

BULGARIA IN THE FIRST DECADE OF THE COMMUNIST REGIME. A REPORT OF THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE OF THE US SENATE (1953)

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Abstract: In the heated years of the Cold War, especially the beginning of 50s, the need of the political community to be informed about the developments behind the Iron Curtain became more urgent. This led to various analytical attempts, one of them being the subject of our paper.

In 1951, the Library of Congress prepared a study referring to the Soviet Union, especially with a focus on the conditions in which the people of the Soviet federation could (and will) become more and more against the Soviet government („Communist oppression”). The study was prepared at the request of the US Senate Committee for Foreign Affairs. Two years later, the same committee voted for enlarging the analysis for the rest of the Communist states, from Eastern Europe and, moreover, to publish them, as a Senate document, under the title “Tensions Within the Soviet Captive Countries”.

First of the analysis was dedicated to Bulgaria. Romania, Bulgaria, Democratic Republic of Germany, Poland, Albania, and Hungary followed. The focus was on the Russian/Soviet grip on these countries, the Communist takeover and the liquidation of the old prewar society, the relations between workers and the communist power, the minorities, the intellectuals, and the conditions of living. The main conclusions, for Bulgaria, were that society was under siege, imprisoned by force into a Communist cell from which Bulgarian society hoped to be relieved, including by passive and active resistance. Similar conclusions were to be found in the rest of the analyses, despite the fact that their structure of them was different from a country to another. The accent of possible anticommunist resistance, underground or public, against Communist rule, was a key point of these analyses, in a period of intense anticommunist rhetoric, as that of mccarthyism.

Keywords: United States Senate; public opinion; Communisation of Bulgaria

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I. The origins and the goal of the series *Tensions within Captive Countries*, an initiative of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee.

In the heated years of the Cold War, especially the beginning of 50s, the need of the political community to be informed about the developments behind the Iron Curtain became more urgent. This led to a series of analyses, highlighting the evolution of the Soviet Union and its satellites, with a focus on the signs of dispute and conflict between party-state and society.

The project which came to our attention developed in two phases.

In 1951, the Library of Congress prepared a study about the Soviet Union, especially with a focus on "the conditions in the Soviet Union that were leading the Russian people to oppose more and more strongly to Communist oppression"¹. The study was prepared at the request of the United States Senate Committee for Foreign Affairs, led by Alexander Wiley (1884-1967), Republican Senator from Wisconsin. It was approved for publication on July 28, 1953, under the title *Tensions within the Soviet Union* and printed accordingly (document no.69, from the 83rd Congress). In the same year later, the same committee, at the proposal of its chairman, voted for enlarging the analyse for the other Communist states from Eastern Europe and to publish them, "as a Senate document of a companion study"² (no.70, from the 83rd Congress), under the title "Tensions Within the Soviet Captive Countries", which was published in 1954. The series was as follows: Bulgaria (part one), Romania (part two), Soviet Zone of Germany (although in the report the formula *DDR* is used) (part three), Czechoslovakia (part four), Poland (part five), Albania (part six), and Hungary (part seven).

We mentioned the activity of Library of Congress in this analytical process, referring both to the Soviet Union and the above mentioned states. It was done under the supervision of Sergius Yakobson. Born in Moscow in 1901, he emigrated to Germany in 1918 and attended the University of Berlin, where he received a PhD. He became a librarian and honorary lecturer in Russian history at the University of London in 1926³. His academic trajectory include School of Slavonic and East European Studies (1934–1940) and honorary lecturer in Russian History at King's College (1937-1940) followed by the American period: Library of Congress, Washington, DC (1941-1971); Rockefeller Fellow in Slavic History (1941–1942); Legislative Reference Service (later Congressional Research Service (1947–1971); Analyst in Foreign Affairs (1947–1949); Head, Foreign

¹ *Tensions within the Soviet Captive Countries. Bulgaria*, prepared at the request of the Committee on Foreign Relations by the Legislative Reference Service of the Library of Congress (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1954), IV.

² *Ibidem*.

³ Sergius Ossip Yakobson, Expert on Slavic History, <https://www.nytimes.com/1979/11/16/archives/sergius-ossip-yakobson-expert-on-slavic-history.html>, accessed on April 1, 2026.

Affairs Division (1949–1951); Head, Slavic and Central European Division (1951–1971); Honorary Consultant in Slavic Studies (1971–1979)⁴. In 1941, Sergius Yakobson accepted a fellowship in Slavic history at the Library of Congress, where he served briefly as a consultant. In 1947, he became an analyst in foreign affairs in the library's Congressional Reference Service division, and two years later, he was promoted to head of the division. Ten years after joining the library, in 1951, he became chief of the new Slavic and European division. He served as division chief and senior specialist in Russian affairs until his retirement in 1971, and is recognized as a major contributor to the development of the library's Slavic Collection. In 1987, the Helen and Sergius Yakobson Scholarship, which helps graduate students from George Washington University focusing on Russian or East/Central European studies, was established. He died in 1979⁵.

Chairman Alexander Wiley explained, in the introductory part of the Bulgarian volume, the need for the extending of the Soviet Union volume into a series dedicated to the Soviet satellites: „Given widespread distribution both in this country and abroad (of the *Tensions within the Soviet Union – n.ns.*), it was translated into several languages and has been used frequently to document our understanding of events in the Soviet Union. On many occasions, it has been helpful to Members of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations in the discharge of their responsibilities. Realising that only part of the story had been told, however, the committee voted on April 10, 1953, to begin a study which would probe similar areas of tension in the satellite countries”⁶, as it was mentioned above.

Each study benefited from the assistance of individuals residing in the United States, émigrés from the countries covered in this analytical series, who possessed diverse professional and academic backgrounds and were integrated into various American institutions. In the case of Bulgaria, this role was played by Marin Pundeff.

We tried to depict the profile of the character mentioned above. Marin Pundeff was born on 7 November 1921 and immigrated to New York, United States in 1953. At the time of drafting the study regarding Bulgaria, he worked in the Law library, from Library of Congress. From online sources, we also found that he defended his PhD in 1958 with the title “Bulgaria’s Place in Axis Policy, 1936-1944”⁷. He taught at the California State University (former San Fernando Valley State College), where was recognised as Professor Emeritus. This

⁴<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/abs/past-renewed/sergius-o-yakobson/160D5698FF3F96AAB57FF3E6A8B1FAE4>

⁵ Sergius Ossip Yakobson, Expert on Slavic History, <https://www.nytimes.com/1979/11/16/archives/sergius-ossip-yakobson-expert-on-slavic-history.html>, accessed on April 1, 2026.

