

however, were mostly unskilled, unorganized, only periodically employed semi-peasant workers, and it was they who comprised one third of all Roumanian industrial workers. Statistics listed 45 per cent of the workers as skilled, and 55 per cent as unskilled. Nevertheless, since some semiskilled workers were also classified as skilled, the proportion was presumably less favourable.

Industrial development during the interwar period took place primarily in the textile and machine industries which thus accounted for the 59 per cent rise in the numbers of the working class: 26 per cent in the textile, 18 in the iron and machine, and 15 per cent in the lumbering industries. A natural concomitant of this was that a growing number of women were to be found among the more than 300,000 factory workers who formed the core of the nearly 500,000 strong industrial working class.

The small Balkan working class had but started on the road to genuine class organization. Many industrial workers were still tied to their villages, returning there after spells of seasonal factory work. Even those who came to work exclusively in industry had but recently left agriculture. It was a first-generation working class, one which preserved many of its rural peasant habits. Most workers were loosely organized, or not at all, and thus remarkably exploited. Because of the plentiful supply of labour, this most rapidly developing social class of the slowly evolving Balkans lived — in the mid-20th century — without the benefit of social legislation, and amid conditions in many respects reminiscent of those of over a century earlier. Nevertheless, even this new and small class was sufficiently concentrated, and — at least in respect of its leading core — sufficiently organized to have a conclusive influence on the history of these countries when the Communist parties made their appearance on the eve of the Second World War.

## THE CHIEF POLITICAL CURRENTS OF THE INTERWAR YEARS

Grave and bitter events took place on the political stage of East Central Europe during the decades between the two World Wars, when extreme rightist and dictatorial forces overwhelmed the countries of the area. The postwar social systems, heavy with the legacy of the past, proved fertile ground for their success, but even more decisive was the influence of factors directly related to the postwar settlement: the new set of minority problems, which fanned nationalist passions to a fever pitch; the consequent irredentism; and the acute economic difficulties already discussed. Also significant for their victory were Mussolini's Fascist régime, and particularly Nazi Germany's policy of expansion which provided these rightist forces with not only indirect, but also very energetic direct support.

In most countries of the area, attempts were made to create mass parties on the Italian and German Fascist models, and these were most successful in Poland, Hungary and Roumania. In these countries, there was a relatively more significant Jewish population, and it was easy enough to appeal to the pogrom-hunger and plundering instincts of the lumpenproletariat with a racist anti-Semitic ideology. Anti-Semitism could be just as attractive to the petite bourgeoisie, the intellectuals, and the weak national bourgeoisie who hoped to profit, each in their own way, from the promised "changing of the guard". In Poland, a faction of the National Democratic Party broke away in 1934 to form the independent Fascist National Radical Camp which was soon reinforced by other groups. It was especially among the urban middle strata that the party found loud and aggressive support for its extremist anti-Semitic program.

In Hungary, it was Ferenc Szálasi's Arrow-Cross Party, the fusion of a variety of extreme-rightist groups, whose demagogy won broad support among the lumpen-proletarian and petit bourgeois strata for its confused and mystical social ideology. They outdid even the various Hungarian governments in their irredentism and their loyalty to Hitler, made plans for the creation of a great Hungarian Empire, and within the framework of the "Turulist movement", organized "Jew-bashings" at the universities. Their blood-thirsty agitation against "Jewish capitalism" and "plutocratic Jewish Bolshevism" both at home and abroad, their black party uniform, their green shirt, their leader cult, and their Nazi form of greeting were all taken from the trappings of Hitler's movement. At its zenith, the movement won close to one million votes at the 1939 elections, and was able to organize a nation-wide miners' strike in 1940.



The Roumanian Iron Guard, with similar trappings and program, also organized Jewish pogroms and similar waves of terror. The Iron Guard won support even among the peasants, for it exploited the land problem as well, using the slogan "one man, one acre" to create its mass party. Like means and similar goals characterized the Slovak and Croatian Fascist movements.

East Central European societies, however, were too polarized and their composition was too explosive for the ruling classes to go too far in their flirtation with social demagogy, or to tolerate any kind of mass movement. The Nazi mass parties, thus — to the extent that they materialized — were much more merely the right-wing opposition of the various régimes, and had not much chance of taking over power. Yet, there came historical moments which gave scope even for this: the Iron Guard briefly came into power; the Hungarian Arrow-Cross Party took over the government on October 15, 1944; and Ante Pavelić had transient power in an "independent" Croatia. Nevertheless, it was not the Fascist mass parties which determined the complexion of East Central Europe's interwar régimes. For all that, these countries were not free of profoundly Fascist elements, and — except for Czechoslovakia — there came about in all of them either an Italian or German style, or their own unique type of authoritarian dictatorship. In most of the countries of the area, government throughout all or part of the interwar period was by extremely nationalistic, anti-Semitic, corrupt régimes, which for the most part did away with parliamentary democracy and preserved only its forms. They institutionalized anti-Communist oppression, and forced the leftist opposition partially or totally underground. For all their superficial differences — some countries had a royal dictatorship, while others were more explicitly ruled by the military-bureaucratic élite; in some they wore Nazi style uniforms, while in others it was the role of the "historical" ruling class which was emphasized — these régimes were all fundamentally alike: all — with the exception of Czechoslovakia — were peculiar East European versions of a dictatorial semi-Fascist system.

