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## Tito-Stalin conflict and the Yugoslav Secret Police (UDBA) in 1948–1956

### Yugoslav Secret Police prior to Tito-Stalin breakup

Upon the German attack on the SSSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics/Soviet Union) in June 1941, which was preceded by the invasion of and splitting-up of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in April of the same year, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (Komunistička partija Jugoslavije, KPJ) launched an armed uprising all across occupied Yugoslavia. Its objectives were to fight for the liberation of the Yugoslav peoples (Narodnooslobodilačka borba, NOB – National Liberation War) and to create a new, federal Yugoslavia once the war ended.<sup>1</sup> As much as the national liberation was in the focus of Yugoslav communists, they also kept in view the implementation of communist ideology and practices after the war.<sup>2</sup> There are many reasons why the Partisans transformed into the ever stronger antifascist power that grew even stronger over the years, to become the only genuine antifascist movement under the control of the KPJ, which largely strengthened its authority from 1943 onwards. One of the reasons was the general dislike for the puppet regimes in Yugoslavia, especially the one in the Independent State of Croatia (Nezavisna Država Hrvatska, NDH). The latter largely contributed to the Partisan (communist) antifascist movement because of its genocidal policy towards Serbs. Other reasons can be ascribed to the impacts of the Italian occupational policy in Dalmatia and Montenegro, the passivity of the nominally antifascist government in exile, and the Chetnik movement led by Draža Mihajlović<sup>3</sup> (Jugoslavenska vojska u otadžbini, JVuO – Yugoslav Army in the Homeland). The empowerment of the Partisan movement gradually led to the creation of parainstitutions, such as the Antifascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (Antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Jugoslavije, AVNOJ) and the National Liberation Committees (Narodnooslobodilački odbori, NOO), which were to assume political legitimacy after the war. In 1944, the outcome of the war became discernible and the Partisan movement began to take the shape of a real army. It gave rise to

1 TOMAŠEVIĆ, Jozo: *Rat i revolucija u Jugoslaviji 1941–1945*. EPH Liber, Zagreb 2010.

2 BANAC, Ivo: *Sa Staljinom protiv Tita*. Globus, Zagreb 1990, pp. 88–90.

3 Dragoljub “Draža” Mihajlović (1893–1946) was colonel in the army of Kingdom of Yugoslavia and after the occupation led “anti-fascist” movement (Chetniks) and was promoted to the rank of general. His strategies aimed at restoration of royal government and the king after the war, while militarily he mainly fought communists (partisans) for power in occupied Yugoslavia. After the communist victory in 1945 he was captured, put on trial and executed.

the need for organizing the first Yugoslav communist police. The Department for People's Protection (Odeljenje za zaštitu naroda, OZNA) was established in May 1944, although several (intelligence) agencies already existed within the Partisan movement (army).<sup>4</sup> The newly established Yugoslav communist secret police was tasked with fighting the intelligence agencies of the occupying forces and their puppet regimes, foreign intelligence services, enemies of the Partisan movement and the KPJ, and protecting the Partisan army, particularly in the territories already liberated.<sup>5</sup> Formally, OZNA was established and structured on several levels within the Partisan movement, which, by that time, had already grown into a National Liberation Army of Yugoslavia (Narodnooslobodilačka vojska Jugoslavije, NOVJ) and de facto a government (Nacionalni komitet oslobođenja Jugoslavije, NKOJ – People's Liberation Committee of Yugoslavia). Regardless of formal division, OZNA had similar tasks and sections: (a) intelligence service, (b) counterintelligence service in the liberated territory, (c) counterintelligence service in the army, (d) statistics and technical section.<sup>6</sup> Due to war conditions, OZNA integrated civil and military intelligence operations. It was headed by Aleksandar Ranković – “Marko”.<sup>7</sup> Until his political fall in 1966, he was chief of the Yugoslav security service and also one of Tito's closest associates ever since Tito came to power in the Party in the late 1930s.

