

# The Last Struggle: The Suppression of Agrarian Parties in Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania, 1944–1948<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** The paper examines the struggle between three agrarian parties – the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union “Nikola Petkov”, the Hungarian Smallholders Party and the Romanian National Peasant Party – and the local communist parties and Soviet representatives after the Second World War. It identifies the pattern and forms of communist campaign against the opposition agrarian parties and places them in the context of domestic and international developments. The paper discusses how the abolition of agrarian parties contributed to the Sovietization of Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania.

**Keywords:** Agrarianism; Communism; Eastern Europe; Sovietization; Totalitarianism

The prohibition of agrarian parties in Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania was a key component of the building of totalitarian states in the region after the end of the Second World War. This paper focuses on the postwar struggle between three agrarian parties – the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union “Nikola Petkov” (BANU “N. Petkov”), the Hungarian Smallholders Party (SHP) and the Romanian National Peasant Party (NPP) – and the local communist parties and Soviet representatives. This struggle was a vital part of post-war history

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because its outcome ensured the demise of previous social order and opened the road for the Sovietisation. The paper examines the communist pressure on the agrarians and the fundamental reforms in political, economic and cultural life. The extension of Soviet influence in Eastern Europe constituted the core of these changes. The failure of agrarian political resistance in the late 1940s led to the imposition of a Soviet-style socio-political system.

The principal objective of this paper is to identify the pattern and forms of communist campaigns against the opposition agrarian parties, on the one hand, and to place them in the context of domestic and international developments, on the other. In relation to this I shall consider how the suppression of agrarian parties corresponded to the agenda of local communist parties and their Soviet supporters. It is also important to analyse how the agrarian leaders and adherents reacted to the growing communist domination. The paper finishes with a discussion how the abolition of agrarian parties and the measures that the communist parties employed against them contributed to the Sovietization of Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania.

There is evidence of five main forms of communist pressure on the agrarians. The first was the strong presence of Soviet representatives in the Allied Control Commissions (ACC) of Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary. The Soviet domination of the ACC in these countries led to continual interference in their internal affairs in support of the communists. The activity of the ACC also showed the weaker position of Britain and the United States in Eastern Europe. The second was the communist pressure on agrarian parties and their adherents during the parliamentary elections. These elections expressed the communist parties' efforts to legitimise their regimes. Rivals were suppressed in various ways to secure communist domination. The third was the very intense communist propaganda, with accusations against the agrarian opposition of subversive activities, chauvinism, fascism, anti-Soviet feelings, revengefulness, etc. At the same time, the publication of agrarian newspapers was hampered and access to the radio denied. The fourth was the use of juridical trials that served initially to discredit and finally led to the prohibition of agrarian parties. These trials had a dual significance. They not only served as a means for eliminating agrarian parties but also to convince society and foreign observers of the harmful nature of the opposition. The fifth very important factor in the dominance of communist parties was their leading position in the Ministries of Interior and the security services throughout Eastern Europe. In the first post war years these ministries were a repressive instrument that communists could use widely and effectively against the agrarian parties. The influence of these ministries was evident throughout the period in all political events.

### *The state power and agrarian parties*

Many authors have researched in depth and breadth the first postwar years in Eastern Europe. They proposed a certain theoretical schema for East European developments. The classical models of communist takeovers put forward by Hugh Seton-Watson underlined three phases, beginning with genuine coalition and ending with a monolithic regime.<sup>2</sup> A few decades later Joseph Rothschild, looking specifically at Bulgaria, described five overlapping stages of socio-political transformations in this country.<sup>3</sup> Recently Anne Applebaum showed how the Soviet Union imported “certain key elements of the Soviet system” into Eastern Europe immediately after the war – secret police, control over Interior Ministries, violence, ethnic cleansing, confiscation and redistribution of land. When these relatively peaceful tactics failed, the communists employed a harsher approach – prohibition of non-communist parties, a large system of labour camps, mass violence, show trials, etc. These vigorous measures eventually led to the establishment of totalitarian states.<sup>4</sup>

How does a study of the agrarian parties fit into the broader researches quoted above? The activities of the agrarians and the prohibition of these parties were a crucial step in the postwar period, opening the social field for political, economic and cultural transformations. The case of the agrarians also underlined the communists’ methods of rule and their attitude to non-communist parties, which was marked by intolerance, repression, restrictions, ideological prejudices and extreme measures such as execution and imprisonment of agrarian politicians and members and the prohibition of rival political parties in 1947–1948. In the final stage of the period under examination the communists liquidated the agrarian parties, as part of a process of establishing a totalitarian state in line with the Soviet model.

In Bulgaria the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union became one of the ruling parties within the Fatherland Front on 9 September 1944 after the *coup d'état*. That was a coalition of leftist parties, including the Bulgarian Workers’ Party (communists), Bulgarian Social Democratic Party, Political Circle ‘Zveno’ and a group of independent intellectuals. The Prime Minister, Kimon Georgiev, was a member of ‘Zveno’, but the Ministries of the Interior and of Justice

2 HUGH SETON-WATSON, *The East European Revolution*, London 1956, s. 169.

3 JOSEPH ROTHSCCHILD, NANCY M. WINGFIELD, *Return to Diversity. A political History of East Central Europe Since World War II*, New York and Oxford 1989, s. 115.

4 ANNE APPLEBAUM, *Iron Curtain. The Crushing of Eastern Europe 1944–1956*, London 2012, s. xxix–xxxv.

were headed by communists. The creation of the coalition was initiated by the communists in the Second World War years. In 1942 the communists sought to organize a wide political movement of all the democratic forces, which were not participating in the government of that time. The result was not satisfactory, but in 1943 they maintained contacts with various political leaders such as Kimon Georgiev, Nikola Petkov, Konstantin Muraviev, Grigor Cheshmedjiev etc. Some of them did not accept the programmatic principles of the Fatherland Front and did not want to associate with the communists, and therefore refused to join the coalition.<sup>5</sup> However, others of them agreed to participate, and as a result the National Committee of the Fatherland Front was formed on 10 August 1943. It included Kiril Dramaliev (communist), Kimon Georgiev (Zveno), Nikola Petkov (agrarian), Grigor Cheshmedjiev (social democrat) and Dimo Kazasov (independent).<sup>6</sup> The contradictions surrounding the formation of the coalition continued when it came to power. In 1946 the Fatherland Front conducted one of its major acts – the Land reform. The opposition criticised the reform severely. Adherents of the BANU “N. Petkov” distributed leaflets against the reform, claimed that it represented “an actual expropriation of land” and expressed their desire to keep private property.<sup>7</sup>