Czechoslovakia was the only country where democracy was on stable footing during this period. A developed economy and a strongly bourgeois social structure inherited from the disintegrated Monarchy proved secure foundation for a consistently institutionalized parliamentary democracy. Professor Masaryk, former head of the Czechoslovak Legion, was chosen President; Beneš returned from Paris to be Minister of Foreign Affairs; and Kramár, the national hero condemned to death in 1915 by the Austrian Government, became Prime Minister of the new Republic. With each election, new coalition governments were formed by the Agrarian Party, the Social Democratic Party, the National Socialist Party (Beneš'), and other smaller groups, but the class-composition of the various governments was largely similar, as was their political orientation on the points of fundamental importance. The shortcoming of this bourgeois republic was not only that it was based strictly on class rule, but also that it failed to grant the Slovaks the autonomy promised them at the time of the founding of the Republic, and that its unqualified centralism led, at times, to explicitly repressive measures. National antagonisms were not the only

sources of serious danger to this democratic system: Henlein's Sudeten-German Party, founded with Hitler's support in 1934, was also a major threat; but neither led to the fall of the Republic. Hitler's attack alone could do that; and after, a Fascist-style régime was organized in the "independent" Slovak area of the country.

Although in a very different way, Austria, too, was exceptional among the countries of the area. Its socio-economic development had been similar to that of Czechoslovakia, but it fell upon extraordinarily hard days after the dissolution of the Monarchy, and was long considered non-viable, and unable to cope with its radically new situation. The socio-economic and political crises which it suffered brought about a political situation radically different from that in Czechoslovakia. True enough, here, too, the new republic was a parliamentary democracy in which the Social Democratic Party's extraordinarily significant role was supported by that of the Christian Socialist Party and other smaller bourgeois parties. During the 1920s, the provincial votes put the reins of government into the hands of these latter parties. Already in these years, the Social Democrats had great influence, especially in Vienna, winning 1.5 million votes in the 1927 elections — only 200,000 less than the number won by the victorious bourgeois party coalition. However, Seipel and his government turned their supporters on the working-class movements. For instance, in January of 1927, the terror-units of the *Heimwehr* attacked workers during an anti-government demonstration in Schattendorf, an atrocity which claimed a number of dead. The Viennese workers responded to the acquittal of the terrorists with a general strike; in the course of it, 85 persons fell victim to police brutality.

As the class conflict intensified, so did the activism of the extreme right, which considered the introduction of the Fascist system the panacea for mass social discontent. It was particularly with the deepening of the economic crisis that the *Heimwehr*, which had ties to the Italian Fascists, and the Austrian Nazis, who supported Hitler, became increasingly active. Terror became nation-wide, and there was a state akin to a state of civil war. In February of 1934, there were regular battles between the Fascist storm-units and the workers' armed defense units, the *Schutzbund*, in Linz and later in Vienna.

In Graz and Salzburg, there was fighting on the barricades. The government troops interfered on the side of the *Heimwehr*, and beat down the workers' resistance.

It was these battles which became the excuse for the introduction of overt dictatorship by the Dollfuss government. The new constitution introduced in May embodied the Fascist corporative principle. All government employees were compelled to join the rightist state organizations.

It was at that point that the Austrian Nazis, who in February had been "neutral" showed their true colours. They organized SA and SS units, and openly prepared for a putsch which Hitler promised to support with the "Austrian Battalions" collected in Germany. The Nazi coup which erupted on July 25 was also — perhaps primarily — an explicit *Anschluss* attempt.



Nevertheless, although Chancellor Dollfuss was killed and a number of public buildings were occupied, Mussolini's intervention, his drawing up his troops at the Brenner Pass, discouraged Hitler from interfering, and the putsch was defeated. The Fascist elements, however, became an institutionalized part of the new government formed by Chancellor Schuschnigg, for Prince Stahrenberg, the leader of the *Heimwehr*, became the Vice-Chancellor. Even when the power struggle of the two rival politicians ended in Schuschnigg's victory the spring of 1936, and the *Heimwehr* was dissolved, it was, in fact, merely incorporated into the regular army through the introduction of compulsory military service.

During these years, therefore, Austria was caught in the vice of both the threat from domestic Fascist forces, and Hitler's overt attempts to bring about the *Anschluss*. Its strong working-class movement, and its developed parliamentary democracy were ever more rapidly and ever more inevitably sliding towards Fascism. However, it was not so much domestic class relations which were decisive in this, as the immediate proximity of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, and the role played by the Hitlerite fifth-column. After Austria was annexed to the Reich in March of 1938, a Nazi régime was set up with considerable local support.

Having mentioned these more unique historical developments, let us now consider at greater length the two kinds of dictatorships more typical of East Central Europe: ones which — for all local variations — could be called the Polish-Hungarian, and the Roumanian-Yugoslavian-Bulgarian varieties.

In all five of these countries, class rule was maintained through dictatorship. But while in Poland and Hungary the immediate influence of the military, the gentry and the old nobility were characteristic, in the latter three nations the common and distinguishing features were the rule of bureaucratic cliques, and later, the introduction of royal dictatorships.