⁶ *Tensions within the Soviet Captive Countries. Bulgaria*, IV.

⁷ http://www.promacedonia.org/en/mmb/mmb_preface.htm, accessed on March 15.

information is also confirmed from a short notice published in "The American Historical Review", volume 66 (April, 1961), dedicated to Bulgarian historiography between 1942 and 1958. This notice mentioned the above university affiliation and the quality of the contributor for the book *Government, Law and Courts in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, appeared in 1959, at New York. We also found out some of his works: *Bulgaria: A Bibliographic Guide (Library of Congress)*⁸; *History in the U.S.S.R., Selected Readings* (Published for The Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford University)⁹; *Bulgaria in American Perspective: Political and Cultural Issues*¹⁰. He also reviewed a volume of documents of the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry, published in 1952, dedicated to the „hostile and aggressive policy of the Government of the United States against the People's Republic of Bulgaria". About this volume, Marin Pundeff writes, in that review: „In the latter part of 1952 the Bulgarian Government published a volume of what it calls „documents" purporting to make a case of American interference in the period 1945-1952. Most of the „documents" are of Communist home manufacture: confessions of defendants and testimony of witnesses in political trials, memoranda to the United Nations and diplomatic notes. The point which it tries to make is, of course, absurd"¹¹. He died on 25 July 2005 in San Diego¹².

As to the period in which this analysis was documented, approved and published, we could easily observe that it overlapped with the time after Stalin's death, in which the transition from Moscow was accompanied by some internal critics and small initiatives of reform, which was followed, more or less, in the socialist camp. Reading these reports (including that of Bulgaria) in that key, we are tempted to believe that author searches for every small or large different view, appeared in the press or public speeches, in order to unveil a potential or real disruption in the Communist countries. However, as stated in the introductory

⁸ (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office), IX, 98 pp.

⁹ Co-authored, appeared at San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1967, 313 p.

¹⁰ Appeared as Issue 398 of East European Monographs, in 1994, at the University of Michigan and at St. Kliment Ohridski University Press: https://books.google.ro/books/about/Bulgaria_in_American_Perspective.html?id=0I3iAAAAAAAJ&redir_esc=, accessed on March 15.

¹¹ *Documents on the Hostile and Aggressive Policy of the Government of the United States against the People's Republic of Bulgaria* (Sofia: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria, 1952), 287 p., review by Marin Pundeff in *American Journal of International Law*, volume 48, issue 3 (July 1954), 519-520, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/american-journal-of-international-law/article/abs/documents-on-the-hostile-and-aggressive-policy-of-the-government-of-the-united-states-against-the-peoples-republic-of-bulgaria-sofia-ministry-of-foreign-affairs-of-bulgaria-1952-pp-287/64ABC384632DF923F52678553317B226>, accessed on March 15.

¹² <https://ancestors.familysearch.org/en/L28T-BPJ/marin-pundeff-1921-2005>, accessed on March 15.

remarks mentioned above¹³, the goal of this enterprise was not only that. Instead, it pretend to be also a warning: „we must realise that we, in the free world, are not imune to Communist imperialism. A study of this document will remind us that we must maintain constant vigilance against the insidious penetration of communism. No effort is too great to prevent the shocking deplorable conditions such as those in Bulgaria, from spreading to any more of the democratic world”¹⁴.

In the above-mentioned foreword, the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations assessed the situation behind the Iron Curtain: ”It has become increasingly evident that the intolerable conditions existing within the Soviet Union and her satellites will not be borne by the captive peoples without resistance. Despite extreme efforts of Communist leaders to prevent it, manifestations of growing discontent have penetrated the Iron Curtain so that the Free World has learned more and more about the turmoil within the curtain. Since Stalin's death a year ago the signs of revolt and the resultant attempts to subdue it have become even more apparent”¹⁵. There are several examples quoted, starting with the evolutions from Moscow and continuing with the Eastern Germaý revolts, all of them being considered a ”dramatical” demonstrations „to the strain of distress at play within the Communist-dominated lands”¹⁶.

The author explains the choice of Bulgaria as a case study by emphasising the necessity of differentiating between the communist system as it functioned in the Soviet Union and the forms it assumed in the satellite states. Given the limited amount of available information, it is argued that observers had often tended to view the regimes in Moscow and in the capitals of Eastern Europe's Sovietized countries as operating according to a uniform pattern. The author regards this tendency as a fundamental analytical mistake, maintaining that important national and historical differences persisted despite the common ideological framework imposed by the Soviet Union.

In the Wiley's opinion, first reaction of the reader of this analyse would be that ”such inuman, unbearable conditions cannot long exist [...] for a person accustomed to the liberty of the democratic world, it is difficult event o conceive of forced labor, state usurpation of the church, regimentation of youth or a government dictated line which must be adhered to in all artistic and cultural-endeavors”. Debating in the repression-resistence binome, the author warned that the lack of an revolt are due to the repression high capacity: ”but rarely

¹³ The introductory remarks from the Bulgaria volume are longer, being the first issue of the series, and trying to explain the character of this work, because of the first position held by Bulgaria. For other countries, this opening statement is much shorter. Except in the case of the Democratic Republic of Germany (”Soviet Zone of Germany”) and Poland.

¹⁴ *Tensions within the Soviet Captive Countries. Bulgaria*, V.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, IV.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, V.

before in history has a saddle of stringent slavery been so tightly strapped to the back of the people". And warn further: "while it is heartening for us to see the courageous efforts of the dominated peoples resisting their rulers, we must be mindful not to be overly optimistic and expect imminent freedom for the enslaved of the satellite countries"¹⁷.

