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### **Danish-Russian Archive Project: The Danish Personal Files in the Comintern Archives**

As it is well known, the collapse of the Soviet Empire gave historians working with communism and the Soviet Bloc countries an abundance of new possibilities. Especially the early 1990s were an era of great optimism. Even in the centre of the empire it was suddenly permitted to look into some of the most secret documents of the fallen communist regime.

In Denmark the former chairman of the Danish Communist Party, Ole Sohn, and a former Moscow correspondent of the Danish communist daily newspaper *Land og Folk*, Kurt Jacobsen, were among the first to use the new Russian sources. They began writing biographies on Arne Munch-Petersen, a Danish parliamentarian who disappeared in Stalin's purges in 1937, and on Aksel Larsen, the chairman of the Danish Communist Party through the 1930s, 40s and 50s. Because of their positions as trusted communists, they started their research as early as in the late 1980s under influence of Gorbachev's Glasnost policy. In the early 1990s, however, access to archives was very good for all scholars, and Danish researchers saw this as an opportunity to obtain copies from the Comintern Archives. Most of these have been transferred to The Labour Movements Library and Archives (ABA) and are now, alongside the archive of the Danish Communist Party, the most important resources to research on Danish communism.

However there was one category of Comintern documents which was not accessible for researchers in the 1990s – the Danish personal files (Opis 208, in Fund 495: The Archive of the Comintern's Executive Committee). Later with the INCOMKA Project – The International Committee for the Computerization of the Komintern Archives which created the Comintern online database – we found out that there was 466 folders (dela) on a variety of persons, from volunteers in the Spanish civil war and cadres of the Danish Communist Party to leading Danish politicians and personalities such as Social-democratic Prime Ministers during the Cold War era. Nowadays we know that while some files are very thin, containing only basic personal data and in some cases TASS telegrams, other files are larger dossiers with a wide range of different kind of materials: autobiographies, authorized biographies, party school evaluations, letters, questionnaires (“Fragenbogen”), couriers' report schedules etc. Altogether the documents amount to more than 11,000 pages. The biggest file within these holdings is on the chairman Aksel Larsen. It contains nearly 1,000 pages and covers the period from 1925 to 1972. The end year is somewhat surprising as Comintern was disbanded in 1943, but evidently the personal files continued to be in use up to at least 1989.

In the last 10 years we have had several requests on the personal files, especially from biographers on Danish communists. Without contacts in Russia and without experience with the Russian archival system or the Russian language many researchers find it difficult to include these documents in their research, and some give up before even trying, while others have been in Moscow to see the files. Overall there have been a lot of expectations in regard to the files, for instance concerning information on underground activities in the 1930s.

On that background a Danish project group with participants from the Centre for Cold War Studies, University of Southern Denmark (Thomas Wegener Friis), Roskilde University (Chris Holmsted Larsen), The Royal Library (Morten Møller), and The Workers' Museum & ABA (Jesper Jørgensen) in 2010 prepared a collecting and research project on the Danes in the Comintern. Fortunately, the project was granted economic support from the Danish Carlsberg Foundation. Yet we could not have started without some indications about a chance to realise the project – which we got through the help from the Ludwig Boltzmann Institut für Kriegsfolgen-Forschung in Graz, Austria. Since many years the institute maintains a close cooperation with the Russian State Archive of Social and Political History (RGASPI) which mainly holds pre-1952 archives of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, including the Comintern Archives, and with the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI), which mainly holds post-1952 communist archives.

In the beginning of 2012 an agreement with RGASPI was signed, and the scanning of the files and the transfer of copies of 402 personal files began (the rest of the 466 dela is either at RGANI or are 'svobodnyi', meaning the numbers are not assigned to real files). In the end of the year the process was successfully brought to an end. The Danish-Russian Archive Project also includes publishing a primary source collection based on the personal files. The publication will include the documents in facsimile, consequently mainly in Russian, German and Danish, and will be published in 2013. As an early result of the project the first Danish-Russian conference on contemporary history since many years was held in September 2011 at the University of Southern Denmark. Researchers from leading archives and universities in Russia and Denmark participated with presentations concerning the Comintern and Danish-Soviet relations. An anthology with the same title based on the conference papers and edited by Jesper Jørgensen, Alexander Chubaryan, Andrei Sorokin and Thomas Wegener Friis was published in December 2012.

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