Riddles have been part of the folklore of the Yugoslav nations since very early times, and the first were written down at the beginning of the sixteenth century. During the nineteenth century, riddles appeared regularly in literary magazines and collections of folk riddles were published. The first modern crossword puzzle appeared in Zagreb on March 1, 1925.

However, specialized periodicals devoted entirely to enigmatical material did not appear in Yugoslavia until just 50 years ago, with the first publication of 'Zagonetka' (The Riddle) in Beograd on January 11, 1928, and 'Sibila' (The Sybil) in Zagreb on February 17. Since that time, 70 enigmatical periodicals have appeared: 53 in Croatia, 26 in Serbia, 6 in Slovenia, 4 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and 1 in Macedonia. Many lasted but a short time -- 'Zagonetka' published only eight numbers, and 'Sibila', seven -- but a few continued for many years. Among those no longer published, especial mention should be made of 'Sfinga Rebus' (Sphinx Rebus) with 596 numbers prior to World War II, and 'DŽepna križaljka' (The Pocket Crossword Puzzle) which issued a record 1320 numbers from 1952 to 1977.

Of the 70 periodicals, 13 are available in Yugoslavia today. Three are published in Belgrade: 'Mala ukrštenačica' (A Little Crossword Puzzle), 'Razonoda miliona' (The Pastime of Millions), and 'Enigma' (The Enigma) which was started in 1951 and is currently the longest-lived periodical. 'KIH', started in 1971, and 'Super PIP', started in 1972, are both based in Ljubljana. Two periodicals named 'Eureka' are published in Gornji Milanovac, one since 1973 and the other since 1974. 'The Quiz', published in Zagreb since 1972, attained a record circulation of 189,000 copies in 1976. In 1973 a school enigmatic periodical named 'Razonoda' (The Pastime) was started in Krusevac.

The remaining four of the current periodicals are published by a single puzzling group, the Riddlers' Association of Bjelovar: 'Cvor razbibriga' (The Knot of Pastime) started in 1968, 'Mini čvor' (The Mini Knot) started in 1969, 'Čvor križaljka' (The Knot Crossword Puzzle) started in 1970, and 'Skandi čvor' (The Skandy Knot) started in 1973.

Of these, the most significant one is 'Čvor razbibriga' (CR). It organizes annual meetings of enigmatographers, where the best ones are awarded annual prizes. It also organizes tournaments of clubs.
Philip M. Cohen: In my copy of CR, there is a wide variety of puzzle-related material. It contains both U.S.-style and German-style crosswords (each definition is placed in the blank square preceding the word to be defined). The crosswords are often thematic, with a rectangle cut out of the diagram for insertion of a theme-related picture; these have no symmetry. There are specially crosswords: one with a syllable in each square instead of a letter (see the November 1975 Kickshaws), and one where the across clues are transposals of the answers. CR also contains a column entitled 'Anthology of 8 x 8 Squares'. It reprints noted 8 x 8s, like the one at the right, which sparked debate over the existence of 'Atanazij' (as opposed to 'Atanazije').

CR contains many puzzles beside crosswords, all signed by the authors. There are over a dozen anagrams. The level of apposition seems somewhat lower than in National Puzzlers' League anagrams, and word-lengths of the answer are not given; in compensation, they are generally titled ('sport', 'Wagner opera') and/or given an explanatory text or verse. A special sort of anagram is the 'marriage license', in which the letters of the names of two newlyweds are rearranged to give their occupations, with the aid of an explanatory verse. (The editor recalls a similar game he once played with the surnames Eckler and Woodward: WE DO RECORD WALK, alluding to many long walks taken in suburban Philadelphia while at college.)

Picture rebuses are also very common. Whereas in U.S. rebuses the pictures and letters are all separately drawn with plus signs in between (and possibly subtractions, not done in Yugoslavia), there they attempt to draw all the pictures in a single scene, the letters that are left over being overprinted at appropriate spots. There is a scattering of other puzzles: a letter change, transdeletions, an alphametic, a word search based on a poem, and mazes.

As a regular supplement, CR publishes 'Zagonetač' (The Riddler), a specialized historical and theoretical periodical. Originally an independent magazine, it was absorbed by CR in 1972 after 15 numbers. It used to bring in articles on the history and theory of riddles, not only in Yugoslavia but in many other countries such as Italy, Portugal, Brazil, Hungary, Poland, Denmark, The Netherlands, etc. Many of the articles that appeared in its pages were represented by the periodicals in Hungary, Italy and Brazil.

Philip M. Cohen: In the three copies of 'Zagonetač' available to me, there is a story on the first two Yugoslavian enigmatic periodicals of 1928, a list of Yugoslav geographic transposals (such as
Tina Ras/Rastina/Stanari), an essay on Octave Delpierre (a Belgian author of rebuses), and a history of Yugoslav rebuses from 1665 to the end of the nineteenth century. This four-page periodical appears to be the closest analogue to Word Ways in Yugoslavia, and some of its articles may well be worth translating into English.

'Čvor križaljka' (CK) specializes in crosswords of various types and is similar in appearance to CR: 16 pages, printed in two colors.

Philip M. Cohen: My copy of CK contains a biographical sketch of Dragoslav Rosić, and all 24 of the crosswords are by him. The formats vary considerably. There are U.S.-style crosswords, small in size (9 x 6, 9 x 15), distinguished by the fact that the identifying number of each word appears not in the corner of the first letter's square, but in the black square preceding it. Some crosswords are mirror-symmetric rather than inversion-symmetric. There are German-style crosswords, as well as a page of mini-crosswords like National Puzzlers League forms -- across and down words the same, no black squares, and a simple geometric shape. However, some of the forms are less constrained than NPL ones: for example, there is a 9 x 9 square with a single square out of each corner, containing seven 9-letter words across and down, intersecting in the central 7 x 7 -- but the 7-letter boundaries are meaningless jumbles of letters, taboo in NPL usage.

Yugoslav puzzle periodicals serve as a publishing outlet for more than 300 riddlers and enigmatologists; many are paid honoraria for their work, and some are registered as journalists. They have materially contributed to the high standards of enigmatology in Yugoslavia today.