II. Bulgaria on the way to Sovietisation: political conflict and imposing the new model

The volume on Bulgaria is divided into nine chapters, comprising a total of 28 pages: *Background*; *Communist Party*; *Upper Strata*; *Peasants*; *Workers*; *Religious Groups*; *Forced Labor*; *Youth*; and *Summation*. The studies included in this series do not adhere to a uniform template. Rather, each was structured according to the particular political, social, economic, and cultural conditions that shaped the establishment and consolidation of communist power in the respective country.

The study devoted to Bulgaria opens with a map of the country depicting its territorial configuration after the Second World War. From a methodological perspective, although no explicit statement of method is provided, the research approach can be inferred from an examination of the sources employed. As noted above, these consisted primarily of open sources: newspapers (most of them Bulgarian, but also from United States, Soviet Union and Yugoslavia), official statements and governmental publications from Bulgaria's institutions, as well as recently published scholarly literature or memoirs from the United Kingdom, United States and France and United Nations international reports¹⁸.

Bulgarian newspapers, presumably available through the Library of Congress even at that time, were used extensively. Among the periodicals most frequently cited were „Rabotnichesko Delo“, „Otechestven Front“, „Vecherni Novini“, „Narodna Mladezh“, „Literaturni Front“, „Zemedelsko Zname“, „Sotsialisticheskoto Pravo“, „Izgrev“, „Trud“, „Novo Vreme“, „Transporten Glas“, and „Durzhaven Vestnik“. These sources were complemented by various publications issued by the Bulgarian government, the Communist Party, and the National Assembly in Sofia, while references to the Western press remained comparatively rare.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸ Cordell Hull, *Memoirs*, 2 volumes, (New York: McMillan, 1948); Winston S. Churchill, *Triumph and Tragedy* (Boston: Houghton and Mifflin Co., 1953); Adam Ulam, *Titoism and the Cominform* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952); Hugh Seton-Watson, *The East European Revolution* (New York: Praeger, 1951); François Fejto, *Histoire des démocraties populaires* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1952); Peter Meyer et al., *The Jews in the Soviet Satellites* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1953); Department of State, *Nazi-Soviet Relations* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1948); Louise Holborn (ed.), *War and Peace. Aims of the United Nations* (Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1948).

The themes addressed across the eight studies are similar, though not identical, and their length also varies considerably. Nevertheless, a general analytical framework can be discerned. Common topics include the postwar political situation and relations with the Soviet Union; the relationship between the working class and the state; interactions between the Communist Party and the intelligentsia; forced labour and political repression; the peasantry; and religious groups. In the Bulgarian case, however, a separate chapter is devoted to youth affairs, while particular attention is also paid to Protestantism, especially in connection with its American missionary origins and affiliations.

Chapter I, *The Background*, examines the historical and political context of Bulgaria's relationship with the Soviet Union and the establishment of communist rule in the country¹⁹. "Difficult historical background, political development, economic, social and cultural makeup, and geopolitical position make for a different reality in Bulgaria and even for basic tensions absent in the Soviet Union"²⁰.

The lack of acceptance of the ideology is highlighted. "communism [...] is resented and resisted in Bulgaria not only for what it is – an oppressive form of government – but because it is the vehicle and symbol of the imperialism of a foreign power" [...] This is an overriding tension which distinguished Bulgarian Communist society from Soviet Communist Society"²¹.

The report places Bulgaria's incorporation into the Soviet sphere of influence within the broader context of the abandonment of Allied plans for a landing in the Balkans and the Soviet-British negotiations conducted between May and October 1944. Particular attention is given to the Churchill-Stalin "percentages agreement," according to which Bulgaria was assigned to a sphere of influence characterised by a 75-25 predominance of Soviet control.

Following the Soviet declaration of war on Bulgaria on 5 September 1944, and despite assurances concerning the preservation of the existing social order, the study argues that "the entry of Soviet troops into Bulgaria initiated a brutal transformation, comparable to the model applied in the Baltic states and other territories occupied by the Soviet Union"²². The report describes the ensuing process as "a campaign of terror and physical liquidation" directed against the "upper strata of society." Citing figures allegedly published in the Bulgarian press, the author states that during the first six months of occupation approximately 2,800 individuals were executed and more than 700 sentenced to imprisonment.

¹⁹ For the entire evolution of Bulgaria under Communist regime see Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans. Twentieth Century*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), chapter 9; R.J.Crampton, *Bulgaria* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), chapters 11-13; Plamen Pavlov, Iordan Ianev, Daniel Cain, *Istoria Bulgariet* (București: Corint, 2002), 148-162.

²⁰ *Tensions within the Soviet Captive Countries. Bulgaria*, 1.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

²² *Ibidem*.

Among those affected were three regents, twenty-two ministers, sixty-eight members of parliament, and numerous military officers, journalists, and businessmen²³.

The political struggle in Bulgaria unfolded between the democratic forces, chiefly the Agrarians and the Socialists, and the communists together with their allies. Despite a policy of intimidation and repression, including nine political trials directed against opposition leaders between March and October 1946, the United Opposition succeeded in winning 101 seats in the parliamentary elections of 27 October 1946, securing nearly one quarter of the total vote. The core of this opposition was represented by the Agrarian movement led by Nikola Petkov²⁴, whose supporters accounted for 90 of the 101 op. 2position deputies²⁵.

For the entire period following the entry of Soviet troops into Bulgaria, "the democratic forces were encouraged by the seeming allied cooperation and agreements (Yalta, Potsdam, Moscow) in the belief that democratic government could be established in Bulgaria"²⁶. Which led, in the opinion of the author of this analyse, together with a general rejection of communism as a potential political, economical and social system [...] to a polarization between the Communists and their stooges on one hand, and a united antitotalitarian front, on the another"²⁷, Bulgaria being seen as "a country of strong democratic aspirations, small ownership social equality and deeply rooted spirit of independence"²⁸.

The elimination of the opposition, through the invalidation of parliamentary mandates and, ultimately, the execution of its leader, Nikola Petkov, is highlighted alongside the adoption of a new Soviet-style constitution and the enactment of legislation providing for the nationalisation of private

²³ *Ibidem*.