The Soviet support grew stronger as the Partisan movement was gaining momentum. It became more visible in February 1944, when the first Soviet mission led by General Nikolai Korneev came to the area of Drvar. The mission included a number of instructors from the Soviet secret services, who provided training in intelligence operation.<sup>8</sup> Before long, they spread their activities in other areas of the liberated territory, e.g. in Bosnia and Slovenia.<sup>9</sup> Towards the end of the war and immediately after, in May 1945, OZNA was mainly focused on various forms of intelligence work related to enemy formations, but also to the neighbouring countries.<sup>10</sup> This work included, for example, keeping records on war enemies, strength of the German army and collaborating forces in combat zones or what was left of them in the liberated territory.<sup>11</sup> In operative terms, those tasks were quite demanding, given the abundance of

4 ODIĆ, Slavko – KOMARICA, Slavko: *Partizansko obavještajna služba*, Books 1–3. Centar za informacije i publicitet, Zagreb 1988.

5 NIKOLIĆ, Kosta: *Mač revolucije. Ozna u Jugoslaviji 1944–1946*. Službeni glasnik, Beograd 2014, p. 21–22.

6 Ibid., pp. 22–23.

7 Aleksandar Ranković – “Marko” (1909–1983) was a Yugoslav communist and longtime head of the Yugoslav secret police OZNA/UDBA. He played a crucial role in the establishment and strengthening of communist rule in Yugoslavia, and was one of Tito's key collaborators. He was deposed in 1966 in a power struggle as a proponent of a dogmatic line in the communist party of Yugoslavia.

8 TIMOFEJEV, Aleksej J.: *Crveni i beli. Ruski uticaji na događaje u Jugoslaviji 1941–1945*. Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, Beograd 2011, pp. 294–301; VELEBIT, Vladimir: *Moj život*. Fraktura, Zagreb 2016, pp. 378–379; NIKOLIĆ, Kosta: *Mač revolucije. Ozna u Jugoslaviji 1944–1946*, pp. 24–25.

9 NIKOLIĆ, Kosta: *Mač revolucije. Ozna u Jugoslaviji 1944–1946*, pp. 24–25.

10 RADELIĆ, Zdenko: Uloga Ozne u preuzimanju vlasti u Hrvatskoj. In: KISIĆ KOLANOVIĆ, Nada – JAREB, Mario – SPEHNJAK, Katarina (eds.): *1945. Razdjelnica hrvatske povijesti*. Hrvatski institut za povijest, Zagreb 2006, pp. 97–122.

11 RADELIĆ, Zdenko: *Ozna/Udba: popisi neprijatelja i njihova kategorizacija (1940-ih i 1950-ih)*. *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, 2017, Vol. 49, No. 1, pp. 59–99.

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collaborating formations (Ustashas, Chetniks, Nedić troops, the White Guard, Rupnik troops, etc.)<sup>12</sup> in the relatively small territory of Yugoslavia. From 1944 and until its reorganization in 1946, OZNA was tasked with arresting and executing wartime enemies and those perceived as such.<sup>13</sup> Another very important task was to launch a war against the remnants of the Ustasha and Chetnik insurgent formations in the territory of Yugoslavia after the war.<sup>14</sup> Also, OZNA ran camps for Prisoners of War (POWs) and members of national minorities (e.g. the Volksdeutschers), who came under attack of the new power partly due to the imposed collective guilt.<sup>15</sup> OZNA had broad discretionary powers and, just like the Soviet secret services, it was almost a governing body in its own right.

In addition, OZNA had a very important role in the preparation and organization of the communist power in Yugoslavia, given that – apart from helping the civil organs establish the administrative structure of authority – it was monitoring and analysing the reactions of the population and detecting potential opponents. Though the KPJ de facto came into power in Yugoslavia in May 1945, the period of loose coalition between the communist government and the representatives of the Yugoslav royal government in exile continued well into the autumn of the same year. It was actually Tito's concession to the efforts of the Allies to return the king and restore the pre-war regime in the country. Very soon, the power of communists and their domination over the country forced the government in exile to resign. The KPJ immediately began with sovietization, the goal of which was to transform the country after the Soviet models in almost all spheres of life; apart from the political domination, which was quickly established, Yugoslav communists undertook to transform the economy, culture, industry, rural areas, judiciary, publicist writing, education, sports, etc.<sup>16</sup> If in the beginning OZNA was predominantly focused on the fight and intelligence work against the enemy formations during the war and in its aftermath, now it redirected its efforts towards the transformation of the state and the society in keeping with the communist patterns, or – in terms of the communist doctrine: “class struggle”. Thus, in March 1946, OZNA was transformed into new organizations – the State Security Administration (Uprava državne bezbednosti, UDBA) focusing on civil activities, and the Counterintelligence Service (Kontraobavještajna služba, KOS), in charge of intelligence work in the military. The reformed organization of the Yugoslav secret service was tasked with a wide range of operations: strengthening the powers of the

