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THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND CELEBRATIONS OF THE VICTORY DAY (9 MAY) IN YUGOSLAVIA 1945–1955

At the beginning of May 1945, World War II in Europe was coming to an end. The unconditional surrender of the German Third Reich was signed in the early morning hours of Monday, 7 May 1945 in Reims, north-eastern France. But the Soviet High Command was not informed about the surrender, some German troops continued to fight on the East, and the Soviet Union considered the Reims surrender as a preliminary document only. So, the next day, on 8 May shortly before midnight, German representatives signed an amended and definitive document of unconditional surrender in Berlin, explicitly surrendering to all the Allied forces in the presence of Marshal Georgy Zhukov and representatives of the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Force.¹ News of the surrender broke in the West on 8 May 1945 and celebrations erupted throughout Europe and the whole world. The United States declared 8 May Victory in Europe Day (V-E Day). As the Soviet Union lays more to the east than Germany, it was already 9 May in European parts of Soviet Union when the German military surrender became effective. So, the Soviet Union and some other countries declared 9 May Victory Day.²

At that time, large parts of Yugoslavia were already liberated by the Red Army and Yugoslav partisans (Belgrade was liberated already on 20 October 1944). During the spring of 1945, there was a struggle for total liberation, the expulsion of enemy forces and the end of the war. At the same time, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia – CPY (Komunistička partija Jugoslavije – KPJ), was bringing the revolution to the end, taking

¹ G.K. Zhukov, *Vospominanija i razmishlenja*, Moskva 1969, p. 329; P. Calvocoressi and G. Wint, *Total War. Causes and Courses of the Second World War*, London 1972, pp. 435–436; E.F. Ziemke, *The U.S. Army in the occupation of Germany 1944–1946*, Washington, D.C 1990, pp. 258–260.

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victory_in_Europe_Day, retrieved 25 II 2019; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victory_Day_\(9_May\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victory_Day_(9_May)), retrieved 25 II 2019; https://www.officeholidays.com/countries/russia/victory_day.php, retrieved 25 II 2019.

over power, and started to form the authorities of the 'new Yugoslavia'. On the basis of the recommendation of Great Allies from Yalta Conference in February 1945, in March 1945 the communist leader Josip Broz Tito formed a provisional, internationally recognised the Government of the Democratic Federative Yugoslavia, composed of representatives of the communist movement and pre-war bourgeois parties. At the beginning of May 1945, the Yugoslav Army liberated the western parts of the country; on 8 May 1945 Zagreb and Ljubljana were freed. And, as it was already mentioned, next day Germany capitulated. The fighting in Yugoslavia continued after the German capitulation and lasted until 15 May 1945, when the last enemy units were defeated and World War II in Yugoslavia definitely ended.³ These few days of prolonged fighting had a great significance later for the celebration of the end of the war and the Victory Day in Yugoslavia.

Since the new Yugoslavia, created by CPY, was a faithful follower and ally of the Soviet Union, 9 May was accepted as the Victory day in Yugoslavia from the very beginning. Victory Day was celebrated already on 9 May 1945, while the fighting in some parts of country still took place. The information about the German capitulation appeared on 9 May on the front page of the Yugoslav press. The daily newspaper transmitted the text of the German Instrument of Surrender signed in Berlin, along great photos of Winston Churchill, Harry Truman, Joseph Stalin and Josip Broz Tito.⁴ Although the following pages were full of news about the ongoing fighting, the state authorities of new Yugoslavia, following the example of Soviet Union, immediately accepted 9 May as Victory Day which should be proclaimed a holiday and be celebrated with honour. The Presidency of the Ministerial Council decided that on 9 May 1945, state and private bodies, institutions and companies would not work, so that workers, officials and employees could join the national celebration of Victory Day.⁵ On the same day, the Presidency of Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation of Yugoslavia (Antifašističko veće narodnog oslobođenja Jugoslavije – AVNOJ) passed the Decision on the proclamation of the 9 May for the National Victory Day. The celebration of this holiday purposed to mark the day when victories of Red Army and Allied Forces were crowned by the unconditional capitulation of Germany, and when 'the heroic Yugoslav Army' ended the liberation of the country.⁶

Regardless of these state decisions, the inhabitants of Belgrade and other Yugoslav cities went out on the streets on 9 May to celebrate the end of the war and victory over

³ B. Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918–1988*, vol. 2, Beograd 1988, p. 387–390, 423–430.