²⁴ The son of prime-minister Dimitar Petkov (born in Tulcea, in 1885, soldier in the Russian Army in the 1877-1878 Russo-Ottoman war, leader of the Bulgarian Liberal Party and prime-minister between 1906-1907, when he was shot to death). After studying law at Paris, he entered the Bulgarian foreign service and was attached to the Bulgarian Embassy in Paris. Following the coup which overthrew Stamboliiski's government in 1923 he was imprisoned, then went into exile in France. He returned to Bulgaria, where he led the left-wing of the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union. In September 1944, after the fall of the monarchy, he became minister without portfolio in the provisional government. In July 1945 he left the government to lead the pro-Western opposition to the Communist takeover in Bulgaria. After the rigged election which brought the Communists to power in 1946 he attacked Dimitrov as a Soviet puppet. Arrested and tortured, he was executed after a show trial in which he refused to confess

<https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100320467?p=emailAgEv2vGk9cE3E&d=/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100320467>, accessed on March 13.

²⁵ *Tensions within the Soviet Captive Countries. Bulgaria*, p. 3.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 2.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 2-3.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 2.

property. This relatively brief yet exceptionally dense period, spanning from September 1944 to December 1947, is characterized as an “epic” “battle for freedom,” in which broad segments of Bulgarian society took part, “in one form or another, the bulk of country’s political leaders, intelligentsia, peasants, army officers, workers”²⁹. And “the cause of freedom and democracy was championed and defended with extreme, perhaps suicidal, daring and defiance in the opposition newspapers, the National Assembly and the political organisations”. From this observation, it was extracted the perspective: “the recollection of this period ending with the impressive self-sacrifice of Nikola Petkov is still fresh and vivid and is a prime and decisive factor for the frame of mind of recalcitrance and resistance prevalent today in Bulgaria”³⁰.

Opposition to the Soviet Union is traced back even further in time. The study associates contemporary Soviet domination with what it describes as an imperial policy that emerged in the aftermath of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878. According to this interpretation, Russian policy toward Bulgaria evolved into a deliberate effort aimed at “transforming Bulgaria into a trans-Danubian province of its empire.” Consequently, “the present Communist rule in Bulgaria appears to be a variation of imperialist policies first manifested in the 1870’s. Despite social and linguistic kinship and the recognition of the Russian people’s sacrifice in the war of 1877-78, Bulgarians were – and are now – just as jealous of their independence vis-a-vis Russia as they were vis-a-vis any other power. Their experiences following the liberation from Turks have driven home the lesson that Russia was another imperialist power, pursuing its own objectives in Bulgaria to the disadvantage of the Bulgarian people”³¹.

A large part of that publication is reserved to the relations between regime and society, as to correspond with the title of the series and to demonstrate the real existence of these tensions: “the policy of the communists led to a total conflict: in a country of independent peasantry and industrious middle class, collectivisation, return to the medieval serfdom, dispossession and denial of free enterprise have antagonised the vast bulk of the people”³². As in other cases (see the Romanian example), the Bulgarian Communist Party members rocketed from 25.000 (in 1944) to almost half a million, at the end of 1946: „the influx of opportunists are tremendous”. Data are taken from a Bulgarian publication that appeared in Moscow in 1949³³. A special chapter (*the second*) is dedicated to the Communist Party.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

³² *Ibidem*.

³³ *Ibidem*, footnote 16, p. 5. For the common road of both countries and the bilateral rapprochement in the framework of Communist ideology, see Florin Anghel, *The Correct Price of Bulgarian Communism: Romania as an External Propaganda Instrument (1947)*, „Historical Yearbook”, XIV/2017, p. 57-75.

Tensions between the Party and society are identified primarily through the analysis of the Bulgarian press, as noted above. These tensions are inferred from official propaganda campaigns directed against alleged saboteurs, members of the bourgeoisie, landowners, and other purported “enemies of the people,” themes that appeared repeatedly in newspaper articles according to a now familiar pattern characteristic of communist political discourse.

Particular attention is devoted to the trial of Traicho Kostov³⁴, which is examined both in the context of domestic repression and against the backdrop of the Stalin-Tito split. The study cites statements by Vulko Chervenkov³⁵ indicating that, as of 1 April 1950, 92,500 party members had been expelled from a total membership of 460,000, including thirteen members of the Central Committee and six members of the Council of Ministers. These figures are presented as evidence of the scale of internal purges and the growing atmosphere of suspicion within the Bulgarian Communist Party³⁶.

The study devoted to Bulgaria, like the reports concerning the other East European states examined in the series, does not exhibit a fully coherent or systematic structure.

Following the discussion of the alleged purges within the Party, a brief presentation is given of what is termed a policy of “Russification”: “the repatriates who currently govern the country are conducting a monumental campaign of Sovietization and Russification, carried out through a so-called Union of Bulgarian-Soviet Societies”, which organizes thousands of Russian-language courses and an equally large number of exhibitions, performances, film screenings, lectures, and book publications³⁷. Several figures are cited from *Osteuropa* (Stuttgart) concerning the activities of this organization: 220,788 propagandists; 17 million copies of translated Soviet books; 240 imported Soviet periodicals; 94,000 lectures on the USSR (in 1951 alone); and 38 million attendees at Soviet film screenings³⁸. All in order „to create attachment to the Soviet Union and impress Soviet superiority upon Bulgarian people”. Even this situation was seen in the key of tensions and hostilities: „this bombardment is per se an

³⁴ Important Bulgarian Communist leader, President of the Council of Ministers and secretary of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party. He was charged with Titoism, sentenced to death and executed in December 1949.

³⁵ One of the top Bulgarian Communist leaders, with two decades of residence in Moscow before returning to Bulgaria in September 1944. Secretary-general of the Bulgarian Communist Party (from 1949) and President of the Council of Ministers from 1950 until 1956. Deputy-president of the Council of Ministers for another five years, expelled from the party in 1962 but rehabilitated in 1969.

³⁶ *Tensions within the Soviet Captive Countries. Bulgaria*, p. 6.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 7-8.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, footnote 28, p. 8.

indication of the attitude of people. A friendly and enthusiastic population would not need to be so belabored”³⁹.

The discussion then returns to the situation within the Communist Party, with reference to an amendment to the Penal Code adopted on 13 February 1953, which sought to punish collaborators of the wartime government who „acted under the guise of members of the anti-Fascist underground in order to destroy anti-Fascist organisations and members thereof”⁴⁰.