12 All of these were names of various Nazi (to a greater or lesser extent) collaborators in the then occupied Yugoslavia. Ustashas in the Independent State of Croatia; Chetniks in Serbia (there is an ongoing debate in the historiography as to what level or whether they were collaborators at all); Nedić troops in Serbia, the White Guard in the region of Slovenia, the same as the Rupniks, etc.

13 *Partizanska i komunistička represija u Hrvatskoj 1944–1946. Dokumenti*. Hrvatski institut za povijest, Zagreb 2009, pp. 66, 113, 294, 295; *Partizanska i komunistička represija u Hrvatskoj 1944–1946. Dokumenti Dalmacija*. Hrvatski institut za povijest, Slavonski Brod – Zagreb 2011, pp. 74–75, 89.

14 RADELIĆ, Zdenko: *Križari. Gerila u Hrvatskoj 1945–1950*. Alfa, Zagreb 2011, pp. 143–222.

15 *Partizanska i komunistička represija i zločini u Hrvatskoj 1944–1945*. Hrvatski institut za povijest, Zagreb 2009, pp. 55–56, 101–103, 245–247, 285–293, 302–303, 324; GEIGER, Vladimir: Josip Broz Tito i sudbina jugoslavenskih Nijemaca. *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, 2008, Vol. 40, No. 3, pp. 789–806.

16 BANAC, Ivo: *Sa Staljinom protiv Tita*, pp. 32–39.

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KPJ, observing, arresting and investigating the clergy, the remains of the pre-war civic political structures (even if they had collaborated with the KPJ during the war), former industrialists, intellectuals averse to the communist power, etc.<sup>17</sup>

The overall activity of the Yugoslav secret police prior to the 1944–1948 Tito-Stalin conflict, indicates that it was focused on the operations directed against the war enemies, the remaining collaborators after the war, the suppression of the post-war guerrillas, etc. Soon after, the Yugoslav secret police considerably contributed to the strengthening of the KPJ power and sovietization of Yugoslavia, particularly by eliminating its political opponents. But, in 1948 both the KPJ and UDBA had to face some new challenges.

### Tito-Stalin split and UDBA

From 1945 and until the summer of 1948, Yugoslavia was the Soviet Union's most devoted follower among countries in the sphere of Soviet influence. The process of sovietization implied adoption of the Soviet model of organizing a new state and not just seizure of political power and elimination of the opposition. In many of its aspects, this process was already completed in 1948 (agrarian reform, nationalization, industrialization, etc.). The period before the conflict saw glorification of the Soviet Union and the building of the personality cult, in addition to various forms of bonding between these two countries, both in a formal and symbolic sense. That is precisely why the rupture of the relationship between them came as a great shock to both the people in Yugoslavia, and the countries within the Soviet zone of interest (e.g. Czechoslovakia), as well as the West. The cause of the conflict was primarily in the activities of the Yugoslav foreign policy, namely its involvement in the Greek Civil War; the negotiations with Bulgaria about unification; and the Yugoslav involvement in Albania.<sup>18</sup> Tito's initiatives in foreign policy threatened the Soviet postwar relations with the West, especially after several fruitless attempts to straighten Tito up in early 1948. As a result, on 28 June of the same year Stalin submitted to Cominform (the then umbrella international communist organization), the *Resolution of the Informbiro*. By this public document the KPJ was expelled from the "communist world".<sup>19</sup> Among other things, the Resolution called on the KPJ members to overthrow Tito and his associates and install a new leadership.<sup>20</sup> Given that most details of the conflict were kept secret from the KPJ membership, the Resolution created a shock and disbelief among them, particularly because its text was abundant in various ideological alle-

17 ĐILAS, Milovan: *Vlast i pobuna*. EPH Novi liber, Zagreb 2009, p. 56–63; CVETKOVIĆ, Srdan: *Između srpa i čekića. Represija u Srbiji 1944–1953*. Institut za savremenu istoriju, Beograd 2006, pp. 293–301, 303–313, 529–540.