⁴ "Kraj Hitlerove Nemačke", *Politika*, 9 V 1945, p. 1; "Kapitulacija Hitlerovske Nemačke", *Borba*, 9 V 1945, p. 1. *Politika* and *Borba* were two main and most circulating daily newspapers in Yugoslavia. *Borba* was an official organ of the CPY, and other newspapers were obliged to transmit it. The press was under strict control of the Agitprop apparatus of CPY; the content was uniform and imposed by Agitprop; provincial and local newspapers only transmitted the contents of the central press (B. Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije...*, vol. 3, pp. 137–139).

⁵ "Veliki dan u životu naših naroda i države", *Politika*, 9 V 1945, p. 1; "9. maj – praznik pobeđe", *Borba*, 9 V 1945, p. 1.

⁶ Arhiv Jugoslavije (Archives of Yugoslavia, later: AJ), fund Prezidijum Narodne skupštine FNRJ, 15-12-213, br. 198, 9 V 1945; "Deveti maj je proglašen opštenarodnim praznikom pobeđe", *Politika*, 10 V 1945, p. 1; "Deveti maj je proglašen opštenarodnim praznikom pobeđe", *Borba*, 10 V 1945, p. 2; "Odluka o proglašenju devetog maja narodnim praznikom pobeđe", *Službeni list DFJ*, 11 V 1945, 245.

fascism. The youth, soldiers, workers, citizens, peasants, students and children from all parts of Belgrade and surroundings went to city centre, enthusiastically naming the Red Army ‘great allies’ and a ‘heroic Yugoslav Army’. The streets were decorated with flowers, flags of Allied countries, mostly of Soviet Union, and with large portraits of Tito, Stalin, Zhukov, Churchill, Truman, and other Allied state and military leaders. Banners with anti-fascist, patriotic and political messages were everywhere. People carefully listened and enthusiastically greeted Tito’s speech on the radio about victory over fascism and national liberation. Performances were organised in the streets and squares, and people played folk and revolutionary songs and dances until late night hours.⁷

Similar reports about the celebration of Victory Day came from other cities throughout Yugoslavia. People went out onto the streets, celebrating the defeat of Hitler’s Germany and the arrival of freedom. According to the press, peasants allegedly interrupted agricultural works to celebrate the end of the war and the collapse of fascism. At the gathering in Kruševac, in central Serbia, around 15,000 people participated (in Jagodina 12,000, Čačak 10,000, etc.). Victory Day was celebrated in Valjevo, Kraljevo, Leskovac, Velika Plana, Šabac, Sombor, Kikinda, Pančevo, Cetinje, Skoplje, Tetovo, Štip, Kumanovo, Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Bihać, Drvar, Zagreb, etc.⁸ All celebrations, in Belgrade and other cities, were similar – composed of speeches by politicians and local officials, ceremonial processions and mass gatherings with banners and slogans, laying wreaths on the graves of fallen soldiers, performances, and singing and dancing to late into the night.⁹

It is important to emphasise that the organisation and the course of the celebration of 9 May 1945 completely depended on CPY. Just a few days before the end of the war, on 5 May 1945, the Central Committee of CPY gave the directive to subordinate bodies to prepare a celebration of the capitulation of Germany. The directive signed by Milovan Đilas, a senior official of CPY and chief of the Agitprop apparatus, contained detailed instructions how to do it. They planned to celebrate victory by illuminating the city, by ringing bells and by artillery volleys in the centre of each of the Yugoslav republics; to declare a non-working day; to hold short lectures about the end of the war in companies and city districts; to organise folk parties on squares, with concerts, folk dances, theatres, performances and games. Special groups were supposed to go to villages and to hold lectures about the German capitulation and to organise a celebration there. The decorations were precisely prescribed: Tito’s photos had to be most frequent and placed on the most prominent places, followed by photos of Allied leaders, Yugoslav communist officials, and at the end by photos of local fallen fighters. Already then, Tito’s speech on radio and his proclamation in newspapers were planned.¹⁰

