. With no preserved and arranged archival records that are available to all, our descendants will be left only with myths, not history.*

Keywords: *Croatia, archival science, history of institutions, socialism*

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INTRODUCTION

Based on the laws and regulations promulgated in the official gazettes of the Socialist Yugoslavia and Croatia, and from the perspective of archival science as a discipline within information science, Živana Hedbeli, PhD, and co-author Nikola Mokrović, are finalizing a book that deals with the state and public administrative apparatus in the Federal, People's and Socialist Republic of Croatia (further SRC) during the period between 1945 and 1990, their competences, functions, purviews and organisational structure. Not much has been written in Croatian archival science about the institutions of the socialist Croatia. In 1998, the Croatian State Archives published the second, revised edition of the Directory of Public Administration 1945-1990 (*Šematizam državne uprave 1945.-1990*, 1994), which, as its name implies, contains short entries about the bodies in question.

ABOUT THE BOOK, "STATE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIVE APPARATUS IN THE FEDERAL, PEOPLE'S AND SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF CROATIA 1945-1990"

The Socialist Yugoslavia emerged during World War II, which began in 1939, with Croatia one of its federal constituents. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 was the symbolic end of the global division that arose after World War II. It was very quickly followed by the war on the territory of Yugoslavia and its dissolution, and the independence of the Republic of Croatia (further RC). The book covers the period beginning with the formation of the Initiative Committee of the State Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Croatia (further ZAVNOH) in 1943, up to 25 July 1990, when the word "Socialist" was erased before the words "Republic of Croatia" in the name and provisions of the Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Croatia.

The book addresses the public administrative apparatus from the viewpoint of archival science, that is, the creators of the records are identified precisely, and exclusively based on regulations. The evaluations of the Socialist Yugoslavia and Croatia cover a broad spectrum, ranging from excellent to negative marks, with an exceptional level of variety depending on the evaluator and the year in which the evaluation has been made. Evaluations should be left to historians, political scientists, jurists and other scholars. This volume provides solely the facts important to the emergence, work, development and disappearance of the republic-level public administrative bodies. Although there are also federal administrative bodies that operate within the territory of the RC (for instance the Customs Administration), the book only addresses the republic-level bodies.

The book traces the vertical and horizontal division of the administrative apparatus. The first chapter, following the introduction, gives a critical overview of the events from World War II until 1990, in order to give the readers a basic understanding of the socio-political and socio-economic context in which the public administrative apparatus operated. The chapter *State authority and administration* is divided into five sub-chapters. The first gives a detailed chronological overview of Yugoslavian and Croatian public administration. It examines the regulations that govern the work of officials and civil servants, delegates and representatives. It examines records management and the regulations pertaining to administrative proceedings, finances, assets and budgets of public administration bodies. Four chapters deal with the bodies of the administrative apparatus themselves. The chapter *The highest-level bodies of the state apparatus* covers the SRC Parliament, its Executive Council, the SRC Presidency and the Council of the Republic. The chapter *Republic-level bodies* covers the ministries, councils and councils of the republics, general directorates, committees and republic-level committees, secretariats, state and republic-level secretariats, boards, state and republic-level administrations, institutions and republic-level institutions, commissions, state and republic-level

commissions, joint bodies, various bodies. The sixth chapter, which is the longest, *Local bodies*, addresses national liberation committees, national committees, districts, municipalities, communities of municipalities. The seventh and last chapter deals with inter-republic committees. The book contains a list of abbreviations, literature and legal sources, a summary in Croatian and English, and two annexes: an Index of bodies and organisations, and an Index of officials and decision-makers.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LEGISLATION