The state-society conflict is looked more profound through the refferings to the „upper strata of the Bulgarian society – politicians, intellectuals, businessmen, civil servants, members of the independent professions, army officers” which „have been the object of physical decimation and economic destruction”⁴¹. It is the object of the *third chapter*.

Using the governmental journals, the author describe a real „intellectual subversion”, of which center seems to be the Department of Philosophy from University of Sofia. Some profeesors names are mentioned: Mihalcev, Kazandjiev, Sarailiev, Geroskov, “all over 60’ [...] leading philosophy professors of prewar Bulgaria” but who, according to the official journals, “they have not shaken off the bourgeois past” and are still offering so-called „subversive, West-oriented ideas to their students”⁴².

Other professors, from various fields, are not missing, as in the case of Kiranov și Dimitrov, charged with anti-Marxist ideas as to the land collectivisation process: „the result is, according to Professors Kiranov and Dimitrov, that our collective farms are beneficial neither to the poor nor to the middle-bracket peasants. No doubt, the class enemy and the enemies of the collective farms will welcome and use with pleasure such <<science>>. This must not be tolerated. Damaging anti-Marxist theories must be eradicated”⁴³. This indeed occurred: Professor Kinanov was removed both from his university position and from his post as Director of the Bulgarian Statistical Office⁴⁴.

In the cultural sphere, a controversy emerged in 1950 when the painter Alexander Zhenov, a veteran communist activist, sent a letter to Vulko Chervenkov in which he pointed to a decline by half in the level of artistic production, "despite the ideological and political assistance and increased material aid [...] artistic mastery is below the level of all exhibitions of the past twenty years [...] there is a general disappointment with the party leadership. This is the reason for the belief that the party has well-high set as its purpose to debase the creative work of the painters by enchaining it in military discipline and subjecting

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 8.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 9.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 9.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*.

it to summary and irrevocable censorship. There is a serious crisis in the relations between painters and the party. The crisis is deepening daily, and the result is defeats for the party. [...] The Central Committee (of the party) is the victim of intrigues, malicious information, and irresponsible conspirational activities"⁴⁵. The debate was published in the „Otechestven Front”, from August 16, 1950, which also printed the Vulko Chervenkov reply⁴⁶.

Moreover, the example of the Academy of Music from Sofia, of which „one-sided orientation toward the Western European classics” opposed „our cultural policy of creating a new art”, adds to the conclusion that the Communists failed in the implementation of the new cultural model⁴⁷.

III. Tensions in the rural world

The situation from the rural Bulgaria represent the subject of the *fourth* chapter. Bulgaria is presented as a predominantly rural country („in which 80 percent of the population derived its livelihood from agriculture and related occupations”), with a development model based on small-scale landownership and on an “equitable redistribution” of land carried out during the Agrarian government of Alexander Stamboliyski⁴⁸.

The political organisation of the rural population is briefly outlined, beginning with its origins in the late nineteenth century, the period of government following the First World War, and the political confrontations of the interwar years, despite which the National Agrarian Union “was a major democratic and progressive factor in the political life of the country”⁴⁹.

After September 1944, the political confrontation between the Agrarians and the Communists intensified, the latter seeking to win over the rural population, which had remained loyal to the Agrarian Party. The study describes the methods of repression and subversion employed, beginning with the establishment of parallel organisations led by “pro-communist Agrarians” and culminating in the outlawing of the Agrarian Union and the execution of Nikola Petkov⁵⁰.

The model applied was, of course, similar to that found in other communist states, including at least the case of Romania, where the suppression of the traditional parties through various means was accompanied by their fragmentation through the encouragement of pro-communist splinter groups and ultimately by the outlawing of the National Peasants’ Party (PNT) and the National Liberal Party (PNL), as well as the imprisonment of their leaders.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 10.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 11-12.

In the Bulgarian case, the remaining pro-communist Agrarian faction was itself subjected, during 1951-1952, to extensive purges on charges of reactionary tendencies, lack of honesty and loyalty to the Party, adherence to the former objectives of the Agrarian Union, and opposition to and undermining of communist agricultural policies⁵¹.

Collectivisation, as a major policy of the regime, was interpreted through the lens of conflict. The analysis begins by noting the launch of the process in 1950: „a drive [...] so precipitate and the disruption of the agriculture so great that widespread peasant disorders broke out in the spring of 1951”, being mentioned the revolts from the Kula și Teteven, „where the rioters, frightened by the growing food and fodder shortage, broke up the collective farms and took away their shares of livestock and foodstuffs. During the ensuing reprisals considerable numbers of them from the border regions fled to Yugoslavia”⁵².

The party reaction was to dismiss the members in charge of collectivisation from the Political Bureau, but also to initiate „a political department in the Ministry of Agriculture with field offices in the machine-tractor stations [...] this department is a task force of the Central Committee of the party with wide powers to deal summarily with trouble, resistance and sabotage. These task forces are dispatched wherever <<rapid measures are needed to restore the leadership of the party and improve the political work>>”⁵³.

Nevertheless, drawing on material from the government-controlled press, the study claims that a veritable “class war” was taking place. Although official figures indicated that the proportion of arable land included in the collectivisation process had increased from 11.5 to 49.9 per cent, it is also noted that 5 per cent of the collective farms had been dissolved as a result of withdrawals. The principal culprits were, of course, the kulaks, who were accused, both in press diatribes and in court proceedings, of sabotage and of spreading anti-communist slogans: „Death to Communism!”; „Peasants, the collective farm is your enemy – dismember it!”; „Down with the collective farm!”⁵⁴.

Although resistance appears to have been sporadic, the report also mentions an incident that resulted in the death sentences of two individuals in Plovdiv in June 1951. They were accused of attempting to reactivate the Agrarian Union, a project on which they had allegedly worked in considerable detail, with the aim of fostering discontent within the collective agricultural cooperatives, sabotaging agricultural production, and increasing resistance to compulsory state deliveries. According to the prosecutors and the press, these objectives were to be pursued through „every method of fighting, including the formation of armed

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p. 12.

⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 13.