The advance of the Red Army in Hungary enabled Hungarian communists, such as *Erő Gerő*, Imre Nagy and *Mátyás Rákosi*, to return to the country in November 1944 and January 1945. They established Provisional government and Provisional National Assembly. The government that ruled until the parliamentary elections was comprised of the Hungarian Communist Party (HCP), Social Democratic Party (SDP), Smallholders Party and National Peasant Party (NPP). The Communist Party was small but had enormous Soviet support, and, like the other East European communist parties, it had control of the Ministry of Interior. In 1945 the ruling coalition undertook a land reform, which was popular among the Hungarians. It redistributed

5 ILCHO DIMITROV, *Burjoaznata opozicia 1939–1944*, Sofia 1997, s. 149–151.

6 The creation and activity of the Fatherland Front is described in details by DINIO SARLANOV, *Sazdavane i deinost na Otechestvenia front*, Sofia 1966.

7 Tsentralen darzhaven arhiv (Central State Archive of Bulgaria, hereafter TsDA), fond (f.) 147 B, opis (op.) 3, arhivna edinitsa (a.e.) 1908, s. 1; Kongresat na balgarskite agronomi, *Narodno zemedelsko zname* 21. 5. 1946, s. 1; Zapazvane na chastnata sobstvenost, *Narodno zemedelsko zname* 21. 5. 1946, s. 2.

8 RICHARD CRAMPTON, *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century and After*, London 2001, s. 222; A. APPLEBAUM, *Iron Curtain*, s. 69–70.

about 35 percent of the arable land (over 3 million hectares) among 642 000 families.<sup>8</sup> This reform liquidated the economic basis of the aristocracy but at the same time many agrarians feared that the reform had created agriculture with a low level of efficiency, decreased the amount of machinery in use and diminished productivity. This last circumstance led to a shortage of agricultural goods and a black market in the cities.<sup>9</sup>

In Romania the agrarians took part in the government of General Constantin Sănătescu after the coup of 23 August 1944. His cabinet was a coalition that included representatives of the Communist Party, the National Liberal Party, the National Peasant Party and the Social Democratic Party. Initially the Ministry of Interior was headed by a minister from the National Peasant Party and then, after Sănătescu's resignation in December 1944, by the new Prime Minister, General Nikolae Rădescu. The communists, supported by the Soviets, secured their control over the Romanian Secret Intelligence Services with the resignation of Rădescu and the appointment of Petru Groza's government in March 1945. The opposition against the government bloc consisted of the NPP led by Iuliu Maniu and the National Liberal Party led by Constantin Brătianu.<sup>10</sup> Groza's government implemented a land reform in 1945. This was an important act for the communists because it aimed at creating a state-controlled economy and Soviet-type agricultural farms. The vast agrarian population preferred private property and feared the prospect of collectivization.<sup>11</sup>

A brief overview of the situation in Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania at the end of the war shows that the agrarian parties in these countries participated in government after the wartime alliance with Nazi Germany was broken. Agrarians took part in broader coalitions that also included communists, social democrats and other parties. Ostensibly these broad coalitions were aimed at democratizing their societies but in practice they were a vehicle for the communist advance to total power. We can see that the communist parties and the Soviets deliberately destroyed the foundations of the pre-war political and social system as well as systematically weakening their partners in the ruling coalitions.

9 LASLO KONTLER, *Istoria na Ungaria*, Sofia 2009, s. 429–430.

10 R. CRAMPTON, *Eastern Europe*, s. 229; ZHORZH KASTELAN, *Istoria na Balkanite XIV–XX vek*, s. 475; United Kingdom National Archives (UKNA), f. Foreign Office (FO) 496/1, Holman to Atlee, 12th March 1947.

11 KRASSTIO MANCHEV, *Istoria na balkanskite narodi (1945–1990)*, Vol. IV, Sofia 2006, s. 47–48; MISHA GLENI, *Balkanite (1804–1999)*, Sofia 2004, s. 482.

The Ministries of the Interior and State Security participated actively in undermining the agrarians. Security forces in Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania fell under direct Soviet influence and were used by the communist parties as an instrument of repression. The ministries used Soviet methods of work, and undertook the surveillance, intimidation and gathering of information about the agrarian parties' activities. Investigators fabricated so-called "evidence" and "confessions" regarding subversive plans and actions against the people's democratic power. Soviet instructors trained local officers, and Soviet advisors, such as Orlov and Fyodor Byelkin in Hungary, Dmitri Fedichkin in Romania and Dmitri Yakovlev in Bulgaria, supported their professional development. In Romania, the NKVD agent Emil Bodnăraş headed the Secret Intelligence Service in 1945.<sup>12</sup> In Hungary, the Communist Party established a strong police apparatus led by Gabor Peter that was responsible neither to the Ministry of Interior nor to the government. The SHP had deputy ministers and made protests, but was unable to influence the communists' attitude.<sup>13</sup> The case of Bulgaria demonstrated a "well defined separation of functions and tasks" between the NKVD and Bulgarian State Security after September 1944 – while the Soviet personal gathered intelligence data, their Bulgarian colleagues struggled against the internal enemies.<sup>14</sup>

The period under examination also revealed communist ideas about the new society, that it should be based on one-party domination and control. As the following paragraphs show, the pattern of communist activities against the agrarian parties, their leaders and adherents was very similar in Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania – arrests, intimidation, rigged elections, accusations of illegal activities, suspension of agrarian newspapers, trials with "evidence" that relied on "confession" and, eventually, the prohibition of agrarian opposition.

### *The appearance of agrarian opposition*

The elimination of the old bourgeois parties and the previous elite by the new governments was a fundamental political feature of the period 1944–1948 that had long-lasting consequences. A popular measure was the people's courts that sentenced thousands in Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania. Along with

12 DENNIS DELETANT, Romania, in: *A Handbook of the Communist Security Apparatus in East Central Europe*, edd. Krzysztof Persak, Łukasz Kamiński, Warsaw 2005, s. 285–287.

