

The Bulgarian Peasants' Resistance to Collectivization

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The collectivization of the Bulgarian villages was the most outstanding component in establishing the Stalinist model of socialism in Bulgaria. This was a gigantic outrage on a large part of the Bulgarian people; at that time four fifths of the country's population lived in the villages. The Bulgarian peasantry replied to this oppression by a well-expressed resistance which has still not been studied by historians.

Up to the end of 1989 the concept "resistance to collectivization" did not exist for the students of Bulgaria's contemporary history. Most cursorily, in a few sentences in the studies on the "cooperation of the rural economy" mention was made of the peasant disturbance in the spring of 1951 without, however, revealing their true scale. The cause of this unrest was sought in "actions of the enemy". In her monograph M. Trifonova devotes some space also to the question of the applications for leaving the TKZS the same year but without regarding this as an act of resistance to collectivization. More objective and more scientific in her approach is S. Gjurova in describing the peasant disturbance in the province of Pleven in 1951. She, too, has limited herself to revealing the unrest in only five villages, whereas such broke out in 22. In this way she has not succeeded in outlining the scale of the disturbances in the region studied.

In order to better clarify the problem of the resistance of the peasants to collectivization is necessary, although most cursorily, to point out the principal moments in its development. It started in the late summer of 1948 after the adoption by the ruling Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) of the course of consolidating the Soviet (Stalinist) model of socialism in Bulgaria. Collectivization went through several stages of development.

The first was from the early autumn of 1948 to the spring of 1949. During this stage in the co-operative farms were entered some 10-12% of the farmers and was co-operated almost the same percentage of the arable land in the country. The principal part of the land incorporated did not belong to those who joined the co-operative farms but was taken away by various methods from private farmers. Although in this stage the collectivization was on a limited scale, it was associated with mass oppression chiefly in exchanging property around the blocks of the cooperative farms that were formed.

The second stage unfolded in 1950-1951. At the end of 1951 the co-operated land embodied 60% of that subject to co-operation, and the peasants included in the co-operative farms - 52% of the total number of private village households in the country. The key moment in this stage was the entry of more than 250 000 private farmers in co-operative farms in the plains, the grain production areas of the country, in August-September 1950. It was brought about by the taking away of the foodstuffs of the peasants in collecting the grain deliveries during the summer of the same year.

The third stage covered the years 1956-1958. Here again there were two major campaigns in the course of which in co-operative farms was driven the main body of new co-operators during that period. The first occurred in March 1956 when about 250 000 private farmers joined the cooperative farms, and the second, in the early 1958, when the process encompassed the mountainous areas of the country. Generally speaking, collectivization was completed by the end of 1958.

One should not forget that in conducting this process the Bulgarian leaders followed the example of the USSR of 1929-1937. Notwithstanding some specific features the Bulgarian collectivization, therefore, was to a large extent a copy of the Soviet one.

One of the most important components of collectivization was the system of the obligatory state deliveries of farm produce, adopted also by the Soviet Union in the autumn of 1948. It was expressed in the compulsory purchase at every low prices of a major part of the output of agricultural producers in a relative share, legalized by normative acts, from 10 to 90% of total

production. Not seldom, however, in the event of a poor crop, in certain areas of the country the peasants had to deliver their entire output and even to buy at free prices (from two to five times higher than those of the state deliveries) so as to fulfil their quotas.

The principal object of the system of state deliveries was to push the peasants towards the cooperative farms. Particularly characteristic was this for the period 1950-1953. By taking out dirt cheap the bulk of his farm produce a peasant lost any chance to survive as a private owner.

The fulfillment of the state deliveries constituted an unprecedented war of the regime against the peasants. It incorporated all forms of administrative and political pressure, as well as a wide range of repressions. During the peak period of collecting the deliveries in them were involved all the components of the political system: the state apparatus, the Party organs, the activists of the BCP and of the satellite party the BAPU (Bulgarian Agrarian People's Union), and of the public organizations. Very often "for help" were called the personnel of the police, the court and the prosecutor's office. The fact was not accidental that during this period the percentage of the court cases and of those sentenced for failure to fulfil the state deliveries varied from 18 to 27% of the total number of the cases and of the persons convicted in the country.

The tradition of the stubborn resistance to the purchasing policy of the State was established during the period from the autumn of 1945 to that of 1948, when the Soviet system had not yet been introduced. Particularly strong was this resistance during the summer of 1947 in connection with the implementation of Ordinance No. 1 of the Council of Ministers for the requisition of cereals. There were mass hiding of produce by the farmers, slow and formal fulfillment of the obligations under this ordinance by the local officials. According to some calculations, not less than 25% of the foodstuffs subject to requisition were hidden.

Many members of the BCP also opposed the ordinance, some of them were expelled from the Party, others left it as a sign of protest. For instance, in the autumn of 1947, from the Party organizations in the province of Sofia were expelled 700 members for their refusal to fulfil their obligations under Ordinance No. 1, and in the district of Ajtos - 67.

These cases increased still more from the autumn of 1948 with the introduction of the system of deliveries. Not seldom village Party organizations spoke unanimously against the levies. A number of local officials tried to limit the levy to the possible minimum, infringing the legal regulations. For instance, the commissions fixing the amount of the deliveries of lard in the district of Topolovgrad registered a twice or thrice lower weight of the piglets in the farmers' households which resulted in the failure of the planned purchase. The resistance of the Party cadres to the deliveries was noted in a sharp critical tone also in the Accounting Report of the CC (Central Committee) of the BCP to the Fifth Congress of the Party in late 1948.

As from the autumn of 1948 in the course of one year and a half there were ubiquitous attempts to hide the real dimensions of the land of private farmers, non-fulfillment of the sowing plans, arbitrary change of the crops ordered to be grown, etc. The opportunities to conceal land and to modify the sowing plans were cut only with the change in the system of deliveries in the spring of 1950.

