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‘ONLY THOSE WHO HAVE SHOWN IN DEED THAT THEY ARE IN FAVOR OF SOCIALIST SELF- GOVERNANCE CAN ENGAGE IN WRITING AND TEACHING OF HISTORY’ – THE RISE AND FALL OF ‘VOJVODINIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY’ (1968-1993)

ABSTRACT: *This study examines the phenomenon of the so-called ‘Vojvodinian historiography’ which flourished in the Socialist Autonomous Province of Vojvodina from the late 1960s until the early 1990s as a special kind of party historiography. The paper focuses on the ‘Vojvodinian historiography’s’ institutional framework, theoretical and methodological features and general ideological profile as well as its outcomes. As a result of its close ties with the ruling Communist League of Vojvodina, the political collapse of the Vojvodinian communists marked the disappearance of this extremely ideological kind of historiography.*

KEYWORDS: ‘Vojvodinian historiography’, Communism, Vojvodina, Marxism, Ideology

The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989/1991 marked, at the same time, the end of the Marxist historiographies that had been imposed by the new authorities establishing the communist society as the only ‘scientific’ approach to the study of the past after the Second World War. This circumstance – that the disappearance of the political system–brought about the disappearance of that form of (in this case Marxist) historical writing which had supported it – stands for a textbook example of the strong interconnectedness of research and writing of history on the one hand and the political power on the other hand. In other words, it confirms that historiography is a specific kind of discourse about the past which combines knowledge and power.¹ After

¹ Cf. Michel Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2002); Keith Jenkins, *Rethinking History* (London: Routledge, 1991).

the epochal change which took place upon the end of the Cold War and the global triumph of the neoliberal ideology, in all the East European countries, Marxism was thrown into the ‘dustbin of history’ followed by the characteristic renationalization of historical writing.² The interest of historians in the former countries of the ‘Real Socialism’ was primarily directed to the consequences these changes had on the development of historiography³ while, in spite of its importance, the legacy of the former Marxist historiographies as a rule did not attract more significant attention.⁴ Quite contrary, the development of Yugoslav historiography – on which Marxism was also imposed as the obligatory theoretical framework in the postwar period – was a subject of extensive research of several Serbian and Croatian historians – from Đorđe Stanković, Ljubodrag Dimić and Kosta Nikolić across Snježana Koren, Magdalena Najbar-Agičić to Branimir Janković.⁵ However, these studies of the legacy of Yugoslav historiography almost completely neglected the so-called ‘Vojvodinian historiography’ – historiography that developed from the late 1960s until the beginning of 1990s in the academic institutions of the Socialist Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, enjoying the support of the provincial communist authorities. That was directly connected to the autonomous status of the Province in the Socialist Republic of Serbia of that time. In this paper, we will attempt to analyze the institutional framework in which the ‘Vojvodinian historiography’ developed as well as its specific theoretical and methodological characteristics, to critically reexamine its achievements and to point out its close ties with the League of Communist of Vojvodina as the only bearer of the political authority in the province of Vojvodina from the early 1970s until the late 1980s – the fact that, finally, decided its future fate.

² See: Milan Subotić, *Napred, u prošlost. Studije o politici istorije u Poljskoj, Ukrajini i Rusiji* (Beograd: Fabrika knjiga, Peščanik, 2019).

³ Sorin Antohi, Balázs Trencsényi and Péter Apor (eds.), *Narratives Unbound. Historical Studies in Post-Communist Eastern Europe* (Budapest, New York: Central University Press, 2007); Helmut Altrichter und Elisabeth Müller-Luckner (eds.), *Gegen Erinnerung. Geschichte als politisches Argument im Transformationsprozess Ost-, Ostmittel- und Südosteuropas* (München: Oldenbourg, 2006); Ulf Brunnbauer (ed.), *(Re)writing History. Historiography in Southeast Europe After Socialism* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2004); Predrag J. Marković, Nataša Milićević, “Serbian Historiography in the Time of Transition: a Struggle for Legitimacy”, *Istorija 20. veka*, vol. 25, no. 1, (2007), 145–166.

⁴ An important exception is Stefan Berger, “Former GDR Historians in the Reunified Germany: An Alternative Historical Culture and its Attempts to Come to Terms with the GDR Past”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 38, no. 1, (2003), 63–83.

⁵ Đorđe Stanković i Ljubodrag Dimić, *Istoriografija pod nadzorom. Prilozi istoriji istoriografije*, vol. I-II (Beograd: Službeni list SRJ, 1996); Kosta Nikolić, *Prošlost bez istorije. Polemike u jugoslovenskoj istoriografiji 1961–1991*. (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2003); Snježana Koren, *Politika povijesti u Jugoslaviji (1945–1960). Komunistička partija Jugoslavije, nastava povijesti, historiografija* (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2012); Magdalena Najbar-Agičić, *U skladu sa marksizmom ili činjenicama? Hrvatska historiografija 1945–1960* (Zagreb: Ibis grafika, 2013); Branimir Janković, *Mijenjanje sebe same. Preobrazbe hrvatske historiografije kasnog socijalizma* (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2016).

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There is a long tradition of historical writing in today's Vojvodina (former southern Hungary) which had a special role in the emergence of modern Serbian historiography. It was intrinsically tied to the 'erudition' which appeared in the culture of the Serbs in the Habsburg Monarchy in the Age of Enlightenment as aptly pointed out by Radovan Samardžić.⁶ *Matica srpska* and its famous *Letopis* paid considerable attention to the examination of Serbian history throughout the 19th century.⁷ Ilarion Ruvarac, the most important among the 'founding fathers' of modern Serbian historiography, made a crucial contribution to its constitution in the form of 'critical' i.e. 'scientific' historiography.⁸ In the interwar period, the Historical Society in Novi Sad (Istorisko društvo u Novom Sadu), under the direction of renowned historians Stanoje Stanojević and Dušan J. Popović, organized the research of the history of the Serbs and other South Slavs in Vojvodina from a broad interdisciplinary perspective. Its journal *Glasnik Istoriskog društva u Novom Sadu*, gathered specialists from almost all Yugoslav centers and became one of the most respectable historical journals in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.⁹

However, the sweeping revolutionary changes in Yugoslav society after the Second World War were directly reflected in the conditions in which Serbian historiography developed. Based on the understanding of the leading Communist Party ideologue, Milovan Đilas, of the necessity of refuting the 'bourgeois way of thinking' and establishing historical studies on the principles of dialectic materialism (seen as a part of the broader 'battle of socialism against capitalism'), Serbian historiography (with other Yugoslav historiographies) was placed under close ideological surveillance. Marxism was imposed as the obligatory theoretical model and the only 'true' social theory. At the same time, historical studies were expected to give legitimacy to the revolutionary transformation and newly established socialist system.¹⁰ The academic historiography in Autonomous Province of Vojvodina developed within this common Yugoslav framework. Yet, it turned out that some facts were crucial for its future physiognomy. Firstly, as a result of the political convictions of the Serbian communists for whom the struggle against

⁶ Radovan Samardžić, *Pisci srpske istorije*, vol. III (Beograd: Prosveta, 1986), 209–219.

⁷ Nikola Radojčić, „Stogodišnji rad Matice srpske oko istorije“, In: *Matica srpska 1826–1926* (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 1927), 205–242.