13 A. APPLEBAUM, *Iron Curtain*, s. 81.

14 JORDAN BAEV, *KGB v Balgaria. Satrudnichestvoto mezhdu savetskite i Balgarskite taini sluzhbi 1944–1991*, Sofia 2009, s. 27–29.

real wartime criminals the courts punished many people for political reasons, disagreement with government policy and as acts of personal revenge. The Romanian communist newspaper *Scînteia* called on 26 September 1944 for the punishment of war criminals and speculators. Later the People's court sentenced hundreds of factory-owners, bankers and contractors who were accused of robbing the country.<sup>15</sup> From December 1944 to April 1945 the People's court in Bulgaria pronounced 9155 verdicts. The court passed death sentences against the regents, 22 ministers, 8 advisors of the king, 67 members of parliament, 47 officers, etc.<sup>16</sup> Simultaneously the new rulers abolished the monarchies in the region. This happened first in Hungary in February 1946, then in Bulgaria in September 1946 and finally in Romania in December 1947.<sup>17</sup>

Many agrarians were happy with the abolition of bourgeois power. Moreover, the agrarians in Bulgaria and Hungary took part in the government and, thereby for a certain period (until mid-1945 in Bulgaria and 1947 in Hungary) cooperated with the communist parties. However, to a certain extent this participation enabled a smooth transition from the old political system to the new socialist model in spite of some optimistic expectations for equal partnership between agrarians and communists.<sup>18</sup> The tradition of agrarian political representation and the marginal position of communist parties before the war nourished such hopes. Up to 1944 communist parties in these countries had not enjoyed significant public support. In 1944 their membership represented a tiny minority but for several years thereafter the number of party members increased rapidly throughout Eastern Europe.<sup>19</sup> For instance, the Communist Party in Bulgaria had about 14 000 members

15 *Chernata Kniga na komunizma. 2. chast. Istoria i pamet za komunizma v Evropa*, ed. Stefan Kurtoa, Sofia 2004, s. 356–357.

16 LIUBOMIR OGNJANOV, *Darzhavno-politicheskata sistema na Balgaria 1944–1948*, Sofia 2006, s. 32–33.

17 ISKRA BAEVA, *Iztochna Evropa prez XX vek*, Sofia 2010, s. 107–110.

18 The agrarian leader N. Petkov argued that the Fatherland Front's program was compatible with agrarian ideology. He believed that Bulgaria would become a democratic country through recovery of people's rights, maintenance of good relations with Great Powers and freedom in the spheres of politics and economics – Poziv na m-r Nikola Petkov, *Zemedelsko zname* 14. 9. 1944, s. 2. A young member of Hungarian Smallholders Party claimed in August 1945 that there was a gap in the power after the suppression of old ruling class. Therefore, Hungarian people could form its future according its desire – JEAN-FRANCOIS SOULET, *Histoire de L'Europe de L'Est de la Seconde Guerre mondiale a nos jours*, Paris 2006. The quotation is from the Bulgarian edition – Sofia 2007, s. 93.

19 MARK MAZOWER, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century*, New York 1999, s. 255–256.

in September 1944 but by 1948 their number was over 460 000. In Romania the party numbered several thousand in 1944 but in 1945 had significantly increased its membership to 250 000 while in 1947 the party reached 800 000 members. The same was the situation in Hungary where the party had about 3 000 members in 1944 but over a million by 1948.<sup>20</sup>

The fast expansion of communist membership may have seemed to the agrarian leaders to be an artificial product of the postwar circumstances. Agrarians had sufficient self-confidence that their parties represented traditional and freely supported political forces. The SHP had enormous prestige in Hungary. After the war the party received huge social backing and numbered about 900 000 members in 1945. The SHP wanted agrarian-bourgeois democracy, private property and land reform but considered that modern agriculture had to be based on the principles of economic efficiency rather than collectivism.<sup>21</sup> The BANU “N. Petkov” numbered about 70–80 000 members but the archives have revealed that its real support was much more significant<sup>22</sup> – many agrarians did not enroll in the union because they feared that openly declaring their political sentiments might lead to some repression. The BANU “N. Petkov” announced that the aim of its struggle was to restore democracy, freedom of speech and political assembly. The union wanted the decommunization of the army and militia apparatus, private property, and cooperation in agriculture but without pressure on the peasants.<sup>23</sup>

Besides, the agrarians felt that they deserved a better place in the postwar political system than they had in coalition with the communists. For instance, on 15 March 1945 the agrarian leader N. Petkov demonstrated his self-confidence on meeting with the British political representative and expressed his opinion that “the Agrarians still have majority of the population behind them. Under a democratic regime the Agrarians would run the country; under the existing regime the Communists are running it”.<sup>24</sup> The same could be seen in Romania as well. In May 1945 an American representative in the country

20 MITO ISSUSOV, *Politicheskiyat zhivot v Balgaria 1944–1948*, Sofia 2000, s. 33, 367; K. MANCHEV, *Istoria*, s. 42–43; L. KONTLER, *Istoria*, s. 426, 439.

21 L. KONTLER, *Istoria*, s. 426.

22 TsDA, f. 146 B, op. 5, a.e. 1125, s. 34; Arhiv na Ministerstvoto na vatrešnite raboti (AMVR), f. 13, op. 1, a.e. 69, s. 7.

23 Ideas of the BANU “N. Petkov” were elaborated in details in KIRIL POPOV, *Saslovnost, demokratsia i politika*, Sofia 1947. See also TsDA, f. 1 B, op. 6, a.e. 71, s. 8–9; *Zemedelska zashtita* 20. 4. 1945.

24 UKNA, FO 371/48124, p. 115.



reported to President Harry Truman that the Romanian government was dominated by the communists who represented a minority of the population.<sup>25</sup> In 1946, according to the British representative in Romania, the agrarians seemed “unduly optimistic” about the future. Maniu even believed that the NPP might govern the country and prepared a governmental program.<sup>26</sup>

The expressions of Maniu and Petkov showed the agrarians’ belief that they represented strong and influential political organizations that possessed the potential to rule their countries under normal political conditions. Their conviction that the place of agrarian parties was at the top of the political system was one of the reasons for their dissatisfaction with the communist aspiration to dominate the ruling coalitions. Land reforms also caused many frustrations. Although opposition agrarian parties were not against the redistribution of land, they disapproved of the destruction of economically efficient farms, the lack of adequate compensation for the owners and the later pressure on ordinary farmers to join the newly-established collective farms. In 1945–1946 various opposition parties emerged in Eastern Europe as a result of the frictions within the ruling coalitions, political and economic disagreements between communists and agrarians. The core and the soul of these opposition centers were agrarian parties – the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union “Nikola Petkov”, the Hungarian Smallholders Party and the Romanian National Peasant Party. The emergence of agrarian opposition might be outlined as following:

First, as a reaction against the communists’ suppression of basic civil liberties and the expansion of Soviet influence;

Second, as an act of disagreement with the restrictions on private property in agriculture and fears of complete collectivization of land in line with the Soviet model;

Third, as a result of the severe frictions between parties in the ruling coalitions that caused splits in some of them (BANU) and growing contradictions among the parties within the coalition (SHP);

Fourth, as evidence of the fundamental ideological differences between agrarians and communists regarding the future development of Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania;

Fifth, as an example of obvious agrarian dissatisfaction with their junior position in the ruling coalitions.

