

XIII. In Memoriam.

In Zagreb has died Professor Ivan Ocak In Memoriam

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In March 1994 we were astonished by the news from Zagreb that in the middle of his scientific and research work the Croatian historian professor Ivan Ocak Ph.D., a researcher of Stalinist purges of international reputation, had died.

Ivan Ocak was born in 1920. He finished secondary school in Zagreb. During the Second World War he was active in the anti-Fascist struggle (1941-1945) of Yugoslav partisans. By a combination of circumstances his destiny lead him to the Soviet Union (he was sent there to be cured) shortly before the beginning of the Yugoslav-Soviet disagreements in the time of the Informbureau. In those circumstances he stayed in Moscow, decided to study history and he graduated from the Faculty of History of the University Lomonosow. Here he also did his postgraduate studies, took his doctor's and gave lectures on history of Yugoslavia at the chair for the history of southern and western Slaves. He dedicated himself to research about the problems of the influence of October on the development of labour and communist movement in Yugoslavia between the two Wars.

As a university teacher Professor Ocak insisted on his belief that there was no historical research without investigation in archival sources. In Khrushchev's era his request was granted: he was allowed to work in the archives of Moscow - on materials connected with the history of Yugoslavia. This was the crucial point in his

research work as he was only allowed to concentrate on an utterly new and unresearched theme offered to him on the examination of the materials - investigation in the destiny of Yugoslav communist emigrants in the Soviet Union, who disappeared during the Stalinist purges and most of whom were rehabilitated after the Twentieth Congress of CPSU. As result of his research work an extensive opus rose, containing over two hundred scientific works (twenty in the form of books) published in the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Poland, Ex-Yugoslavia and Croatia. After his return to Zagreb in the seventies professor Ocak worked as a scientific counsellor at the Institute for Croatian History at the University in Zagreb.

He continued researching the theme of his life and published a number of works. Here we mention only those which met the widest response:

1. Yugoslavs in October, Moscow-Belgrade 1967;
2. The Struggle for the Ideas of October. Yugoslavs Returned from the Soviet Russia (1918-1921), Zagreb 1976;
3. Yugoslav Octobrists. Portraits and Destinies, Zagreb 1979;
4. A Soldier of the Revolution. The Life and Fight of Vladimir Copic, Zagreb 1980;
5. Krejzl and the Party. Miroslav Krejzl in the Labour and Communist Movement (1917-1941), Zagreb 1982;
6. The Cvijic Brothers, Zagreb 1982; Yugoslav Emigrants from the USA in the USSR, Zagreb 1985;
7. Gorkic, His Life Work and Death, Zagreb 1988; The Diamantstein Affair.

8. The First anti-Communist Trial in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (1919), Zagreb 1988.

The title of Professor Ocaks last work published is: Croatian-Russian Connections, Zagreb 1993; but unfortunately his last work on Andrija Hebrang, a controversial figure in the history of Yugoslav communist movement, to which in his last years he dedicated all of his research eagerness, has remained unfinished.

With professor Ocak we have lost not only a prominent researcher in the history of Yugoslav labour and communist movements between the two Wars and of the Stalinist purges among Yugoslav (communist) emigrants in the Soviet Union, but also a distinguished expert in the archives of Moscow and, last but not least, an important collaborator of the international project Comintern going on under the patronage of the International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam. He remains in our midst with his original works, which not only have reconstructed and highlighted the destinies in the lives of those protagonists who only recently were still concealed and labeled as „traitors" in the rows of Yugoslav and international labour movements, but have also helped us to reach a better and deeper understanding of Stalinist methods of having done with political opponents in his own lines and liquidating them physically.