⁸ Michael Antolović, „Modern Serbian Historiography between Nation-Building and Critical Scholarship. The Case of Ilarion Ruvarac (1832–1905)“, In: *Historiography: Critical Readings*, vol. III: *Scientific Models: From the West to the World*, ed. by Q. Edward Wang (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 111–129. About the role of the 'father figures' in the emergence of modern European national historiographies, see Stefan Berger, „'Fathers' and their Fate in Modern European Historiography“, *Storia della Storiografia*, vol. 59-60, (2011), 228–247.

⁹ Nenad Predojević, *Istorisko društvo u Novom Sadu (1927–1941). Analitički inventar* (Novi Sad: Arhiv Vojvodine, 2012).

¹⁰ Đ. Stanković, Lj. Dimić, *Istoriografija pod nadzorom*, vol. 1, 159.

the ‘Great Serbian hegemonism’ took prominent part, Vojvodina was constituted for the first time as an autonomous province within the Federative Socialist Republic of Serbia.¹¹ This circumstance proved to be ambivalent: on the one hand, it gave new impetus to the institutionalization of academic historiography but, on the other, it limited the research agenda which was tied to the communist ideology. Secondly, in Novi Sad, the administrative center of the newly established autonomous province, new academic and cultural institutions were founded immediately after the war: the Scientific Department was founded by Matica srpska transforming itself from a cultural into a scientific institution, the Vojvodinian Archive was founded on the ground of the former State Archive in 1946 (today the Archive of Vojvodina) and the Vojvodinian Museum was established the following year (today the Museum of Vojvodina). Finally, with the establishment of the Faculty of Philosophy and the Faculty of Agriculture, Novi Sad became the university center in 1954.¹²

The Department of History was one of the six departments at the Faculty of Philosophy. In that way, the institutional infrastructure for the development of historical studies in Vojvodina was set up. Some of the most prominent Serbian historians gave lectures at the Department of History, such as Mita Kostić, Petar I. Popović, Vaso Čubrilović, Đorđe Sp. Radojičić and Ivan Božić who, due to their social origin, were regarded as ‘bourgeois’ (with the exception of Čubrilović who held a high position in the hierarchy of the new authorities).¹³ Therefore, despite the intentions of the authorities to appoint ideologically proven cadres, because of the extremely limited number of the university teachers with appropriate qualifications, almost all the professors in the Department of History were members of the dispossessed bourgeoisie. Having in mind the ideological profile of the Department of History, the communists of Vojvodina kept warning about this fact. They were particularly dissatisfied with the social background of the young academics coming from the ‘ranks of petite bourgeoisie, from the country and *kulak* families’. Arriving at the conclusion that the professors grounded their interpretations of historical ‘processes’ in Marxism only to a limited extent and, in addition, neglected the study of the history of the 20th century,¹⁴ the leadership of the Vojvodinian communists gave a special role to the Faculty of Philosophy. It was expected to create a ‘new intelligentsia’

¹¹ Ljubodrag Dimić, *Istorija srpske državnosti*. vol. 3: *Srbija u Jugoslaviji* (Novi Sad: SANU; „Beseda“, Društvo istoričara južnobačkog i sremskog okruga, 2001), 270–273, 294–298; Branko Petranović, *Srbija u Drugom svetskom ratu 1939–1945*. (Beograd: Vojnoizdavački i novinski centar, 1992), 693–701. Cf. Janko Pleterski, *Nacije, Jugoslavija, revolucija* (Beograd: Komunist, 1986).

¹² Nenad Došlić, *Matica srpska 1941–1955* (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 2011), 254–265; Antal Hegediš, Mita Sekulić, *Spomenica Arhiva Vojvodine* (Sremski Karlovci: Arhiv Vojvodine, 1987); *Vojvođanski muzej 1947–1987* (Novi Sad: Vojvođanski muzej, 1987); *Filozofski fakultet u Novom Sadu 1954–1984* (Novi Sad: Filozofski fakultet, 1984).

¹³ Miloš Jevtić, *Istoričari. Radovan Samardžić, Sima Ćirković, Vasilije Krestić, Čedomir Popov* (Gornji Milanovac: Dečije novine, 1992), 73; Đ. Stanković, Lj. Dimić, *Istoriografija pod nadzorom*, vol. 1, 201.

¹⁴ Slobodan Bjelica, „Prilog proučavanju istorije Matice srpske i Filozofskog fakulteta u Novom Sadu“, *Istraživanja*, 25, (2014), 363.

which would not only be shaped in accordance with the 'Marxist worldview', but which would possess the appropriate 'class character'.¹⁵ Paying particular attention to the higher education and the organization of scholarly work, the communist authorities of the Province of Vojvodina entrusted the Faculty of Philosophy with a task to educate history teachers as well as historians with highest academic degrees who would conduct historical researches.¹⁶ Such a decision was reached by having in mind that Matica srpska, despite of the Historical Section in its Scientific Department, did not match the expectations regarding the subject of its research agenda which left the 'history of the labor movement' entirely neglected by focusing primarily on earlier epochs of history. The authorities assessed that a part of Matica srpska's collaborators were 'far from our reality' and totally uninterested in the 'revolutionary battle of the Vojvodinian proletariat' due to their bourgeois origins and political convictions.¹⁷

Having in mind the aforementioned facts, the Yugoslav Communist Party encouraged the founding of various professional associations trying to use them as transmission tools of its programme to the 'base'. As a part of that action, historical societies were established in all Yugoslav republics as well as the Historical Society of Vojvodina at the turn of 1946//1947.¹⁸ The aim of this professional organization was to stimulate the research of the history of Vojvodina as well as to improve the quality of history teaching in schools. However, as in other Yugoslav scientific centers, these goals were permeated with the ruling ideology. The First conference of Vojvodinian historians (held on 17–18 November 1950 in Novi Sad) discussed various professional issues. Yet, entirely in the spirit of the 'policy of the Popular Front' which considered such social organizations as transmissions of the Communist Party politics, it was made clear that the historians in Vojvodina would 'give their contribution' to the realization of the policy of 'our state and party leadership in the questions of national freedom and equality' from the standpoint of 'Marxism and Leninism'.¹⁹ At the same time, the Society's work program particularly insisted on Marxist orthodoxy in the interpretation of history (the study of the 'history of Vojvodina according to the scientific understanding of Historical materialism' focused on the 'revolutionary movements of the working masses') as well as on the study of the labor movement, People's Liberation War and 'all those movements led by the Communist Party'.²⁰ In addition to the clear ideological goals, the im-

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 356, 361.

¹⁶ Cf. Dragomir Bondžić, „Saradnja naučnika Srbije i Hrvatske u okviru Jugoslavije“, u: *Jugoslavija – između ujedinjenja i razlaza. Hrvatsko-srpski odnosi u kontekstu društvenog razvoja dve Jugoslavije 1918–1991*, ed. Bojan B. Dimitrijević and Mario Jareb (Beograd: ISI; Zagreb: HIP, 2018), 200.

¹⁷ S. Bjelica, „Prilog proučavanju istorije Matice srpske i Filozofskog fakulteta u Novom Sadu“, 355.

¹⁸ Đ. Stanković, Lj. Dimić, *Istoriografija pod nadzorom*, vol. 1, 239; Arpad Lebl, „Sa skupštine Društva istoričara Vojvodine – reč dr Arpada Lebla“, *Godišnjak Društva istoričara Vojvodine* (1979) [1980], 214.