25 MAIKAL BOL, *Studenata voina na Balkanite. Amerikanskata vanshna politika i vaznikvaneto na komenisticheska Balgaria 1943–1947*, Sofia 1999, s. 260.

26 UKNA, FO 496/1, Holman to Atlee, 12th March 1947.

### *The Soviet measures in support of communist parties*

Certain cases illustrated the deep contrast in the Soviet attitude to agrarians and communists. One of them was the resignation of Bulgarian agrarian Dr Georgi M. Dimitrov (also known as *Gemeto*) from the leading position in the BANU. This case showed how the Soviet representatives supported Bulgarian communists regardless of the sentiments in the Agrarian Union. The Bulgarian Workers' Party (communists)' interference in the internal affairs of the other ruling parties increased opposition feelings among ordinary agrarian members. In January 1945 Dr Georgi M. Dimitrov was removed from the agrarian organization by pressure from Soviet and Bulgarian Communists. They threatened to dissolve the organization if *Gemeto* remained the leader of BANU. He succumbed and N. Petkov replaced him as leader. Then the BWP(c) supported the left wing in the Agrarian Union and inaugurated a propaganda campaign against Dr G. M. Dimitrov.<sup>27</sup> He was put under house arrest but escaped in May 1945. Dr Dimitrov found asylum in the villa of the American representative in the ACC with whose support he left the country in September 1945.<sup>28</sup>

The implementation of the Moscow Agreement, signed on 25 December 1945, was another example of communist pressure on the agrarians. Two opposition representatives were to be included in the governments of Bulgaria and Romania according to the decision of the foreign ministers of the Soviet Union, United States and Great Britain. There were certain differences in the details how the Bulgarian and Romanian governments had to implement the agreement. In Romania, the Soviet, American and British representatives were to act jointly, while in Bulgaria the Soviets had the role of sole advisor. Further, there was a specific decision that a member of the NPP and a member of the Liberal Party had to join the government in Romania, while the Bulgarian case was to a great extent unclear – the foreign ministers just indicated

27 TsDA, f. 1 B, op. 7, a.e. 157, s. 2; UKNA, War Office (hereafter WO) 204/10131, ACC Bulgaria US Delegation 24th April 1945; NISSAN OREN, *Revolution Administered. Agrarianism and Communism in Bulgaria*, Baltimor and London 1973, s. 91; J. ROTSCCHILD, N. M. WINGFIELD, *Return to Diversity*, s. 116.

28 The United States Representative in Bulgaria (Barns) to the Secretary of State, Sofia, 24th May 1945; The United States Representative in Bulgaria (Barns) to the Secretary of State, Sofia, 7th August 1945; The United States Representative in Bulgaria (Barns) to the Secretary of State, Sofia, 28th August 1945. In: *Foreign Relations of the United States*, (hereafter FRUS), 1945, vol. IV, Europe. Washington 1969.

that the cabinet had to include two opposition representatives.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps this ambiguity strongly influenced the negotiations in Bulgaria. With Soviet encouragement, the Bulgarian government firmly rejected the opposition demands to control the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Justice. In March 1946 the negotiations failed completely, while in Romania the Moscow Agreement was implemented successfully. As a result the United States and Great Britain resumed diplomatic relations with Bucharest in February 1946. The government in Bulgaria remained without Western recognition.<sup>30</sup>

The Sviridov note, sent in June 1946, was a sign of the Soviet attitude to non-communist organizations in Hungary and the junior position of the Western countries in Hungarian affairs. Sviridov, who was the Soviet vice-chairman in the ACC in Hungary, delivered a note to the government in the name of the ACC but without the knowledge of British and American representatives. The Soviets claimed that “fascist” organizations, such as Catholic Youth, SHP Independent Youth and the Boy Scouts, had been responsible for the killing of Soviet soldiers. They insisted these organizations to be dissolved and further purges of “fascists”, including in the state structures and Parliament, conducted. The government promised to investigate the case but the British and Americans reacted against the unilateral Soviet action – the Western states wanted any new demands to be discussed first in the ACC as a whole. The Foreign Office made further comments regarding the note:

If, as public opinion persistently maintained, the original note was written at the urging of the Communist leaders, it missed its aim. The Anglo-American protests undoubtedly greatly encouraged Hungarian majority opinion and gave a timely warning of Western interest in Hungarian affairs.<sup>31</sup>

The prosecution against the Hungarian agrarian *Béla Kovács* in 1947 was another example of direct Soviet interference in Hungarian affairs. He was arrested on 25 March 1947 and sent for interrogation to the Soviet Union.<sup>32</sup> In May 1947 the Soviets sent to the communist leader *Mátyás Rákosi*, who acted as Prime Minister in the absence of Nagy, a “confession” alleged to have been

29 UKNA, FO 371/48220, UK Delegation, Moscow to Foreign Office, 27th December 1945.

30 TsDA, f. 267, op. 1, a.e. 72, s. 98–103; J. ROTSCCHILD, N. M. WINGFIELD, *Return to Diversity*, s. 111.

31 UKNA, FO 477/1, Helm to Bevin, 11th February 1947.

32 L. KONTLER, *Istoria*, s. 434.

made by Kovacs. This “confession” implicated Nagy and other agrarian leaders in a conspiracy against the republic.<sup>33</sup>

Similar interference might be traced in the prosecution against the Bulgarian agrarian leader N. Petkov in 1947. Bulgarian documents and the diary of communist leader Georgi Dimitrov show that the verdict was directly discussed with the Soviet leaders. The American and British representatives tried to save Petkov’s life during meetings with leading Bulgarian communists, such as Vasil Kolarov. For instance, in September 1947 the British representative Sterndale Bennett insisted that the government should change the verdict. Kolarov accepted the British arguments but he was not influential enough to sway Dimitrov. Actually, Dimitrov saw in Western demands a threat against the national sovereignty and consulted Stalin about what to do. On 17 September, after this consultation, they confirmed the verdict and decided to accuse American and British diplomats of interference in Bulgarian internal affairs. Moreover, the Bulgarian leaders claimed that the reason for the execution of Petkov and the subsequent liquidation of the agrarian opposition was not the policy of the Communist Party but the actions of Western states in defence of the communists’ opponents.<sup>34</sup>