A strong exacerbation of the situation occurred in the first months of the 1950 with the introduction of the new deliveries of milk and wool, and particularly with the striking decree of the Council of Ministers of April 4, 1950 for the milk deliveries from unproductive (barren) cows. This led to a storm of dissatisfaction among the peasantry, including BCP members. A lasting and strongly negative public mood was created in the villages against the authorities.

Sharp statements against levying a tax on "barren cows" were heard even at high Party forums - at provincial annual conferences of the BCP in 1950 and 1951. Representatives of the high elite also spoke at different times against this ordinance: the Ministers of Agriculture T. Cernokolev, of Trade P. Pelovski and of Deliveries R. Hristozov. The decisive factor in the country, the leader Valko Cervenkov, however, was firmly in favour of the views to retain this system, behind him stood the conformist majority in the Council of Ministers and the CC of the BCP.

The system of taxation in the form of cow's milk deliveries had a dispiriting effect on the overwhelming part of the representatives of the local authorities and of the local Party leaders. They lacked sufficient strength and wish to act resolutely, they closed their eyes to the flagrant violations, sometimes they even became accomplices in them. The purchase of cow's milk in 1950, therefore, was proceeding towards failure: by October 20 the plan for purchasing of milk for processing had been fulfilled by 34% and for consumption by 46%. A number of urban centres were left without milk even for the kindergartens and the hospitals. In November and December were taken special measures: two national conferences were held, the CC of the BCP sent its authorized representatives

for the collection of milk to all provinces of the country, a large army of Party activists was mobilized. Mass violations were committed: sending peasants to concentration camps (the so-called TVP - labour educational communities) and prosecuting them. Thus in the province of Vraca 116 farmers were brought to trial for failure to fulfil the deliveries of cow's milk in the autumn of 1950.

Although not on such a scale, the resistance to the deliveries of cow milk continued also during the next three years until in the autumn of 1953 at last the levying of deliveries on barren cows was abolished.

The collection of grain in the summer of 1950 marked the peak in the tension connected with the deliveries. The ordinance passed by the Council of Ministers on April divided the districts into six groups. Particularly high was the levy on the first three groups which included the grain-producing areas in the plains.

Those in these areas who possessed land exceeding 5-6 hectares had to deliver a large part of the wheat needed for feeding their own families whereas those possessing over 8-12 hectares had to hand over their whole output and buy additional amounts of wheat so as to pay off their obligations. The new ordinance for levying grain deliveries was murderous for people holding more than 5-6 hectares, i.e. for more than 60% of the farmers in the country's grain producing areas.

All that was met with sharp negativism by the broad strata of the peasantry in these areas. En mass, in public place were made strong statements against the authorities and the ruling party. In the villages appeared many anonymous anti-government leaflets in some of which calls were made even for mutinies and uprisings.

Spontaneous public meetings against the deliveries were held in many villages: in early July in the village of Bardarski Geran, near Bjala Slatina, on July 14 in the village of Staverci, and on July 18 in the village (now town) of Kozloduj, near Orjahovo. Over 300 people attended the meeting in Kozloduj. The biggest rally was held in the village of Nevsa, near Provadija and was attended by more than 500 people. Meetings were held also in other places in the country: in a number of villages in the district of General Tosevo (Dobrudza), in the villages of Gajtanevo and Stolnik near Elin Pelin, etc. In the village of Stransko, district of Cirpan, was drawn up a collective protest against the grain deliveries which was signed by 120 persons.

A most characteristic phenomenon was that a large section of the members of the village organizations of the BCP in the grain-producing areas of the country rejected the new system of grain deliveries. We have documentary evidence at our disposal that with decisions against this system came out three village Party organizations in the district of Karnobat, three in that of Varna, four in the district of Bjala Slatina, six in that of Orjahovo, four in the district of Mihajlovgrad, four in that of Vraca, nine in the district of Preslav, and one each in the district of Harmanli, Pirdop and Sumen. At the October plenary session of the BCP in 1950 V. Cervenkov announced that in July of the same year the BCP District Committee in General Tosevo had not ventured to summon Party meetings since at them the members spoke unanimously against the grain deliveries.

In many places Party members publicly declared that they would not fulfil their obligations. In this way acted 20 members of the Party organization in the village of Paskalevo near Pavlikeni. In the village of Pet Mogili, district of Nova Zagora, at a Party meeting 15 people declared that they were giving up their Party membership because of the grain deliveries. In practically all the country's districts in the summer and autumn of 1950 many Party members were expelled from the BCP for their refusal to fulfil their obligations. For instance in the district of Popovo were expelled 35 members and in that of Targoviste - 12. In the villages of Srednja and Goljama Voda, near Sumen, were expelled and handed over to the prosecutor even secretaries of the two organizations.

The secretary of the Party organization in the village of Balkanski, near Razgrad, declared before representatives of the Provincial and District Committees of the BCP that "the people were destitute, barefoot and that swindlers stood at the head of the country". A similar statement was made also by the chairman of the Council in the village of Rosokastro near Burgas. Concerning the detention of a "kulak" in the village of Vabel near Targoviste for not having fulfilled his deliveries, the Party secretary of the village D. Bahnev declared that this was an arbitrary act and that he resigned his post.

The negativism towards the grain deliveries was still more strongly expressed in the local organizations of the BAPU. In the majority of places in the country in the campaign for the collection of the deliveries were included only the district and part of the local activists of the Union, while the majority of the members took a negative stand. The rising of the peasants against the deliveries had an effect on the local officials and the state apparatus. In his report in late September 1950 the

Minister of the Interior R. Hristozov pointed out that in many places in the country the leaders of the local councils "had given in to the kulak agitation" and made strong efforts to obtain a reduction of the delivery quotas fixed for them. In a report to the bureau of the Sofia Provincial Committee of the BCP it was noted that the chairmen of the district councils in Stanke Dimitrov, Godec, Radomir, Elin Pelin and Sofia "had shrunk to the difficulties" and had raised demands for the revision of the deliveries for their districts.

