

Organizational structure of transforming League of Communists of Serbia (Part I)

Lukáš VOMLELA

Ústav středoevropských studií, Fakulta veřejných politik,
Slezská univerzita v Opavě
Institute of Central-European Studies, Faculty of Public Policies,
Silesian University in Opava,
Hradecká 665/17, 746 01 Opava, Czech Republic
lukas.vomlela@fvp.slu.cz

Introduction

The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) was affected by a number of difficulties and problems. The constitution from 1974, including the confederate elements, represented one of the attempts of Titoist elites to avoid major disputes between individual Yugoslav republics and autonomous provinces and to eliminate national-motivated protests in the future. In the scope of the communist countries, the political and economic arrangement of Yugoslavia constituted a unique thing. The motive consisted in introduction of so called self-management socialism. The first experiments were performed by the government of the Yugoslav communists after the rupture with the USSR. They tried to ease the control over economic businesses through the introduction of so called workers' councils. The councils were to decide on redistribution of a part of the company profit and to influence further company strategy by their decisions. The reinforcement of powers of the workers' councils led to adoption of so Laws of Associated Labour in 1976; the republic and autonomous leaders of individual leagues of communists of Yugoslavia kept a distinctive influence on the operation of companies. Several years earlier, in 1969, Tito's government proceeded to federalize the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY). The individual leagues of communists of Yugoslavia¹ had very different developments after the death of the main arbitrator, Josip Broz Tito; they were less willing to cooperate and coordinate their policy at federal level. They also reacted very differently to the increasing demands of the opposition. The text below deals with the most important factors that caused the diverse orientation of the individual leagues of communists of Yugoslavia in the period of transition; the most space is devoted to the League of Communists of Serbia (LCS) that was greatly influenced by considerably bound with the Leagues of Communists of the Kosovo and Vojvodina autonomous until the change of the Serbian Constitution in 1989. The following study also focuses to find the main reasons why the Serbian post-communists were able to win the election of 1990. The text is based on the dissertation defended in 2013 and tries to find the answer which mechanisms were used by Milošević' government to avoid a rupture in the League of Communists of Serbia, to transform the party successfully

¹ The leagues of communists were created at the level of all republics and autonomous provinces. The army also had its own League of Communists of Yugoslav People's Army.

into the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) and to hang on to power.

The submitted text deals mainly with the following factors related to the organizational structure of the transforming governing party of Serbia: 1) generational changes in the League of Communists of Serbia, 2) intensity and frequency of internal party purges, 3) outflow of members and effort to recruit new members, 4) ethnic homogeneity among party members, 5) response to the requirements of the opposition, 6) charismatic party leadership and 7) the level of dependence on federal authorities and on other leagues of communists. Although the submitted text focused mainly on Serbia in the second half of the 1980s and on the development in 1990, it deals also with other Yugoslav republics and with their influence on the leagues of communists of other republics and autonomous provinces, due to the interconnection with them.

Transformation of communist parties

According to Ishiyama and Bozóki the development of the successor communist parties affected significantly the transition of the post-communist country to democracy.² All of the communist and post-communist parties in Central and Eastern Europe responded differently to the changing circumstances. Thus, as Taraz Kuzio points out, there was no „uniform transition of ruling Communist parties into successor parties“³ in that area. Valerie Bunce points out the difficult predictability of political development of most post-communist countries.⁴ The individual leagues of communists of Yugoslavia also had completely different developments at the end of the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s.

Anna Grzymała-Busse considers it necessary to search the causes of success of some former communist parties concerning the ability of their program transformation. Formerly, the programs of the communist parties constituted „little more than a ritualistic listing of goals and ideology. They were not responsive to popular concerns or priorities, provided no real policy alternatives, and did not swerve from the party's ideological line.“⁵ While in the course of the transition, the parties had to integrate substantial changes into their programs, in order to be able to attract an essential part of voters. They „had to become responsive: focused on the voters (rather than on internal party concerns), policy oriented, and flexible. Proposals that focused on priorities of the electorate and the voters' concerns, instead on a few narrow appeals, were more likely to gain the party significant electoral support.“⁶ The ability of attraction is considerably reduced by mass protests, if they emerge. They constitute an acid test to the communist party; such test requires efficient strategy, may undermine the party's integrity and endanger its dominant position. The character

2 Věra STOJAROVÁ, Legacy of communist and socialist parties in Western Balkans, in: Party Politics in Western Balkans, Věra STOJAROVÁ – Peter EMERSON (eds.), London 2007, 26.