### *Parliamentary Elections*

The parliamentary elections in 1945 and 1946 clearly showed the communist striving for power in Bulgaria. On 26 July 1945 N. Petkov sent a note to the Bulgarian Prime Minister, the Regent Counsel and the Chair of the ACC. The note expressed his deep disappointment at the present political situation and, simultaneously, marked his break with the Fatherland Front. Petkov demanded the parliamentary elections scheduled for 26 August 1945 be postponed on the grounds of the absence of suitable political conditions in the country.<sup>35</sup> After Western support for Petkov’s demands, the government postponed the elections and rescheduled them for November 1945. In this way, in accordance

33 UKNA, FO 477/2, Helm to Attlee, 3rd January 1948.

34 GEORGI DIMITROV, *Dnevnik 1933–1949*, Sofia 1998, s. 565; UKNA, Records of the Cabinet Office (CAB) 122/738, Sterndale Bennett to Lord Inverchapel, 10th September 1947; Ibid., CAB 122/738, Foreign Office to Lord Inverchapel, 13th September 1947

35 About N. Petkov’s note and its effect upon the different inner and outer factors see: STOYAN PINTEV, *Otlaganeto na parvite sledvoenni izbori v Balgaria – 1945 (novi facti i argumenti)*, *Istoricheski pregled* 6/1993, s. 58–80; EVGENIYA KALINOVA, *Pobeditelite i Balgaria 1939–1945*, Sofia 2004, s. 329–363.

with Stalin's advice, the government demonstrated its respect for the opposition without losing the political initiative. The Soviet leader thought that the Communist Party needed to increase its criticism of the opposition parties and their foreign supporters – Great Britain and the United States.<sup>36</sup>

The main aims of the Agrarian opposition were presented during the pre-election campaign in 1946. The BANU "N. Petkov" tried to guarantee political and economic freedom in society and to develop Bulgaria as a 'democratic, free, independent, social, people's and flourishing republic'. The opposition wanted friendly relations with countries in Europe and the world as well as with all Bulgaria's neighbours.<sup>37</sup> The situation in Bulgaria, however, was quite different from the agrarians' ideas. On 26 September 1946 the Ministry of the Interior ordered the militia to observe the activity of the opposition parties closely. The Minister proclaimed that 'the opposition groups should be completely unmasked as antinational groups, as foreign agents, as reactionary groups'.<sup>38</sup> The results of these orders were soon apparent. Bulgarian officials dissolved opposition meetings, tried to hamper the opposition's election campaigning and arrested its adherents.

The Romanian elections on 19 November 1946 also illustrated the communist march to power. The government suppressed the freedom of speech and NPP access to the radio. Opposition meetings were attacked. On 16 May 1946 Maniu stated that he wanted the United States and Great Britain to observe the forthcoming elections. On 27 May these Western countries protested against violations of the Moscow Agreement. The government considered this protest to be a direct intervention in Romanian internal affairs and rejected it. In October 1946 the opposition protested again, while the British and American missions in the ACC prepared a list of violations of the electoral law which had hampered the free vote of the Romanians.<sup>39</sup> In the end, the government bloc won the elections, with 348 seats in Parliament, while the NPP won just 33 seats.<sup>40</sup> Communists ensured their control over the ballot through violence, cheating and the unscrupulous falsification of results – the Romanian archives showed after 1989 that authorities supported by Moscow had changed the real vote during the count of ballot-papers, thereby depriving the NPP of its victory.<sup>41</sup>

36 MITO ISUSOV, *Stalin i Balgaria*, Sofia 1991, s. 33–34.

37 TsDA, f. 139, op. 1, a. e. 61, s. 5.

38 TsDA, f. 317 B, op. 1, a. e. 21, s. 2; Darzhaven arhiv – Shumen, f. 1605, op. 1, a. e. 3, s. 119.

39 UKNA FO 496/1, Holman to Attlee, 12 March 1947.

40 R. CRAMPTON, *Eastern Europe*, s. 230.

41 TRAJAN SANDU, *Istoria na Rumania*, Sofia 2010, s. 296.

The Hungarian elections were an example of the opposite direction – the SHP, in contrast to Bulgaria and Romania, had relatively good conditions for its activities during the elections and even won them in November 1945 with 57 percent. Ferenc Nagy became Prime Minister, while the leader of the SHP *Zoltán Tildy* served as President. The Communists received 17 percent from the vote but they controlled AVO, the Hungarian security police, and *László Rajk* became the Minister of Interior. The opinion of M. *Rákosi* was clear that the AVO had to be controlled by the Communist Party and that representatives of non-communist organizations had no place in the ministry.<sup>42</sup>

### *Propaganda and Preparation for the Agrarian Parties' Debacle*

The authorities in Eastern Europe had been preparing the ground for the denunciation of agrarian opposition for a long time, and 1946 was an important year for communist policy. On the surface it looked as if there was established order after the elections and the Moscow Agreement. Under the surface, however, the communists were systematically undermining the foundations of the agrarian parties. The first post-war years and the various forms of repression used showed that the communists were unable to obtain and maintain power with legal methods. At this point the ministry of interior had crucial importance. This ministry was responsible for uncovering alleged conspiracies against the new regimes in Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania.

In Bulgaria the attack on the opposition included public denunciation of the Agrarian leaders, infiltration of agents in their union and the collection of “evidence” regarding illegal agrarian activity against the regime. Communist propaganda depicted the opposition as an agent of Bulgarian fascism and as a centre which had been preparing various plots against the government, even though the authorities knew very well from the State Security’s reports that “fascist” circles had neither significant activity since 1944 nor any influence on the opposition parties.<sup>43</sup> State Security had around 30 agents in the BANU “N. Petkov” in 1946–1947 in order to collect information regarding agrarian affairs. Some of them were even deputies, and one was a member of the Agrarian leadership. The main task of the agents was to provoke friction in the union, to foment divisions and to report on the intentions of its leaders.<sup>44</sup>

42 J. ROTSCILD, N. M. WINGFIELD, *Return to Diversity*, s. 99; R. CRAMPTON, *Eastern Europe*, s. 223.

43 AMVR, f. 13, op. 1, a. e. 154, s. 8, 27, 36 – 40.

44 AMVR, f. 13, op. 1, a. e. 230, s. 8; op. 4, a. e. 9, s. 1.

The prominent Bulgarian communist Tr. Kostov clearly formulated the aim of this activity in 1946. According to his statement the BWP(c) “had to beat and defeat the reactionary opposition”.<sup>45</sup>