18 BANAC, Ivo: *Sa Staljinom protiv Tita*, pp. 41–55; GIBIANSKII, Leonid: The Soviet Yugoslav Conflict and Soviet Bloc. In: GORI, Francesca – PONS, Silvio: *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War 1943–1953*. Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli – Fondazione Instituto Gramsci, London 1996, pp. 222–245

19 DEDIJER, Vladimir: *Dokumenti 1948 – Knjiga prva*. Izdavačka radna organizacija „Rad“, Beograd 1979, pp. 299–306.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 306.

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gations that were, more or less based on facts. Besides, the personal charisma that Stalin had in 1948, also strongly impacted the reactions to the criticism expressed in the *Resolution*. The criticism from Moscow, which was set out in eight points of the *Resolution*, sparked different reactions: a part of the KPJ membership extended all-out support to the text of the *Resolution*, some of them agreed with only certain points, but many just could not understand such abrupt rupture after three years of aggressive Stalinization and idealization of the Soviet Union and Stalin. Having realized that the overthrow of Tito had failed, in 1949 Stalin imposed an economic blockade against Yugoslavia, combined with the military pressure and diplomatic isolation. Yugoslavia now faced possible collapse and was in fear of a military intervention and opposition from within the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. As a result, the Party strengthened its control mechanisms and launched a wave of arrests of Stalin's supporters (Cominformists).

The UDBA and the KOS had the main role in the crushing of the opposition, which was supporting *Resolution of the Cominform*; the former in charge of civilians, the latter in charge of the military. From 1948 and until 1956 when the conflict with the Soviet Union ended, a total of 15,737 people were arrested and then interned into camps or prisons.<sup>21</sup> There were no death sentences carried out against Stalin supporters, although there were a few examples where a death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment or lengthy prison sentences.<sup>22</sup> Most of those arrests, around 77%, were made by the UDBA, while 23% can be attributed to the KOS (mainly military staff).<sup>23</sup> The UDBA had its branches in each of the republics (see Chart). They were coordinated by the federal UDBA (UDBA FNRJ<sup>24</sup>), which controlled all federal institutions and the UDBA branch based in the capital city. Most of the arrests were made by the Serbian branch of the secret police and the Croatian branch followed. In terms of the ratio between the number of arrests and the size of population, most of those arrested originated from Montenegro (almost 1% of its population).<sup>25</sup>

Table of arrests and State security organs involved

Arresting organ	Number of arrested people	(%)
KOS	3,649	23.09
UDBA FNRJ	1,248	7.08
UDBA Serbia	2,948	18.65
UDBA Croatia	2,097	13.37
UDBA Slovenia	356	2.35
UDBA Macedonia	630	3.98
UDBA Montenegro	1,751	11.08
UDBA Belgrade	1,099	6.95
UDBA Bosnia and Herzegovina	2,022	12.79
Total:	15,800	100%

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The Yugoslav secret police was making arrests on the basis of tips or the public statements given by Party members who either openly supported the Soviet Union or just expressed their doubts or reservations about the KPJ policies. After their arrest, the Cominform members were taken to the closest detention facility where they were subjected to months-long interrogations and sometimes physical violence. The interrogations were focused on various goals: from admitting guilt, which was often determined by the arrest itself, to revealing the identities of the still free ibeovci (IB members, Stalin supporters) who supported the Soviet Union or just criticized the KPJ policy. Judging by its documents, the UDBA was particularly interested in “crushing” the IB groups (ibeovske grupe), which was a general term for secret groups consisting of 3–5 members who were meeting to discuss the political situation or prepare dissemination of flyers in which they criticized the KPJ and Tito, or even strategized sabotage acts. For example, a report issued by the Croatian UDBA from 1951 states: *Several important IB groups were detected and dealt with [crushed] this year, e.g. those based in the counties of Benkovac and Trogir. They operated in the field in an organized manner and included a large number of persons. The activities of these, as well as some other large or small groups that we crushed, were focused on IB propaganda. In just several cases we detected attempts directed at more aggressive forms of struggle, but they were thwarted owing to our timely response.*<sup>26</sup>