Another important element was the local leaders not seldom were against the imposed "class approach" which was expressed in exercising extreme pressure accompanied by repressions and outrages on the farmers branded as "kulaks". We possess numerous data on such cases all over the country.

The situation that emerged in the grain-producing areas of the country in the period May-July 1950 had a definite effect also on the provincial leaders. The bureaux of the provincial committees of the BCP in Vraca, Pleven and Varna sent letters to the Politburo requesting a reduction of the deliveries. In Pleven the letter was signed also by the inspector of the CC in charge of the province. Demands for reductions were at first sent also by the provincial Party committees in Burgas, Gorna Orjahovica, Ruse e Sumen. All that extremely angered Valko Cervenkov.

During the third ten day period of July the country leaders understood that the grain-collection campaign was moving towards failure. The harvest had ended, the threshing was at its height, and the plan for grain deliveries was fulfilled only by some 10%. On July 28 at the CC was summoned a conference with the Party and State leaders of the provinces. The task was laid down to take the offensive and to ensure the rapid fulfillment of the grain deliveries. The leaders of three provinces - of Pleven, Vraca and Varna - were punished. To each province in the country was appointed a representative of the CC - a member of the Politburo or a minister with very extensive powers. The provincial committees also appointed their representatives to the districts and hundreds of members of the town Party actives were sent to the villages. Thus from Varna over 700 Party activists were dispatched to the four Dobrudza districts of the province of Varna. The personnel of the Ministry of the Interior, the courts and the prosecutor's office were also mobilized. Repressions were carried out on a wide scale: hundreds of farmers were sent to concentration camps, thousands were detained at the people's councils, and some of them were beaten. In many villages public trials of "kulaks" were held, and heavy sentences were passed: up to ten years of imprisonment and confiscation of property. According to our calculations, in the summer of 1950 during the collection of the grain quotas were repressed some 10.000 - 12.000 farmers, i.e. approximately 4% of the farmers in the country's grain producing areas. This number does not include the thousands of peasants who were heavily fined - in the district of Dobric alone were imposed fine exceeding 10 million leva.

This mass assault, connected with a huge wave of repressions, had its repercussion: by the end of August the plan for grain deliveries had been fulfilled. Never to that moment in Bulgaria's history had such amount of foodstuffs - over 700.000 tons - been collected within such a short period of time.

Even in this extremem situation, however, the peasants put up a strong opposition. The basic form of resistance in that period was the hiding of cereals. Particularly widespread was this phenomenon in Dobrudza where the peasants had great experience in concealment already from the time of Romanian domination. The majority of families here had hiding-places where they could conceal tons of wheat. For instance, in the period from August 11 to 17 in the district of General Tosevo were uncovered 35 hiding - places of foodstuffs of 21 families, i.e. every second family had more than one hiding-place that was uncovered in this number.

Other forms of resistance were also applied. For example, from August 1 to 15 the State Security registered 30 cases of the breaking down threshing machines by putting iron rods in the sheaves. There were also 80 instances of setting sheaves on fire at the common threshing-floors as a result of which 240 tons of grain were burnt. Some forms of civil disobedience were also discovered: e.g. deliberate keeping and failure to transport the sheaves to the common threshing-floors. Thus in many villages of the districts of Plovdiv and Pazadzik the sheaves were left in the fields for more than a month, something unheard to that moment in agricultural practice.

In late 1950 and early 1951 strong tension arose in the southern cotton-growing areas of the country. It was caused by the heavy imposition of cotton deliveries. The peasants en masse ginned their cotton illegally, hid the ginned cotton and did not want to make the deliveries. A wave of mass oppression again passed through these areas: fines, entering the houses, slitting mattresses, quilts and cushions and confiscation of the cotton found.

After the cruel 1950 there were no years of such total fierceness, with such mass resistance and such scale of violence connected with the fulfillment of the deliveries. Separate protuberances of

violence flared up, however, in various parts of the country. This was characteristic, for instance, of the summer and autumn of 1952 on account of the poor harvest. Stubborn resistance was displayed by the peasants in the period 1952-1954 in connection with the conclusion of the contracts for the growing of industrial crops and vegetables. The cause for that was that in a number of enactments of the State in 1952 the material stimulus for the cultivation was reduced and for certain crops it was fully abolished. Resistance was put up also in fulfilling the deliveries of grapes and apples since according to the regulations they made up from 65 to 75% of the whole output.

During the second half of the 50s the most numerous cases of resistance were again connected with the deliveries of milk owing to the system of taxation by the decare, introduced in 1955. This system particularly worsened the position of a considerable part of the farmers and in certain areas of the country led to the need for general purchase of milk at free prices so as to fulfil the deliveries. This was evidenced also by the fact of the considerable increase in the relative share of the court cases for failure to fulfil deliveries in 1956-1957 notwithstanding the sharp reduction at that time of the private section in the Bulgarian villages.

As we have noted, the first stage of collectivization ran from the autumn of 1948 to the spring of 1949. During that time the co-operative farms were set up at the initiative of the local Party organizations, the process being conducted and pushed by the district committees of the BCP. In many places Party members spoke against the formation of co-operative farms in their villages, in some places they constituted the majority of the membership of the particular Party organization. We are in possession of such data concerning the Radomir, Pirdop and some other districts in the country. Yet the resistance of Party members to the establishment of co-operative farms in this period was a limited phenomenon.

Numerous BAPU organizations declared themselves against collectivization. For example, at its meeting the organization in the village of Aleco Konstantinovo, near Pazardzik, passed a decision against the formation of a co-operative farm in their village. Similar decisions were approved also by the organizations in the villages of Babica and Garlo, district of Breznik. Decisions for not forming co-operative farms were taken also by the local actives of the BAPU in the villages of Zitusa, district of Radomir, and Gradevo, district of Kotel.