¹⁹ Branislav Vranešević, „Pregled rada I konferencije istoričara Vojvodine“, *Godišnjak Istoriskog društva Vojvodine*, (1951), 150.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 166,

portance of history teaching and the study of history were also stressed. However, despite its ambitious plans, the Historical Society of Vojvodina ceased its activity due to the lack of financial support after having managed to publish only one issue of its periodical *Godišnjak Istoriskog društva Vojvodine*. Some of the intended objectives – collecting sources about the history of the labor and communist movement in Vojvodina – were taken on by the Historical Department of the Provincial Committee of the League of the Communists of Serbia for Vojvodina established in Novi Sad in 1952. Department was renamed into the Historical Archive of the Provincial Committee for Vojvodina of the League of the Communists of Serbia (PCVLCS) in 1955. The Historical Archive was the most important institution for editing and publishing historical sources about the Communist Party in Vojvodina until it was dissolved in 1970.²¹ As it was the case with numerous Institutes for the history of the labor movement founded in the 1960s in all Yugoslav republics, the collaborators of the Historical Archive of the PCVLCS were, without exception, members of the Communist Party. As ideologically proven cadres, they were entrusted with the study of the contemporary history of Vojvodina by the revolutionary authorities.²²

There was a reversal in the development of the ‘Vojvodinian historiography’ in the late 1960s coinciding with the constitutional changes which in the new Constitution from 1974 finally confirmed the confederative structure of Yugoslavia and the statehood of the republics and the two provinces (Vojvodina and Kosovo) being only nominally part of the federative Socialist Republic of Serbia.²³ Giving impulses to the disintegration processes in Yugoslavia, the new constitutional order directly influenced the organizational of scholarly work which was as a rule strongly confined by the borders of the republics, i.e. provinces. In the case of historiography, this meant that there were eight peculiar historiographies organized within six Yugoslav republics and two autonomous provinces. Therefore, Yugoslav historiography denoted a sum of eight historiographies which showed almost no interest in the research of common Yugoslav history. This fact resulted in the shrinking of the research and the lack of common perspective on the past.²⁴

²¹ See: Arhiv Vojvodine, Novi Sad, Pokrajinski komitet Saveza komunista Vojvodine, RS 002 F. 334.

²² Cf. Đ. Stanković, Lj. Dimić, *Istoriografija pod nadzorom*, vol. 1, 279; Magdalena Najbar-Agičić, *U skladu s marksizmom ili činjenicama?*, 424–428; Nataša Milićević, „Upređna analiza radova Instituta za noviju zgodovino i Instituta za noviju istoriju Srbije“, *Tokovi istorije*, 1-2, (2000), 112–113; Michael Antolović, „Writing History Under the «Dictatorship of the Proletariat»: Yugoslav historiography 1945–1991“, *Revista de História das Ideias*, vol. 39, 2^a Série, (2021), 59.

²³ Lj. Dimić, *Istorija srpske državnosti. Knj. 3: Srbija u Jugoslaviji*, 404–435; Slobodan Bjelica, *Sporovi oko autonomije Vojvodine*, vol. 1: 1961–1974 (Beograd: Službeni glasnik, 2015); John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History. Twice there was a Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 305–314; Marie-Janine Calic, *Geschichte Jugoslawiens im 20. Jahrhundert* (München: C.H. Beck, 2010), 259–261.

²⁴ Cf. Branko Petranović, *Bez bojazni od tabu-tema*, prir. Momčilo Mitrović, Sava Dautović (Beograd: INIS, 2010), 57–59; Miomir Dašić, „Riznica istoriografskih podataka za istoriju Ju-

As a part of these developments, the constituting of 'Vojvodinian's historiography' took place. In addition to the political factors, it was enabled by the appearance of the first generation of the party historians. With the exception of Árpád Löbl (1898–1983), one of the first Marxist historians who began to research the socio-economic relationships and labor movement in Vojvodina as early as after the Second World War,²⁵ all the other leading proponents of 'Vojvodinian historiography' were born in the interwar period: Milenko Palić (1921–2003), Josip Mirnić (1923–1979), Kálmán Csehák (1927–2003), Danilo Kecić (1927–2012), György Gaál (1927–2006), Sándor Mészáros (1929–1996), Zvonimir Golubović (1931–2018),²⁶ Ljubivoje Cerović (1936–2015)²⁷ and Ranko Končar (1938–2014).²⁸ Furthermore, all of them were members of the Communist Party and at the beginning of their professional career they socialized themselves working in the Historical Archive of the PCVLCs.²⁹ Finally, most of them got the highest academic degrees having defended doctoral theses about the history of the labor movement in Vojvodina before and after the First World War, i.e. about economic history (György Gaál), the history of student movement in Vojvodina (Ljubivoje Cerović) and the historical origins of the political autonomy of Vojvodina (Ranko Končar).³⁰

The Institute for the Research of the History of Vojvodina, founded at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad in 1968, represented the institutional framework in which these historians worked. These two institutions (the Department and the Institute) merged into the Institute of History in the middle of

goslavije“, u: Dobrilo Aranitović, *Jugoslovenski istorijski časopis. Bibliografija 1935–1997* (Beograd: Savez istoričara Jugoslavije, 1999), 14; K. Nikolić, *Prošlost bez istorije*, 417.

²⁵ Branislav Vranešević, „Dr Arpad Lebl 1898–1982“, *Godišnjak Društva istoričara Vojvodine*, 1981 [1983], 183–187.

²⁶ Drago Njegovan, „Zvonimir Golubović (1931–2018)“, *Rad Muzeja Vojvodine*, 61, (2019), 243–245.

²⁷ Drago Njegovan, „Prof. dr Ljubivoje Cerović (1936–2015)“, *Rad Muzeja Vojvodine*, 57, (2015), 278–279.

²⁸ Ranko Končar, *Istorijskim mišljenjem do razumevanja prošlosti i savremenosti*, ed. by Milivoj Bešlin (Beograd: Helsinški odbor za ljudska prava u Srbiji, 2021).

²⁹ Arpad Lebl, „Sa skupštine Društva istoričara Vojvodine – reč dr Arpada Lebla“, *Godišnjak Društva istoričara Vojvodine* (1979) [1980], 215.

³⁰ Josip Mirnić defended thesis about 'Labor movement in Bačka up to founding of the Hungarian Social-Democratic Party' (1962), Kálmán Csehák about 'Labor movement in Banat up to founding of the Hungarian Social-Democratic Party 1868–1890' (1970), Danilo Kecić about 'Revolutionary labor movement in Vojvodina 1917–1921' (1972), Milenko Palić about 'Labor movement in Vojvodina 1921–1928' (1972), Sándor Mészáros about 'Labor movement in Bačka from the founding of the Hungarian Social-Democratic Party until the end of the First World War 1890–1918' (1973), György Gaál about 'Development and importance of bolt and wire industries in Novi Sad and the making of a cartels in Yugoslavia' (1975), Ljubivoje Cerović about 'Social organizing and political engagement of the students from Vojvodina 1918–1941' (1978). See: *Filozofski fakultet u Novom Sadu 1954–1984*, 30–32. Ranko Končar defended his theses entitled 'Bourgeois opposition and political and constitutional conceptions about Vojvodina 1929–1941' at the Faculty of Philosophy in Ljubljana only in 1991. Despite earning his doctorate quite late, he held a prominent position at the Department of History at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad in the previous two decades. See: R. Končar, *Istorijskim mišljenjem do razumevanja prošlosti i savremenosti*, 11–12.