3 Taraz KUZIO, Comparative Perspectives on Communist Successor Parties in Central-Eastern Europe and Eurasia, in: Communist and Post-Communist Studies 41, 2008, 1, 398.

4 Valerie BUNCE, Rethinking Recent Democratization: Lessons from the Postcommunist Experience, in: World Politics 55, 2003, 2, 173.

5 Anna GRZYMAŁA-BUSSE, The Programmatic Turnaround of Communist Successor Parties in East Central Europe, 1989-1998, in: Communist and Post-Communist Studies 35, 2002, 1, 53.

6 Ibidem.

and strength of the protests, as well as the social requirements directed by the protesting people against the governing party are crucial in such cases. Valerie Bunce states that mass protests give a great advantage to the opposition leaders for negotiation with the representatives of the non-democratic regime, creating at the same time „a mandate for radical change.”⁷ However, in that context, the author considers it necessary to distinguish protests against the regime and protests against the state. While the former favour social changes leading to successful democratization, the latter group of protests, often related to nationalist requirements, shows disputable ability of successful democratization.⁸

The protests occurred in Serbia in the second half of the 1980s and, as will be discussed below, had both national and social contents. The League of Communists of Serbia supported the demonstrators and promised improvement of social conditions. The leaders of the Serbian communists perceived the social disorders as long as it was a lasting threat that could endanger their position very seriously.⁹ That is why at that time when Serbia was entering transition the Serbian communists focused particularly on social issues, taking advantage of the spreading fears from transition to market economy and guaranteeing some social stability.

Organizational structures of post-communist parties

Herbert Kitschelt delimited three pure types of political parties that arose in the post-communist societies. The voters in the countries where new parties arose make selections based on three motives: „sympathy with the personality of a party's candidates, expected personal and selective tangible and intangible advantages in the form of collective goods if the party of choice wins the election. These considerations give rise to three pure types of parties – charismatic, clientelistic and programmatic.”¹⁰ The three models of the political parties prefer different strategies towards the voters and create different bonds for them. The program parties show the highest tendency to provide more information to voters; they focus on their program and on communication with the voters. The charismatic parties constitute little-structured political formations, created around a strong personality. The programmatic parties are supported mainly by more educated voters and by representatives of middle class.¹¹ And at the same time, it is true that „although programmatic parties are harder to build than charismatic or clientelistic parties, they are more likely to reinforce the consolidation and stability of democratic regimes than the two alternative models of party-voter linkage.”¹² Klaus von Beyme points out the failures of charismatic parties in Central and Eastern Europe. According to him, particularly the charismatic parties did not succeed in recruiting a strong voter base and in building a permanent party organization

7 BUNCE, 172.

8 Ibidem, 176.

9 Michał J. ZACHARIAS, *Komunizm, federacja, nacjonalizmy. System władzy w Jugosławii 1943-1991. Powstanie – przekształcenia – rozkład*, Warszawa 2004, 440.

10 Herbert KITSCHOLT, *Formation of Party Cleavages in Post-Communist Democracies. Theoretical Propositions*, in: *Party Politics* 1, 1995, 4, 449.

11 Ibidem, 449–450.

12 Ibidem, 450.

in the initial period of non-structured party system.¹³ That problem is generally related to high degree of volatility that occurred in the preferences of the electorate of those countries, leading to frequent loss of voter's support of the parties. Similar problem is related to citizens' lower willingness concerning the entering of political parties in post-communist countries.¹⁴