⁵³ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 14.

bands in the mountains”⁵⁵. Government-controlled newspapers and Party leaders spoke of the “formation of guerrilla groups,” while in another trial involving defendants alleged to be supporters of the Agrarian Union, charges included the collection of funds to assist “fascist families,” the purchase of weapons, and “attempts to establish clandestine routes into Turkey in order to make contact with émigré organizations”⁵⁶. Reference is also made to a radio station, *Gorianin* (“The Mountaineer”), which was said to broadcast “in the name of the Bulgarians who are fighting”⁵⁷. Predictably, official rhetoric also included the familiar theme of foreign interference: „all trials [...] demonstrate that the wrecking acts, sabotages, blow-ups and arsons are ordered, financed and guided from abroad”. Vigilance is also called to be increased for maintaining the crops into storage facilities, because of the “case occurring in certain locations of delivering of contaminated grain” [...] The enemy’s hand reaching toward our storehouses must be backed off”⁵⁸.

The government-controlled press cited in the study also provided explanations rooted in technical shortcomings, which were nevertheless attributed to allegedly malicious intentions. The author notes, however, that all such explanations must be understood within the context of a broader demonstrative and propagandistic purpose⁵⁹.

In this socio-economical context, „shortage of all staples – bread, meat, dairy products, vegetables, fruit – are a steady feature of life under communism in Bulgaria, provoking further discontent and tension”⁶⁰. The study cites interpretations of a liberalization of trade beginning on 1 September 1953. Previously, such opportunities had existed only after the fulfilment and reduction of state-imposed quotas. More generally, shortages of basic commodities were attributed (by the people) to the massive export of goods to “other areas of the Soviet Empire”⁶¹. In this battle of arguments, the government-controlled press even resorted to didactic examples, one of which is reproduced in the present analysis: <<in the geography books for the fourth grade, Balchik (a Bulgarian town) according to the authors, ”has a small port through which South Dobrudja grain is exported”. By this imprecise wording, the authors of the textbooks are feeding the hostile propaganda that grain is being exported from Bulgaria>>⁶².

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 15.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*.

⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 15.

IV. The society under siege: working class, religious groups and youth

A chapter (*the fifth one*) devoted to the working class could hardly be absent from the report: “the workers in industry and offices in Bulgaria have one of the harshest deals possible”⁶³. Reference is made to the Labour Stabilisation Act, published in 17 February 1953, which, as noted in a footnote, had been repealed by the time the study was being prepared. Nevertheless, the author observe that “however, all the other labor-restrictive legislation has remained in force”⁶⁴.

The report highlights the inability of workers to change jobs freely, compulsory transfers, supervision through work record cards, and the penalties associated with violations of labour regulations, including imprisonment or assignment to labour camps. These measures are presented alongside the justifications advanced by the state, namely the elimination of labour disputes, the enforcement of workplace discipline, and the eradication of absenteeism⁶⁵.

Industrialization, identified as a principal objective of the communist regime in Sofia, is presented as being in direct contradiction to the shortage of skilled labor: “unskilled workers, brought in from the countryside, are wayward and unreliable”⁶⁶.

The study also refers to a publication entitled *Agitation Handbook*, issued serially in Sofia, which reported in its June 1953 issue (No. 16) the case of a mine where 3,852 absences had been recorded in May 1952, rising to 9,462 in August of the same year⁶⁷.

In this environment, the very concept of trade unionism underwent a profound transformation. Strikes were prohibited, and trade unions were subordinated to government policy and to the Ministry of Labour: “their principal purpose as watchdogs over labor is to strengthen labor discipline and to help workers to carry out the Government’s economic plans”⁶⁸.

The *sixth chapter* from the *Tensions Within...* is dedicated to the „religious groups”. It is a special chapter (no longer present, in the other parts of the series, as a distinct chapter), trying to capture the complexity of the relations between the political power and the religious behavior. The analysis proceeds from the assumption of duplicity or, more precisely, of “tactical flexibility.” Religion was attacked in accordance with ideological requirements, yet religious institutions,

⁶³ *Ibidem*, p. 16.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 16-17.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 17.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 16.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 17.

„eviscerated of their spiritual substance, were on the other hand permitted to exist and function”⁶⁹.

The most illustrative example, in the author’s view, is that of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, which “enjoyed the traditional position of a national church”. It was permitted to elect an Exarch in January 1945, only to see him removed from office three years later. Five years thereafter, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church was elevated to the rank of a Patriarchate. According to the study, all of these developments were intended to strengthen the Church’s position among the Orthodox Churches that had come under the influence of the Russian Patriarchate⁷⁰.

Meanwhile, the religious hierarchy was “subverted and intimidated through the medium of the so-called Union of Orthodox Priests – another ‘transmission belt’ led by Red priests who have sided with the Communist Government”⁷¹. Reference is also made to the 1949 Law on Religious Denominations, which prohibited charitable activities and introduced penalties, including dismissal from office, for various violations of the law, public order, or morality⁷².

The study further emphasises the government’s strict control over religious life, citing the new statutes of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church issued in 1951 and asserting that the authorities did not permit the public observance of religious holidays⁷³.

The situation was portrayed as even more difficult in the case of the Catholic and Protestant communities, which were earmarked for outright destruction because of their ties with parent churches abroad”⁷⁴. Catholic (French) and Protestant (American) schools had already been closed in 1948. On 25 February 1949, a trial was initiated against fifteen Protestant pastors accused of espionage on behalf of the United States and Great Britain. The report also provides details regarding the presence of Protestantism in Bulgaria dating back to the mid-nineteenth century⁷⁵, mentioning the fact that “the first version of the Bible in modern, colloquial Bulgarian was made by Rev. Dr. Elias Riggs, missionary and noted linguist, in 1864, generally known as the American Bible. American-sponsored Protestantism also played an essential role in the liberation of the country in 1878 and subsequently in the presentation to foreign public

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 18.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 18.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*.

⁷² *Ibidem*, p. 19.

⁷³ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁵ “Protestantism was brought to Bulgarian lands in 1856 largely through the efforts of American missionaries then stationed in Turkey. Finding the Bulgarians <<burning for knowledge and education>>, the missionaries established numerous churches and schools which produced a large segment of the intelligentsia of the country.” (*Ibidem*).

opinion of the Bulgarian side of Balkan issues. These moral bonds were the actual target of the Communist campaign in 1949”⁷⁶.