the 1970s. The idea about the Institute appeared in the middle of the 1960s at the conference devoted to the 'state of Vojvodinian historiography' organized by the PCVLCs.³¹ In the following years the leadership of the communist of Vojvodina decided to establish the Institute for the Research of the History of Vojvodina with the aim of gathering historians with the appropriate professional and ideological profile as well as encouraging the study of all the epochs of the 'province's history'. However, although the Institute conducted different project covering topics from archeology and Ancient History to contemporary history, the focus of the Institute remained on recent history. Practically, this meant that the history of the labor movement, People's Liberation War, the revolution as well as the history of the Communist Party/League of Communists were the only research topics. These were exactly the issues the authorities in Vojvodina were extremely interested in since they found their own legitimacy in the Second World War and the revolution.³² The evidence for this claim was found in the scientific conferences organized by the Institute as well as in its publishing policy. The first conference was devoted to the 50th anniversary of the League of the Communists of Vojvodina (1969) followed by the conferences with similar topics, namely, 'Vojvodina in 1943' (1978), 'The historical place and importance of the Sixth provincial conference of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia for Vojvodina' (1982), 'The participation of women of Vojvodina in the war and revolution' (1984).³³ Another important feature of the research agenda of the newly established Institute was its ideological orientation, namely, while considering the goals the Institute should achieve, in the study compiled for that purpose, it was pointed out that historiography about Vojvodina had had and still had the striking 'bourgeois-positivist character', it was oriented towards establishing the facts and, in the thematic sense, it was devoted to the research of the history of Serbs, Hungarians and Germans, leaving the history of other 'nationalities' in Vojvodina (Romanians, Ruthenians, Slovaks) almost totally neglected. Regarding these facts, the Institute was expected to eliminate certain deficiencies by extending the research to 'all the relevant themes and problems', by giving them the 'Vojvodinian character' instead of the previous 'national-separatist' one which was particularly emphasized by approaching the historical phenomena from 'scientific' i.e., 'Marxist-Leninist positions'.³⁴

A comprehensive insight into the policy of the 'Vojvodinian historiographical discourse' is provided by the activities of the Society of the Vojvodina's

³¹ Milenko Palić, „Deset godina rada Instituta za istoriju Vojvodine“, *Godišnjak Društva istoričara Vojvodine*, 1978 [1980], 19–25.

³² About the founding of the Institute see Aleksandar Kasaš, „Zapisnici Matične komisije za osnivanje Instituta za izučavanje istorije Vojvodine pre četiri decenije“, *Spomenica Istorijskog arhiva Srem*, 7 (2008), 127–145; Aleksandar Forišković, „Institut za izučavanje istorije Vojvodine“, *Zbornik za istoriju MS*, 1 (1970), 187–188; Čedomir Popov, „Uspešni rezultati i nove obaveze. Povodom desetogodišnjice Instituta za istoriju Vojvodine“, *Dnevnik*, 19. XI 1978, 17.

³³ Dušanka Dinić-Knežević, „Institut za istoriju“, in: *Filozofski fakultet u Novom Sadu 1954–1984*, 55.

³⁴ M. Palić, „Deset godina rada Instituta za istoriju Vojvodine“, 21.

historians, refounded in 1972. In addition to the improvement of the historical research in Vojvodina, the popularization of their results and the advancement of the history teaching, the goals of the Society were also to 'contribute to the development and cultivation of the brotherhood, unity and equality of all the nations and nationalities in the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia and, especially in the Socialist Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, through the Marxist approach to history and the materialistic interpretation of its phenomena from the standpoint of the interethnic policy of the League of the communists of Yugoslavia. Furthermore, the Society was supposed to 'contribute to the development of the socialist self-governing society and its relationships'.³⁵ According to Milenko Palić, the president of the Society, it was meant to significantly contribute to the battle 'against the well-known negative phenomena which appeared in our country during the previous years – nationalism, liberalism and technocracy which threatened the achievements of our people's liberation war and socialist revolution as well as our self-governing socialist development in the future'.³⁶ Therefore, the Society was primarily conceived as a kind of 'transmission' of the political aims of the ruling League of communists of Vojvodina into the field of historiography. That was made particularly easier by the fact that the administration of the Society consisted of the historians closely attached to the Party. Since there was no institute for the history of the labor movement in Novi Sad (like in other Yugoslav centres), The Society of Vojvodina's historians was a kind of the ruling Party's branch in 'Vojvodinian historiography'. At the same time, its yearbook *Godišnjak* tried to be a 'corrective' to the editorial policy of the Matica srpska's journal *Zbornik za istoriju/Proceedings for History* (launched in 1970) which, in only a few years, surpassed its regional character establishing itself as one of the leading historical journals in Yugoslavia. In that sense, the judgment about the first few volumes of the journal – formed by Sándor Mészáros, the collaborator of the Institute for the History of Vojvodina – was significant. Without denying the quality of the published articles, he pointed out that 'some of our academics entertain the opinion that in the future, it would be desirable to publish more papers about the labor movement, the people's revolution and postwar socialist building'.³⁷ In that way, Mészáros aired the opinion of the party historians who represented the mainstream of 'Vojvodinian historiography'.

Exactly these ideas were the guidelines of the *Godišnjak društva istoričara Vojvodine* [*Yearbook of the Society of Vojvodina's historians*] (re-launched in 1974). It was edited by Milenko Palić, as editor-in-chief, then historians Ljubivoje Cerović, György Gaál, Sándor Mészáros, Jadranka Jovanović, Nataša Kovač, Đorđe Milanović, Samuel Jovankovič, a councillor at the Institute of education of the SAP Vojvodina, and Lazar Zrnić, a teacher of national defense

³⁵ „Statut Društva istoričara Socijalističke Autonomne Pokrajine Vojvodine“, *Godišnjak Društva istoričara Vojvodine*, (1974), 251–259.

³⁶ Milenko Palić, „O Godišnjaku“, *Godišnjak Društva istoričara Vojvodine*, (1979) [1980], 225.

³⁷ Šandor Mesaroš, „O prvih sedam brojeva Zbornika za istoriju Matice srpske“, *Godišnjak Društva istoričara Vojvodine*, (1974), 273.

and security. Bearing in mind the striking lack of the literature in Serbo(-Croatian) on the history of national minorities ('nationalities'), the *Godišnjak's* editorial board tried to fill this gap. Therefore, thematic issues about the history of Hungarians (1974) and Ruthenians (1977) were published for the purpose of history teaching in schools. Yet, despite these useful endeavours, *Godišnjak* primarily published the papers about the history of the so-called 'revolutionary subject', i.e., the Communist movement as well as the appropriate articles devoted to the anniversaries related to the history of the Yugoslav Communist Party. Furthermore, *Godišnjak* regularly published the programmatic papers of 'the socio-political workers' about the role of history in 'self-governing socialist society'.³⁸ Hence, the amalgam of scholarly work and political reports were one of the striking features of the yearbook. The political papers uncritically appraising the achievements of the Communist Party and glorifying the personality of 'comrade Tito' were published by historians themselves, like editor Milenko Palić.³⁹ Apart from its close ties with the official ideology, one of prominent features of *Godišnjak* was its modest academic level of many published contributions. Altogether, these circumstances decisively influenced most academic historians to strikingly distance themselves from *Godišnjak* which published only sporadically their papers there. The editorial board was aware of this fact. Appraising that the 'Marxist orientation of historiography in Vojvodina' advances by leaps and bounds, Palić, however, felt disturbed by the 'insufficient presence of the most of the distinguished historians in the activities of the Society'.⁴⁰ This judgment was confirmed in a way by the fact that some of the most prominent historians of that time, such as Sima Ćirković, Branko Petranović, Čedomir Popov, Nikola Gaćeša and Vasilije Krestić – who regularly collaborated with Matica srpska's *Zbornik za istoriju* – published only one contribution in the *Godišnjak* while Slavko Gavrilović, published three shorter papers. After ten volumes published with the delay of even several years (for instance, the *Godišnjak* for 1983 was published only in 1986!), this periodical ceased its publication due to the continuous lack of financial support as well as the indifference of the broader professional community.