⁷ “Veličanstvena proslava Dana pobeđe”, *Politika*, 10 V 1945, p. 2; “Na Dan pobeđe. Narodno veselje trajalo je do duboko u noć”, *Borba*, 10 V 1945, p. 3.

⁸ “U svim mestima u našoj zemlji narod je priredio spontane manifestacije povodom svršetka rata”, *Politika*, 10 V 1945, p. 3; “U celoj zemlji narod slavi praznik pobeđe”, *Borba*, 10 V 1945, p. 3.

⁹ D. Bondžić, “Obeležavanje Dana pobeđe u Srbiji 1945–1955”, in: *Srbija (Jugoslavija) 1945–2005, pokreti, ideologije, praksa*, ed. M. Pavlović, Beograd 2006, p. 206–205.

¹⁰ AJ, fund Centralni komitet Saveza komunista Jugoslavije (Central Committee of League of Communists of Yugoslavia, later: CK SKJ), 507, CK KPJ, 1945/296.

The party leadership, as the organiser of the celebration, paid special attention to the slogans that were supposed to be printed on banners and to be shouted during the celebration. On 6 and 7 June, the Central Committee of CPY sent to all subordinated bodies a few lists of slogans for celebration of the victory over Germany, which were to be kept strictly confidential and not published before capitulation. The list prepared by the Ministry of Defence consisted of 35 slogans which glorified Yugoslav Army, its officers and the supreme commander Josip Broz Tito. On the other list, there were 25 phrases that mentioned the Allied leaders and armies, United Nations, people's democracy, brotherly nations, brotherhood and unity, new Yugoslavia, Yugoslav Army, Tito, anti-fascism, fallen fighters, victory and its attainments, etc.¹¹

And later, in the first years after the war, Victory Day had a significant place in the calendar of official holidays of the new Yugoslavia. It had similar significance as other revolutionary and ideological holidays (1 May – Day of Labour, 25 May – Day of Youth, 29 November – Day of the Republic, 22 December – Day of the Army, etc.). Victory Day was an important part of the revolutionary and anti-fascist tradition of the World War II. It was ceremoniously celebrated in order to remember the suffering, resistance and struggle during the war and to glorify the victory over fascism. Also, it was an opportunity to highlight the forces that achieved this victory and the results that emerged from the victory and revolution. Considering the European and global significance of this date, its international dimension and the crucial participation of the great powers at the end of World War II and the victory over Germany could not be avoided. Therefore, the foreign policy and position of new Yugoslavia in international relations were also reflected in the celebration of 9 May during the post-war years, apart from internal circumstances. At the beginning, it was easy to notice the complete ideological and political orientation of the state towards the Soviet Union, but that changed later.¹²

The preparations, course and content of the Victory Day celebration can be shown on the example of 9 May 1946. On 4 May 1946, Josip Broz Tito, as the supreme commander of Yugoslav Army, ordered that a military parade and celebratory volleys should be organised in Belgrade and Zagreb on 9 May on the occasion of Victory Day.¹³ The parade in Belgrade started at 9 a.m.; the route of the procession was precisely determined and announced to the citizens; traffic was stopped and all vehicles and obstacles were removed from the route. Along the route, the procession was greeted by masses of delighted citizens with exclamations, songs, and waving; since early morning hours, crowds of people pushed along the boulevards and streets, decorated by flowers and flags of Allied countries. Josip Broz Tito, Yugoslav state and military leaders and foreign delegates (representatives of Soviet Union, United States, France, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, etc.) watched from the solemn stage. The press described the parade as “a magnificent survey of the strength and discipline of the Yugoslav Army”.¹⁴

¹¹ AJ, CK SKJ, 507, CK KPJ, 1945/297; AJ, CK SKJ, 507, VIII, II/1-b-46.