The major feature had in common by all the dominant political parties of the new Poland was an energetic nationalism. The conservative-Catholic anti-Semitic political line of the mainly middle-class National Democratic Party (*Endek*) hardly differed in substance from that of Pilsudski's party, a break-away faction of the socialists, although the two camps — partly because of the strong rivalry between Dmowski and Pilsudski, the two leaders, and partly because of earlier ideological and political clashes — regarded each other with extraordinary hostility. It was the *Endek* which was the strongest party in the 1919 Sejm; the 1921 constitution was thus mostly in the French tradition, and provided for strong legislative and restricted presidential powers. However, Pilsudski, who had initially retired to his country home, conducted his own "marcia su Warszawa" in May of 1926, and — although parliamentarism was still formally tolerated — he, and the former "legion" of the army, did in fact do away with it. At first, the conservative *Endek* and the peasants' party opposed Pilsudski, while almost the entire left supported him. However, Pilsudski, who kept the Ministry of Defence for himself (and was periodically Prime Minister) came increasingly to represent the interests of the traditional ruling classes and the military élite during his nine years in office. The Communists were forced

underground. The "Extraparty Block", in fact the Pilsudski party, which managed to appeal to the most varied interests, won a relative majority at the 1928 elections. Soon, however, elections and parliamentarism became an empty formality, as the 1930 election campaigns clearly showed.

Ruthless police terrorization of the opposition, the persecution and imprisonment of its leaders — former Prime Minister Witos, and the leader of the opposition to Pilsudski fled to Czechoslovakia — all were unmistakable signs of the absolute dictatorship whose reality the constitution of 1935 so well expressed. With due respect for form and for the rules of the parliamentary game, Pilsudski had the Sejm adopt a constitutional reform which strengthened the executive power, substantially extended the president's powers, and implemented a strong centralization through giving to the Minister of the Interior the right to appoint the voivodes.

Pilsudski's death in May of 1935 wrought no change at all in the régime. The marshall's military entourage, the "colonels", wielded unlimited power. Slawek, Beck, and Koc — particularly the last — were the leaders of the army's totalitarian faction. The frequently acute political squabbles among the various power-groups during the next four years were not inspired by their championing of diverging political alternatives, but were merely internecine struggles for power. The election games, for instance in 1935, took place with 46 per cent of the enfranchised participating. In the meanwhile, the socio-economic crisis was increasingly radicalizing the worker and peasant masses. The industrial districts of Kraków, Łódz and Upper-Silesia were crippled by strikes organized by the million strong unions; in August of 1937, there was even a peasants' strike supported by solidarity strikes in the large industrial towns. Powerful social ferment was manifest in the political regroupings, in the organization of a national front, in the questioning of the self-serving historical role of the *szlachta* and the colonels. Local elections in December of 1938 in 52 towns resulted in sweeping Socialist victories, and in 639 opposition mandates as opposed to the 383 for the government.

The mass movements and efforts at democracy provoked a rightist reaction: the police were sent out against the strikers, and there were many dead; anti-Semitic demagoguery reached a fever pitch; and Colonel Koc organized a new, totalitarian government party, *Ozon*, the Camp of National Unity. Along with this swing to the right, there were certain pretences of "liberalization". By the eve of the Nazi invasion, authoritarianism had hounded Poland into a crisis of disorganization, and practically to the brink of civil war.

In Hungary, Admiral Horthy and his military clique came to power through his counterrevolutionary activities against the Republic of Councils: after foreign intervention had defeated the revolution, it was he, and his units, who did the work of reprisal. In March of 1920, the parliament was surrounded by troops, and elected Miklós Horthy regent. Such he remained until the end of the Second World War, the chief trustee and embodiment of the counterrevolutionary régime he had created. Among other things, it was his person which gave a fundamental continuity to Hungarian interwar politics which were, in fact, characterized also by significant



internal change. Between 1919 and 1921, the country was the scene of unconcealed and brutal white terror: the Communists and Socialists were persecuted without the slightest pretext of legality, and there were Jewish pogroms. The regime indulged in utter lawlessness. Its most active representatives were from among the gentry-military groups; but they enjoyed the support of the aristocracy and the great financiers, although these latter two classes treated those who did the "dirty work" with not little aloofness and contempt. The new régime excluded the workers and the peasant masses from the body politic, and was extraordinarily isolationist. In April of 1921, Admiral Horthy expressed his faith in the régime's consolidation by naming Count István Bethlen prime minister. With this move, he also placed the aristocratic old guard of the former Monarchy into the immediate foreground of power. The rule of law was restored, the formerly omnipotent military units were dissolved and integrated into the military-police apparatus. Here, too, parliamentary forms were preserved. But the post-revolutionary parties were practically integrated to form a unified government party; and a remarkably limited franchise, and — except in some cities — a system of open voting was introduced.

The Communist Party was outlawed. With the moderate leadership of the Social Democratic Party, however, Bethlen made a secret pact, offering them — in return for agreeing not to organize rural workers, peasants and state employees, and for supporting the system on international forums — the right to function legally, and even to have limited parliamentary representation through the retention of the secret ballot in some larger cities. All this, however, did not alter the fundamental character of the régime: oppression was still institutionalized, as was social discrimination (a *numerus clausus* was used to limit the number of Jewish youths at the universities); and democratic rights were extremely limited, or, only formally guaranteed.

A decade of Bethlen's policy of consolidation nevertheless brought a relative liberalization to this régime which had begun in white terror. But the mass discontent of the years of world economic crisis, the hunger-march to Budapest of the Salgótarján miners, and the immense demonstration of the Budapest workers in September of 1930 again impelled the right-wing of the Horthy régime to adopt a more authoritarian line. After Hitler came to power, this trend grew extremely strong, for Hitler had been secretly in contact with Horthy and his circle since the '20s. Count Bethlen resigned his post as prime minister the summer of 1931, and, after a short period of transition, Gyula Gömbös — strong-man and energetic exponent of the military-gentry group, and one of Horthy's closest comrades-in-arms — was entrusted with the task of forming a government. From this time on, the advocates of totalitarian Fascism became increasingly vocal in government. Hitler was the first head of state that Gömbös visited, and, in 1935, in the course of his talks with Göring, committed himself to the introduction of a Nazi-style system to Hungary, and to the abolition of parliamentarism and the trade unions.