The 1949 law mentioned above imposed numerous restrictions on religious contacts with foreign organisations, all of which required government approval. Foreign churches were no longer permitted to establish missions or charitable institutions, while those already in existence were closed and their properties confiscated. Religious work among youth was prohibited, as were charitable activities carried out by churches⁷⁷.

The Roman Catholic community, comprising both Roman Catholics and Greek Catholics (Uniates), was “likewise violently repressed”⁷⁸. The first step consisted in the severing of relations with the Vatican and the closure of the Apostolic Mission in Bulgaria. Repression followed. In September 1952, forty Catholic clergy and laypersons were put on trial on charges of espionage, as well as for sheltering individuals sentenced to death and sought by the authorities, providing money, food, and other forms of assistance to enemies of the state, and attempting to persuade young people to resist communist influence. Barely two weeks later, the trial concluded with the death sentences of the Bishop of Nikopol, Evgeni Bosilkov, and three other priests, while the remaining defendants received various prison terms. Government-controlled newspapers emphasised the alleged links between the accused and an international network directed from abroad⁷⁹.

The deportation of Muslims is examined in a separate subsection, where they are defined as: “descendants of Turkish settlers who live in rather isolated ethnic enclaves”⁸⁰. Also, this community was seen from the same perspective, of “cultivation and repression [...] while expanding the educational facilities to win the support of some of the Moslems, the Government deports to Turkey others who prove indifferent or antagonistic”⁸¹. In support of this assertion, the study cites an announcement by the government in Sofia expressing its intention to deport 250,000 Muslims to Turkey within a period of three months. Although no source is provided, it is noted that the deadline was ultimately abandoned, while the deportation of a substantial number of people nevertheless took place. This led the author of the study to conclude that “the wholesale expulsion of Moslems clearly demonstrates that among them, as among other groups, the Communists have met resistance and have written them off as a source of insoluble difficulties and tension”⁸².

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 20.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, p. 21.

⁸² *Ibidem*.

A short mention is about the Jewish community from Bulgaria, which was allowed to emigrate, “perhaps in recognition of the fact that the Jewish population of the country favoured the democratic West and has been engaged in free enterprise - business and independent professions – and, therefore, would not accept the tenets and practice of communism”⁸³.

The *seventh* chapter is devoted to forced labour, which is presented as having been formally established in Bulgaria through its incorporation into criminal legislation and into the repressive powers granted to the police. The study cites the report of the United Nations Ad Hoc Committee on Forced Labour, which investigated allegations of forced labour in twenty-three countries. In the case of Bulgaria, it was found that the criminal legislation: “constitutes the basis of a system of forced labor aiming at the political correction and reeducation of those opposed to the political ideology of the Government [...]“the law is expressly aimed at the opponents of the established political order [...] the application of this law results in a system of forced or corrective labor employed as a means of political coercion”⁸⁴. Articles from the Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure, and the 1948 Police Act are cited, detailing how, by whom, under what conditions, and for what duration detention involving forced labour could be imposed, as well as the various forms of forced labor, such as corrective labour and compulsory residence. Particular attention is paid to the categories of offenses under which such measures could be applied. All of these provisions “place in the hands of the police unlimited powers over innocent people”⁸⁵. It is quoted the opinion of the same UN Committee, according to which “these measures, taken by such bodies and for the reasons generally stated in these laws, constitute a system of forced or corrective labor applied as a means of political coercion. This conclusion is also confirmed by oral and documentary evidence presented to the Committee to show that the administrative authorities have in fact sent large numbers of political dissidents to forced labor camps in application of the above-mentioned legislation”⁸⁶. UN Committee estimated that “at least 50 camps with a population of 80,000 to 110,000. The camps are usually proximate to economic projects for which they furnish slave labor. The best-known camps are those located along the Danube and in the coal-mining region of Pernik. It is believed that the doubling of the country’s coal production from 2,200,000 tons in 1939 to 4,400,000 in 1950 has been in large measure due to exploitation of slave labor”⁸⁷.

⁸³ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*. See, also, *Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Forced Labour*, Supplement No.13 in the Official Record of the Sixteenth Session of the Economic and Social Council and No.36 in the Studies and Reports (New series) of the International Labour Office, p. 28-32.

⁸⁵ *Tensions within the Soviet Captive Countries. Bulgaria*, p. 21.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 22.

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*.

These camps seems to be destined for “the former upper urban strata, the recalcitrant peasants, and the purged party members”. It is estimated that the internment over no more than a year “indicates that the measure is designed to break up the opposition against the regime”⁸⁸. Political leaders also appear to have benefited from repeated extensions of their detention terms, while Nikola Mushanov⁸⁹, leader of the Democratic Party and former Prime Minister, is reported to have died in a labour camp, according to information published by the *New York Times* on 8 August 1951⁹⁰.

The penultimate chapter, *the eight one*, also possesses the distinctive character previously noted in relation to the chapter on religious groups. It is called *The Youth*. As in the discussion of trade unions, the concept of the “transmission belt” appears in this analysis as well, referring to two organizations: the *Dimitrov Union of People's Youth* and the *Septemvriiche*. Together, these organizations encompassed young people between the ages of seven and twenty-five and, according to official figures, numbered approximately 900,000 members. To these was added the *Volunteers' Organization to Assist the Defense*, whose purpose was to provide pre-military training, including instruction in the use of firearms, parachuting, air-defense and chemical-defense measures, flying, and related activities⁹¹. Employing the language of Party propaganda, the study concluded that “the youth preferred western ideas, culture and art, desired cultural