¹² D. Bondžić, “Obeležavanje Dana pobeđe u Srbiji 1945–1955”..., p. 207–208.

¹³ “Zapovest Vrhovnog komandanta oružanih snaga FNRJ za 9. maj 1946”, *Politika*, 8 V 1946, p. 1; “Proslava Dana pobeđe 9. maja”, *Borba*, 7 V 1946, p. 1.

¹⁴ “Narodi Jugoslavije svečano su proslavili Dan pobeđe”, *Politika*, 10 V 1946, p. 1–2; “Proslava Dana pobeđe”, *Borba*, 10 V 1946, p. 2–3.

The military parade in Zagreb started at 11 a.m., and its start was declared by cannon volleys. On 9 May 1946, Victory Day was celebrated in the capital cities of all republics and elsewhere throughout the country. The towns were decorated with flowers, flags, banners and photos; representatives of the state and military authorities held speeches; on the streets and squares the performances, concerts and parties were organised. Masses attended the meetings (in Niš, in Serbia, and in Maribor in Slovenia, there were over 20,000 people) and participated in all activities organised on the occasion of Victory Day.¹⁵

Of course, the celebration of the Victory Day was managed by CPY, supported by state authorities, military units and mass organisations. On 6 May 1946, the Agitprop apparatus of the Central Committee of CPY sent to the republican committees a directive explaining the proper ways to celebrate Victory Day. In addition to military parades in major cities (Belgrade and Zagreb), Agitprop recommended meetings, folk parties, festive academies, conferences and lectures in settlements and factories. Agitprop also gave instructions for decorating the celebration: among other things, it was recommended to put forward the flags of Allies, the flags of all five leading powers (the Soviet Union, the United States, the United Kingdom, France and China) and other members of the anti-Hitler coalition, as well as the flags of Albania and Bulgaria and other ‘people’s democracies’.¹⁶

The Agitprop apparatus organized the arrival of delegations from the inland to the celebration in Belgrade. It was necessary to send ten delegates from each district (except Belgrade); above all, communists from villages, but also from some cities, factories and mines. They had free accommodation and food in Belgrade as well as a free train ticket.¹⁷ During the celebration in Belgrade, there were about 300 delegates from the inland, and about 12,000 from the Belgrade district. Both them and the citizens of Belgrade who wanted to attend the parade were informed in the press about the mandatory schedule along the route of the procession, the timetable and repertoire of folk parties, performances and sport events that were organised in several places in the city in honour of Victory Day.¹⁸

The inhabitants of Belgrade and other Yugoslav cities participated in the celebration of the Victory Day to revive the memory of the victory in World War II over fascism, but also to make a political manifestation and support the ruling CPY and its internal and foreign policy. The task of conferences, lectures and speeches was to explain the significance of 9 May and the victory over fascism, over the occupier and ‘internal enemies’, but also to present the current political situation and problems in inner and foreign policy. The entire celebration had a number of dominant key topics. Josip Broz Tito was set up

¹⁵ “Svečana proslava Dana republike u narodnim republikama Jugoslavije”, *Politika*, 10 V 1946, p. 3; „Dan pobeđe proslavljen u celoj zemlji”, *Borba*, 11 V 1946, p. 2.

¹⁶ Arhiv Srbije, (Archives of Serbia, later: AS), fund Centralni komitet Saveza komunista Srbije (Central Committee of League of Communists of Serbia, later: CK SKS), k. 1, no. 268, 6 V 1946; AJ, CK SKJ, 507, VIII, II/1-b-46.

¹⁷ AS, CK SKS, k. 1, 5 V 1946; AJ, CK SKJ, 507, VIII, II/1-b-46.