Elections after this became even more but empty shows. The opposition had not the slightest chance, and the government party won sweeping victories every time.

Yet for all the institutionalized guarantees of their outcome, elections were always times of terror and intimidation. The summary jurisdiction introduced for a short period at the beginning of the '30s gave greater "legal" scope for lawless action, and made possible the execution of the captured leaders of the illegal Communist Party.

Nevertheless, the efforts to introduce totalitarianism were unsuccessful, for the Hungarian ruling classes, once their fear of social unrest had abated with the end of the Depression, strove to maintain the traditional conservative forms of power, and mistrusted the Nazi's demagoguery and their mobilization of the masses. The years after Gömbös' death in 1936 were, thus, years of political manoeuvring, years of concessions made to German pressure and totalitarian Fascism and then withdrawn, but years during which, on the whole, the alternating governments of Prime Ministers Darányi, Imrédy, and then Count Teleki incorporated more and more extreme rightist demands into their programs, and proceeded ever further down the road to alliance with Hitler. The Arrow-Cross Party, formed through the union in 1937 of a variety of extreme rightist groups, became a political factor to be reckoned with. The antithetical moves of the Anglo-oriented group of the ruling élite could but temporarily slow down the shift to the right. The culmination of this policy was Hungary's joining the anti-Comintern Pact, and its becoming in 1938 the first — after Germany — to legislate to protect "racial purity" through the first of a series of "Jewish Laws".

The more liberal spirit of the years of consolidation grew faint during the thirties: features peculiar to Fascism came more and more to dominate the political scene. Recurring attempts to establish an explicitly Fascist system on the German or Italian model were, however, all doomed to failure.

The Fascism that developed in the Balkans had stages which greatly resembled the pseudo-parliamentary dictatorships in Poland and Hungary. In Roumania, a strongly centralized, semi-liberal régime run by nationalist merchants, industrialists and bankers was set up during the postwar decades by King Ferdinand and the politician, Ionel Brătianu. The opposition also came into being as early as 1919, a remarkably heterogeneous group composed of the Transylvanian National Party led by Maniu; the Peasant Party of Regat, led by Michalache; and numerous right-wing groups led by Goga, Jorga, and T. Ionescu. These groups united to form the National Peasant Party in 1926. When Brătianu and King Ferdinand died in 1928, the regent asked Maniu to form a government. At the elections which followed, the previously opposition National Peasant Party won a 75 per cent majority.

The new majority turned against the regent. In June of 1930, King Ferdinand's son, Charles, who had been living in France since 1926, unexpectedly flew home to demand his throne. His minor son, Michael, abdicated, and Charles became king. Charles II, a great admirer and imitator of Mussolini, introduced a peculiar form of royal dictatorship during the next ten years. The first while, prime ministers came and went one after the other. Maniu soon came into conflict with the King, and resigned in favour of Mironescu. In 1931, Professor Jorga became prime minister; a year later, Vaida; to be followed by Duca in 1933. Duca was assassinated shortly thereafter, and until 1937 Tatarescu was the man to finally faithfully carry out



Charles' plans. From 1930 on, the King supported the Iron Guard, first through Vaida, then through Tatarescu, hoping to incorporate them into the system, and thus to undermine the leading political parties. The paramilitary Iron Guard ruled the country through brutal terrorization. After the 1937 elections, when Maniu, now in opposition, won 62 per cent of the votes through his surprising alliance with the Iron Guard, the King appointed the veteran extreme-rightist, anti-Semitic Goga prime minister. Terror reigned throughout the next few weeks, and a wave of pogroms swept the country.

The Gordian knot of this extraordinarily critical domestic situation was cut when Charles II proclaimed himself dictator. A new constitution was instituted. He got rid both of the now dangerous Iron Guard — Codreanu, and 13 other leaders were arrested, and shot "while attempting to escape" — and of the traditional political parties. Charles II appointed the Patriarch prime minister, and the next year, organized the Front of National Rebirth, a Fascist mass-party, complete with party uniforms. Demagogic pseudo-socialist plans were put into action. University and high school graduates spent a year doing "social service", physical labour in the villages, and "health trains" were started in an attempt to popularize bathing. Yet, in spite of all the extreme, demagogic speeches and propaganda, no genuine reform was undertaken.

By the eve of the Second World War, Charles had gone even further in adopting a German-style Fascism: he made the Front for National Rebirth into a National Party, and declared himself its leader.

After the Vienna Agreement was signed in 1940, in response to the general discontent and especially to the strong pressure of the extreme right, Charles II entrusted the government to General Antonescu, abdicated in favour of his son, and left the country.

The first decade in the life of the new Yugoslavia was similarly a time when pseudo-liberal, strongly nationalistic parties competed for, and took turns in holding the reins of government. The 1921 elections proved the Serbian Radical Party to be the one with the broadest support. The party led by Pašić, the nation's great democratic politician at the beginning of the century, gradually abandoned its evolutionary, democratic-egalitarian, peasants' rights program, and became a traditional conservative bourgeois party. Nevertheless, it continued to keep its massive peasant electoral support. The Democratic Party — which came second in the elections — and the Agrarian Party — the least significant of the three — both had a mixed peasant and bourgeois electoral base, and were largely similar in character. In Croatia, however, it was Radić's Croatian Peasant Party which was the most significant.