Legislation promulgated in official gazettes provide an insight into a state's constitution,² the organisation of political life and legal system, the state's position on a certain issue or set of issues. A country's existence is reflected in the emergence, development, transformation and disappearance of its organs. Every community (state) constructs its administration in a way that is contingent on its needs and circumstances, which change over time, depending on social, economic and political changes. The administration in the Socialist Yugoslavia and Croatia is no exception. The very names of various acts and administrative bodies demonstrate what was in the state's focus in any given period: in 1945, in the aftermath of the war, the priority lay in securing food for the population, and so the Croatian People's Government also included a Minister for Commerce and Procurement. In 1948, the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (further FPRY) established a Ministry for the Newly-liberated Territories, due to the special requirements of social, economic and cultural life in regions that were incorporated into the FPRY on the basis of the Peace Treaty with Italy. The Committee for the Peaceful Use of Outer Space was founded in 1963, and the Act on Liability for Nuclear Damage was adopted in 1978. Each piece of legislation, each body is an example unto itself. Simply examining the names of the bodies and regulations over a given period may allow us to swiftly and easily infer which domains the state has regulated and paid attention to.

Knowing the regulations, each archivist, as well as the users of the records, will know which information / documents ought to have been produced in the course of a certain body's operation, which greatly facilitates and accelerates the use of the records. Each body's work leads to the creation of documents necessary both to the body itself to be able to do its work, and to the citizens to exercise their rights, which the users of the records, researchers and scholars also use for various other purposes. Some of the regulations determine which kinds of records must emerge in the course of the functioning of a specific body or branch of the administrative apparatus. Upon receiving the records to their archives, it is the archivists' task to give the users correct and credible information, both about the documents contained in the fonds deposited in the archive, as stipulated by the relevant regulations, and about the documents that are not in the fonds, and the relevant reasons. The same goes in the opposite case – if the records included in a fonds contain documents whose keeping has not been stipulated in the relevant regulations.

The book is based on legal sources – regulations promulgated in the Official Gazette of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (further OGY) and the Official Gazette of the SRC (further OGC) between 1945 and late July 1990. Work on the legal sources promulgated in the OGY and OGC had its difficulties, the first being the availability of the official gazettes itself, as they can only be accessed for use in a small number of public libraries – especially those from 1945 and 1946. The gazettes from the period in the immediate aftermath of World War 2 (further WW2) are difficult to read due to the degradation of paper and print, and it is sometimes only possible to access them with a microfilm

2 In the sense of its formation or establishment.

reader. The terminology used in the published regulations is inconsistent and one finds several names in use for the same body – especially during the first few years after the war. The work is also hindered by the frequent amendments to regulation, as well as corrections, which are sometimes difficult to keep track of.

The purviews, establishment / termination, responsibilities, competences, tasks and jobs, organisation and internal organisation of the bodies are determined by federal and republic-level laws and regulations. Federal and republic-level regulations determine and govern the founding and termination of a body, as well as its purview. There are also exceptions, especially during the years immediately following the war – bodies being founded without being promulgated in an official gazette, or being founded pursuant to federal regulations without the enactment of relevant republic-level regulations.³ The organisation of the administration of the republics follows the organisation of the federal administration.⁴ Bodies change their structure and organisation in line with changes to the Constitution and the relevant legislation. Sometimes the regulations explicitly stipulate the termination of a certain body and transferral of its competences to another, and sometimes a regulation is enacted determining that a certain other regulation is no longer in force. Regulations cease to apply based on specific articles in the regulations (e.g., harmonising the regulations within a certain domain with a new system), and can also be annulled by other regulations, cease to apply as their implementation has been completed, be tacitly annulled by the adoption of new regulation, expire due to the time defined for their implementation having come to an end, or they may not be in line with the new system or order. Sometimes a single regulation determines when a number of regulations cease to apply. Some bodies exist for a very short time, while others have existed from 1945 almost to this day.⁵

Being acquainted with legislation and regulations is important to archivists and users, as these determine which documents bodies should keep, their retention periods, which organ performs the records management and other tasks for which body, as well as the procedures regarding the cases worked on and the archive once the organ is no longer in operation. Regulations determine how entries and corrections to entries are made in registers and documents. Regulations determine the availability of the records, the secrecy of the documents and data, the bodies working without the presence of the public. Being well-acquainted with the regulations is also important to archivists and users in the case of destruction of records. The Ordinance on Records Management determines that bodies produce the necessary number of copies of their formal documents, meaning a copy for each private or legal entity receiving the document, and a copy for its own record office. If for any reason a body's record office is destroyed, it will probably be possible to find the document (information) being sought with another body. The regulations also make clear in which segment of the records of the same creator a duplicate of a document can be found if the document isn't in its expected place.