In Hungary the communists attacked the SHP in 1946. They directed their first claims against the existence of “reactionary” members in the agrarian party. Communist leader *Rákosi* pressed the agrarians with a threat to withdraw his party from the government unless the SHP eliminated the right-wing elements that, according to *Rákosi*, were obstructing the democratic development of Hungary. The reason for the communist pressure was the SHP’s disagreement with the Bill for the Defence of the Republic, which gave the communists more power in the police. Nagy agreed to accept the Bill in the hope that this concession would satisfy the Communist Party; certain right-wing members were expelled from the party as well. The expelled group was led by *Dezső* Sulyok who established the Hungarian Freedom Party (HFP) in June 1946.<sup>46</sup> In the summer of 1947 authorities increased the pressure on its activities. This pressure included physical attacks on the HFP’s members; workers refused to print the party newspaper and began strikes that hampered its dissemination. Eventually, authorities shattered the party and stopped the publication of its newspaper.<sup>47</sup>

In Romania the Communist Party increased the pressure on the NPP after the implementation of the Moscow Agreement and the British and American recognition of the Romanian government in February 1946. On 16 February the NPP’s offices at Arad were attacked and wrecked. A member of the peasant party was killed. Two days earlier Groza spoke aggressively against the “reactionary” elements in the country. He said that the government bloc would win the elections and ‘if the reaction succeeds, do you think we shall let it live twenty-four hours? We shall immediately take our revenge’.<sup>48</sup> The authorities sought to slander the opposition. They publicly characterized the adherents of the NPP and other opposition parties as “reactionaries”, “enemies of the people”, “conspirators”, etc.<sup>49</sup>

Besides the pressure at the level of high politics, agrarians in Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania were subject to various pressures in their everyday lives. Communist policy destroyed the traditional links between peasants and

45 TsDA, f. 265 B, op. 1, a. e. 29, p. 2.

46 UKNAm FO 477/1, Helm to Bevin, 11th February 1947.

47 UKNA, FO 477/2, Helm to Attlee, 3rd January 1948.

48 UKNA, FO 496/1, Holman to Attlee, 12th March 1947.

49 K. MANCHEV, *Istoria*, s. 46.

their land, and worsened their economic situation. Some examples can show the consequences of agrarian reforms. In Bulgaria to have access to industrial goods and to pay lower taxes agrarians had to join the newly established collective farms. At the same time in these farms payment was low and conditions poor. Some Romanian agrarians were pressured to denounce their wealthy neighbours in order to receive wool and cheese. Collectivization led to alienation among the agrarians following the loss of their land and high taxation in Hungary.<sup>50</sup>

In 1946 the statements and actions of the communist representatives outlined the social context of intolerance towards noncommunist parties and the hostility towards the development of a strong opposition. The Communist Parties in the region clearly took advantage of their leading position in government and their Soviet support in order to restrict the agrarian parties.

### *The End of Agrarian Opposition*

Stalin restrained the revolutionary enthusiasm of East European communists till 1947. The Soviet leader supported national roads to socialism instead of the dictatorship of the proletariat, as he unambiguously made clear to G. Dimitrov in 1948.<sup>51</sup> In February 1945 he advised the Bulgarian communist Traicho Kostov that the party should avoid the open establishment of proletarian dictatorship. In June 1946 he stressed to the Czechoslovak communist Klement Gottwald that the Russian revolutionary fever after the First World War caused severe violence and the national road to socialism was a much more appropriate form for Eastern Europe.<sup>52</sup> That meant the collaboration between communists and agrarians was necessary, at least for awhile. However at the end of 1946 and the beginning of 1947 Stalin denounced the national road and insisted that East European communists abandon their coalitions with non-communist parties. In a meeting with the

50 DAVID PRIESTLAND, *The Red Flag. Communism and the Making of the Modern World*, London 2009, s. 312–313.

51 IVAILO ZNEPOLSKI, *Balgarskiyat komunizam. Sochioculturni cherti i vlastova traektoriya*, Sofia 2008, s. 139.

52 MARIA ISSUSOVA, Georgi Dimitrov i protivorechiyata v Otechestveniya front (XI. 1944 – VII. 1945 g.), *Izvestiya na instituta po istoria na BKP* 66/1990, s. 219; M. ISUSOV, *Stalin i Balgaria*, s. 17; T. V. VOLOKITINA, Smena strategicheskogo kursa Moskv v Vostochnoi Evrope v kontse 40-h godov v kontekste mezhdunarodnoi situatsii, in: *Stalinismat v Iztochna Evropa sled kraya na Vtorata svetovna voina*, Sofia 2005, s. 90–103.



Romanians Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and Ana Pauker, Stalin spoke about the need of more determined measures for the victory of the party.<sup>53</sup>

The end of opposition came with a series of public trials. The prohibition of agrarian parties was the final step that enabled the consolidation of communist power and the establishment of a totalitarian state without, dispensing with the need for the mask of current coalitions. This stage began after the conclusion of the peace treaties and the growing tension in international relations in early 1947. The peace treaties were the turning point in the development of Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary.

The Hungarian *Béla Kovács* was accused of subversive activities after his arrest in February 1947. The “evidence” presented, however, was not persuasive – as in other prosecutions against the agrarian leaders there were no specific data. The accusations rested on so-called “confessions” and imaginary constructions that conflated political critique with a plot against the state. Nevertheless, the communists used the case to force Nagy to resign as Prime Minister in the end of May 1947. He explained to journalists that he resigned ‘in order not to increase the gravity of the situation and add to the sufferings of the Hungarian people’.<sup>54</sup> There was a new government headed by the agrarian Dinnyes and ministers from the SHP but the influence of the agrarian party was much reduced. After the establishment of the Cominform, nationalization and treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union, the place of Hungary in the Soviet sphere of domination was secure. In 1948 the SHP was liquidated. First, *Zoltán Tildy* resigned as President, and later the SHP was dissolved.<sup>55</sup>

In Romania the authorities increased the pressure on the opposition in 1947. On 14 July 1947 several NPP leaders – Ion Michalache, Nicolae Penescu and other – were arrested as they attempted to leave Romania illegally. The regime used this to place the leader of the party Maniu under house arrest and shattered the NPP on 29 July. The communists arrested not only their political opponents but also ordinary peasants and workers, which led to a growing sense of insecurity among Romanians. People’s apprehensions were palpable when British representatives met with ordinary people who

53 MARK KREIMER, Stalin, Savetskata politika i konsolidatsiyata na komunisticheskiya blok v Iztocna Evropa (1944–1953), in: *Totalitarizmite na XX vek v sravnitelna perspektiva*, ed. Ivailo Znepolski, Sofia 2010, s. 67, 88 – note 44.