The Communist Party, which had come third in the elections, was forced underground the very year of the election after the assassination of Minister of the Interior Drasković.

The key domestic issue of the first decade was the nationalities question behind Pašić's and Radić's political rivalry. Pašić's Serb nationalist forces instituted a Serb-

dominated centralization; while Radić and his followers went into opposition, and demanded a federal solution. In 1928, Radić was shot dead at a parliamentary session; during the crisis which followed, the Croatian leaders demanded a federation first of two, then of five political units, each with an independent army.

It was a dilemma that proved incapable of solution. King Alexander tried to solve it by proclaiming a royal dictatorship on January 6, 1929, a step he believed to be the only safeguard against Bolshevism and anarchy. He appointed General Zinkow, who already headed the armed forces, to be prime minister. Serbian officers and politicians then surrounded the King, and established an arbitrary rule of terror. The antagonism between Serbs and Croats grew ever more acute with the Serb nationalist military and political leaders treating Croats as second class citizens. The assassination of King Alexander in Marseille in October of 1934 provoked a united Yugoslav reaction, for the threat of foreign intervention implied in the killing made for a rapprochement between the warring factions.

The nationalities problem remained unsolved, and provided the excuse for the continued existence of the dictatorship. Prince Paul, the regent, disappointed all those who had hoped for change. Although the Croatian leader, Macek, was released from prison, it was Stojadinović, a banker with English business connections, whom he finally settled on as prime minister in 1935. The new minister was responsive to the regent's foreign affairs objectives, and from then on, the country turned increasingly towards the Fascist powers. A new government party, the "Yugoslav Radical Union" was created through the merger of Stojadinović's wing of the traditional Radical Party with the Bosnian Moslem and the Slovenian Clerical Parties. On the domestic front, and in the techniques of government nothing that was of substance changed. Nevertheless, just before the war, there did come about an alliance of the opposition faction of the Serb Radical Party, the Democratic Party, the Agrarian Party, and the Croatian Peasant Party. In the autumn of 1937, they had agreed to cooperate in seeking a solution to the Croatian problem, and in finding a way to restore democracy. And, in the elections of December 1938, for all the intimidation, the opposition managed to win 44 per cent of the votes, a clear indication of the weakness of the government party.

In February of 1938, Prince Paul was obliged to let Stojadinović go, and to name in his place Cvetković, the organizer of the Italian-style government-controlled trade unions, the *Jugoras*. Fascist and dictatorial elements continued to exploit national tensions; this, together with the vituperative anti-Communism prevailing in the country, was a fundamental impediment to the revival of democracy, and to the implementation even of the most necessary social reforms. Assassinations and attempted assassinations were the order of the day, and it was the most extremist elements which came to dominate in this fruitless, two decade long tug-of-war.

After Stamboliski's revolutionary-democratic government was ousted in a putsch in 1923, Bulgaria, too, fell victim to terror, to military-bureaucratic cliques, and finally, to royal dictatorship. After Colonel Vechev's men took Sofia, Professor Cankov, the leader of the conspiracy against Stamboliski, formed a government.



Supreme power, however, was in the hands of a Fascist-terrorist-chauvinist group, the "Inner Macedonian Revolutionary Organization". The government — in fact, a series of governments, for Liapchev replaced Cankov in 1925 — was powerless. The country lay prey to unbridled terror. The Macedonian terrorists shot the peasant member of parliament, Petkov, in the street, and "liquidated" anyone who advocated peaceful coexistence or a democratic order. The streets of Sofia were the scenes of daily gun-battles, not infrequently among the various terrorist factions. (In 1924, even the leader of the Organization, Alexandrov, was killed; in 1927, General Protogerov, a veteran leader of the terrorist group, met a similar fate. For years after this, Mihailov's and Protogerov's followers continued to murder one another.) Terrorism, however, was by no means practised only by the Macedonian Organization. The government, too, used severe repressive measures, and, when in 1925 an unsuccessful attempt was made in Sofia Cathedral on the life of Tzar Boris — more than one hundred people were, however, killed — the authorities used it as an excuse to conduct a veritable witch-hunt against the Agrarian Party and the Communists. Mass arrests, more than 300 death sentences, and the torture and murder of many hundreds of leftists followed.

Against this background of unrestrained terror and lawlessness, the severity of the world economic crisis provoked mass political antagonisms that were particularly acute. Thus, in spite of the most varied attempts to intimidate and manipulate the voters, it was the coalition of bourgeois opposition parties which won a majority in the 1931 elections. Malinov, the tried and tested democrat, became prime minister.

However, the Macedonian terrorist organization had so far infiltrated the bureaucracy and the army, that the government was powerless against them, and Malinov soon resigned. The old government party returned to continue its tacit cooperation with the terrorists. There were also several signs of the growing influence of Italian Fascism: Tzar Boris' marriage to Princess Giovanna of Savoy; and the appointment of ex-Minister of Defence Volkov as Bulgaria's representative to Rome. A faction of the old Agrarian Party led by Gichev was also strongly attracted to Italian Fascism.