Epoch/subject	Ancient History	Middle Ages	16th–19th century	20th century	Theory and methodology of history, historiography, history teaching, archival science
Number of papers	2	5	38	58	25
In sum					128

Articles published in *Godišnjak Društva istoričara Vojvodina* according to epochs and themes

³⁸ See: Stevan Mačković, „Godišnjak društva istoričara Vojvodine – popis autora i radova za godine 1974–1983“, *Godišnjak Društva istoričara Vojvodine*, (1983), 83–95.

³⁹ See: Milenko Palić, „60 godina od konstituisanja komunističkog pokreta u Jugoslaviji“, *Godišnjak Društva istoričara Vojvodine*, (1979) [1980], 41–45.

⁴⁰ Milenko Palić, „Kako smo organizovani?“, *Godišnjak Društva istoričara Vojvodine* (1978), 228.

On the other hand, the periodical of the Institute for the history of Vojvodina, entitled *Istraživanja* [*Researches*] was longer-lasting. Launched in 1971 as a collection of papers, this periodical was supposed to be, according to the editors of the first issue, Čedomir Popov and Aleksandar Forišković, with its academic niveau 'as alive, relevant and interesting for the academic, professional and cultural public as the history of multicultural Vojvodina, the region specific in ethnic, economic, social, political, cultural and other terms'.⁴¹ Primarily owing to archeologist Bogdan Brukner, medievalist Dušanka Dinić-Knežević and specialists for the history of the Serbs in Habsburg monarchy Slavko Gavrilović, Aleksandar Forišković and Lazar Rakić, *Istraživanja* devoted a lot of space to prehistory, the Middle Ages and Modern History. However, until the end of the 1980s, the focus of this periodical was also on the history of the labor movement, the People's Liberation War and the socialist revolution.⁴² Out of 14 issues published in two decades (1971–1992), the first one was entirely devoted to the papers presented at the conference organized in the honor of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and the 30th anniversary of the uprising and revolution, the sixth issue (1978) was devoted to the '40th anniversary of Josip Broz Tito's appointment as the leader of the Party and his 85th birthday', the eight issue (1979) was devoted to the '60th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party, the Unity of the communist youth and revolutionary trade unions of Yugoslavia' and the tenth issue (1983) to the '40th anniversary of the 6th provincial conference for Vojvodina of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia'. As was the case with *Godišnjak*, almost all papers about the 20th century history were, thematically, devoted to the history of the labor movement, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, the People's Liberation War and the socialist revolution.⁴³

Epoch/subject	Archeology	Ancient History	Middle Ages	16th-19th century	20th century	Historiography
Number of papers	31	3	9	46	76	8
In sum						173

Articles published in *Istraživanja* according to epochs and themes

Besides in its periodical, the Institute for the Research of History of Vojvodina i.e., the Institute for History, published the academic results of its collaborators in the edition *Monographs* (34 monographs were published there by 1991) and in the edition *Građa za istoriju Vojvodine* [*Sources for the History of Vojvodina*], as a joint project with the Archive of Vojvodina (17 volumes in total). Both

⁴¹ Čedomir Popov, Aleksandar Forišković, „Na početku izlaženja“, *Istraživanja*, I (1971), 7.

⁴² *Istraživanja*, 1–14, (1973–1992). Cf. „Istraživanja I-X, Sadržaj po autorima“, *Istraživanja*, 10, (1983), 312–325.

⁴³ Cf. Aleksandar Kasaš, „Sadržaj prvih dvadeset brojeva *Istraživanja*“, *Istraživanja*, 21 (2010), 439–483; S. Mačković, „Godišnjak Društva istoričara Vojvodine – popis autora i radova za godine 1974–1983“, 83–95.

editions published to a significant extent works about the history of the labor movement, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia as well as the War and the socialist revolution. Yet, they also published monographs and collections of historical sources devoted to various subjects (political, economic, social and cultural history) and different epochs – from ancient to contemporary history.⁴⁴ The case of the edition *Vojvodina u borbi* [*Vojvodina in battle*] was totally different: launched by the SUBNOR [the Association of the veterans of the People's Liberation War] in the middle of the 1950s, the Institute for History became its co-publisher in 1974. There were four series within this edition: *Hronike mesta i vojnih jedinica* [*Chronicles of places and military units*], *Sećanja* [*Memories*], *Posebna izdanja* [*Special editions*] and *Likovi revolucionara* [*Revolutionary figures*]. Nearly hundred books were published in this edition by the end of the 1980s.⁴⁵ Such a fruitful production was a direct result of the strong support this edition enjoyed by the 'revolutionary subject', i.e., the League of the communists of Vojvodina. Fostering the building of the collective memory about the Communist Party, the war and the revolution, it tried to consolidate its own legitimacy. The books published in the edition *Vojvodina u borbi* were usually written by amateur historians and the participants in the war and the revolution. Therefore, they were characterized by obvious differences in the quality of these chronicles and memories. The proponents of 'Vojvodinian historiography' were aware of this fact pointing out that 'some of the books are not at a satisfactory level' since they were published by 'local and municipal committees of SUBNOR, local communities and similar'.⁴⁶

However, the publication of a huge number of historical sources provided a solid heuristic ground for the writing of the synthesis of Vojvodinian history which had already been planned in one of the first research projects of the Institute for the Research of History of Vojvodina: the study of the 'history of the People's Liberation War in Vojvodina' began in 1971. Despite the intention to publish the research results in 1976, the work on this collective monograph took another eight years. Under the title *Vojvodina u narodnooslobodilačkom ratu i socijalističkoj revoluciji 1941–1945* [*Vojvodina in the People's Liberation War and the Socialist Revolution 1941–1945*], and edited by Čedomir Popov, it was published only in 1984.⁴⁷ Although Popov was a Professor of Modern European and World History at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad dealing only sporadi-

⁴⁴ Cf. Biljana Šimunović-Bešlin, „Izdavačka delatnost Odseka za istoriju Filozofskog fakulteta u Novom Sadu“, *Istraživanja*, 21, (2010), 487–501.

⁴⁵ For a comprehensive insight into the bibliography of the publications of the Institute, see Dragica Koljanin, „Vojvodanska istoriografija narodnooslobodilačkog rata i socijalističke revolucije – dostignuća i zadaci“, *Istraživanja*, 13, (1990), 213–224; Milan Drča, „Dosadašnji rezultati i zadaci izdavačke delatnosti vojvodanske istoriografije, s posebnim osvrtom na ediciju 'Vojvodina u borbi', za period NOB-a i revolucije“, *Istraživanja*, 13, (1990), 243–247; B. Šimunović-Bešlin, „Izdavačka delatnost Odseka za istoriju Filozofskog fakulteta u Novom Sadu“, 487–501.

⁴⁶ M. Drča, „Dosadašnji rezultati i zadaci izdavačke delatnosti vojvodanske istoriografije, s posebnim osvrtom na ediciju 'Vojvodina u borbi', za period NOB-a i revolucije“, 243.

