

Opposition Parties in Bulgaria 1944-1948
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This work presents the complicated and dramatic history of the democratic political opposition in Bulgaria in the first years after the war, i.e. from the initial period when the country found itself within the Soviet sphere of influence until the complete elimination of the opposition from Bulgarian politics. It presents the basic phases of the opposition's formation, its struggle for a democratic political system and its hopeless attempt to survive under these political conditions.

Bulgaria found itself in the Soviet zone of influence and the National Front dominated by Communists-took power, which created the conditions for the imposition of a totalitarian system based on the Soviet model. All of the forces which were threatened by these structural changes and which supported the concept of a democratic state tried to oppose the policies of the government. The opposition parties that formed began a struggle with the communist forces in an attempt to bring about the realization of a social, political and economic system based on Western democratic principles and private property.

The opposition's struggle to build the postwar Bulgarian state on the basis of democratic principles occurred mainly during the period of the electoral campaigns, and the formation of a new government and preparation of a new constitution. A great deal of this paper describes the struggle of the democratic parties for the postponement of the August 1945 elections; the issue of the boycott of the parliamentary elections of 18 November 1945, as well as the election to the Great National Assembly; the opposition's struggle for the implementation of the conditions of the Moscow Agreement in regard to the reconstruction of the Bulgarian government and the drafting of the constitution, in which the opposition wanted a democratic system guaranteed.

The last part of this work, which is dedicated to the division and liquidation of the democratic political opposition, is a description of the repression of the opposition, which

manifested itself in the show trials of the prominent members of these organizations: Petra Koev, Nikola Petkov, Dimitar Gichev and Kosta Lulchev; in the dissolution and final liquidation of the opposition parties and several parties of the National Front as well as the persecution of the anti-Communist activists.

The history of the opposition parties is presented in the broad international and domestic framework, in particular with regard to the influence of the U.S.S.R. and the Western powers on the politics of the opposition parties and the Bulgarian government dominated by the Bulgarian Workers Party (Communist). On the one hand, the United States and Great Britain brought pressure to bear on the U.S.S.R. and the National Front government to create a democratic political system in Bulgaria, as well as supporting the Bulgarian opposition in its struggle for human and civil rights. On the other hand, Moscow energetically supported the Bulgarian Communists in their attempts to build a totalitarian state. The decision to allow the establishment of the legal opposition in 1945, was a tactical move dictated by the international situation, and to a similar extent by the resistance of a large part of society against the anti-democratic methods of rule. This thesis is confirmed by the fierce encounter between the Bulgarian government and the opposition in 1947, when the Soviet Union had already stopped to consider the reaction of the Western powers.

The ruthless terror against political opponents brought about the complete elimination of the opposition parties from Bulgarian political life. After more than 40 years, as a consequence of the crisis in the international communist system, the anti-Communist opposition was reborn in Bulgaria, overthrowing totalitarianism and establishing a democratic system, for which the party of Nikola Petkov, Kosta Lulchev and Nikola Mushanov struggled in a hopeless fight with the communist forces in the first years after the war.

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