The Socialist Party of Serbia focused mainly on preserving and finishing of its own firm organizational structure, which rates it among clientelistic parties, according to Kitschelt's model.¹⁵ Klaus von Beyme also points out the ability of former communists to secure a very strong position in the changing conditions of Central and Eastern Europe. According to him, their success must be searched in the fact that they were able to make use of the bureaucratic and organizational framework, rather than in their charisma.¹⁶ A great advantage of the successor post-communist parties consists in their history and strong institutional structure inherited by the post-communist party from its predecessor, unlike the newly created oppositional subjects.¹⁷ The communist party had been the only permitted political party in a number of countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Additionally to Yugoslavia, other political parties were not allowed also in Albania, Romania, Hungary and the USSR.¹⁸ The advantage of the communist parties, consisting in their organizational structure, was strengthened by the fact that such party constituted the only organized political force and did not have to compete with political parties that had been its satellites in the past, although they also had some advantage consisting in the existing organizational structure. The party's member base was made use of in Serbia as well; the newly emerging post-communist Socialist Party of Serbia tried to recruit supporters through some permitted social-political organizations, the most important is the Socialist League of Workers of Serbia, with it the League of Communists of Serbia merged in 1990 to create the Socialist Party of Serbia. But that merger, according to J. Wiatr, „did not change substantially either the organizational structure of the party or its administration, led by Slobodan Milošević.”¹⁹ The property controlled by the newly emerged party through the Socialist League of Workers of Serbia was estimated 160 million USD.²⁰ The merger had another aspect: avoiding negative impacts of considerable outflow of members.

According to Anna Grzymała-Busse, the „organizational strategies of communist parties during the era of state socialism (1945-1989) are among lesser-documented aspects of parties' rule. Yet, these strategies, consisting of the means of party control over society and internal personnel policy within the party, underlay the communist parties' ability to reform

13 Klaus VON BEYME, Parties in the Process of Consolidation in East-Central Europe, in: Prospects for Democratic Consolidation in East-Central Europe, Geoffrey PRIDHAM – Atilla ÁGH (eds.), New York 2001, 139.

14 Jerzy J. WIATR, Europa pokomunistyczna. Przemiany państw i społeczeństw po 1989 roku, Warszawa 2006, 178.

15 KITSCHOLT, 449.

16 VON BEYME, 140.

17 John ISHIYAMA, Party Organization and the Political Success of Communist Successor Parties, in: Social Science Quarterly 82, 2001, 4, 845.

18 WIATR, 161.

19 Ibidem, 167.

20 Robert THOMAS, Serbia under Milošević. Politics in the 1990s, London 1999, 63.

and negotiate under communism.”²¹ The strategies influenced the transforming abilities of former communist parties. Anna Grzymała-Busse regards the level of party’s control over the society and the recruitment of elites as main factors. According to her, it applies that: „the less the parties relied on the loyalty of the party members and of extensive organizational networks as a way to control society, and the more pragmatic and skilled their elites, the more able the communist parties to innovate and implement policy reforms... and to negotiate with the anti-communist opposition.”²² The successor communist parties confronted the outflow of members. According to Jerzy Wiatr, it testified frequent forced membership.²³ Too marked outflow of members reduces the party’s ability to preserve the essential advantage consisting in members in the changing conditions. An essential factor, allowing the communist party transforming and responding adequately to the demands of the society and to the changing conditions in the period of transition consists particularly in firm and united party leadership, is able to respond to social demands.

Rupture in the League of Communists of Yugoslavia

Differences in ideological direction of individual leagues of communists of Yugoslavia could already be seen in the 1980s. A marked rupture in the whole League of Communists of Yugoslavia arose with regard to economic issues and mistakes of the existing economic and political system that had led Yugoslavia into deep economic crisis. The discussion on self-management socialism and its necessary reforms split up considerably the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, and currents of liberals and conservatives were shaped fundamentally. The extensive economic crisis was confronted by the Yugoslav elites stimulated also numerous discussions regarding the future role of individual institutions, particularly on federal level, and on relationships with individual republics. The communists were divided into centralist²⁴ and decentralist currents in this regard. Modifications of both currents could be observed in individual leagues of communists; as Sabrina Ramet states, „liberal recentralizers were dominant in the Serbian party, conservative recentralizers in the Bosnian and Montenegrin party, liberal decentralists in the Vojvodinian party, and conservative decentralists dominated the Croatian, Macedonian and Kosovar party.”²⁵ The leaders of the Slovenian communists, before Milan Kučan came to power, were considered liberal in overwhelming majority of social issues and decentralistic.²⁶

Josip Broz Tito viewed the League of Communists of Yugoslavia as one of the basic pillars guaranteeing Yugoslavia’s unity. The leaders of the leagues of communists of the individual republics diverged from each other by the end of the 1980s, which could be seen also in the first years after the death of the president who had been elected for lifetime. Although

21 Anna GRZYMAŁA-BUSSE, *The Organizational Strategies of Communist Parties in East Central Europe, 1945-1989*, in: *East European Politics and Societies* 15, 2001, 2, 421.