The UDBA had broad discretion and their investigations of arrested IB members could last from three to six months, depending on their perception of the offence. Although the duration of detention was prescribed by the law, the Yugoslav secret police were extending that period at their own discretion when they found it necessary. Given that investigations were a one-way street and served for collection of information primarily about potential opponents, the UDBA was resorting to various methods to get what they wanted. The final document on the completed investigation, the so-called *Characteristic*, contained the UDBA’s opinion on the subject of investigation, but in fact it had the power of a verdict. In fact, the UDBA had absolute authority for arresting, investigating and sentencing all those who were suspected of supporting Stalin. This was not much different from the authority that the Yugoslav wartime and postwar organization exerted in their operations against war collaborators and opponents to the regime. In other words, the UDBA was the long arm of the system.

In the aftermath of the Tito-Stalin split, the KPJ treated the problem of factions within their own ranks as an intra-party issue, which did not require court proceed-

21 PREVIŠIĆ, Martin: Broj kažnjnika na Golom otoku i ostalim logorima za informbiroovce u vrijeme sukoba sa SSSR-om (1948–1956). *Historijski zbornik*, 2013, Vol. 66, No. 1, p. 180.

22 PREVIŠIĆ, Martin: *Povijest Golog otoka*. Fraktura, Zagreb 2019, pp. 162–164.

23 *Hrvatski državni arhiv Zagreb* (hereafter HDA), Republički sekretarijat unutrašnjih poslova (hereafter RSUP SRH SDS INFORMBIRO), Fund (hereafter f.) 1561, Pregled bivših osuđivanih i kažnjivanih pristalica Informbira, 1963 (not dated further); *Ibid.*, 011. 10. /1, Box 19, „Popis“, 1963 (not dated further).

24 FNRJ stands for Federativna Narodna Republika Jugoslavija (Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia)

25 RADONJIĆ, Radovan: *Izgnubljena orijentacija*. Radnička štampa, Beograd 1985, p. 77.

26 HDA, RSUP SRH SDS INFORMBIRO, f. 1561, Elaborat „Metode rada neprijatelja iz redova informbirovaca, akcije i istupi u 1951. godini“, 1951 (not dated further). All translations from Croatian/Serbian into English are the author’s.

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ings – an issue that was a violation of ideological principles rather than a criminal act. This is precisely why the majority of IB members received administrative sentences, most often to community service, which meant milder punishment without prison time, just as it does today. A total of 10,999 people received administrative sentences.<sup>27</sup> Those sentences were pronounced by the District Board Misdemeanour Committees, Misdemeanour Councils of the Republic Ministry of the Interior, Second Department of the UDBA, and certain city courts (rarely).<sup>28</sup>

Punishments were pronounced by three-member committees (often UDBA's). In most of the cases, they followed the UDBA's opinions, reported in the *Characteristic*. This suggests that the security service had the powers of a court, similar to the NKVD Troikas. Luka Hrvatić (1927–2017), from Kalinovac in Croatia, former detainee, describes what the punishment process looked like: *It was early April [1950]. They called us one by one into the room at the end of the hall. There sat three comrades – the Party committee. One of them told me that I was expelled from the Party, to which I replied that it wasn't them who admitted me to the Party, so they could not expel me either. Of course, they did not even bother to comment on my observation. Then they read to me that I was found guilty of subversive activity and punished with the administrative sentence of two years of community service. It all happened without any witnesses, or court or judge, and there is no paper trail thereof.*<sup>29</sup>

So, it was mainly the UDBA that was punishing IB members. A consistent method of internment did not exist until the summer of 1949. For the most part, IB members were held in remand prisons after their arrest and interrogation. As time went on and the conflict with the Soviet Union escalated, those prisons became overcrowded and something had to be done to find an alternative solution. In 1948, a total of 462 people were arrested (and later interned), whereas in 1949 this number increased to 6,146 people.<sup>30</sup> The number was growing as the tensions between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union were running higher. In 1948, the KPJ still believed that the conflict could be smoothed over, but in early 1949 the Soviet Union began applying harsher methods of pressure. Until mid-1949 the Soviet Union was not just making ideological accusations, but started to use blockade and military pressure with the view to overthrow Tito.<sup>31</sup> Faced with this diplomatic, political and economic crisis, the KPJ made a decision on the systematic internment of IB members. To that end, a system of camps and prisons was established in the summer of 1949. The camp on Goli Otok (Barren Island), established in July 1949, occupies a special place. Some 13,000 or 75% of all