As the unresolved socio-economic and political problems intensified, the Communist Bulgarian Workers' Party also grew in strength: a number of its candidates won seats in the 1931 elections; and in 1932, it won an absolute majority in the local elections in Sofia. Naturally, the election results were immediately nullified; the Communist Traikov, who demanded the introduction of the 8-hour working day, was murdered. By this time, even some of the régime's former supporters, those who had participated in the putch against Stamboliski, turned violently against the government. The politicians around the journal *Zveno*, and the young officers congregated around Colonel Velchev — the military organizer of the 1923 putsch — pressed Tzar Boris to take steps against the Macedonian terrorists. In May of 1934, Velchev's group organized a coup d'état, and formed a new government with the *Zveno* political circle. A military dictatorship was introduced: political parties were abolished, and law and order began to be restored. The tax burden of

the peasantry was eased; the credit system was reorganized; and plans worked out for educational reform. The Unions, too, were replaced by non-political unions on the Italian corporative model. The group's major accomplishment, however, was the liquidation of the Macedonian terrorists. The army destroyed the Organization's centers, and arrested many of its leaders; Mihailov fled to Turkey. This quick, energetic, and widely popular action on the domestic front was complemented by a new foreign policy: the government proclaimed its intention of becoming reconciled with Yugoslavia, and established contact with the Soviet Union.

This policy, which in fact expressed the wishes of the mass of the population, could not, however, long endure. Exploiting the conflicts that arose between Velchev and his military entourage, the Tzar appointed a new government in January of 1935. Toskev now headed a government which was again Fascist-oriented, and proved to be a docile tool of the Tzar's policies. In February, Velchev was condemned to death for high treason; however, his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment.

Although he disposed of Velchev and his liberalizing circle, Tzar Boris did not restore the parliamentary forms which had existed before their military putsch. The government continued to be a dictatorship; but a peculiar royal dictatorship. To guarantee its endurance, the Tzar continued to repress the Macedonian terrorists, and continued also the policy of reconciliation with Yugoslavia.

In an effort to consolidate the system, the Tzar held elections in 1938 for the first time in seven years. There were still no parties; the voting was for individuals. The elections took place in an atmosphere of terror; still, one third of those elected were of the opposition. The Communists and other left-wing delegates were immediately stripped of their seats, and the royal dictatorship continued to function undisturbed.

These dictatorships, so different from the German and Italian models, were initiated and supported in most of these countries by the bourgeoisie, in some by the aristocracy and the gentry, and the "upper ten thousand" of the state bureaucracy and military. But they enjoyed the support also of the middle strata — of the intelligentsia and the petit bourgeois elements — who had been terrified by the wave of revolutions which followed upon the First World War. These people continued to fear the realization of the alternative expressed in the existence of the Soviet Union, and dreaded the domestic "Bolshevik menace" which they thought to see around them. Instead of mass parties and unbridled social demagogy, Fascist dictators in these countries relied mostly on the army, on oppression through the police apparatus, and on the paramilitary, terrorist organizations which supplemented their work. The above guarantees of their endurance were coupled with the establishment of an extraordinarily strongly bureaucratic state apparatus. In Poland, Hungary, and Roumania, institutionalized anti-Semitism, and a general extremist chauvinism were fundamental to the ideological and political *raison d'être* of these systems, as were their territorial claims, their oppression and humiliation of ethnic minorities, and their inordinate nationalist demagogy.



Neither their periodic, formal declarations of civil rights, nor their toleration of parliament and of some opposition parties, nor the occasional, restricted and terrorized elections that they held mitigated the fundamentally aggressive nature of these systems. Not only did these not alter it; they did not even endanger it. For the genuine and truly dangerous opposition, the Communist parties, were given no scope for action. And yet the Communist parties, which came into being when the Socialist movements of these countries split after the First World War, were very quick to win popularity with their radical solutions for society's backwardness, and for the national divisions and conflicts. Except for Austria, where they could make no real headway, and, in spite of being a legal party, were dwarfed by the Socialists — at the 1927 elections, for instance, they won only 16,000 votes to the 1.5 million of the Social Democrats — the Communists were able to move masses. In the more industrialized countries of the area, and in the industrial belts of the agrarian-industrial centers of Silesia, Łódź, Warsaw and Budapest — the Communist parties built on the traditions of the Socialist workers' movements. For after the war — in some cases, sooner — the Social Democratic parties here, as in Russia and throughout the rest of Europe — experienced a strong internal polarization, split into majority and minority wings, and generally broke up into two parties. In Czechoslovakia, this took place in 1920. Most of the old Socialists joined the Communist Party which had the support not only of the masses of the workers, but also of a significant number of the Slovakian and Ruthenian poor peasants. Throughout the interwar years, the Czechoslovak Communists continued to function as a legal party, and exercised considerable political power through a significant number of parliamentary representatives.

In Hungary, the independent Communist Party came into being already in November of 1918 and, together with the Social Democratic Party, assumed power in the spring of 1919. After the defeat of the Hungarian Republic of Councils, the two parties again separated. The Communist Party had been severely decimated, and was immediately declared illegal. But by the 1920s, it had again built up its underground organization.

The independent Polish Communist Party was founded in 1918, and, in spite of the oppression it suffered, exercised considerable political influence. The Roumanian Communist Party was founded in 1921, and was composed of the old Socialist majority. From 1924, it worked underground, winning most of its leaders and supporters from among the national minorities.

The class structure of the Balkan countries was such that it was only during the interwar years that the working class became more numerous. The working-class movement here was thus generally not a mass movement — unlike in the previously mentioned countries, which had strong Socialist traditions — but was, rather, the burgeoning of the smaller revolutionary groups. Nevertheless — and partially because of this very absence of the traditional Socialist competition — it soon became an independent political force, and practically the sole representative of the working-class movement. The same was true of the Yugoslav Communist Party formed in

1919 through the union of the small Marxist groups of the various areas. By the 1921 elections, it had already become the third strongest party in the country. In spite of the hard years underground, the Communist Party was again stronger by 1935. After 1937, it became an immensely popular, small, but remarkably well organized party under the leadership of First Secretary Josip Broz (Tito).