⁴⁷ Čedomir Popov (ed.), *Vojvodina u narodnooslobodilačkom ratu i socijalističkoj revoluciji 1941–1945* (Novi Sad: Institut za istoriju, 1984).

cally with the history of Vojvodina, he was entrusted to edit the manuscript due to the general scholarly profile of the leading proponents of the 'Vojvodinian historiography'. After the passing away of Josip Mirnić, initially designated as the editor, among other eleven authors (including one major general, Sreta Savić!), Popov was the only historian who had sufficient methodological and theoretical knowledge to compile various contributions – extremely different regarding their approach and style – into a relatively coherent whole. Having in mind that the contributors were mostly the historians who 'specialized twenty years ago in identifying the facts, primarily, collecting sources', Popov pointed out that 'many of those contributors remained on that level', which made it impossible to reach a 'higher level of theoretical generalizations as well as politological, philosophical or any other reasoning about history'. Therefore, Popov was forced to undertake major revisions to the manuscript of the monograph in which, finally, 'the clear lines between individual texts of the team of authors were blurred'.⁴⁸ Another important factor that determined the manuscript's physiognomy resulted from the strong 'ideologization at the University of Novi Sad' induced by the communist authorities in Vojvodina.⁴⁹ The severe ideological surveillance of historiography was in a way confirmed by the fact that, except for Branko Petranović, a Professor at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade and the leading expert for the history of Yugoslavia, the other peer reviewer of the manuscript was Ljubiša Stankov Zemba, a proven party cadre and the president of the Commission for the history of the PCVLCS.

Čedomir Popov supported an objective view on the Second World War and the revolution in Vojvodina from the standpoint of Marxist historiography as best as he could. In doing so, he tried to escape the extremes of the apologetic approach on the one hand as well as the 'sensational discovery of unknown facts and truths' on the other hand. Therefore, he defined the basic methodological principle as 'establishing the most distinctive features and specificities of the Yugoslav revolution' on the territory of Vojvodina as a 'regional example'.⁵⁰ Despite a relatively broad conception which tried to encompass various dimensions of the past (society, economy, education, culture), the focus of the monograph was on the history of the labor movement, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, the uprising in Srem, the partisan movement in Vojvodina, military operations as well as the social-, economical- and political changes during the last year of the war. Apart from that, almost all the authors overloaded their contributions with redundant facts (especially from the military and party history), they grounded interpretations on the simplified schemes of Marxist theory as well as heavily ideologized concepts. Hence, this book, conceived as an attempt to synthesize the results of 'Vojvodinian historiography' about the Second World War and the revolution, achieved its goal only partially. Having in mind this fact, the editor Popov obviously had no illusions about the scale of the accomplishment, pointing out that

⁴⁸ Čedomir Popov, *Istorija na delu. Razgovori 1982–2012* (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 2017), 65–70.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 29–30.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 67.

‘we are far from any idea that with it we gave the final judgment and unchangeable truths about those extremely complex problematics’.⁵¹

Since they considered the Second World War and the revolution to be their founding myth, i.e., the historical legitimacy of the political autonomy of Vojvodina, the provincial authorities attached immense importance to this book. This was indirectly reflected in the fact that its publication was accompanied by a great deal of media attention and appraised as the result of the longstanding research of ‘our most prominent specialists’ and ‘most respectable feathers of Vojvodinian historiography’.⁵² Published during the late socialism marked by the growing crisis of the Yugoslav political system, the book was steeped in the spirit of the previous age. Therefore, it did not meet with any reception in professional circles while the reviewer Branko Petranović passed many critical remarks regarding the content of the book and its theoretical approach.⁵³ Although the book *Vojvodina in the People’s Liberation War and the Socialist Revolution 1941–1945* should have been the crest of a wave of ‘Vojvodinian historiography’, it turned out to be, practically, its swansong.

Generally speaking, ‘Vojvodinian historiography’ was the provincial variant of the party historiography which was established in all the republics and provinces of the socialist Yugoslavia.⁵⁴ Its intellectual profile was impregnated in many ways with the ruling ideology. Taking the program of the League of the communists of Yugoslavia as directives for the research of history, it fostered a *cult of personality* (demanding the fully realization of comrade Tito’s letter and messages which inspired the new revolutionary course of the League of communists’), *political exclusiveness* (emphasizing that the study of history ‘could not be conducted by those who, by their activity, in any way undermine the principal achievements of our revolution’), *utmost dogmatism* which proclaimed that its ideology was scientific truth (insisting that historiography has to be ‘entirely impregnated with Marxist worldview as only possible in the self-governing socialist society’)⁵⁵ as well as the *political functionalization of historical knowledge* (in the form of the ‘improvement of the socialist self-governance in our multiethnic community and the building of the system of the socialist democracy, directed to strengthening the role of the working class and the emancipation of labor, consolidating the brotherhood and unity of nations and nationalities, the cultivation of the revolutionary traditions and the affirmation of the non-alignment policy and equal international cooperation’.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Č. Popov (ed.), *Vojvodina u narodnooslobodilačkom ratu i socijalističkoj revoluciji 1941–1945*, 6.

⁵² Č. Popov, *Istorija na delu*, 65.

⁵³ Č. Popov (ed.), *Vojvodina u narodnooslobodilačkom ratu i socijalističkoj revoluciji 1941–1945*, 5; Č. Popov, *Istorija na delu*, 75.

⁵⁴ About party historiography see: Đ. Stanković, Lj. Dimić, *Istoriografija pod nadzorom*, vol. 1, 256–280; M. Najbar-Agičić, *U skladu sa marksizmom ili činjenicama?*, 375–496.

⁵⁵ Ljubivoje Cerović, „Aktivnosti Pokrajinskog odbora Društva istoričara SAP Vojvodine“, *Godišnjak Društva istoričara Vojvodine*, (1974), 243–244.

⁵⁶ „Izveštaj o radu Društva istoričara Vojvodine“, *Godišnjak Društva istoričara Vojvodine*, (1979) [1980], 223.

The theoretical ground of 'Vojvodinian historiography' was dogmatic Marxism, one of three ruling paradigms in Yugoslav historiographies.⁵⁷ Although the proponents of 'Vojvodinian historiography' almost never 'ritually invoked the classics of Marxism-Leninism, they interpreted the entire modern history exclusively as a venue of class struggle which was (along with the history of the Communist Party) the main subject of their studies. Having neglected the social-, political and cultural context in which workers as a new social stratum came into being, dogmatic historians tried to reconstruct every (even the most insignificant) attempt of their organization and political mobilization without any reference to social totality. Therefore, another distinctive feature of this historiography was its vulgar empiricism – the strong focus on the establishing of the facts and, consequently, needless information overload. Thirdly, unlike the historians at the Institute for the history of the labor movement and the Institute for contemporary history in Belgrade, who relatively early began researching the history of the 'bourgeois parties' in the interwar period, that was not the case with the proponents of the 'Vojvodinian historiography'. Focused on the history of the Communist Party, they left this subject almost completely unexplored: the only exceptions were Árpád Löbl, who published a monograph about the 'bourgeois party in Vojvodina' at turn of the 20th century,⁵⁸ and Ranko Končar's doctoral thesis about the opposition parties and their concepts of the autonomy of Vojvodina in the interwar period.⁵⁹ Furthermore, due to their superficial knowledge of the theory and methodology of historical studies, they interpreted the labor movement within an extremely simplified Marxist model in which the central role was attributed to the class struggle between the 'reactionary bourgeoisie' and the 'progressive working class' led by the Communist Party. This resulted in two other striking weaknesses: the implicit acceptance of the concept of historical progress whose alleged bearer was the working class and a completely uncritical use of the terms taken from Marxist social and economic theory (class, labor, capital and capitalism, imperialism, revolution, socialism, and communism and similar). At the same time, the language of 'Vojvodinian historiography' was burdened with clichés and stereotypical judgments adopted directly from the official documents of the Communist Party such as 'oppressing and oppressed nations', 'revolutionary proletariat', 'revolutionary course', 'revolutionary forces', 'revolutionary platform', 'opportunistic leadership', 'united bourgeois front', 'Greater-Serbian centralistic bourgeoisie', 'Greater-Serbian hegemony', 'Vojvodinian bourgeoisie'. In this sense, the conclusion of Danilo Kecić's book about the 'labor movement in Vojvodina' is illustrative: 'Therefore, the basic historical importance of the labor movement between 1917 and 1921 is that permanent and indestructible ideological and political differentiation was carried out among their ranks, another precious