27 Ibid., 011. 10. /1, Box 19, „Popis“, 1963 (not dated further); Ibid., Elaborat „Osvrt na problem rehabilitacije bivših pristalica Rezolucije Informbiroa“, undated.

28 JANDRIĆ, Berislav: *Hrvatska pod crvenom zvijezdom. Komunistička partija Hrvatske 1945–1952*. Srednja Europa, Zagreb 2005, pp. 296–297.

29 *Author's archive*, Testimony of Luka Hrvatić given to the author (Pitomača 2009, 2010).

30 HDA, RSUP SRH SDS INFORMBIRO, f. 1561, 011. 10. /1, Box 19, „Popis“, 1963 (not dated further).

31 BEKIĆ, Darko: *Jugoslavija u hladnom ratu*. Globus, Zagreb 1988, p. 60; PETRANOVIĆ, Branko: *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918–1988. Treća knjiga*. Nolit, Beograd 1988, p. 227; TERZIĆ, Milan – BASARA, Mihajlo – TASIĆ, Dmtar: *Informbiro i Jugoslavenska (Narodna) Armija. Zbornik dokumenata*. Službeni glasnik, Beograd 2015; TASIĆ, Dmtar: *Neostvarena pretnja (Mogućnost sovjetsko-satelitske agresije na FNRJ 1948–1953)*. *Vojnoistorijski glasnik*, 2009, No. 1, pp. 81–98.

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convicted IB members were detained there.<sup>32</sup> Apart from that camp located on Goli Otok in the Adriatic, there were other camps in different periods between 1949 and 1956: the camps on the islands of St. Grgur and Ugljan (Croatia) Ramski Rit (Serbia), and the prisons in Zabela near Požarevac (Serbia), Bileća (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Stolac (Bosnia and Herzegovina), etc.<sup>33</sup>

### Goli Otok

On the order of the KPJ leadership, the UDBA was tasked with organizing a detention camp.<sup>34</sup> The UDBA's top officials headed by Aleksandar Ranković entrusted the operative implementation of that task to UDBA Generals Jovo Kapičić<sup>35</sup>, Slobodan Krstić – “Uča”, chief of the UDBA's Croatian branch, Ivan Krajačić – “Stevo”<sup>36</sup>, and others.<sup>37</sup> The first groups arrived at the Goli Otok camp in the summer of 1949 and as the number of inmates increased over time, new facilities and camps were added. Until 1956, when the conflict ended and the camp was closed down, there were four smaller, separate camps in total. Apart from the facilities for inmates and the administration building, the camp included its own jetty and manufacturing facilities, where inmates worked in several small factories, processing metal, wood and rocks.<sup>38</sup> There was also a small ship-repairing yard, a precision engineering shop, and a locksmith's shop. The assortment of products was wide: from furniture to cigarette cases and cigarette holders; sand was extracted from the sea, rocks were crushed for production of plates, etc. The UDBA even registered their own trade enterprise (Velebit) and had a fleet of a dozen boats.<sup>39</sup> Besides, the Yugoslav secret police ran a facility in Rijeka where the items manufactured in the camp were sold, sometimes even exported abroad.<sup>40</sup>

The camp was run by the UDBA, headed by its officers in charge of different sectors: camp warden, deputy warden, head of production plants, head of the medical service, etc. The staff also included the UDBA's interrogators (investigators). Regard-

32 PREVIŠIĆ, Martin: *Povijest Golog otoka*, pp. 223–234.

33 Ibid.

34 For the comprehensive history of Goli Otok labour camp see PREVIŠIĆ, Martin: *Povijest Golog otoka*.

35 Jovo Kapičić (1919–2013) UDBA general and partisan. People's hero of Yugoslavia and one of the key aides of Aleksandar Ranković. Played a key role in the arrest of Draža Mihailović and establishing of Goli Otok labour camp. In later years served as Yugoslav ambassador in various states.