3 The Croatian State Commission for determining the crimes of the occupiers and their accessories was established pursuant to the 18 May 1944 Decision by the ZAVNOH Presidency, without promulgation in the Official Gazette (ZKRZ, 1945–1947). The Land commission for war damages of the Federal Croatia was established pursuant to the Ordinance on establishing a Land commission for war damages (Zemaljska komisija za ratnu štetu, 1945–1946).

4 The FPRY Government's Council for Energy and the Extractive Industry was founded on 7 February 1950, followed by The PRC Government's Council for Energy and the Extractive Industry on 5 May.

5 For instance, the Ministry of National Farmland was established on 5 May 1950, and abolished in three months, on 4 August. The Committee for Maritime Affairs was founded on 7 December 1950, and abolished on 27 April 1951. The Ministry of Internal Affairs has existed since its establishment in 1945 to this day.

THE HISTORY OF INSTITUTIONS AND THE STATE OF AFFAIRS REGARDING THE PROTECTION OF ARCHIVAL RECORDS

Archival science is concerned with studying the principles and methods of protecting archival records with the purpose of their use. The history of institutions is a constituent part of archival science; it defines the creators of records, their purview, organisation and competences. A good knowledge of the history and purview of a certain organ is the starting point of the overall work of archives and archivists, with the aim of providing correct, credible and meaningful information to users of archival records.

The work of archives is governed by the Archives and Archival Records Act. Ideally, in performing public administration work and in official correspondence with physical and legal entities, a public administration body receives or collects documents, that is, documented (registry) records, in line with the stipulations of the legislation on record and archive management whose principles have practically been unchanged since 1945 to this day. All documentary records must be entered in the official records of record management. The record office (registry) receives the completed files (cases), attends to the integrity and arrangement of the entire documentary and archival records, which it also oversees and safeguards. Documentary records are kept in the record office until they are disposed, transferred to a relevant state archive within a deadline that generally shouldn't be longer than 30 years from their creation. Archival records being transferred to the relevant state archive must be arranged, catalogued, ordered in well-defined wholes and prepared for storage. The relevant state archive conducts professional oversight of the records in the possession of the body.

The state archive keeps records and documentation on a body's archival records. Among its tasks is also receiving and processing public archival records that emerge in the course of the work of the creators of documentary and archival records currently or previously active within the jurisdiction and competences of the archive, as well as enabling and encouraging the use of archival records. Records produced in the course of the operation and work of a single creator constitute a whole (archival fonds). An archive creates finding aids allowing the use of any single fonds' archival records. With legally defined exceptions, archival records in state archives are available for use to users from the moment they are created.

Both the creators and the archives need to follow certain principles of managing archival records. Legislation on managing documentary records outside archives determine the principles of managing the records including: authenticity, comprehensiveness, confidentiality, credibility. Archivists make sure that the documents they keep are authentic, reliable, usable, unchanged and complete (Stančić, 2006).

The RC adopted its first legislation on archives in 1997. The Act determined that the Croatian State Archives, regional state archives and local self-government and administration units' archives perform the services of archives; while certain specific tasks pertaining to archival services may also be performed by specialised and private archives, as institutions. The National Plan for the Development of Archival Practice for the period 2020-2025 (Ministarstvo kulture Republike Hrvatske, 2019, 5) makes it clear that the development of archival services outside the network of national archives envisaged in the 1997 Law has entirely failed to materialise. According to the Culture and the Arts in 2020 Statistical Report (Državni zavod za statistiku Republike Hrvatske, 2023, 79–82), 19 Croatian archives stored a total of 16,558 fonds and collections, 115,706 linear metres of records, of which 68.86% had been processed. From the Culture Ministry's Strategic Plan for 2020-2022 (Ministarstvo kulture Republike Hrvatske, 2019, 60) we find that the existing spatial and technical resources of most archives do not permit the storage of the materials that need