¹⁸ “Obaveštenje građanstvu povodom 9. maja”, *Glas*, 8 V 1946, p. 2, 6. *Glas* was an official daily newspaper of the People’s Front of Serbia.

on the pedestal as war leader and the most meritorious person for the national liberation of Yugoslavia and the creation of the new state; the celebration of Victory Day was an important part of the creation of his personal cult in post-war Yugoslavia. Tito was the supreme commander of the Yugoslav Army, which had accomplished liberation and revolution and protected freedom and independence of the new state. Thus, the Army played an important role during the celebration, from the parade itself as central part of celebration, to the volleys, decorations, banners and slogans. Further, the Victory Day celebration had the aim to remind citizens to preserve victory and freedom, and that patriotism, 'brotherhood and unity' and 'love for the country' should be strengthened.¹⁹

The foreign policy and international topics were especially prominent in the Victory Day celebrations. First of all, a special thanks for the liberation of the country and victory in the war was expressed to the Red Army. The foreign policy orientation of the country dictated an intensive demonstration of commitment to the Soviet Union, which was visible on the banners, photographs, and through an immoderate glorification of Joseph Stalin (the Red Army was called a 'liberator' and Stalin was called 'a genius leader and teacher'). On the other hand, the contribution of the other members of the Anti-fascist coalition in the war was mentioned, but it was neglected and diminished. That was visible in the press, during the celebration, on banners, photographs, during speeches, etc. The beginning of the Cold War and the split of the post-war world on the ideological basis had a remarkable influence on the celebration of Victory Day in Yugoslavia. A particularly important international issue was the question of Trieste and Julijska Krajina and the border dispute between Yugoslavia and Italy. The officials and participants of the celebration demanded from the great powers to support the joining of disputed regions to Yugoslavia, and in the press, the Yugoslav character of these regions was propagated. It was claimed that the Italian demands were a reflection of fascism, and that winning countries were obliged to oppose it. According to the Agitprop directives, the issue of Trieste was the basic motto of the celebration of Victory Day in 1946 and 1947; it was dominant and unavoidable at the banners, exclamations, slogans, speeches, statements of politicians, greetings, telegrams, articles, etc.²⁰

Victory Day was celebrated on 9 May 1947 in a similar atmosphere and in a similar way as year before. The main internal and foreign policy topics were also the same. The only major innovation was the commitment to the implementation of the first Five-Year Plan of Economy, which was proclaimed in April 1947. Another new thing that year was also an evening formal reception organised by Tito in the residence of Dedinje, attended by officials, military and diplomatic corps, representatives of mass organisations, cultural and public workers.²¹ This innovation can be viewed as result of the consolidation of the Communist Party's position two years after seizing power. It is important to emphasise that during the celebrations of the Victory Day after the war, the role of CPY and com-

¹⁹ D. Bondžić, "Obeležavanje Dana pobeđe u Srbiji 1945–1955"..., p. 211–214.

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

²¹ "Proslava Dana pobeđe u Beogradu i zemlji", *Politika*, 10 V 1947, p. 1–3; "Proslava Dana pobeđe u Beogradu", *Borba*, 10 V 1947, p. 1–3; "Svečani prijem kod Maršala Tita povodom Dana pobeđe", *Borba*, 10 V 1947, p. 2.

munists was camouflaged in public. It is understandable in view of the party's secrecy and hiding behind the People's Front in the first post-war years.

The press reported about the celebration in an extensive, picturesque and patriotic manner, with many photos and details. Announcements, news and reports were mostly similar, with the same themes, points, comments and quotes. In addition to the long reports from the parade, on the front pages of the newspapers appeared festive speeches, greeting telegrams of world leaders, and Tito's and Stalin's daily commands and mutual congratulations on the occasion of Victory Day. All Yugoslav newspapers on the front pages published statements by Soviet officials, articles from Soviet press and reports about the celebration of the Victory Day in Moscow and other Soviet cities. Of course, all of that was dictated by top CPY officers and by the Agitprop apparatus which controlled and directed the press in general and especially the reports on Victory Day celebration.²²