36 Ivan Krajačić – “Stevo” (1906–1986). Yugoslav communist, People's Hero of Yugoslavia, longtime head of Croatian branch of OZNA/UDBA. One of Tito's closest allies and president of the Parliament of the People's Republic of Croatia.

37 ĐILAS, Milovan: *Vlast i pobuna*, p. 268; DEDIJER, Vladimir: *Novi prilozi za biografiju Josipa Broza Tita, Treći tom*. Rad, Beograd 1984, pp. 464–465; NENADOVIĆ, Aleksandar: *Razgovori sa Kočom*. Globus, Zagreb 1989; MARIĆ, Milomir: *Deca komunizma*. Mladost, Beograd 1988, p. 303; NIKČEVIĆ, Tamara: *Goli otoci Jova Kapičića*. V.B.Z., Beograd 2010, pp. 137–138; NIKOLIĆ, Miodrag: *Infornburo 1*. Centar za informacije i publicitet, Zagreb 1989, p. 141.

38 *HDA*, f. 1560, Vol. 389.

39 Ibid.; *Author's archive*, Testimony of Boško Vulović (1932–2018) given to the author (Belgrade 2010).

40 LUKIĆ, Vojin: *Sećanja i saznanja. Aleksandar Ranković i brionski plenum*. Novica Jovović, Titograd 1989, pp. 253–254.



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less of the fact that the inmates had already been convicted and punished, the arrival at the camp meant continuation of the investigations earlier conducted in remand prisons. Assuming that the detained IB members never stopped holding back information about other real or alleged supporters of Stalin, the secret police was using various methods to obtain additional information.

The UDBA designed a very specific system of running the Goli Otok camp and other prisons, in fact, one similar to the organizational charts implemented in the Nazi camps and Soviet gulag. It introduced the so-called self-management system, which meant that the camp was run by eligible inmates. In exchange for privileges, those inmates performed the tasks assigned to them by the Yugoslav secret police. Furthermore, the UDBA also established a class system among the inmates. Their position in that system depended on the level of their cooperation with the secret police. Such design of the system enabled the UDBA to achieve their ultimate goal, which was to gather information on IB members who were still outside, and to “politically re-educate” those already inside the camps. If an inmate was prepared to renounce his support to Stalin, provide new names, even if they were made up, beat other inmates, or take part in the maltreatment of other inmates – he had a chance to climb up on the hierarchical scale in the self-management system. He was then entitled to better food, easier jobs and was closer to freedom. Those who were not prepared to give their support to Tito and denounce their fellow inmates were subjected to violence.

The UDBA created a variety of methods to break potential resistance of those who were not prepared to cooperate. Such inmates were forced to move rocks from one pile to another, work in the quarry, they were deprived of sleep, had to wear black clothes typical of Fascists’ uniforms just to humiliate them, ran the gauntlet, or received less food and water. All that was putting enormous pressure on the inmates as they soon became languid, lost weight, but also suffered from nervous breakdowns as they were forced to denounce their comrades, friends and even members of their family. Inmate Momčilo Stanković gave the following description of the regime in the Goli Otok camp: *The atmosphere among the people was bad. They were brainwashed, they were beating each other while running the gauntlet. While running, you feel that some hit you harder than others. When I am the one who is beating I can choose to hit with less strength, but I know that the activists who stand aside are watching and assessing me. When an inmate hits you hard, and you run with your head down and your nose is bleeding, you know that this inmate is either freaked out or re-educated. People were driven crazy. They were so brainwashed that they did not know what they were doing. They acted the way they did just to survive. That is my opinion. I can put a brake on my arm when hitting, but I can also hit a man hard. That’s how it was, people couldn’t control themselves. We all reasoned that the harder we hit, the sooner we would be free. I was young, so I could endure all that. Many other inmates could not. They would fall while running the gauntlet or even die.*<sup>41</sup>

The conditions in the camps controlled by the UDBA were very harsh. Food was of poor nutritive value and insufficient to inmates who worked extremely hard: daily rations of water were also insufficient. Inmates were not allowed to bathe and it was