to be received, and the descriptive data for about 50% of the records in archive need to be harmonised or added to, which can only be done over a relatively longer period with the existing resources. The majority of archives lack the storage space and/or equipment for depositing new records coming in, which need to be received within the legally mandated deadlines. For this reason, the records are kept longer in inadequate locations outside archives, where they are exposed to the risk of accelerated decay and are unavailable to users. The National Plan for the Development of Archival Practice (Ministarstvo kulture Republike Hrvatske, 2019, 6) stipulates that the basic tasks of all the constituents of the current network of archives are: to ensure long-term safekeeping, receiving and availability of records created in the course of the work of the state administration and the of the local and regional self-government units, as well as other public authorities across the entire territory of the RC; to collect private records of public interest or special value as a mark of our history; to appraise, select, arrange and describe those records that are of permanent value and ensure their availability.

This publication is necessary to archivists and users, as some of the records deposited in archives has not been adequately processed, while a large amount of records is outside archives. Records often arrive in state archives behind the legally defined deadlines, unarranged and undisposed, so the tasks with regards to the records that should have been performed by their creator fall to the archives, who primarily have to bring the records to the level of proper record management, only to be able to move on to archival processing once this is done.⁶ Ideally, all archival records created through the work of the state and administrative apparatus of the People's Republic of Croatia should have been handed over to the relevant state archives, arranged, catalogued into well-defined wholes and prepared for storage by 1994 at the latest, and records created through the work of the state and administrative apparatus of the SRC by 2021. Reading the Statistical Report Archives in 2020 (Državni zavod za statistiku Republike Hrvatske, 2023, 3), we find that there were 115,706 linear metres of records inside archives in 2020, while 780,103 metres of records were outside archives. A lack of material and human resources, knowledge and skills in record and archive management are neither new or rare. The level of illiteracy in Croatia before WW2 was high: "according to the 1931 Census, 27.7% people in Savska Banovina and 57.4% in Primorska were illiterate." (Senjan, 2021, 28). In elections immediately after the war, voting was done using small balls due to the population's illiteracy. Very soon after the war, the administration itself very quickly established that cadres were insufficiently proficient and educated, and so for instance in 1952, an ordinance determined that even individuals without the specified educational qualifications may access the civil service, if it is found that they are capable of performing the tasks relevant to the service. The lack of professional qualifications among workers in public administration remains an object of complaints to this

6 For instance, the records of the National War Damage Commission, which operated between 1945 and 1947, was received *ex officio* by the CSA from the Parliamentary Executive Council in 1988 (acq. 2/1988). Upon reception, the records were processed at the CSA in 1993 (ZKŠ, 1945–1947). The records of the Institute for the advancement of primary education arrived at the CSA in an unarranged and only partly catalogued state. The Institute operated between 1966 and 1976. The records were intermixed with other records pertaining to education (the Education Council, the Institute for the advancement of vocational education, the Republican fund for advancing the cultural sector). The material was neither arranged nor disposed in the record office. There was no comprehensive catalogue of the records, which had been received in 2002 from the Ministry of Education and Sports (ZUOO SRH, 1966–1976). On 15 december 2007, the CSA received the records of the Republican Secretariat for Judicial Affairs (1953–1965), entered into the Book of Acquisitions under the number 69/2007. The records were handed over *ex officio* by the RC Ministry of Justice after CSA staff arranged them during 2006–7 on the premises of the Justice Ministry (Republički sekretarijat za pravosudne poslove Socijalističke Republike Hrvatske, 1946–1966).

day, for which a cursory look at the daily press should suffice. We find more on the state of the administration in the Analytical basis for the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia by 2030 (The World Bank, 2019, 22–26): "However, Croatia does not rank well on measures of civil service efficiency or professionalism; indeed, over time it has regressed.", "Tertiary education is a precondition for only 46 percent of jobs in the civil service, which is an unusually low percentage compared to other countries. And while setting the bar so low may be explained by the fact that several categories of employees of bodies tasked with implementing legislation have the status of civil servants, the share of jobs in the civil service for which higher education is not required is high in the majority of institutions."