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁹ Born in Drenovo (Central Bulgaria) on April 12, 1872, he completed his primary and secondary education in his native town and in Veliko-Târnovo, after which he studied and graduated in law in Aix-en-Provence, France (1889-1893). Between 1893 and 1896 he was public prosecutor in Stara Zagora and Varna, and in 1897-1908 he worked as a lawyer in Ruse. Mushanov joined the Democratic Party in 1897 and was elected to the party's Governing Board in 1903. He served in a long public career, as member of Parliament and holder of various ministerial posts, including those of prime-minister in interwar period. Mushanov refused to join the Communist-dominated Fatherland Front. After the September 9, 1944 Communist takeover, he was tried by the "People's Court" and was sentenced to imprisonment and deprivation of civil rights. He was pardoned and released in September 1945 on the eve of the parliamentary elections. Mushanov revived the Democratic Party and tried to turn it into a strong centre of opposition. In 1947 he was sent into internal exile to Tarnovo, and in July 1949 he was arrested and confined to the Nozharevo forced labour camp (near Silistra, Northeastern Bulgaria) despite being 78 years old. In April 1951, he was rearrested and investigated for links with outlawed opposition parties and figures. Nikola Mushanov died at the Sofia Investigative Detention Centre of State Security on May 10, 1951. His cause of death was given as "rupture of the heart". According to other records, his death occurred on May 21, 1951. The actual circumstances remain uncertain to this very day. The "People's Court" sentence was reversed by the Supreme Court in August 1996. (Liubomir Gigov, *75 Years since Passing of Former Bulgarian Prime Minister Nikola Mushanov*, <https://www.bta.bg/en/news/archives/1122927-75-years-since-passing-of-former-bulgarian-prime-minister-nikola-mushanov>, accessed on May 19, 2026.

⁹⁰ *Tensions within the Soviet Captive Countries. Bulgaria*, p. 22.

⁹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 22-23.

communion with the West, adhered to filial loyalty and refused to denounce and betray their parents”⁹².

The official journal of the youth organisation, *Narodna Mladezh*, lamented, at February, 21, 1952, the persistence of the „bourgeois mentality” in the schools, the participation of „a group of girls” to the church mass and, finally, the lack of succes of the antireligious propaganda plan of measures⁹³. Same trends are to be found also at the lower age, the party admitting, in the same journal, that “the ideological educative work among the Pioneer battalions and companies is failing to overcome the survivals of the bourgeois influences among the Pioneers and to eliminate disrespect to teachers, religious delusions, and openly hostile attitudes among the Pioneers”⁹⁴.

This issue is also linked to the state of morale within the armed forces, which the author assess on the basis of information concerning the number of successful and unsuccessful attempts to desert by crossing Bulgaria’s borders into its three Balkan neighbors. “Although gaining little publicity in the West” (și este citat un exemplu spectaculos “of landing of a Bulgarian fighter plane on a Yugoslav airfield”, quoted from “New York Times”, October 15, 1953)⁹⁵. The phenomenon is considered significant, representing “a political menace,” and it is noted, with reference to a major Bulgarian daily newspaper, that “special measures introduced in addition to the efforts to keep the borders airtight by the use of selected troop formations. Among these measures was the obligation imposed on citizens, under threat of imprisonment, to inform the authorities of any suspicion regarding escape plans by members of their own families. Another measure involved treating relatives and immediate family members “as hostages,” making them liable to repression, including deportation to remote regions or internment in a labour camp: “the fact that these measures exceed the severity of similar enactments in the Soviet Union (where only relatives of military deserters are exposed to such treatment) is an indication of the significance that Communists attach to escapes from Bulgaria”⁹⁶.

The chapter concludes by referring to another regulation that prohibited individuals originating from families considered hostile to the regime from changing their names: “this measure has the obvious purpose of keeping the children of such families easily identifiable and permanently stigmatized”⁹⁷.

The *ninth* and final chapter is devoted to the study’s conclusions. First, it emphasises the rise of the Communist Party, described as “a minute party of 8,000 members in 1944,” portraying its ascent exclusively as a consequence of the

⁹² *Ibidem*, p. 23.

⁹³ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 24.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*.

Soviet occupation⁹⁸. Second, it argues that, following a now familiar pattern, the Party underwent a complex metamorphosis in which opportunists (“a good many of fascist tinge”), repatriates returning from Moscow, and veteran activists who had remained loyal to the Party within Bulgaria all played a role. In this equation, the presence of the first category, of opprtunists, “have put the basic split between the repatriates from Moscow and the local Communists in an atmosphere of uncertainty, duplicity and sycophancy”⁹⁹.

In the effort to subordinate and transform Bulgarian society, the reduction and eventual elimination of resistance was achieved through “soviet-patterned laws, often exceeding their prototypes in severity, frequent <<subversion>> trials and sealed borders.” (in the latter case, the study cites a decree published on 6 November 1953 prohibiting marriages to foreigners and adoptions by foreigners, except with the approval of the Presidium of the National Assembly)¹⁰⁰.

In an optimistic perspective, it was appreciated, though, that “opposition — active and passive — against the Communist regime in Bulgaria has not ceased. The resentment and antagonism of each group have interlocked in a general domestic opposition front.” For the author of this analyses, “Bulgaria lives in a tense atmosphere of siege. Faced by the anti-Soviet Balkan conditions, it resembles a fortress in which the Communists keep the country on a permanent war footing in a climate of fear, secrecy, suspicion and vigilance, while the restive and discontented population is trying to break out and free itself from the garrison state”¹⁰¹.

The conclusion serves primarily to justify the objectives of the analytical undertaking itself: “in their captivity the Bulgarian people, judging from the wealth of evidence, display a tough spirit of resistance, sustained and strengthened by the memories of the epic battle for freedom and democracy in the period 1944–1947 and by the hopes pinned on their compatriots in exile and the free world”¹⁰².

V. Conclusions

The assessment of Bulgaria’s situation in the first decade of the Communist regime was important, being, probably, the first one in which sources from inside (governmental publications and journals, mainly) are used. This explains why the Library of Congress, as the depositary of these publications, still received them. This was not a condition, by itself, for the success of the endeavour. An important condition was the involvement of persons with certain

⁹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 24.

⁹⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 24-25.

¹⁰¹ *Ibidem*, p. 25.

¹⁰² *Ibidem*.

intellectual background but with Bulgarian origin, living and working in the United States, in order to surpass the language barrier and to clarify certain historical or contemporary issues. This work formula was used, also, for the rest of the series *Tensions within...*

We cannot estimate the impact of this analysis on the political community and public opinion from the United States, in that tumultuous period which followed Stalin's death. Of course, much of the ideological rhetoric can be traced to that discursive framework. The frequent use of "tension" and the search, in the fragmented resources at their disposal, for "tensions" are part of this ideological environment. Not as a predictable collapse of Communism, but mainly as a warning about the consequences of Communism. Leaving aside the rhetoric, this analysis reflected, with a certain degree of certitude, the image of Communist Bulgaria in the first decade of the Communist regime.