⁵⁷ Cf. Đorđe Stanković, *Iskušenja jugoslovenske istoriografije* (Beograd: IRO „Rad“, 1988), 100–101.

⁵⁸ Árpád Lebl, *Građanske partije u Vojvodini 1887–1918*. (Novi Sad: Institut za istoriju, 1979).

⁵⁹ Ranko Končar, *Opozicione partije i autonomija Vojvodine 1929–1941* (Novi Sad: Mir, 1995).

political and effective experience was gained and a clear perspective on the far-reaching goals of the class struggle emerged'.⁶⁰

As a consequence of such a 'methodology', the results of 'Vojvodinian historiography' presented an extremely decontextualized and depersonalized historical narrative. The 'working masses' and party functionaries led by Josip Broz Tito were its only 'heroes', which resulted in an entirely distorted view on history. Since the research of Vojvodina's history regularly neglected the broader political and spatial context Vojvodina was an integral part of – namely the Habsburg monarchy in 19th century and Yugoslavia in 20th century – one of the striking features of 'Vojvodinian historiography' was its provincialism. Finally, politically sensitive subjects – such as interethnic relations, the political approach of the national minorities in the Second World War, retorsion and repression for, real or imagined enemies, during the period of the 'revolutionary terror', then, the 'class struggle' in the countryside and the collectivization as well as the deprivation of the civil rights of the German population, and its imprisonment in camps – represented obvious lacunas in 'Vojvodinian historiography'. Following the party directive, it neglected them intentionally.⁶¹

The 'outburst of history' in the public discourse after Tito's death called many earlier interpretations into question.⁶² However, it did not prompt the proponents of 'Vojvodinian historiography' to reexamine their own theoretical assumptions. Quite contrary, they still insisted on ideological orthodoxy as attested by the attitudes of Ljubivoje Cerović and Milenko Palić. Cerović emphasized that it was crucially important for Yugoslav communists to 'find the answers to all the principal questions regarding Marx's doctrine, i.e., according to the words of comrade Tito: 'For the League of Communists the creative approach towards Marxism is a measure of its leading role''.⁶³ Discussing the 'phenomena and problems in historiography' in the middle of the 1980s, Palić asserted that the revision of historiographical judgments, initiated by the works of Vladimir Dedijer and Veselin Đuretić,⁶⁴ was led primarily by the 'anti-self-governing, antisocialist, counterrevolutionary, nationalistic and chauvinistic aims'.⁶⁵ This issue was also analyzed by the Society of Vojvodina's historians at the end of 1985. Bogdan Tankosić, a highly positioned functionary of the League of the Communists of Vojvodina argued that 'only those who have

⁶⁰ Danilo Kecić, *Revolucionarni radnički pokret u Vojvodini 1917–1921*. (Novi Sad: Institut za izučavanje istorije Vojvodine, 1972), 437.

⁶¹ Cf. Up. Mihael Antolović, „Srpska istoriografija o Nemcima u Vojvodini“, *Spomenica Istoriskog arhiva Srem*, 7, (2008), 149–165.

⁶² Jasna Dragović-Soso, *Saviours of the Nation'. Serbia's Intellectual Opposition and the Revival of Nationalism* (Montreal, Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 64–114, 123; Predrag J. Marković, „Kako (ni)smo pronašli 'pravu istorijsku istinu'? Srpska istoriografija posle 1991. godine“, *Prispevski za novejšo zgodovino*, vol. 44, no. 2, (2004), 50–51.

⁶³ Ljubivoje Cerović, „Pogled na život i delo Karla Marksa“, *Godišnjak Društva istoričara Vojvodine*, (1981) [1983], 15.

⁶⁴ Cf. K. Nikolić, *Prošlost bez istorije*, 226–248.

⁶⁵ Milenko Palić, „O pojavama i problemima u istoriografiji“, *Godišnjak Društva istoričara Vojvodine*, (1983) [1986], 77–79, na ovom mestu 77.

shown in deed that they are in favor of socialist self-governance can engage in writing and teaching of history and those who grounded their scholarly and teaching praxis on the principles of Marxist doctrine'.⁶⁶ Sharing this opinion, Palić pointed out the necessity of the suppression of own opposition and counterrevolution'.⁶⁷ The leading proponents of 'Vojvodinian historiography' refused any reexamination of the obsolete party appraisals taking them as nothing else but an attack on the system of the 'self-governing socialism' and the ideology of 'brotherhood and unity'.⁶⁸ Therefore, they supported extremely dogmatic ideological positions even in the mid-1980s.

It is not surprising that they were completely unprepared for the changes brought about by the collapse of communism as well as the disintegration of Yugoslavia at the end of the 1980s. These changes influenced 'Vojvodinian historiography' in a double way. Namely, the end of communism made Marxist social theory for the most part meaningless while the reconfiguration of the political system reduced the autonomy of Vojvodina becoming again a part of the Republic of Serbia. In that way, 'Vojvodinian historiography', as other Marxist historiographies in Eastern Europe, lost its theoretical ground. Simultaneously, it also lost its ideological function in giving historical legitimacy to Vojvodina as a constitutive element of the Yugoslav federation. In new circumstances, the theoretical assumptions of 'Vojvodinian historiography' became irrelevant and its practical and ideological function historically outdated. The fall of the Vojvodinian communist establishment in the autumn of 1988, i.e., those political forces that directly supported 'Vojvodinian historiography', followed by the redistribution of the political power determined the disappearance of this regional form of party historiography.⁶⁹

* * *

'Vojvodinian historiography' was institutionalized on the wave of the constitutional reforms in the late 1960s, it developed over the following two decades fervently supported by the provincial communist leadership and, finally, met its end during the new constitutional changes in the late 1980s. As a kind of party historiography, it had an important ideological function giving legitimacy to the ruling League of Communists of Vojvodina. Being ideologically profiled since their youth, the leading proponents of the 'Vojvodinian historiography' were characterized by striking partisanship, narrow intellectual horizons, a too simplified and schematic understanding of history as well as a vulgar Marxist approach to historical studies. Except for Árpád Löbl who studied class struggles in the

⁶⁶ Bogdan Tankosić, „Zadaci u daljem razvoju istorijske nauke i nastave istorije“, *Godišnjak Društva istoričara Vojvodine*, (1983) [1986], 68.