In some places peasants went out in the fields and lay down in front of the tractor sent to plough the field boundaries and to cut "the first co-operative furrow". The State Security registered such a case in the village of Novacene, district of Botevgrad, on November 23, 1948. There were also acts of terrorism in some villages in the tension that was created, especially about the exchange of property to form the large tracts of land of the co-operative farms. Thus in October 1948 was assassinated the person in charge of the livestock farm of the co-operative in the village of Bacevo, district of Razlog, and in February 1949 - the chairman of the People's Council in the village of Novacene, district of Botevgrad.

The pressure for setting up co-operative farms created favourable conditions for the formation of underground groups in many villages in the country. This was particularly characteristic for the district of Varna where violence in connection with co-operation assumed very big dimensions in the autumn of 1948.

At the June plenary session of the CC of the BCP in 1949 were noted numerous cases of violence and distortions during the collectivization in 1948-1949. The so-called government commissions for rectifying the arbitrary acts in forming the tracts of land of the co-operative farms were set up. In many villages in the country peasants started organized activity to break up the co-operative farms. We possess documentary evidence about cases in the villages of Popovic and Konstantinovo, district of Varna, Krivini, district of Provadija, Gorno Romanci, district of Breznik, Svetvracene, district of Sofia, Ljuben, district of Plovdiv, Provalenica and Nikolaevo, district of Radomir, Gavrilovo, Malko Sivacevo and Recica, district of Sliven, etc. A large number of applications were submitted for leaving the co-operative farms. In the district of Varna alone they numbered 200. In the village of Krivini, district of Provadija, the local agrarian organization expelled from its composition several of its members who had not put in applications for leaving. In many villages co-operative farmers entered the co-operative tracts of land and ploughed their former fields. By repressions, political pressure and blackmail the protests of the peasants were quickly subdued.

The second stage of collectivization began in early 1950. A special plan of the Ministry of Agriculture for co-operation during the years was worked out, a model statute for the co-operative farms was approved to be offered for broad public discussion. A nation-wide campaign was launched to whip round for support at general village and neighbourhood meetings and by individual persuasion. The massed pressure came up, however, against the firm resistance of the peasants: they did not

attended the meeting and hid from "individual agitators". In the villages appeared leaflets calling for not joining the co-operative farms. BCP activists began to receive threatening letters. Now again many Party members and in some places Party organizations declared themselves against the formation of co-operative farms in their villages.

Again the BAPU organizations declared themselves the most strongly against collectivization. We have at our disposal data on the openly expressed negative stand of a large part of the agrarian organizations in many districts of the country: of Kazanlak, Stara Zagora, Nova Zagora, Vidin, Kula, Mihajlovgrad, Pirdop and the Sofia rural district. In the Sofia district ten agrarians were sent to concentration camps for active agitation against joining the co-operative farms. In a report of the BAPU provincial leadership in Stara Zagora it was pointed out that even in the leaderships of many of the organizations in the province prevailed people with a hostile attitude towards the co-operative farms.

The generale rehearsal for the mass collectivization was held in the province of Vraca in March 1950 by the general mobilization of the State apparatus and the Party organizations, by ubiquitous pressure and violence on private farms. This led to cases of passive resistance by the peasants: in the spring of 1950 the new co-operative members refused to come to work in the fields; in June a number of villages - Hajredin, Malorad, Bukjovci (today the town of Mizija), Lehcevo, etc. - were put in numerous applications for leaving the co-operative farms.

Most of the new co-operators wanted to carry out a "private threshing", i.e. to bring to their homes the production from the fields that they had sown as private farmers in the autumn of 1949. The provincial committee of the BCP in Vraca came out with a categorical order not to allow that: the sheaves had to be piled up at common threshing-floors and the wheat threshed had to go to the granaries of the co-operative farms in the province. On July 2 a large group of peasants from the village of Burdarski Geran, district of Bjala Slatina, went at 4 o'clock in the night with carts to take away their sheaves from the common threshing-floor. There they found members of the local Party organization who had been raised to guard the sheaves. A mass fight ensued and the incident went on until 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

The serious tension created in the province compelled the Politburo of the CC of the BCP as early as July 6 to take a special decision for the province of Vraca. By it private threshing was allowed in the province and those wishing to leave the co-operative farms in the autumn of the same years were to be freed.

The massed campaign for collectivization during the first half of 1950 failed and it was discontinued by a special decree of the Council of Ministers and the CC of the BCP of May 6.

The only effective way of driving the peasants into the co-operative farms proved to be the already mentioned taking away of their foodstuffs in the summer of 1950. As a result of that in one month and a half twice as many peasants joined the co-operative farms as in the six years before. This rapid rise of collectivization made the country's leaders wish that it should be continued and that the planned rates of co-operation in the first five-year period (1949-1953) be reached as early as in the spring of 1951. From the late 1950 and early 1951, therefore, in many non-grain-growing areas of the country was launched a forced campaign for co-operation which involved numerous outrages.

The situation grew extremely tense also because of some other circumstances. In the period October 1950 - February 1951 the authorities made great efforts to bring into the co-operative farms the livestock of the new co-operators who entered them in the summer and early autumn and also to collect from them the fixed contributions to the seed and fodder stocks of the farms. This campaign was strongly resisted by the peasants: hiding of livestock and fodder, mass slaughtering or selling dirt cheap of animals in the areas where collectivization was not effected. For instance, in one night alone, before the teams for collecting the livestock made their rounds, in the courtyards in the village of Dermanci, district of Lukovit, over 600 sheep were killed. This was a mass phenomenon encountered all over the country at that time.