22 Ibidem.

23 WIATR, 180.

24 also called recentralizers

25 Sabrina RAMET, *Balkan Babel. The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to the Fall of Milošević*, Cambridge 2002, 11.

26 Ibidem.

the whole League of Communists of Yugoslavia declared externally unity and continuity to Tito's legacy, the reality was very different. Institutionalized mistrust, as Vesna Pešić called it, ruled there; „the republics, state nations and institutional minorities watched each other, caring that none of them deviated from the existing practice.”²⁷ The attempt to change the equilibrium of forces finally led to disintegration of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. Particularly the relations between the leaders of the Slovenian and Serbian communists were very critical in that period. On 20 and 21 January 1990, the 14th Extraordinary Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia was held in Belgrade; some delegations of the leagues of communists of the individual republics and autonomous provinces brought different visions of further arrangement of relations within the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. 1,457 delegates from individual republics and autonomous provinces participated in the congress.²⁸ Particularly two concepts of future arrangement of the LCY collided there. The Slovenian delegation required complete „remodelling of the LCY into a loose alliance of independent republic organizations... The LCY resolutions were not to be binding but rather recommending to the member parties.”²⁹ At the same time, the delegation required that the LCY should waive its monopoly and announce free elections.³⁰ As Václav Štěpánek states, the relations among some leagues of communists were very tense. „The Serbian delegates refused all Slovenian suggestions as a matter of principle, including suggestions they would otherwise have approved. It was obvious that no compromise between the Slovenian and Serbian leaders of the party was possible.”³¹ The Slovenian delegates left the 14th congress of the LCY, protesting against the refusal of their demands. After their walkout, two blocs were created at the extraordinary congress. The first bloc consisted of Serbia and the delegations representing both subordinated autonomous provinces together with Montenegro. That bloc called on the congress to continue without the 114 Slovenian delegates who had walked out.³² The second bloc consisted of delegations from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and the Yugoslav People's Army; that bloc, unlike Milošević, did not want to continue the congress without the Slovenian representatives, asking for adjournment of the extraordinary congress of the LCY.³³ The League of Communists of Yugoslavia virtually broke up due to this; when the meeting of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia was convoked for 30 March 1990, to „discuss the further fate of the party, it was attended, additionally by Serbs, Montenegrins and representatives of Yugoslav People's Army, by only three Macedonians and 14 members from Bosnia and Herzegovina, who left after break, and by one member of Serbian nationality from Croatia.”³⁴ After the 14th Extraordinary Congress of the LCY and the meeting of the Central Committee (CC) of the LCY, it was evident that the League

27 Filip TESÁŘ, Nacionalismus a komunismus ve světle vztahu mezi státem a menšinou na Balkáně, in: Mezinárodní vztahy 37, 2002, 4, 57.

28 Václav ŠTĚPÁNEK, Jugoslávie – Srbsko – Kosovo, Kosovská otázka ve 20. století, Brno 2011, 422.

29 Jan RYCHLÍK et al., Dějiny Slovinska, Praha 2011, 240.

30 Susan WOODWARD, Balkan Tragedy. Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War, Washington 1995, 115.

31 ŠTĚPÁNEK, 422.

32 Ibidem.

33 WOODWARD, 115.

34 RYCHLÍK et al., 241.

of Communists had really broken up, and the individual leagues of communists would develop independently without each other. Before the break-up of the LCY, most of the leagues of communists already behaved very loosely, and the leaders of the whole party were perceived rather as platform of individual republics and autonomous provinces. The 14th congress had another interesting aspect: the Serbian representatives of the leagues of communists of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina supported the attitude of the leagues of communists whose members were against Slobodan Milošević' intentions.³⁵ That circumstance documents how difficult it could have been for the leaders of the League of Communists of Serbia to unify with the representatives of Serbs in the Leagues of Communists of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina whose shift towards Milošević' current would probably have caused the disintegration of those party's organizations of the republics. Vojislav Stanovčić points out the specific characteristics of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. According to the author, the consociation mechanisms, applied in Yugoslavia at federal level (e.g. in form of collective presidency, leadership of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, etc.), „remained largely limited to the federal level, though they were also badly needed in republics, due to their multi-national composition.”³⁶ On the other hand, the individual republics were completely lacking such mechanisms, except for the composed Republic of Serbia before 1989 when the autonomous provinces were restricted, as Nebojša Vladislavljević points out.³⁷ Lenard Cohen points out the status when the issue of fair representation of individual nations constituted „a politically sensitive issue in Yugoslavia.”³⁸ The individual leagues of communists supervised certain parity in representation in ethnically heterogeneous republics. Lenard Cohen also deals with the ethnic composition of Yugoslav elites in selected sectors of the ethnically mixed parts of Yugoslavia. He includes Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Vojvodina³⁹ in his study.⁴⁰ It applies to both autonomous provinces that the Serbs were overly represented, which is very probably caused by their high proportion of members of local leagues of communists. While in Vojvodina, the Serbs constituted less than 56% of the population in 1971, their representation among the officials of the League of Communists of Vojvodina and of other social-political organizations amounted to 63%. The Vojvodinian Serbs had similar representation among officials active in autonomous authorities (63.4%) and among Vojvodinian managers (64.5%).⁴¹ The Albanians were represented insufficiently within the whole Yugo-