⁶⁷ Milenko Palić, “O pojavama i problemima u istoriografiji”, *Godišnjak Društva istoričara Vojvodine*, (1983) [1986], 77.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 77–79.

⁶⁹ Nebojša Vladislavljević, *Serbia's Antibureaucratic Revolution: Milosevic, the Fall of Communism and Nationalist Mobilization* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008).

Revolution of 1848, all other proponents of ‘Vojvodinian historiography’ focused their research on the period between the emergence of the labor movement at the end of the 19th century to the end of the Second World War. Therefore, the researchers of the earlier epochs – in whom the ‘revolutionary subject’ was not, practically, interested at all – were not a part of this historiography. They got their professional affirmation within the Serbian and Yugoslav historiography of that time. The same was the case with some historians who studied contemporary history (such as Čedomir Popov and Nikola Gaćeša) but they did not follow the dogmatism of ‘Vojvodinian historiography’. While Popov tried to interpret modern Serbian history in a broader European context, Gaćeša was the unquestionable pioneer of the quantitative history in the entire Yugoslav historiography. He established a new research field of economic and demographic history entirely according to the model given by the second generation of the historians of the *Annales school*.⁷⁰ It is obvious that ‘Vojvodinian historiography’ introduced some topics, neglected in the older historiography such as social and economic history. However, it was extremely autarchic since it was totally aside of the modernization endeavors in the Serbian and Yugoslav historiography of the time. From the early 1970s historians like Mirjana Gross, Sima Ćirković, Radovan Samardžić, Andrej Mitrović, Čedomir Popov, Milorad Ekmečić, Branko Petranović and Đorđe Stanković kept pointing out the importance of the permanent theoretical and methodological development of historical studies, interdisciplinarity as well as strengthening the disciplinary self-reflectiveness.⁷¹ Regarding this fact, Predrag Marković’s appraisal – that Serbian historiography from the socialist period did not fully take the advantages of the opportunities provided by the reception of dogmatic Marxism – is even more accurate in the case of ‘Vojvodinian historiography’.⁷² Primarily looking after the ideological orthodoxy and defense of the principles of the Communist Party, their proponents found any attempt of modernization foreign to them.

Finally, the collapse of the political system – which was the base of the institutional power of this particularly dogmatic form of party historiography – entailed the loss of the significance of most of its results. It turned out that only a few works of ‘Vojvodinian historiography’ stood the test of time – primarily those whose subjects were not directly focused on the history of the labor movement and the Communist Party. These are, first and foremost, the works about the history of national minorities as well as some professionally edited collections of historical documents. Several collected memoirs – as significant historical sources and correctives to the official documents about the Second World War – kept their value too.

⁷⁰ See: Mihael Antolović, *Čedomir Popov. Intelektualna biografija* (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 2021); Mihael Antolović, „Selektivna bibliografija Nikole L. Gaćeše“, *Istraživanja*, 19, (2008), 15–27.

⁷¹ Cf. Michael Antolović and Biljana Šimunović-Bešlin, „History as Vallis Aurea. Đorđe Stanković and the modernization of Serbian historiography“, *Tokovi istorije*, 3, (2018), 109–145.

⁷² P. J. Marković, „Kako (ni)smo pronašli ‘pravu istorijsku istinu’? Srpska istoriografija posle 1991 godine“, 48.

'Vojvodinian historiography' itself vanished quietly with the winds of change at the end of the 1980s and early 1990s. The editorial policy of the journal *Istraživanja* provided a vivid insight into the historiographical 'transition' from socialism into capitalism. A visible change in its content took place in the twelfth issue (1989) that contained only one article about the history of the 'revolutionary subject' while other papers were devoted to earlier historical epochs. In this way, the political changes directly influenced the research of the history of the Party and revolution. In a few following years these subjects disappeared completely from the journal: in the 14th and the last issues of the first series (1992) there was no paper about history of the Party whatsoever.⁷³ The abolishment of the Institute for history at the Faculty of Philosophy in the following year signified that 'Vojvodinian historiography' came to an end in the organizational terms too.⁷⁴ Yet, its former promoters promptly redirected their research from the previous class- to the national subject matters which were much more appropriate to the new reality of the Serbian society after the fall of communism and the breakup of Yugoslavia.⁷⁵ The ease with which they abandoned the concepts they insisted on in the previous decades was a confirmation not only of their superficial acceptance of Marxism but also of their striking ideological opportunism. Consequently, the rise and fall of 'Vojvodinian historiography' testify especially about the limitation imposed to historical knowledge by the political power as well as the extent of the instrumentalization of historical studies in the authoritarian political systems in which historians often take part voluntarily.

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⁷³ See: *Istraživanja*, 14, (1992).

⁷⁴ Cf. Danilo Kecić, „Institut za istoriju Filozofskog fakulteta u Novom Sadu 1985–1994“, *Rad Muzeja Vojvodine*, 37–38, (1996), 203–207.

⁷⁵ Cf. D. Njegovan, „Zvonimir Golubović (1931–2018)“, 243–245; D. Njegovan, „Prof. dr Ljubivoje Cerović (1936–2015)“, 278–279. An exception, in a way, was Ranko Končar, who during his entire later academic career tried to prove the historical basis of the autonomy of the province of Vojvodina. See: Ranko Končar, *Istorijskim mišljenjem do razumevanja prošlosti i savremenosti*, passim.

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‘ONLY THOSE WHO HAVE SHOWN IN DEED THAT THEY ARE IN
FAVOR OF SOCIALIST SELF-GOVERNANCE CAN ENGAGE
IN WRITING AND TEACHING OF HISTORY’ – THE RISE
AND FALL OF ‘VOJVODINIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY’ (1968-1993)

Summary

Although historical writing enjoyed a long tradition in the region of Vojvodina, strong impetus to the development of scholarly historiography was given after the Second World War. Vojvodina became an autonomous province within the Socialist Republic of Serbia and as a part of the socialist project of the accelerated modernization Novi Sad it became a university center in 1954. At the newly founded Faculty of Philosophy the Department for History was established too. However, appraising its professors as well as a large part of students to be ‘bourgeois’ in their world view, the communist authorities tried to produce an ideologically proven cadre which would be entrusted with the research of contemporary history, i.e., the history of the Yugoslav Communist Party, the Second World War and the socialist revolution. As part of the constitutional changes in the late 1960s, confirmed in the Constitution of 1974, which attributed Vojvodina the status of a constitutive element of the Yugoslav federation, the ‘Vojvodinian historiography’ was also constituted as a special form of the party historiography. Institutionalized in the newly established Institute for the study of history of Vojvodina, ‘Vojvodinian historiography’ was expected to legitimize the new constitutional status of Vojvodina within Yugoslavia as well as the authority of the Vojvodinian communists by proving the ‘authenticity’ of the People’s Liberation War and the socialist revolution in Vojvodina. Focused exclusively on the history of the labor movement, the People’s Liberation War and the socialist revolution, ‘Vojvodinian historiography’ was in many ways impregnated with the ruling ideology. Its distinctive features included a cult of personality (of comrade Tito), political exclusiveness, utmost dogmatism which proclaimed that the ideology was scientific truth as well as the political functionalization of historical knowledge. The political changes in the late 1980s and the fall of the communist authorities in Vojvodina entailed the collapse of this regional form of the party historiography too.

KEYWORDS: ‘Vojvodinian historiography’, Communism, Vojvodina, Marxism, Ideology