Besides, following the example of the USSR, in November 1950 began the preparations for the so-called dispossession of the kulaks in the grain-producing areas of the country. It was to be expressed in the compulsory expropriation of the property and household goods of those declared to be "kulaks" and their forced setting in certain areas of the country. In connection with the preparations for the dispossession, in many villages they began to commit a great variety of outrages on the "kulaks": arbitrary detentions in the councils, arbitrary fines and confiscations, prohibitions to visit service establishments, pubs and shops, to cross the centre of the village, to leave their houses in certain hours, etc.

In January 1951 a delegation, headed by V. Cervenkov, went to Moscow for consultations with the Soviet leaders on the forthcoming dispossession of the kulaks. At the meeting in the Kremlin, however, J.V. Stalin advised the Bulgarian leaders not to carry out a dispossession of the kulaks, not to copy blindly the Soviet experience of the 30s and to artificially heighten the tension in the country. This made the Bulgarian leaders change their course so far. The change was announced by a Decree of the CC of the BCP of March 19, 1951 whereby the violations in the collectivization in the district of Kula and the outrages on those declared to be "kulaks" in the village (now town) of Jablanica, district of Teteven, were sharply criticized. The decree aimed at creating the impression that here it was the question of isolated cases of distortion of the "correct line" by local officials. The meaning of this document, however, was the negation, of the course so far of the authorities.

Hardly had the rulers expected such a rapid reaction by the peasants. As early as March 20 over 70 co-operators, mainly women, in the village of Manole, district of Plovdiv, broke the doors of the co-operative byres and took the cattle to their homes. The next day, March 21, there were similar disturbances in the villages of Rogos, district of Plovdiv, and Jagodovo, district of Asenovgrad. Over 200 women of Jagodovo went to the district centre, where in the main town square a protest meeting was held with the raising of anti-government slogans: "Give us back our land!", "We want freedom!", "We don't want co-operative farms!" etc. In the period March 23-26 the disturbances spread over eight villages in the district of Plovdiv, in eighteen of that of Asenovgrad and three in the district of Parvomaj. Moods to take back the livestock emerged also in other villages of these three districts, as well as in some villages of the districts of Pazardzik and Karlovo. On March 31 in the village of Miromir, district of Karlovo (at present a quarter of the town of Hisar), to the sound of church bells peasants entered the tracts of land of the cooperative farm and began to plough their former fields. A skirmish ensued with the members of the village Party organization who had been alerted to guard the tracts. The authorities arrested three persons as instigators. The council was surrounded by hundreds of people demanding the release of those detained. The crowd began to throw stones at the windows and prepared to burst into the building. The representatives of the district office of the Ministry of the Interior replied with shots in the air. In this situation the district leaders who had come to the village decided to free those detained.

There were cases of ploughing tracts of land of the co-operative farms also in the town of Kalofer, and according to some information, also in other villages of the district of Karlovo. In this way the province of Plovdiv turned out to be the area with the most large-scale peasant disturbances in the spring of 1951. By March 31 the disturbances had been suppressed and the livestock returned to co-operative farms.

In the district of Kula (province of Vraca) the unrest began on March 22 with cases of taking away the livestock from the co-operative byres in the villages of Gramada and Borilovec. The next day the disturbances spread over the villages of Bojanovo, Medesevci, Cicil and Perilovec and on March 24 - Milicina Laka, Izvor Mahala and again Borilovec. In the last village in the unrest that took place peasant women beat the chairman of the farm and a policeman who were trying to stop the taking away of the livestock from the co-operative farmyard. On March 25 disturbances broke out in the villages of Kostapercevo and Golemanovo. The same day in the villages of Milicina Laka and Radivica were held public meetings with demands for the release of the detained peasants accused of instigation. The disturbances switched over to the districts of Vidin, Vraca and Mihajlovgrad. In the province of Vraca the peasants rose in 19 villages. As in the province of Plovdiv, here again the women co-operators took the most active part in the taking away of the livestock and in the public meetings.

Characteristic of the district of Kula were the demonstrations from the villages to the district town with demands for the release of those detained. On March 24 such a demonstration was held from the village of Cicil, on March 25 from the village of Izvor Mahala and on March 26 - from the village of Gramada. In the province of Vraca there were also cases of private ploughing of land of the co-operative farms.

The province of Pleven was the third centre of the disturbances in late March and early April. A big spontaneous meeting took place in the village of Trastenik, district of Pleven. Scores co-operators, mainly women, in front of the council, shouted slogans: "Give us back the land, cattle and tools so that we may cultivate the property that you forcibly put in the co-operative farms! We don't want to be members of co-operative farms any longer!". The same day in the village of Glozene, district of Teteven, was launched a subscription list for disbanding the farm. The letter was signed by 200 co-operators. On April 7 was organized a rally in the village of Beglez and on April 9 - a protest demonstration in the village of Bukovlak - both villages situated in the district of Pleven. A most dramatic turn was taken by the events in the village of Nikolaevo, in the same district, where the conflict between the peasants and the local authorities grew into an exchange of fire the result of which were two persons killed and eight wounded. The unrest ended only after the arrival in the village of a unit of the so-called internal troops of the Ministry of the Interior. This was the only instance known to us of the intervention by the armed force of the authorities in the peasant

disturbances in 1951 and 1956. The military unit, however, did not use arms - its appearance caused the scattering of the peasants.

According to information reported by the Provincial Committee of the BCP - Pleven, the disturbances in the province of Pleven included 22 villages: eight in the district of Lukovit, ten in that of Lovec and four in the district of Pleven. In the unrest took part nearly 10.000 peasants and from the co-operative byres were taken away 2.783 head of cattle.

The peasants disturbances gave the authorities quite a shock. On April 7 in a speech to the propagandists from the province of Sofia, V. Cervenkov declared that the further collectivization in the country was stopped and that all those who had been forcibly included could put in applications and be released from the co-operative farms. "We will keep nobody by force in the co-operative farms!" - Cervenkov declared. His speech was published in the press on April 12. It was aimed at bringing calm to the villages. Instead, after its publication new peasants unrest started. On the largest scale were in the district of Silistra - the embodied twelve villages, in six of them livestock and farm tools were taken away, in three villages that did not happen since the co-operative farmyards were guarded by the local Party organizations that had been put on the alert. In some of the villages of the district there were demonstrations and rallies. In the district of Kotel there was unrest in four villages: Sadovo, Nejkovo, Feklac and Padarevo; in the first two the livestock was taken away.