54 Ex-Premier Nagy explains. Resigned “To Save the People Suffering”, *The Sydney Morning Herald* 9. 6. 1947, s. 3.

55 UKNA, FO 477/2, Helm to Attlee, 3rd January 1948; R. CRAMPTON, *Eastern Europe*, s. 224.

shared their fears in the summer of 1947.<sup>56</sup> Maniu was subsequently put on trial in November 1947. The main charges against him included accusations of treason and espionage (“communication of documents to American and British missions”), and support for the establishment of armed resistance. He denied the charge of connections with American intelligence and made a statement that “all the accusations against me are lies from beginning to end”. Maniu and Machalache received “solitary confinement for life”.<sup>57</sup>

In Bulgaria the agrarian leader N. Petkov also was sentenced and his party dissolved in 1947. Public trials against prominent opposition figures, such as Dr G. M. Dimitrov in absence and Trifon Kunev, were an important contrivance for suppressing the BANU “N. Petkov”. The regime used other trials, such as those against the organizations Military League and Neutral Officer, the agrarian deputy Petar Koev, etc., to find “evidence” for illegal activities by N. Petkov and his party. These trials shaped the framework of accusations which authorities made against Petkov – the inspiration and preparation of a *coup d'état* against the Fatherland Front, sabotage activities and outrages.<sup>58</sup> In June 1947 Petkov was arrested and put on trial. On 16 August he received a death sentence and on 23 September he was executed, despite the attempts of the United States and Great Britain to save him. Meanwhile, on 26 August, the opposition Agrarian Union was dissolved. Henceforward opposition activity in Bulgaria declined, since the other opposition parties had been weaker than the agrarian one. Soon the regime banned the Democratic Party and Radical Party (united) and liquidated the multiparty system.

### *The Outcome of the Struggle*

What do these cases tell us about the process of Sovietization in Eastern Europe and the building of a totalitarian state? As a whole the communist project aimed at modernizing the backward agrarian societies of Eastern Europe. The ambition to destroy imperialism flourished when communists acquired power. “Modernist” Marxism used a central plan and discipline as vehicle for economic development and progress. “Radical” Marxism

56 UKNA, FO 496/2, Holman to Bevin, 26th February 1948; DENNIS DELETANT, *Romania under Communist Rule*, Oxford 1999, s. 57.

57 Treason Charges Lies, says Maniu, *The Daily News* 11. 11. 1947, s. 2; UKNA, FO 496/1, Holman to Bevin, 12th November 1947.

58 ZHORO TSVETKOV, *Sadat nad opozitsionnite lideri*, Sofia 1991; DINIO SHARLANOV, *Tiraniyata: zherltvi i palachi*, Sofia 1997; AMVR, II court, 2649, vol. X, s. 183–199, 243–250.

emphasised the mobilization of the masses, rapid “leaps forward”, revolutionary enthusiasm, etc. There was also a Marxism of “extreme violence” that struggled against peasants, intellectuals and bourgeoisie.<sup>59</sup> The extension of Soviet influence after the war, and communist domination in the internal affairs of East European states “served as the prelude to the sovietization” of the region. The concept of Sovietization implies that after the war the USSR transferred to East European societies its collectivist and anti-capitalist norms that permeated state institutions, social practices and methods of rule. The state intervened in economic and cultural life, defined new public rituals, new standards in science and arts. State interference in all public spheres expressed itself in its attitude to towns, streets, schools, farms and factories. Sovietization extended to the people and their daily lives, behavioral patterns, communication codes, etc.<sup>60</sup>

In the first postwar years we saw the first steps of the Sovietization of Eastern Europe. Communists not only suppressed the agrarian parties but also extended their victory to the foundations of society. Communist parties in Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania began systematic efforts to create a favorable image of the Soviet Union and communist ideology. In Romania the party represented the Soviet Union and its political model as the future of humanity. It also tried to “conquer” the thinking of the masses by imposing its members in the spheres of culture, education and mass media. The party began the publication of Marxist literature and educational materials to teach society about the biography of Stalin, the history of Romanian and Soviet communist parties. The Communist Party strengthened its position through liquidation of economic basis of its opponents – in the villages with the Land reform and in the cities with nationalization in 1948.<sup>61</sup> As the Romanian leader Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej summed up the situation in March 1949, his party had all the necessary instruments for the building of socialism – it enjoyed Soviet help, total political power, and control over industry, banks and insurance companies along with a monopoly on foreign trade.<sup>62</sup>

Communists in Hungary did not create utopia of which they dreamed in 1944–1948 but in the political, economic and cultural sense the country

59 D. PRIESTLAND, *The Red Flag*, s. xxiv.

60 E. A. REES, Introduction. Sovietization of Eastern Europe, in: *The Sovietization of Eastern Europe: New Perspectives on Postwar Period*, edd. Balazs Apor, Peter Apor, E. A. Rees, Washington 2008, s. 1–28.

61 K. MANCHEV, *Istoria*, s. 58–59; T. SANDU, *Istoria na Rumania*, s. 301–303.

62 GEORGE GEORGIU-DEZH, *Zadachite na Rumanskata rabotnicheska partiya*, Sofia 1949, s. 3–4.

was changed. In order to establish its monopoly in the minds of the people the Communist Party purged many public servants, controlled culture and education. Its tactic for a gradual consolidation of power resulted not only in the liquidation of opposition parties but also in nationalization and the beginning of collectivization of land in 1948.<sup>63</sup> The communist leader *Mátyás Rákosi* claimed on 10 January 1948 that as a result of reforms “the political image of our country is completely different”. Hungarian democracy became “much stronger, more self-confident and had much deeper social content”.<sup>64</sup>

Bulgarian communists also started the gradual process of Sovietization and after 9 September 1944 they tried to cultivate Soviet practices on Bulgarian soil. There was a sharp contradiction between the agrarian and communist visions. Marin Lichev, a member of the BANU “N. Petkov”, wrote in 1947 that while the agrarian ideology rested on people’s intuition, high-minded instincts, soul and mentality, communist ideology was “a fanatical-sectarian doctrine which was artificially built around abstract theories, cultivated on the basis of hatred, malice, revenge and contradicted human nature”. Therefore, violence was the only way it could be imposed.<sup>65</sup> Communists vigorously denounced agrarian ideas. They aimed at influencing not only the political model but also people’s minds. According the Soviet model, the New Man had to be ascetic and to be ready to sacrifice his life for socialism and the party. The local backward society had to be transformed through the collectivization of land, industrialization and cultural revolution. As a step forward the government nationalized industry, banks and insurance companies in 1947. Inconvenient people, books and ideas were purged from state institutions, schools, universities, culture and public life. G. Dimitrov believed that the fictional character Rakhmetov from Nikolai Chernyshevsky’s novel *What Is to Be Done?* represented the ideal that the Communist Party had to cultivate – he was brave, was ready to sacrifice his life and was devoted to the revolution.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, there was nothing in common between Lichev’s and Dimitrov’s ideas.