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impossible to practise good personal hygiene. Most often they had a chance to take a bath just a couple of times a year, but in the sea. Such regime resulted in various diseases, the most tragic being the outbreak of typhoid fever. The majority of the 399 deaths in the UDBA's camps and prisons is ascribed to that outbreak.<sup>42</sup> There were quite a few cases of suicides, but also of homicides.<sup>43</sup>

In order to ensure control over Stalin supporters even after their release, the UDBA was forcing the inmates to sign a statement promising that, once they are out, they would continue to cooperate with the secret police, follow other released inmates, and keep all the information about the camp to themselves. In this way the UDBA created a wide network, which in 1951, and only in Croatia, comprised 1,090 agents and 1,332 informers.<sup>44</sup> This network of associates ensured control and categorization of IB members in terms of the level of threat they posed to the regime.

The end of the conflict between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union came in sight with Stalin's death in 1953, and especially after the visit of Nikita Sergeievich Khrushchev to Yugoslavia in 1955 (the Belgrade Declaration) and Tito's visit to the Soviet Union in 1956 (the Moscow Declaration). The Informbiro was disbanded the same year. Also, the UDBA released almost all incarcerated IB members, abolished the camp system, and closed down Goli Otok, the main camp for the interned IB members.

### Conclusion

As was the case with other communist systems, various versions of the Yugoslav secret police (OZNA, UDBA) played an extremely important role in the establishment and enforcement of the communist power in the country. In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War they were focused on the fight against the remnants of collaboration forces in Yugoslavia, primarily the remaining Ustashas, Chetniks, etc. Besides, the UDBA actively participated in various forms of Stalinization and communization of the country, the struggle against "class enemies" and the control of the society in general. The main figure in the UDBA was Aleksandar Ranković, one of Tito's closest associates and top Party leaders until his political fall in 1966. After the outbreak of the Tito-Stalin conflict in 1948, Yugoslavia and, consequently, the UDBA faced serious challenges. Before long, the Soviet Union and the states under their control exerted economic, political, diplomatic and even military pressure against Yugoslavia. These tensions, along with the Stalinism related issues, contributed to the aggressive approach to Stalin's supporters in Yugoslavia. Between 1948 and 1956, the UDBA (with the KOS) arrested and then interned 15,737 people. It should be pointed out that many of those arrests were made indiscriminately, i.e. a large num-

42 HDA, RSUP SRH SDS INFORMBIRO, f. 1561, Umrli - brojčani podaci po godinama 1949-1986; PREVIŠIĆ, Martin: *Povijest Golog otoka*, pp. 383-396.

43 PREVIŠIĆ, Martin: *Povijest Golog otoka*, pp. 398-404; MIHAILOVIĆ, Dragoslav: *Goli otok*. Politika, Beograd 1990, p. 116.

44 HDA, RSUP SRH SDS INFORMBIRO, f. 1561, Elaborat „Metode rada neprijatelja iz redova informbirovaca, akcije i istupi u 1951. godini“, 1951 (not dated further).

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ber of people were arrested under false accusations. The UDBA established a system of detention camps, the most notorious being the camp on Goli Otok which held more than 13,000 prisoners. The conditions in the camps run by the UDBA were extremely harsh as inmates were subjected to systematic physical maltreatment, hard labour, insufficient medical care, poor nutrition and other forms of pressure. Besides, the UDBA designed a system which combined features earlier seen in Nazi concentration camps and Soviet gulags (systems of self-management and of privileges). It was only when the tensions with the Soviet Union and the repression against IB members subsided that the conditions in the camps and prisons improved to some extent until their closure in late 1956, when the conflict ended.<sup>45</sup> Typically, of all communist regimes, the secret police played a very important role in Yugoslavia as well. Before 1948, it was an instrument of strengthening the power and controlling the society. Throughout the conflict with the Soviet Union, its role and relevance in the Yugoslav society became even more pronounced. It held this position and powers until 1966, when the UDBA was transformed and reorganized. However, although many of its distinctive functions were reduced, it remained a very important institution of communist Yugoslavia.

45 Although Goli Otok as a labour camp was closed in 1956, it was reopened as a regular prison for criminals, delinquents and some political prisoners.