On the occasion of Victory Day, numerous comments and columns by journalists and prominent politicians, revolutionaries and fighters were published in newspapers. The text "O godišnjici pobjede" ("On the Anniversary of the Victory"), written by Milovan Đilas, one of the main communist leaders and ideologist, chief of the Agitprop apparatus, should be stressed in particular. The text was published as a leading article in *Borba*, an official organ of CPY, and then in most of the daily and weekly newspapers in the country. Đilas wrote about the attempt of Nazi Germany to subdue all the world and stressed the "heroic" resistance and the key role of the Soviet Union in the victory over fascism. Then, he criticised the Western capitalistic powers for the post-war "imperialistic" policy and the "endangering of peace". Finally, he described the significance of the Yugoslav Army in the victory over fascism and pointed to its role in the defence of "new Yugoslavia" and the communist regime.²³ All topics mentioned in Đilas' article were repeated later in other texts in Yugoslav press dedicated to the Victory Day.²⁴

Therefore, during the first post-war years, Victory Day was shaped as holiday that commemorated victory over fascism, the national liberation war, the creation of a new state and the significant role of the Soviet Union, the Red Army, the Yugoslav Army and other allies in the war. Victory Day was a part of the creation of tradition of national liberation war and anti-fascism as cornerstones of the new state and the new socio-economic regime, and an indicator of the international orientation of Yugoslav state. The status of the Victory Day in Yugoslavia was significantly shook and changed by Yugoslav-Soviet split in 1948. In June 1948, the Resolution of the Cominform was published and the confrontation between Yugoslavia and Soviet Union became public. It was an event of great internal and international significance. That conflict caused a strong shock in the

²² D. Bondžić, "Obeležavanje Dana pobjede u Srbiji 1945–1955"... , p. 211–212; M. Selektor, "Deveti maj", *Politika*, 10 V 1946, p. 7; "Naredba ministra oružanih snaga Sovjetskog Saveza armijskog generala Bulganjina povodom Dana pobjede", *Politika*, 9 V 1947, p. 5; "Sovjetska armija glavni faktor pobjede", *Narodna armija*, 7 V 1947, p. 2. *Narodna armija* was an official organ of the Yugoslav Army.

²³ M. Đilas, "O godišnjici pobjede", *Borba*, 9 V 1946, p. 1–2; *Politika*, 9 V 1946, p. 1–2; *Glas*, 9 V 1946, p. 1–2; *Narodna Armija*, 7 V 1946, p. 1–2.

²⁴ D. Blagojević, "Na Dan pobjede", *Borba*, 8 V 1947, p. 1; "Dan pobjede", *Politika*, 9 V 1947, p. 1; V. Simić, "Veliki dan naše Armije – povodom Dana pobjede", *Republika*, 14 V 1946, p. 1.

entire Yugoslav state, regime and CPY, and led to gradual and limited changes in the Yugoslav foreign and inner policy, state, economy, society and culture and fundamentally changed the international position of the country. The relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union and Cominform countries were deteriorated and the Yugoslav leadership started a gradual approach and cooperation with Western countries.²⁵

The Yugoslav-Soviet conflict of 1948 influenced the celebration of 9 May as Victory Day. This date was connected with the capitulation of Nazi Germany and the collapse of fascism in Europe. Victory over Germany was achieved primarily thanks to the armies of great powers, above all the Red Army. As it was shown, during the celebration of 9 May in Yugoslavia after the war, the merits of the Soviet Union and the Red Army were accentuated. On the other hand, the merits of the Western countries as ideological antagonists were neglected. But, after the conflict between Yugoslavia and Cominform, the stress on the crucial role of the Soviet Union and the Red Army in the victory over fascism ceased to be desirable. Since this role could not be denied and avoided, the Communist Party propaganda found a solution in the suppression and neglecting of 9 May as Victory Day. This date lost the significance for the ruling party that intended to defend its role in the war and the “authenticity of the Yugoslav revolution” against attacks and defamations by Cominform. It was necessary to affirm its own tradition and to emphasize the national, Yugoslav contribution to the victory in World War II.²⁶