However, the most brutal terror was used in these countries to annihilate the Communist parties in the strictest sense of the word. The Communists were driven underground for decades, and from time to time, manhunts were organized against them. Mass executions, waves of arrests, terrifying sentences and police tortures of the most select cruelty were suffered by the Communists of the area from Horthy's Hungary to Bulgaria.

The difficulty of their situation was aggravated also by internal divisions. Many parties split into opposing factions, some groups seeking a way out through concessions or through renouncing their revolutionary goals, others insisting on total isolationism, on the rejection of all pragmatic considerations, and on an immediate and unqualified revolution.

In spite of this, however, the frequently decimated, illegal Communist parties maintained their organizations in all these countries. Periodically, but always temporarily, they were able to participate in legal political activity through using another party name: for instance, the Bulgarian Workers' Party of the 1930s; and the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party of the '20s.

During these years, Communism came to be associated in the minds of broad masses of the population in many of these countries with the hopes they still had of liberty and human dignity. In part, this was because the anti-Communism of the official propaganda seemed to be of one piece with its vituperative anti-democracy; but mostly, it was because the Communists were the most consistent and most heroic opponents of these Fascist dictatorships. It was particularly from the second half of the 1930s that the Communist parties exerted more direct influence, when, following the initiative of the Communist International, they abandoned their former call for immediate revolution, and strove to create a broad anti-Fascist popular front. They closed ranks with other leftist, democratic and anti-Fascist forces, alliances from which the former, more dogmatic line had until then debarred them.

The other great thorn in the side of the dictatorships was the revolutionary-democratic peasant movements. In most countries of the area, revolutionary-democratic peasant parties had been formed partly at the time of the postwar wave of revolutions, partly in response to the political ferment that had started at the turn of the century. We find this phenomenon from Czechoslovakia and Poland, to Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. Hungary was perhaps the only country where, in spite of the original successes of the organization at the beginning of the century, there was no such party during the interwar years. But here, too, it was the rich peasant directed Smallholders' Party — which yet had moderate land distribution as a part of its program — which won the majority of the votes at the first election in 1919.



In a few of these countries, however, the agrarian parties supported by the peasant masses were simply destroyed through terror, persecution, murder and political manipulation. It was in Bulgaria that this was done the most overtly after the coup which caused Stamboliski's fall; and it was a method which was resorted to practically constantly throughout the next two decades. For historic reasons, the Polish peasant movement was organized into two parties: the more moderate Piast Party led by Witos, most of whose support came from overpopulated Galicia; and the more radical Wyzwolenie Party, which built on the Russian peasant movements in the areas formerly belonging to the Russian Empire. However, these parties were brutally oppressed, and could barely function after Pilsudski's coming into power, especially after the 1930 elections when many peasant leaders were imprisoned and Witos was forced into exile.

In many other countries, the ruling classes sought to destroy the threatening rural and radical democratic nature of the peasant parties not so much through overt oppression, as through organized undermining from within.

This was true even of Czechoslovakia. The Czech Agrarian Party, which had merged with its Slovakian equivalent, was a member of the government coalition throughout this period. Nevertheless, the party very early lost its peasant character, and came under urban bourgeois leadership; during the '30s, it came to have very close ties with the Zivnostenská Banka. Here, then, the peasant party was transformed into a democratic bourgeois party.

In Hungary, the rich peasant led Smallholders' Party lost even its formal independence when Count Bethlen and the genteel-aristocratic political leadership "joined" the Party in 1922, appointed its leader, István Nagyatádi Szabó, to the honorary post of Party President, and incorporated it into the Unified Party. By the next elections, the ruling Unified Party did not even trouble to respect formalities: hardly any of the old Smallholders were named as parliamentary candidates. It was only in the 1930s that the Smallholders' Party again became an independent organization, but even then not under peasant leadership. A new, truly Peasant Party came into being only during the war. Thus, although the majority of Hungary's population was peasant, there was no genuine peasant party during the interwar years.

In Yugoslavia, it was the Serbian Radical Party which enjoyed the support of the peasant masses and had a democratic, radically egalitarian party platform. However, although it kept its mass peasant support throughout the period, and its leaders did maintain a peculiar personal contact with the villages, it completely lost its democratic rural character, and, after the creation of the Yugoslav state, became a conservative bourgeois party. The new Agrarian Party led by Iovan Ivanović was from the start dominated by urban businessmen and intellectuals. The Croatian Peasant Party was originally a revolutionary and radical organization; at the turn of the century, when the Radić brothers were its leaders, it represented the class interests of the peasantry. However, it soon came to represent Croatian national interests, and the bourgeois middle strata came increasingly to regard it as their own

party. After Radić's murder, when Maček became the party's leader, the bourgeoisie came totally to dominate the Peasant Party.

The Roumanian Peasant Party met a similar fate. In 1926, it merged with Maniu's Transylvanian National Party to form the National Peasant Party, and came into power in 1928. Once in power, however, it no longer represented the peasant's interests. Here, too, it was the bourgeois, capitalist elements which came to predominate, and the party's major achievement was opening Roumania up to foreign investment.

Thus, the democratic, revolutionary radical peasant parties of the turn of the century which had truly represented rural interests were, like the Communist parties, driven from the political arena, if not with the same methods, yet no less decisively.