35 ŠTĚPÁNEK, 423.

36 Nebojša VLADISAVLJEVIĆ, *Serbia's Antibureaucratic Revolution. Milošević, the Fall of Communism and Nationalist Mobilization*, New York 2008, 36.

37 Ibidem.

38 Lenard COHEN, *The Socialist Pyramid. Elites and Power in Yugoslavia*, London 1989, 299.

39 The above stated figures are related to the 1970s. The first type of the elites under research consists in the party's officials and officials of other social-political organizations. The second group consists in officials of legislative and governmental bodies. Another group includes managers and executives of economic businesses, directors of educational institutions, cultural centres, health care institutions, scientific organizations and executives of working organizations.

40 COHEN, *The Socialist Pyramid*, 308.

41 Ibidem, 306.

slavia.⁴² That status can be explained by general mistrust of the Albanians in Yugoslav institutions and in the League of Communists of Yugoslavia as such. In Kosovo, the Albanians constituted 62.4% of local party's officials and representatives of permitted social-political organizations. The Serbs were overly represented in the party and in the social-political organizations in the 1970s. At the beginning of the 1970s, the Kosovo Serbs had 24% proportion among top representatives and representatives of socio-political organizations. The Montenegrins, constituting 2.5% of total Kosovo population, were overly represented in Kosovo. The Montenegrin officials had 10.7% representation in the above stated organizations.⁴³ In legislative authorities and among governmental officials, there were 33.5% of Serb representatives, 11.5% of Montenegrin representatives, and the majority population of Kosovo Albanians was represented by 48.8%. The Albanians were appointed even less managerial positions. In Kosovo, they had 40.5%, while Serbs constituted 39.7% of those elites and Montenegrins 12.7% of them.⁴⁴

During so called Anti-bureaucratic revolution when dissatisfied inhabitants demonstrated against the Montenegrin and Vojvodinian leaders of the party and of the republic, or of the autonomous province, in case of Vojvodina, the League of Communists of Serbia succeeded in getting those parts of Yugoslavia under control by pushing through the members of local leagues of communists, who were loyal to Milošević, and the vacated positions of officials who had resigned under the protesters' pressure. In Kosovo, the leaders of the League of Communists of Serbia could not rely on similar strategy like in Vojvodina and Montenegro. The reason consisted in the ethnic majority of the Kosovo Albanians who, on the contrary, protested against their effort to dismiss the leaders of the autonomous province of Kosovo and of the League of Communists of Kosovo. The Serbian communists pushed through their goals at federal level, as well as through reinforced police and military control over Kosovo.

Generational changes in the League of Communists of Serbia

The communist regimes and parties displayed relatively gerontocratic tendencies. In the course of time, representatives of the younger generation advance to top positions. Between the leaving older generation and the newly ascending generation, there are often essential differences in perception of the ideology, of the party leadership and of practical politics. In parties where generational changes at top positions had taken place before the respective society found itself in transition, the party's leaders had greater chance to respond to the changing conditions. On the contrary, in parties where only the generational changes were taking place, the conflicts between the members of the older and the ascending generation, resulting from different perception of the party, the ideology, etc., could substantially weaken the party. The League of Communists of Yugoslavia underwent essential changes with regard to generational change. The decentralization processes that took place in SFRY in the 1970s had created a situation in which the new ascending gener-