In the district of Sofia the unrest broke out in the villages of Mramor and Dolni Lozen; a protest demonstration started from Mramor to Sofia. In the district of Botevgrad there were disturbances in the villages of Litakovo and Novacene, in that of Tervel - in Kladenci and Kableskovo. Disturbances erupted also in two villages of the district of Dobric and in one of them - Lovcanci - the livestock was taken away.

The character of the disturbances of April 13-20 was the same as in the preceding period. We have information about risings prepared also in certain villages of the districts of Pernik and Elhovo which were frustrated. Probably there were such in other districts of the country as well.

The total number of the villages with outbreaks of unrest was 95. If we add here the places where they were prepared but for one or other reason they failed to materialize, it becomes clear that the disturbances spread over 5-6% of all co-operative farms at that time. This shows that they turned into a real factor in the country's political life.

About the exacerbation of the situation speak also the data of the State Security about an increase in the number of clandestine groups in the villages in 1951 and the expansion of the network of their supporters. This was a strong indicator of the moods of the Bulgarian peasants.

One of the main factors which contributed to the quick suppression of the unrest and the return of the livestock to the co-operative farms were the mass repressions undertaken by the Ministry of the Interior in the areas of the peasant disturbances. By March 26 in the district of Kula were detained 49 people. On April 24 they rose to 60. Taking into consideration the part of those detained up to March 26 were released, it becomes clear that the total number of those who passed through the police-station of the District Department of the Ministry of the Interior in Kula came up to 70-80 peasants, and for a district like that of Kula that was too much. In April, over 107 families of "hostile elements" in the district were banished to distant areas in Eastern Bulgaria.

Up to April 3 in the Provincial Department of the Ministry of the Interior of Plovdiv were detained 71 people. In the night of 10/11 April were detained 55 persons, former activists of the banned BAPU - Nikola Petkov.

After long interrogations in the investigation units of the State Security part of those detained were released, another part were put on trial and a third part were sent to concentration camps. For instance up to December 10, 1951 in the district of Kula 36 people were convicted by the district court to various terms of imprisonment for "acts against co-operative farms". These were not all the persons convinced from the district since "the more serious cases" were handed over to the Provincial Court.

Immediately after the publication of V. Cervenkov's speech started the mass putting in of applications for leaving the co-operative farms. This process was most marked during the last two weeks of April when more than 25 000 applications were submitted. Although not so intensive, this process continued in June and July but in separate areas declarations were submitted even in September and October. According to data of the Politburo, by December 10, 1951 the total number of applications (including the already withdrawn 10 000-12 000) amounted to 52 000. This came up to some 8% of

the co-operators in the country at that time and over 25% of those driven into the co-operative farms after September 15, 1950, bearing in mind that the bulk of the applications were by these co-operators in the country at that time and over 25% of those driven into the co-operative farms after September 15, 1950, bearing in mind that the bulk of the applications were by these co-operators. A large number of the applications were concentrated in 10-12 districts. Thus in the district of Lukovit were submitted 3 200 applications, in the district of Silistra - 3 049 (35% of the total number of co-operators in the district), in the district of Sofia - 2 884, of Lovec - 2 118 and of Pleven - 1 896. According to our, probably incomplete, data, between 1 500 and 1 700 were the applications in each of the districts of Lom, Svistov, Kula, Vidin, Orjahovo and Botevgrad.

The number of those wishing to put in applications was in all probability much greater. At a plenary session of the Provincial Committee of the BCP - Varna on August 24 it was pointed out of the co-operators "keep the applications in their pockets" and waited to see how it would be proceeded with those who had already submitted them.

Despite the strong efforts made during the second half of 1951, over 40 000 co-operators did not wish to withdraw their applications. In the autumn of 1951 about 12 000 of them were expelled from the co-operative farms: part of them as "not convinced", another part as "kulak and hostile elements". In this way those in power tried to extricate themselves "with honour" from the delicate situation in which they had put themselves - on the one hand with the need for observing the tacit principle of Stalin's kolkhoz strategy: "having once entered in the kolkhoz, the peasant cannot leave it".

The suppression of the peasant disturbances did not remove the tension from the villages. A strongly hostile attitude towards the co-operative farms continued to be felt for several months, very often it was expressed in public places. Not seldom Party members did not react to "hostile statement" - evidently they feared the sharp reaction of the majority of those present against them or were in full agreement with the evaluations that were made. Besides, these crisis processes sized not only the districts where there was unrest but many others as well. We hold documentary data on such phenomena in the districts of Pazardzik, Ajtos, Pomorie, Elhovo, Karnobat, Sumen, Preslav, Sliven, Ruse and Lom. This meant that the processes were general, all over the country.

Another characteristic period of time - in the spring and summer of 1951 - in many places the new co-operators did not come to work in the co-operative farms. This led to the failure of farm work in the co-operatives or to late performance, to poor quality work, to considerable waste and great loss. In his report to the national conference of June 17, 1951 the Secretary of the CC Todor Zivkov pointed out these phenomena as ubiquitous for the country. Particularly characteristic was that of the district of Kula where the process of normalization began only at the start of 1952. Similar was the situation in the district of Varna, and probably in other areas of the country.

This shows that the peasant disturbances in the spring 1951 had a lasting effect on the Bulgarian villages and on the entire Bulgarian society.