Thus, the change in the attitude towards 9 May happened at the very beginning of the conflict with Cominform, in spring 1948, when the open disagreement between Yugoslav and Soviet leaderships began. The Agitprop apparatus of the Central Committee of CPY ordered to all subordinated bodies that 9 May 1948 should be commemorated in the newspapers only, without any celebration, manifestation, lectures, etc.²⁷ The directive was completely fulfilled and the tradition of a military parade, celebratory volleys, celebration and people’s parties was interrupted. Since 1948, the modest commemorating of 9 May had been reduced to rare articles in the newspapers and laying wreaths on monuments to fallen fighters and to the Grave of Unknown Hero on Avala near Belgrade. Short pieces of information and comments about the significance of 9 May and the victory over fascism were published in the newspapers. The role of the Soviet Union and the Red Army wasn’t completely neglected, but the actual Soviet policy and attacks on the Yugoslav leadership had been criticised more and more intensively. Yugoslavs responded particularly harshly to Cominform propaganda attacks that negated the contribution of the Yugoslav Army in the war, denied the Yugoslav national liberation struggle and attributed the liberation of Yugoslavia only to the Red Army.²⁸

²⁵ J.L. Gaddis, *We Now Know. Rethinking Cold War History*, New York 1997, pp. 48–49; W. Laqueur, *Europe in Our Time. A History 1945–1992*, New York 1992, pp. 158–160; L.M. Lees, *Keeping Tito Afloat. The United States, Yugoslavia and the Cold War*, University Park, Pennsylvania 1997, pp. 1–120; I. Banac, *Sa Staljinom protiv Tita. Informbiroovski rascjepi u jugoslavenskom komunističkom pokretu*, Zagreb 1990; B. Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije...*, vol. 3, pp. 195–321.

²⁶ D. Bondžić, “Obeležavanje Dana pobeđe u Srbiji 1945–1955”..., p. 215.

²⁷ AS, CK SKS, k. 1, 4 V 1948.

²⁸ “Dan pobeđe”, *Borba*, 9 V 1948, p. 1; “Dan pobeđe”, *Politika*, 9 V 1948, p. 1; “Na Dan pobeđe predstavnici Savezne vlade i stranih država položili vene na grob Neznanog junaka na Avali”, *Borba*, 11 V 1949, p. 1; “Oslo-

In the early 1950s, at the time of the greatest Soviet pressure on Yugoslavia, the Yugoslav leadership emphasised its own experience from World War II and sought for an authentic holiday that would push the role of the Soviets in the liberation of the country. Thus, in May 1951, the almost forgotten date of 15 May as the date of the final liberation of Yugoslavia and defeat of the last enemy units appeared in public.²⁹ One year later, in April 1952, 15 May was declared as a national holiday and day of the final liberation of the country achieved by the Yugoslav Army.³⁰ Few days later, a detailed explanation for commemorating that date as a 'real' Victory Day was published in the press. On the front page of *Politika*, general Dušan Kveder concluded that the Yugoslavs had no reason to celebrate Victory Day on 9 May, as it was done earlier. It was the day when Germans in Berlin signed an unconditional capitulation, but the fighting in Yugoslavia continued, until 15 May, when the Yugoslav Army defeated the Germans "with its own forces", expelled them and freed the country. That was a reason to commemorate 15 May as a 'real' Victory Day in Yugoslavia.³¹

For the next few years, 15 May had been symbolically commemorated as Victory Day in Yugoslavia. The commemoration was reduced to articles in the press, public lectures and laying wreaths on graves of fallen warriors, national heroes and victims of fascism; neither military parades, celebrations nor a big publicity were organised. 9 May was much more neglected and almost forgotten, all in order to suppress the role of the Soviets and the Red Army in the liberation of Yugoslavia.³² At the beginning of the 1950s, there were only a few notes in the Yugoslav press about the celebration of 9 May in the world (Paris, Prague, etc.).³³

