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V.G. Larina, A.M. Musaev, O.Iu. Nezhdanova, eds. *Gosudarstvennye khranilishcha dokumentov byvshego arkhivnogo fonda KPSS: Spravochnik*. Novosibirsk: Sibirskii Khronograf, 1998. 330 pp. ISBN 978-5-87550-070-1.



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This directory provides basic data about all archival repositories throughout the Russian Federation that before 1991 had constituted the privileged network of central and regional archives of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The failure of the communist coup in August 1991 brought an end to the exclusive position of the party archives; documents, buildings and staff were all taken over by the Federal Archive Service of the Russian Federation (Rosarkhiv) and were rather abruptly integrated into its operational services. This did not mean the liquidation of these party archives, but their adjustment to the document processing and availability procedures practised by the Federal Archival Service. The integration policy allowed the former party archives a modest degree of autonomy, for apart from their guardianship of the communist past, the new status of these “centers of documentation of social organizations” also accorded them a second task, namely the documentation of the new political parties and social organizations.

One reason for this apparently liberal attitude on the part of the authorities was the enormous quantity of documents involved. The confiscation of the “Archival fond of the CPSU” had increased the volume of documents held by Rosarkhiv by a third, and certain provincial party archives had more documents –and space!–than did the parallel provincial archive which had control over the

newcomer. These aspects precluded the possibility of complete physical incorporation (although in the first weeks after the coup, pleas for this complete integration could be heard). On the other hand, the great majority of the party archives’ staff, often including the director, succeeded in retaining their old positions under the aegis of Rosarkhiv. The present guide, then, can be seen both as an important step in the movement towards integration and as a tribute to the communist party archival network that has since formally been closed down.

The directory reviewed here surveys all former communist party archives that had existed until 1991 within the boundaries of the present Russian Federation. The editors have organized the information per individual repository; thus, aside from a short introduction, the directory comprises seventy-eight entries: five entries on federal repositories in Moscow and St. Petersburg and seventy-three entries on repositories in the republics and provinces (“Subjects”) of the Russian Federation.

Each entry provides the official name of the repository in question, the address, the telephone number “to make inquiries” (p. 7), the overall number of record groups (“fondy”) and files, the years covered by the documents, the number of visual and audiovisual documents, 5 to 10 lines of information about the organizational history of the repository in question, and finally the main

body, a characterization of the holdings of the repository in 5-10 pages, for federal repositories, or 3-5 pages for provincial ones. All data reflect the situation as of 1 January 1997 and were edited by an editorial group of VNIIDAD (Vserossiiskii Nauchno-Issledovatel'skii Institut Dokumentovedeniia i Arkhivnogo Dela) in Moscow on the basis of information provided by the repositories.

All this is very elementary information, but most welcome, simply because such a survey has never been published before. The listing alone of all official institutional names, addresses and telephone numbers (without, unfortunately the area code) of all former party archives is a great help for the Russian and foreign researcher. But it is first and foremost the summary of the holdings of each repository that makes the publication so worthwhile. Surveys of holdings of party archives have so far been rare indeed.

Of course, the average space available for each entry does not allow for very detailed descriptions of the holdings. This problem is aggravated by a tendency in many entries to use rather broad and indefinite qualifications; for example, the State Archive of Contemporary History and Social-Political Movements of the Oblast of Perm refers to its documentation of the 1920s as "characterizing the economic restoration, the industrialization and collectivization of the oblast" (p. 200). The Center of Documentation of Contemporary History of the Belgorod Oblast qualifies its documentation between 1954 (when the oblast was formed) and 1991 as mirroring "questions of organizational-party and ideological-educational work, of political leadership, of selection and distribution of cadres and social-economic and cultural development" (p. 71).

In fact, such empty statements are to be found on nearly every page. Worse, some qualifications seem to be taken directly from a more glorious past. The leading role of the communist party in the economy is referred to without reservation (Voronezh, p. 91; Dages-

tan, p. 94; Samara, p. 219). References to documentation about the Great Purge sometimes suggest that what occurred in those terrible years was in accordance with the established procedures of *chistka* (Moscow, p. 31, Tver', p. 211).

There is no reference whatsoever in the directory to the problem of declassification, and this is strange indeed. Since 1993/1994 discussions about which documents could be made available to researchers has come to a standstill, or even a retreat. Different repositories apply different policies, and some hints about the actual situation per individual repository might have been in order.

Information about reference aids is incomplete. True, the directory mentions some nine published guides on individual repositories (see note 4), but the (occasionally very elaborate) internal reference systems remain unmentioned.

The question of the destruction of party archives in 1991 is ignored. Information on this vexed problem is of course essential to the evaluation of the relevance of any existing holdings.

The repository has not been promoted very vigorously by Rosarkhiv after it had been passed for printing late March 1998. During my stay in Moscow in October 1998 I was entirely unable to trace the publication. Even the Russian State Library had no copy available. Western distributors have so far overlooked the volume altogether.

With a press run of only 500 copies, a second edition of this useful reference would seem necessary. Might this not be a good occasion to insert some amendments into the text?

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