42 Ibidem, 300.

43 Ibidem, 308.

44 Ibidem.

ation of communists identified rather with republics or autonomous provinces where most members of the generation built their careers than with Yugoslavia as a whole.⁴⁵ In the course of the 1980s, the members of that generation took over important party and state offices; but it occurred particularly at republic or autonomous level. In 1986, the withdrawal of older Titoist elites from top party functions could already be well visible. For example in 1986, when the 13th Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia was held, 127 out of 165 delegates were younger than 40 years.⁴⁶ The ascending generation also did not share a lot of views of their predecessors. Unlike them, the members of the new generation withdraw from official ideology, focusing rather on pragmatic solutions of individual issues, requiring higher degree of looseness in the party and in the society as well as reduced pressure on opposition groups and media, promoting changes of the autonomous system and requiring election out of several candidates to top party and state functions.⁴⁷ In the course of the 1980s, the representatives of younger, post-war generation of communists broke more and more into top positions of the League of Communists of Serbia. In 1982, the elites related to the person of Josip Broz Tito gradually withdraw and the LCS leaders were very heterogeneous with regard to their age. The most significant representatives of the withdrawing older generation included Petar Stambolić, Dragoslav (Draž) Marković, Dobrivoje Vidić and General Nikola Ljubičić.⁴⁸ At the beginning of the 1980s, two most influential Serbian politicians, Petar Stambolić and Dragoslav Marković, push through the appointment of younger politicians gradually to top party and republic offices in Serbia. The age differences between the top representatives of the League of Communists of Serbia caused certain discrepancies of the party leaders with regard to the opinions on some political areas.

Intensity and frequency of internal party purges

The party purges reinforced the opinion homogeneousness and subdued internal party opposition, or its chance to influence the events and developments in the party. The party purges performed in the period immediately preceding the transition process reinforcing the opinion homogeneity very strongly among the party leaders. Also the ideological orientation of the current that was dominant in the party was very important too. It can be demonstrated very illustratively on the example of Czechoslovakia, as Anna Grzymała-Busse points out: after 1968 and the subsequent party purges, particularly the strong conservative wing remained in the party, which affected very negatively the ability of the Communist Party to transform and to address the society in changing conditions.⁴⁹ The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia relied only on its organizational component and was not able to address substantially the society. The unity of the League of Communists of Serbia was supported not only by the charisma of Slobodan Milošević as its president and, the presi-

45 WOODWARD, 71.

46 Ibidem.

47 VLADISAVLJEVIĆ, 85.

48 Ibidem, 55.

49 GRZYMAŁA-BUSSE, The Programmatic Turnaround, 55.

dent of the Presidency of the Republic of Serbia since 1989, but also by the reinforcement of certain internal unity of the party, strengthened by extensive party purges. The party purges facilitated highly the later transformation of the League of Communists into the Socialist Party of Serbia. The whole League of Communists of Yugoslavia, all along its history, underwent similar development until the 1980s, but the change of the party leadership was the most noticeable in Serbia during the whole existence of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY), or SFRY, even before Slobodan Milošević' accessioned to power. The first extensive party purges took place in the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, immediately after the Soviet-Yugoslav split. Members of the wing with pro-soviet orientation were excluded from the party. Further strong purges followed after the publication of articles by Milovan Djilas, being very popular at that time, it was considered quite controversial by the Yugoslav communists. In 1954, Tito's government came to terms with the liberal wing within the League of Communists of Yugoslavia.⁵⁰ Later, a very extensive new party purges affected the Socialist Republic of Serbia in connection with the changes provoked by the conflict between the liberal and the conservative wing of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in the 1960s. At that time, the very influential Aleksandar Ranković had to leave his offices and was subsequently excluded from the party. Together with him, a number of his influential allies, coming particularly from Serbia, were excluded from the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. As Jože Pirjevec states, the fall of Aleksandar Ranković led to an „extensive purge in UDB⁵¹ and in the LCY, particularly in Serbia and in Montenegro.”⁵² After the victory of the liberal wing of the LCY, the members of the liberal wing of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia established themselves particularly in Croatia and in Serbia. But extensive party purges took place in both republics, after the Croatian Spring in 1971 and in Serbia in 1972, which led to further changes of elites that were active in those republics. At that time, the conservative wing of Petar Stambolić and Dragoslav Marković came to power. Unlike the most leagues of communists, the members and leaders of the LCS were affected particularly by the party purge from 1966 and, except for Croatia, by the party purge from the beginning of the 1970s too. Even in the course of the 1980, based on the initiative of Stipe Šuvar, the president of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, and some significant communists were excluded from the party. After that Šuvar's initiative, there were no substantial changes in the cadre policy of the individual leagues of communists of Yugoslavia, based on a demand of the central leadership of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. After 1987 Serbia constituted an exception in that regard; after Slobodan Milošević defeated Ivan Stambolić's wing, party purges in the League of Communists of Serbia took place again. Similar strategy could be observed in Vojvodina, Kosovo and Montenegro after the fall of the old autonomous and republic governments and after the takeover of power by Milošević' supporters in 1988 and 1989. The League of Communists of Serbia, with such unity of opinions and such strong central leadership, could use the individual institutions and so called social-political organizations to control the society again. Except for Montenegro and the autonomous provinces, no other league