But in 1955 the process of reconciliation between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union began. The Soviet Union was no longer a threat for the Yugoslav leadership, so the attitude towards the Victory Day relaxed. 9 May was Victory Day again, but it was not of greater significance. According to the law adopted in April 1955, neither 9 May nor 15 May was declared a state holiday in Yugoslavia.³⁴ The significance of 9 May in Yugoslavia later grew, and this date had become an important part of the anti-fascist tradition, while 15 May lost its importance. The changes of celebration of the Victory Day in Yugoslavia

bodenje Jugoslavije – u obnovljenoj verziji radio Sofije", *Borba*, 14 V 1949, p. 3; "Četvrta godišnjica pobjede nad fašizmom", *Politika*, 9 V 1949, p. 3; "Polaganje venaca na grob Neznanog junaka na Avali", *Politika*, 11 V 1949, p. 1; "Predstavnici Vlade FNRJ i Jugoslovenske armije položili vence na grob Neznanog povodom Dana pobjede", *Politika*, 10 V 1950, p. 1; "Pet godina posle pobjede", *Borba*, 9 V 1950, p. 1; "Polaganje venaca na grob Neznanog junaka", *Borba*, 10 V 1951, p. 1.

²⁹ "Jedna slavna godišnjica", *Narodna armija*, 16 V 1951, p. 1.

³⁰ AJ, 15-9-174, Zakon o proglašenju 15. maja za narodni praznik, br. 599, 8 IV 1952; "Zakon o proglašenju 15. maja za narodni praznik", *Službeni list FNRJ*, br. 20, 12 IV 1952, p. 373.

³¹ D. Kveder "Naš Dan pobjede", *Politika*, br. 14177, 15 V 1952, 1.

³² "Na Dan pobjede", *Borba*, br. 115, 15. maj 1952, 1; "Proslava Dana pobjede u Beogradu", *Politika*, 15 V 1952, p. 6; "Proslavljen Dan pobjede u našoj zemlji", *Borba*, 16 V 1953, p. 1; "Dan pobjede", *Borba*, 16 V 1954, p. 1, 4; M. Apostoloski, "Oslobođenje Jugoslavije", *Borba*, 15 V 1955, p. 1; "U Beogradu su položeni venci na grobove palih boraca", *Borba*, 16 V 1955, p. 1; "Dan naše pobjede", *Politika*, 15 V 1954, p.1; "Proslava Dana pobjede", *Politika*, 16 V 1954, p. 5.

³³ *Borba*, 10 V 1952, p. 3; *Politika*, 10 V 1952, p. 2; *Politika*, 9 V 1953, p. 1.

³⁴ "Zakon o državnim praznicima", *Službeni list FNRJ*, br. 18, 27 IV 1955, p. 284.

in the observed ten-year period is significant because of the influence of the foreign policy and the international position of the country on the creation of the calendar of state holidays and on shaping official remembrance and the commemoration of the historical events from close past. Another important feature is the crucial influence of CPY on deciding which date would be celebrated as Victory Day and how it would be celebrated.

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https://www.officeholidays.com/countries/russia/victory_day.php, retrieved 25 February 2019.

The Communist Party and Celebrations of the Victory Day (9 May) in Yugoslavia 1945–1955

The article deals with meaning of celebrations of 9 May – Victory Day – in Yugoslavia in the first few years after World War II and with the role of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in organising these ceremonies. It is shown that this holiday was one of the cornerstones of the Communist regime propaganda and a very important occasion for creating the tradition of national liberation struggle and anti-fascism. The main role of Victory Day was to recall the victory over fascism, but also to contribute to consolidation of Communists' rule and to display foreign and inner policy of the new authorities in Yugoslavia. The ruling party used the entire content of the celebrations to create and impose its own image of World War II and the national liberation struggle in Yugoslavia and to present the desirable image of the current international and internal political situation. These celebrations were conceived and designed by the top officers of the Communist Party, in its Agitprop apparatus, and all activities and details were dictated by Party guidelines and directives.

KEYWORDS

Yugoslavia, Victory Day, celebration, Communist Party of Yugoslavia

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