The National Plan for the Development of Archival Practice (Ministarstvo kulture Republike Hrvatske, 2019, 16–17) shows that in the RC, people can currently only be educated to become archivists at the Philosophy Faculty in Zagreb, where 20 students enrol in the course in Archivistics each year as part of the graduate degree in Information Sciences. Nevertheless, such education mostly takes place within the archival service itself, as part of the preparations for the professional exam. The Department of Information and Communication Sciences of the Philosophy Faculty of the University of Zagreb, of which the Section for Archival and documentation sciences is part, was established in 1981 (Jamić, 2017, 12). Neither the SRC nor the RC hold, through their legislation, that completing a study in archival science is a necessary condition for becoming a professional archivist. The fact that the state has been financing a course that appears to be unnecessary for archives for decades is in itself worthy of a distinct paper.

The archival records of the administrative apparatus of Socialist Croatia has generally been deposited in the relevant state archives. The CSA keeps the Record of Entries for all archives in the RC. The Ministry of Culture and Media keeps the Register of Archives. The Register of archival fonds and collections of the Republic of Croatia is the central registry of archival records within the territory of the RC, and is maintained for the RC by the CSA. In 2006 and 2007, the CSA printed an Overview of archival fonds and collections of the Republic of Croatia, parts I and II. In 2006, the National Archival Information System (NAIS) was initiated – an online information system that has become the basic tool for representing and accessing archival records (the system was initially called ARHiNET). The online Register is an element of ARHiNET. At the moment, the system is in the course of migrating to a new one, the Croatian Archival Information System (HAIS, 2020). In 1986, the Law on the Archival Records of the Federation was adopted (SFRY Official Gazette, 11/1986). The archival records of the Federation have been deposited in the Archives of Yugoslavia. The list of the deposited fonds and collections is available at the Archives' website.

CONCLUSION

Archivists give information both from the records and about the records. Their task is to allow all users to use the documents/information they are interested in, allowing each user their evaluation, interpretation, assessment, coming to their own conclusion. The task of information management professionals is to give facts about the bodies, not to evaluate the organs as such. By comparison, librarians are not expected to give literary critiques of works, but to provide a librarian's descriptions of a publication, well-ordered, available and easily searchable catalogues etc. Just like librarians do not write literary works or literary criticism as part of their official tasks during their official working hours, so are archivists likewise not expected to write historical, sociological, legal or other accounts of a certain period or state. Information management professionals

connect sources to users, and their task is to manage records, deposit it, allow its use. Archivists don't interpret the records, but take care that the documents they safeguard are authentic, reliable, usable, unchanged and complete. The records are read and interpreted by the users, who use primary sources to create secondary and tertiary ones. When it comes to archival work, it's also worth highlighting that when giving information from the records, the archivists do not establish the truth, but merely cite what has been written in the documents.

The bodies of the state and public administration apparatus that existed in Croatia in the period from 1945–1990 are the foundation of the administration today. On 25 July 1990, the SRC Parliament, Presidency, Parliamentary Executive Council and republican secretariats and committees continued their work as the RC Parliament, RC Presidency and RC Government, that is, the ministries in the Republic of Croatia. History is constantly being reinterpreted, represented and explained; each new generation views things and phenomena in their own way. Archivists are there to allow records to be used under the same conditions for all, current and future users, so that they can reach their own (re)interpretations of past facts and events. Without well-preserved and arranged archival records that are available to all, our descendants will be left with myths, not history. The publication being prepared is necessary to both archivists and users, since part of the records deposited in archives has not been adequately processed, while a large amount of records are outside archives. Caring for archival records, preserving historical sources, is our generation's task, our legacy to future generations, which is the purpose of this work.

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