50 ZACHARIAS, 160.

51 Secret Police of Yugoslavia

52 Jože PIRJEVEC, *Jugoslávie 1918 – 1992. Vznik, vývoj a rozpad Karadjordjevičovy a Titovy Jugoslávie*, Praha 2000, 298.

of communists had such position and opportunities. In that manner, the League of Communists of Serbia succeeded in overcoming the crisis resulting from generational differences between the leaders of the communist party. Milošević often promoted the members of his own generation to top positions, clearly showing diversion from the personalities from Tito's period and diversion from their political course. Besides the other leagues of communists of the individual republics, the League of Communists of Yugoslav People's Army constituted a very united and strongly ideologized communist party. Unlike the LCS and the League of Communists of Montenegro, the League of Communists of Yugoslav People's Army did not undergo generational change at that time.

Outflow of members and new members

A high number of members allowed high level of party organization at lower level and higher chance to get to the voters. Also the preservation of local party cells and of their everyday operation was crucial. The League of Communists of Yugoslavia had relatively large number of members, as compared to some communist parties. In 1983 when the total number of its members culminated, the LCY had about 2,100,000 members and 67,000 branches, copying consistently the territorial division all over Yugoslavia but, as Jim Seroka and Radoš Smiljković stated, having less than 50 members in 85% of cases.⁵³ The mass outflow of members paralyzed strongly the ability of the transforming communist parties to act at local level. All leagues of communists suffered substantial outflow of members. In 1981, when the number of party members almost culminated, the League of Communists of Bosnia and Herzegovina had 391,000 members, the League of Communists of Montenegro 73,000, the League of Communists of Macedonia 150,000 and the League of Communists of Slovenia 125,000 members. The number of members of the League of Communists of Serbia amounted to 908,000 in total; 224,000 party members of the League of Communists of Vojvodina and 91,000 members of the League of Communists of Kosovo were members of the League of Communists of Serbia at the same time and could intervene in the events of that republic-wide party organization. The number of members who were affiliated only to the League of Communists of Serbia, without membership in any autonomous party organization, amounted to 593,000. Additionally the party organizations of the republics and the autonomous provinces, also the League of Communists of Yugoslav People's Army existed, with 107,000 members. The total proportion of Serbs in the whole League of Communists of Yugoslavia was considerably high. Serbs constituted about 50% of all members of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia.⁵⁴

The number of members of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia declined from 1984. Although the party presented itself as a workers' party, the number of workers within the whole League of Communists of Yugoslavia never exceeded 30% of all members.⁵⁵ But in the 1980s, the number of members of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia declined,

53 Jim SEROKA – Radoš SMILJKOVIĆ, *Political Organizations in Socialist Yugoslavia*, Durham 1986, 51–52.

54 SEROKA – SMILJKOVIĆ, 64.

55 Džon LEMPI, *Jugoslavija kao istoria. Bila dvaput jedna zemlja*, Beograd 2004, 305.

with particularly the leaving of workers and students.⁵⁶ As Louis Sell states, the proportion of those people declined to a half in the whole League of Communists of Yugoslavia.⁵⁷ Those people had always very low representation both in the top bodies of the whole League of Communists of Yugoslavia and in the leagues of communists of the republics and autonomous provinces. For example Laslo Sekelj stated that in 1982, only 8% of workers were elected to the Central Committee of the LCY, and 26.8% of workers were elected to the republic and autonomous committees four years earlier; a substantial part of such elites kept claiming allegiance to their original profession, although they did not practice it any more.⁵⁸ The author states that the LCY tried to change the social structure of its leadership, but it never exceeded the level of declarations, and the „application of those principles into actual political measures was only exceptional.“⁵⁹ Between 1983 and 1989, about 600,000 members left the party, and just in 1989, the League of Communists of Yugoslavia suffered a loss of further 100,000 members.⁶⁰