Agrarian opposition had no place in the future totalitarian state. A one-party political model, totalitarianism was characterized by an all-embracing ideology, omnipresent propaganda, ruthless terror, control over the economy,

63 L. KONTLER, *Istoria*, s. 442–443.

64 MATIASH RAKOSHI, *Izbrani dokladi, rechi i statii*, Sofia 1952, s. 256.

65 MARIN LICHEV, Dva svyata – dve sistemi, *Narodno zemedelsko zname* 23. 1. 1947, s. 1.

66 ULF BRUNNBAUER, *Socialisticheskiyat nachin na zhivot. Ideologia, obshtestvo, semeistvo i politika v Balgaria (1944–1989)*, Sofia 2010, s. 63–64.

etc.<sup>67</sup> After the war Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary began to build a large state security apparatus, which ensured the penetration of communist ideology into society. The communists governed using overt and covert terror, liquidating the political opposition and inaugurating state control over main economic branches – agriculture, industry, banks and foreign trade.

### *Conclusion*

The conclusion sets out several of the most important reasons for the suppression of agrarian parties in Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary. Here the research focus is not only on the communist and Soviet intentions but on the behavior of agrarians as well. I would like to suggest that communist violence had several meanings in this period. It served as an instrument for the maintenance of political control, as a factor that enabled social reforms through intimidation of the population and as a way to ensure Soviet influence in Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania and, accordingly, to limit Western impact. Dr G. M. Dimitrov's letter to Julian Amery, who had carried out special missions in the Balkans during the war and later became Minister of State at the British FCO, regarding the communist efforts to sentence N. Petkov is revealing about the thoughts of this agrarian politician. Dr Dimitrov considered that the aim of Bulgarian officials was not only to kill Petkov but to "kill the American and British prestige and to show to the Bulgarian people and to the world generally that it doesn't worth to fight against the Bolshevism and the communism and that America and Great Britain can help no body, even their best friends".<sup>68</sup>

To a certain extent the agrarian parties played a passive role in domestic politics after the war. The communist parties took the leading role in society. The agrarians were passive not because they were old fashioned politicians with no ideas about the future but basically because they were concentrated on their political survival. Often agrarians were afraid of the possible Soviet reaction if they resisted demands for political purges of figures that were inconvenient for the communist parties. Concessions might be seen as an attempt to appease the Communist Party while waiting for the Soviet

67 Detailed analysis of the totalitarian state are presented in HANNAH ARENDT, *Totalitarizma*, Sofia 1993; RAYMOND ARON, *Democratsiya i totalitarizam*, Sofia 1993.

68 Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge, Papers of Julian Amery 1/2/20, Dimitrov to Amery, 25th August 1947.

withdrawal after the conclusion of the peace treaties. However, they produced exactly the opposite results. Each concession only increased the communists' confidence and undermined the agrarian position. As Ferenc Nagy saw the situation in Hungary, his efforts to appease the communists and the Soviets were in vain. He considered that the important thing about the peace treaty was "the provision that, ninety days after ratification, the Russian occupation troops shall be withdrawn, and independence restored. I, as Prime Minister, making concessions and playing for time, looked forward to this treaty through the long Russian-stalled peace conference of 1946, through the delay of that fall, through the agreement of the Foreign Ministers in December, through the actual signing in February, 1947, and through the anxious waiting for ratification by the United States Senate. This last occurred on June fifth—just three days after I was forced out as Prime Minister."<sup>69</sup>

The expectation of effective Western support for the opposition evaporated at the end of the postwar period. In fact, the United States and Great Britain did not have a strong enough position in the region to offer real support. In some cases the Soviets ignored Western opinion, while other events showed the desire of the Americans and British to support the opposition but the ineffectiveness of their actions.

The agrarians also had some illusions about communist intentions at the beginning of the postwar period and wanted to participate in governmental coalitions. Their initial participation was accompanied with certain unrealistic expectations for democratic rule after the war. It is important to underline a specific feature of the agrarian parties when we consider their struggle with the communist parties – the agrarians were not a belligerent force, while their opponents were willing to use extreme actions and had plenty of experience in subversive activities, clear objectives to follow and sufficient Soviet support.

69 FERENC NAGY, How the Russians Grabbed my Government, *The Saturday Evening Post* 29. 11. 1947, s. 83.

## *Summary*

### ***The Last Struggle: The Suppression of Agrarian Parties in Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania, 1944–1948***

*Vasil Paraskevov*

This paper examines struggle between three agrarian parties – the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union “Nikola Petkov”, the Hungarian Smallholders Party and the Romanian National Peasant Party – and the local communist parties and Soviet representatives. It identifies the pattern and forms of communist campaigns against the opposition agrarian parties and places them in the context of domestic and international developments. The paper discusses how the abolition of the agrarian parties contributed to the Sovietization of Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania.

The paper shows that the agrarian parties were suppressed through the strong presence of Soviet representatives in the Allied Control Commission in Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary; communist pressure on the agrarian parties and their adherents during the parliamentary elections; communist propaganda and accusations against the agrarian opposition of subversive activities, chauvinism, fascism, anti-Soviet feelings, revengefulness; juridical trials that initially sought to discredit and finally led to the prohibition of agrarian parties; a very important factor for the domination of communist parties was their leading positions in the Ministries of the Interior and the security services.

The paper outlines several reasons for the emergence of agrarian opposition: communist suppression of basic civil liberties and the expansion of Soviet influence after the war; agrarian disagreement with the restrictions on private property in agriculture with land reforms and fears of complete collectivization of land according to the Soviet model; the severe frictions between parties in the ruling coalitions; the fundamental ideological differences between agrarians and communists regarding the future development of Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania; and agrarian dissatisfaction with their junior position in the ruling coalitions.