In the period from the spring of 1951 to the end of 1955 collectivization was not applied on a general scale. The new stage of co-operation began at the end of February 1956. The violence in collectivization during the spring of 1956 against resulted in an increased resistance on the part of peasants. In many villages of the districts of Targoviste, Omortag, Botevgrad and Dupnica there were strong agitation not to join the co-operative farms. Not seldom the propagandists were BAPU members.

Particularly strong was the resistance in the Pirin region. For example, on June 26, 1956 in the village of Tesevo, district of Goce Delcev, a group of peasants came out with pitchforks and clubs against the tractor which had to form the tract of land of the new co-operative farm. A mass fight followed. Similar scenes occurred also in the villages of Novohodzovo, Petrovo and Mikrevo in the district of Sandanski. In the village of Poletto near Blagoevgrad in such an incident the tractor was broken and a Party functionary was badly beaten. In connection with this case four women were convicted to different terms of imprisonment.

As during the previous period, many BCP members and whole village Party organizations declared themselves against the setting up of co-operative farms. Such were e.g. the Party organizations in the villages of Siva Reka, Vaskovo, Mustrak and Studena, near Svilengrad, Jagodovo and Dolno Ozirovo near Berkovica. In the three districts of the province of Vraca where in 1956 collectivization had been carried out - those of Berkovica, Belogradcik and Mihajlovgrad - 273 Party members were expelled for refusal to join the co-operative farms. For the whole country the number of those

expelled for this reason varied between 3 000 and 4 000 people.

Most interesting was the case in the village of Smocevo, district of Dupnica. On the initiative of a few councillors, a conference was summoned at the council of the local "active", including two members of the BCP. The meeting decided not to allow the formation of a co-operative farm in their village. A group of activists who had come from the district centre were not admitted to the conference.

The most frequent form of resistance was the failure of the new co-operators to bring in their livestock - the animals were slaughtered or sold dirt cheap. In this respect the data are striking: in March 1956 the co-operative farms were joined by 50% of the private farmers at that time with nearly 50% of the land owned by the private sector. Only about 3 or 4% of the available livestock was, however, brought in. In some areas of the country newly admitted co-operators pointedly cut down the trees in their orchards.

The straining of the situation about collectivization again led to terrorist acts by the peasants. In 1956 the State Security recorded 157 cases of threats and terror and in 1957 - 350 chiefly in the areas where a large number of cooperative farms were set up. The cases of sabotages in the villages also increased: 132 in 1956 and 57 in 1957. In 1956 were recorded also 210 cases of setting on fire co-operative property or that of activists of the co-operative farms. The State Security believed that it was the question of diversionary acts. The cases of arson were the most numerous in the provinces with intensive collectivization - of Vraca, Sofia, Haskovo and Burgas and among the districts in that of Grudovo in the province of Burgas where violence and coercion in the establishment of co-operative farms on a large scale were the strongest.

Cases of terror of greater importance were the assassinations of the chairmen of the co-operative farms in the villages of Belotinci, district of Belogradcik, and Kalново, district of Sumen, and of the chairman of the council in the village of Malamovo, district of Dupnica. Attempts were made to kill the chairmen of the councils in the villages of Bijacevo, district of Targoviste, and Mindja near Elena. In the village of Lujutovo, district of Velingrad, were gravely beaten the initiators for the formation of the co-operative farm, and in the village of Barloznica, district of Slivnica, and Antonovo, district of Omurtag, bombs were in the rooms where groups of propagandists from the district centre were sleeping. In the village of Bratanci, district of Pazardzik, and Sapareva Banja, district of Dupnica, were uncovered organized clandestine groups. As a result of the pressure for joining the co-operative farms among the Turkish population in Northeastern Bulgaria was strengthened the movement for emigration to Turkey.

The strongest manifestation of the resistance of the peasants were the disturbances that burst out in the second half of April 1956. They were stimulated by the plenary session of the CC of the BCP, held April 2-6, which condemned the manifestations of the "personality cult" in Bulgaria. The peasants correctly thought that the coercion in the collectivization during March 1956 was also a manifestation of the system of the personality cult and that the decisions of the April plenary session entitled them to leave the co-operative farms and to take with them their livestock and farm equipment.

The earliest piece of information about the unrest is contained in a document of the Politburo of the CC of the BCP of April 21 where it was pointed out that in the provinces of Ruse and Plovdiv had taken place "plundering of livestock" from the co-operative farms. In his report at the meeting with the active of the Ministry of the Interior on April 25, T. Zivkov reported plunderings of livestock in 17 villages in the province of Ruse. He pointed out that such things had happened also in the provinces of Sumen and Burgas. People in the halls noted that there had been similar manifestations also in the Kjustendil area. At the official conference, held the same day with the provincial chiefs of the Ministry of the Interior, the Minister of the Interior G. Cankov said that a few days earlier the situation in the province of Ruse had been alarming but now it was back to normal.

In the annual report of the State Security for 1956 mention was made of unrest in the provinces of Sofia, Ruse, Stara Zagora, Plovdiv and Sume and of "one or two cases" in those of Vraca, Pleven and Varna. As the most serious was characterized the unrest in the villages of Dicevo, district of Tutracan, and Sevar, district of Kubrat, which was on a particularly large scale and where things went as far as physical violence on officials. According to the report disturbances occurred in 34 villages all over the country.

We think that this figure is far from complete. We have data at our disposal on village unrest in many places which were not mentioned in this report of the State Security; according to a report of the Provincial Committee of the BCP - Haskovo, there were peasant disturbances in five villages of the district of Svilengrad and in "two or three" in that of Harmanli. According to information made known at a district Party conference in the summer of 1956, disturbances had taken place in three villages in the district of Sevlievo. In a report of the Provincial Prosecutor's Office - Sofia mention

was made of a protest rally in the village of Zimevica, near Svoge. At a Party meeting in May 1956 at the Ministry of the Agriculture village unrest in the district of Dupnica was also noted. Besides this, in the document of the State Security were registered only the disturbances expressed in the taking away of livestock and farm equipment from the farmyards of the co-operative farms without mentioning the excesses in the entry of co-operators in the tracts of co-operative land to carry out private harvesting. Of such cases there was talk, for example, in the already mentioned report of the Provincial Prosecutor's Office - Sofia.