In 1989, the decline of the number of members of all leagues of communists continued. In December 1989, Slovenia had no more than 102,000 members; in Croatia, the number of members dropped to 298,000, in Serbia to 840,000 and Montenegro kept approximately identical number of members.⁶¹ In the course of 1990, the total number of members kept declining all over Yugoslavia. The disintegration of the League of Communists was most striking in Slovenia.⁶² In June 1990, about 20,000 remained loyal to the transformed League of Communists of Slovenia; the former League of Communists of Croatia had about 46,000 members left on January 1991, and about 70,000 former communists joined the winning Croatian Democratic Union. According to Laslo Sekelj, on January 1991, the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS), the successor entity of the League of Communists of Serbia, had 500,000 members, and the number of members of the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) of Montenegro oscillated about 60,000.⁶³ The outflow of members affected the very League of Communists of Serbia. Milošević' leadership succeeded to protect the party against major weakening by merging with the Socialist League of Workers of Serbia. It was estimated that the emerging SPS included about 1/3 of former members of LCS.⁶⁴ According to M. Obradović, there were even less former communists in the SPS. M. Obradović estimated that such members constituted 15 to 20% of the members of SPS.⁶⁵ The strong outflow of members, experienced particularly in Slovenia and Croatia, endangered and even made impossible the work of the party branches, which was reflected on the work of the parties. In Serbia, Slobodan Milošević was able to avoid similar disintegration of his political party

56 Ibidem.

57 Louis SELL, Slobodan Milošević and the destruction of Yugoslavia, London 2002, 102.

58 Laslo SEKELJ, Yugoslavia: The Process of Disintegration. New York 1993, 92–93.

59 Ibidem.

60 SELL, 102.

61 SEKELJ, 100.

62 SELL, 102.

63 SEKELJ, 100.

64 Lenard COHEN, Serpent in Bosom. The Rise and Fall of Slobodan Milošević, Colorado 2001, 19.

65 Marija OBRADOVIĆ, The Ruling Party, in: The Road to War in Serbia. Trauma and Catharsis, Nebojša POPOV (ed.), Budapest 2000, 428.

at micro-level and, on the contrary, to use the existing structures to penetrate and control better the society, particularly in rural areas where the new political parties had difficulties with addressing the voters. So the League of Communists of Serbia preserved all substantial advantages given by its strong organizational structure. The situation of Kosovo differed quite substantially from proper Serbia. When the Serbian communists took party control over Kosovo and over the autonomous bodies, radical disagreement of the Kosovo Albanian majority in that autonomous province led to extensive protests of the Kosovo Albanians and the outflow of the members whose number was already relatively low at that time. The disintegration of a part of local party organization in Kosovo only evidenced the fact that the local party organization constituted less important power base in pushing through the policy of the leaders of the Serbian communists than it was the case of the party members from proper Serbia.

Abstract

The main aim of the article is to explain the advantages of organizational structure of the League of Communists of Serbia, which enabled the party to remain in power after the Serbian elections in 1990. The article focuses on several factors which strengthened the central leadership of the Serbian communist party, such as the completed process of generational changes, intensive and frequent party purges, the decrease of party membership and the party's ability to recruit new members, ethnic homogeneity among party members, the reaction of party leaders to the demands of Serbian opposition, charismatic leaders and the level of dependence on the federal authorities and the other Leagues of communists. Although the article focuses mainly on the transformation of the League of Communists of Serbia, it also deals with the party organizations of other republics and autonomous provinces as well as the party's army organization of the League of Communists of Yugoslav People's Army, which was also member of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. After adopting the new constitution in 1974 the republics and autonomous provinces became even more independent on the federal institutions, and even the differences among the communists during the 1980s, after the death of Tito, arose, which affected further political development of Yugoslavia.

Keywords

Yugoslavia, Serbia, Vojvodina, Kosovo, communism, transition, League of Communists of Serbia, League of Communists of Yugoslavia