The other opposition groups — the various bourgeois, liberal, democratic, or generally weak Social Democratic parties — could exercise no real political influence on interwar East Central Europe. Social democracy was a significant factor only in the more developed, more bourgeois areas of the old Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, in Austria, Czechoslovakia, and partly in Hungary. The masses of the working classes were concentrated and organized within the Social Democratic parties; in Hungary, it was their sole legally functioning body.

Throughout a quarter century, it was Social Democracy and the trade unions which kept the workers organized and nourished their class consciousness, and fought for democracy, for human rights, and for better social conditions, not infrequently in spite of the fact that the upper echelons of the party leadership at times made far-reaching compromises with the parties in power.

Although it was unable to bring about changes in the political systems of East Central Europe during the interwar years, the hunted, underground leftist opposition, frequently decimated though it was, became tempered and toughened into the force which would shape the future of these countries. This process, mostly hidden during the two decades between the wars, started to emerge into political daylight already during the years of World War II.

A major factor in the shaping of the area's political scene during these years — of the régimes, of the parties' freedom of action — were the national antagonisms inherited from the past, antagonisms which the imperialist peace settlement imposed after World War I but intensified. The authoritarian features of the Horthy régime were undoubtedly due as much to the irredentism prevailing in the country, to its general commitment to territorial revision, as to its being born of the white terror of the counterrevolution. For it was these former which fed Hungary's vituperative hatred of her neighbours, and attracted her so strongly to the Fascist powers committed to destroying the system established at Versailles.

In like manner, the unbridled terror of the Macedonian Organization which so strongly determined the character of the Bulgarian Fascist dictatorship was as much a function of the Macedonian problem — of the exacerbated minority and border disputes, and of the bitter hostility toward Yugoslavia — as of the counterrevolu-



tion's victory over the revolutionary-democratic Stamboliski régime of just after the war. National hostilities within each state also served to reinforce the terroristic and dictatorial nature of these systems, and to strengthen their inclination toward Fascism. In Yugoslavia, the institution of royal dictatorship was openly justified in terms of the Croat problem; and in Roumania, the will to oppress the Transylvanian Hungarian minority was similarly exploited. These nationality conflicts most strongly influenced the foreign policy decisions taken by the various governments, and facilitated the growth of international Fascism, and Italian and German expansion alike.

Those countries which had an interest in maintaining the new, postwar status quo — primarily Czechoslovakia, Roumania and Yugoslavia, but Poland, too — sought the alliance of the victorious western powers, primarily of France, which seemed to be the strongest power on the continent. At the same time, they also drew closer to each other. Already at the Paris Peace Conference, Beneš, Ionescu and Pašić began to pave the way for this political and military cooperation. A mere list of the ensuing political events gives a clear picture of this common foreign policy. In August of 1920, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia signed an agreement in Belgrade, promising mutual aid in case of a Hungarian attack, and undertaking to coordinate their foreign policies. The same provisions are found in the Czechoslovak-Roumanian agreement signed in Bucharest in April, 1921; and in the Roumanian-Yugoslav agreement signed in Belgrade in June of the same year. The latter agreement, however, made provisions also for cooperation against Bulgaria. Between 1924 and 1927, all three interested countries signed a treaty with France; and, in February of 1928, in Genf, the system of agreements grew into the "Little Entente". Its aim was to guarantee the status quo of the area in face of the Hungarian and Bulgarian territorial claims, and represented also France's political interests. Not least importantly, it was a significant component of the cordon sanitaire the victorious Great Powers were determined to build around the Soviet Union.

The Hungarian and Bulgarian governments, on the other hand, with their hopes of territorial revision, soon became the natural allies of the Fascist powers. The end of Hungary's political isolation was marked by its signing a treaty of friendship in 1927 with Mussolini's Italy; Hungary was also the first to seek Hitler's alliance. Italian pressure was very strong also in the Balkans. Roumania added to its Little Entente commitments by making overtures to Italy as early as the '20s. It was this which was partly responsible for the weakening of the Little Entente, for Yugoslavia's and Roumania's joining the Balkan Alliance. And, in the 1930s, Nazi Germany began to infiltrate the area, not least of all through exploiting the grave economic crises experienced by the agrarian countries of the area. Market for their products seemed guaranteed when Germany renewed and expanded its trade agreements in 1934 first with Hungary in February, then with Yugoslavia in May, then with Bulgaria; and in March of 1935, with Roumania. By 1937, one fifth of Roumanian and Yugoslavian exports, one quarter of Hungarian, and almost one half

of Bulgarian exports went to Germany, while Germany's share in the import of these countries was even greater.

A number of the Balkan dictators imagined themselves mini-Mussolinis: they adopted most of the methods and institutions of Fascism, and aped its trappings. The Fascist powers, emboldened by the concessions made them, and drunk with their power, openly proclaimed their revisionist intentions: and the race for Hitler's and Mussolini's good graces was on. Both those who desired, and those who feared territorial revision sought Hitler's and Mussolini's support for their aims. It was thus that the strong French influence of the years immediately after World War I was replaced by the late '30s by that of the Fascist powers: it was thus that Roumania became their satellite; that Stojadinović and the Bulgarian Borist switched alliances, not to mention the Hungarian Horthy and his prime ministers. And, after the Austrian fifth column pushed the country to the brink of civil war, and Nazi influence there, too, became predominant, it was only in Czechoslovakia and Poland that there endured an unambiguous French and English orientation. In the latter, however, the very nature of the system was such that there was significant domestic pressure for the country to join the Fascist camp.

Thus it was that the political systems of the countries of East Central Europe, their international situation, and the tide of foreign affairs all conspired to hurry them along to their tragic end.