From all this it becomes clear that the disturbances in 1956 were also on a large scale although they did not reach the extend and range of those in 1951. Our estimate is that disturbances took place in some 50-60 villages in the country. They were most marked in the districts of the province of Ruse: Tutrakan, Dulovo Kubrat and Isperih. Strong were the disturbances also in the districts of Provadija and Kjustendil where things proceeded to meetings and demonstrations of peasants with the raising of anti-government slogans.

Like in 1951, now again the peasants began en masse to put applications for leaving the cooperative farms. According to information of the Minister of Agriculture St. Todorov announced at a Party meetin of June 29, 1956, up to that moment about 13 000 applications had been received at the Ministry. We believe that there were considerably more applications - probably about 20 000 since many of them failed to reach Sofia. A large number of applications were submitted in certain villages - e.g. they totalled 187 in the village of Slavotin, district of Mihajlovgrad.

Unlike 1951 now the peasants were bolder, in many places the applications were submitted in an organized fashion - in the form of collective subscriptions which were delivered by delegations to the CC of the BCP or the Council of Ministers. At a district conference in Pirdop on May 19, 1956 the Party secretary of the village of Smolsko declared that a few days previously he had been in Sofia and there - at the CC and at the Provincial Committee of the BCP there were so many delegations that the people of these institutions wondered what to do. Peasants from the village of Nikolovo, district of Mihajlovgrad tried to submit a petition to the British Legation on Sofia but this was prevented by the State Security. All these acts were accompanied by numerous news sheets and leaflets with anti-government contents.

These were forms of well-expressed civil disobedience, but they did not meet the necessary public response - the authorities took exclusive measures so that these manifestations would remain unknown to the broad strata of the Bulgarian public. As in 1951 the movement for putting in applications was suppressed and the will of thousands of co-operators was disregarded.

Civil disobedience foun other ways of expression though. In some places the new co-operators refused to pay any taxes and charges to the State and the municipalities and this continued until the end of 1956. In many places the new co-operators did not bring in the livestock, whole flocks and herds were concealed in secret, distant spots in the mountains. It became necessary for the local Party organizations to set up brigades for compulsory taking away of the livestock from the courtyards and of armed groups for tracking down the livestock hidden away outside the inhabited localities.

The most frequent form of civil disobedience now again was the failure of the new co-operators to come to work in the farms. In maby places this continued until the end of 1956. This act again led to a serious crisis in many co-operative farms, to a delayed gathering of the crop and to not doing or badly done field work. A way out of the crisis was usually sought by the mass sending of brigades of workers, employees, students and soldiers from the army. This however resulted in much waste and in poor-quality work which inflicted great losses on the co-operative farms.

The authorities strongly hit the peasants who had dared to rise in protest actions. In connection with the village unrest, according to State Security information, were detained over 300 people. We regard these data as considerably lowered since in the district of Kjustendil alone were arrested 115 people - this was announced at a plenary session of the Provincial Committee of the BCP - Sofia by one of the secretaries of the District Committee - Kjustendil during the autumn of 1956.

Through its network of agents the State Security tried to find out who were the initiators and organizers of the mass subscriptions and the sending of the delegations, these people were arrested and later brought to trail.

Collectivization went on in 1957 and 1958, as did the resistance of the peasants. This process was expressed most intensively during the first three months of 1958 in the co-operation of a number of the countr's mountainous areas: those of Belogradcik, Ajtos, Kotel, Trojan and Teteven, the villages in the Rhodope region of the districts of Haksovo and Plovdiv. In these areas strong resistant actions

took place. The most frequent phenomenon in the Rhodope region were the mass flights of farmers from their native villages, spending weeks in the forest or being put up for the night with relatives in distant inhabited localities. In some places the local Party organizations were mobilized to organize blockades of the villages to forestall flights. The blockades, however, proved ineffectual. This "game" admittedly could not last long but it was a vivid indicator of the attitude of the peasant masses towards collectivization.

Terrorist acts and threats for them again became more frequent. During the period from January 1 to March 21, 1958 the State Security recorded 18 cases of arson of property of the co-operative farms in areas where intensive collectivization was in progress.

Now, like in the previous period, the resistance of the peasants was smothered by repressions. In certain places they assumed a savage character. Such were, for instance, the mass beatings of private farmers who had refused to join the co-operative farm in the village of Ustina, district of Plovdiv.

What was the significance of the peasant masses to collectivization. At first sight this resistance seems completely useless and senseless. The totalitarian state achieved its objectives: within comparatively short periods of time it carried out a general collectivization of the Bulgarian village and the counteraction of the peasants did not in the least hinder this process. The resistance was, however, of a definite importance not only and we would say not so much for collectivization than for the all-round development of the society. Best felt were the results of the peasant disturbances during the spring of 1951 - they contributed to the beginning of a well-expressed tendency towards a certain softening and liberalization of the political system in the country. As regards the disturbances in April 1956, their effect was expressed the best in the general context of the changes that occurred in Bulgaria after the 20th congress of CPSU. In the first place we would indicate the established negative attitude among the Bulgarian public towards the compulsory collectivization, which found its most striking expression in April and May 1956 in the internal Party discussions in the BCP of the decisions of the April Plenary Session of the CC. In the second place, this transpired in revising the programme for changes in Bulgarian agriculture, approved by the July Plenary Session of the CC of the BCP in 1956: much more funds were granted than the originally envisaged and a more radical reduction of the levy was approved.

As regards the impact of the permanent resistance of the peasants to the system of state deliveries, it exercised its influence for doing away with the excesses in it, for the introduction of certain order and this becomes apparent very much in studying the evolution of this system.

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