

THE NATIONAL PEASANTS' PARTY DISSOLUTION, A NEW STAGE IN ROMANIA'S SOVIETIZATION PLAN

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The November 19, 1946 elections resulted in an outrageous forgery, which constituted a key moment for the establishment of the Communist dictatorship in Romania. Reversing the real outcome, The Romanian Communist Party and its satellites, grouped in the Democratic Parties' Bloc (D.P.B.) won 84% out of the 414 seats of the future Parliament. The National Peasants' Party (N.P.P.), which was the real winner, got only 33 seats, namely 7.72%¹. The National Liberal Party (N.L.P.), representing the second large opposition party, got only 3 seats². Given the incredible historical fake committed by Groza government, that flagrantly violated the provisions of the Moscow Conference from December 1945 and of the Decree-Law from July 15, 1946 on the elections for the Chamber of Deputies, the N.P.P. and the N.L.P. made public a joint declaration³ on November 22, 1946. This document contained the abuses and frauds committed during the elections and consequently decided that the two ministers without portfolio representing the two parties, Emil Hațieganu and Mihail Romniceanu, should resign from the discredited government⁴.

A few days later, the leaders of the three opposition parties, the N.P.P., the N.L.P. and the I.S.D.P. - Iuliu Maniu, C.I.C. Brătianu and Constantin -Titel Petrescu signed a declaration proclaiming the elections null and void „...in flagrant opposition to the reality and the will of the electoral body”⁵.

During the November 29, 1946 extraordinary meeting of the N.P.P. Executive Committee, a resolution was adopted, which denounced the elections' outcome and decided that Peasants' deputies should not take part in the Parliament sessions⁶.

Without the US and British governments support and applying the provisions of the 1923 Constitution, King Michael had to ignore Maniu's and Brătianu's advice and read the Throne's message on December 1, 1946, in the opening of the Chamber of Deputies' session.

Holding the legislative power as well, the Communists could pursue at a higher pace their policy meant to fully gain power, in order to create a state seen as a mimetic copy of the Soviet Union.

¹Ș. Rădulescu-Zoner, D. Bușe, B.Marinecu, *Instaurarea totalitarismului comunist în România (The establishment of Communist Totalitarianism in Romania)*, p. 209.

² *Ibidem*.

³ *Romania. Political life in documents. 1946*. Romanian State Files, Bucharest, 1966, p. 494.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 495-496.

⁵ *Romania's history in data*, Bucharest, 2003, p. 485.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 486.

In early 1947, the country was in a catastrophic situation. Two years after the D.P.B. government had been established, the domestic product accounted only 48% of the value registered in 1938. Half of this percentage was paid to the USSR as a war compensation⁷. Chaos and disarray governed all economic fields. Besides, the long-lasting drought during 1945-1946 led to a serious food shortage, Moldavia being the most affected province. The famine took a heavy toll of human lives here, while the authorities never mentioned their number.

Unable to manage the serious problems his country confronted with, Petru Groza was interested in the political side of the ruling. Directed by Soviet councilors imposed by the Red Army, he took steps aimed at ruining the market economy in order to subsequently introduce the Socialist economic system.

Applying the Leninist principle „you are either with us or against us", the Communist Party continued and extended its actions meant to annihilate the opposition by an extremely wide range of measures such as: banning meetings and manifestations; suppressing the freedom of press; seizing propaganda papers, political cleansing, arrests and even assassinations. The initial attack had to be directed against opposition parties' leaders who were to be compromised in order to eventually dissolve the entire opposition. As a matter of fact, this objective had been made public from the very beginning of Groza's ruling. The first serious attempt occurred in November 1945, when following the meeting held by the opposition in the Palace Square celebrating King Michael's name-day, the Communist leader Vasile Luca asked the dissolution of the historical parties N.P.P. and N.L.P. under the false pretence of their having planned an armed rebellion. A large-scale political lawsuit was requested in order to incriminate the opposition⁸.

Being aware of the hostility shown by most people, the Communist leadership went on using its satellite parties, the historical parties dissidences and the well-organized and disciplined members of the Legionary Movement (which had signed a cooperation agreement⁹ with the Communists ever since October 1945). Therefore, at the end of 1946, Victor Medrea, ex-chief of the legionary protocol, declared: „The extremes go together. My party is going to join forces with Gh. Dej and Bodnăraș. We will give up the priests and they, the Jews. Together we'll destroy the bourgeoisie and the historians, who need more than a knife and a gun to be killed. I made the most beautiful funerals of the whole country and historians will also enjoy such funerals"¹⁰. The same Medrea, affiliated to Nicolae Pătrașcu's group, used to say: „Communists and legionaries have a common enemy"¹¹, and the bourgeoisie can only be overthrown with our help.

⁷ National Central Historical Files (A.N.I.C.), the General Directorate of Safety Police stock, file 69/1947, page 11.

⁸ A.N.I.C., C.C., R.C.P., stock 49, file 49/1945, page 1.

⁹ *Romania. Political life in documents. 1945*, Romanian State Files, Bucharest, 1994, p. 391.

¹⁰ A.N.I.C., the General Directorate of Safety Police stock, file 37/1947, page 110.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

The Peasants' leadership knew hard times were to come, but they couldn't imagine that secret agreements outlining new political trends in Eastern Europe had been signed. Therefore, they tried to stop the Communist offensive with the help of people's extensive support, the king and the rules of the democratic game. Under these circumstances, the N.P.P. decided that the main working lines should focus on: annulling the elections, refreshing the party's activity by restructuring its territorial structures, increasing the role of local bodies in decision-making, gathering more members and continuing the propagandistic activity with a focus on man-to-man work. Strengthening relationships with King Michael and putting more pressure on the British and American missions in order to directly involve these states in saving Romanian democracy were also envisaged.

One of the first steps was to publish a documentary booklet about the way in which elections had been forged¹². The booklet, printed in Romanian, Russian, French and English was to be delivered to journalists and foreign diplomats in Bucharest and then sent to the UN Security Council in order to annul the vote¹³.

Appreciating the importance of the role played by the Great Powers in that moment, Iuliu Maniu stressed in a discussion with Ion Bărbuș, the national leader of Peasants students that N.P.P.'s problems were closely related to the external events „imminent and decisive for our internal affairs; we won the elections and for the time being this fact has to be fully exploited in all the ways and places”¹⁴. Bărbuș exposed Maniu the main actions envisaged for the near future by Peasants students in cooperation with the Liberal ones. He told the party leader that the preparations for a students' strike, scheduled 2-3 weeks before the Peace Treaty was signed, were already way ahead. The conflict would allegedly start because the government was unable to provide food to the students¹⁵. Shock teams made up of 30-40 students were to be established in Cluj and they had to seize several public institutions. The railway workers were supposed to join the strikers¹⁶. Maniu replied that, for the moment, the youth had to refrain from open manifestations which could worsen the situation of the party. However, the young people had to be prepared, as terror times were likely to come¹⁷.

The Safety of the State, which followed every step of the Peasants' leaders and registered their talks, reported to the General Directorate of Safety Police that county leaders used to say during their meetings that elections were to be held in January or February, as the two great Western parties had not recognized the outcome of the November vote. General Susaikov, the Russian representative in the Allied Control Commission, was said to having contacted Iuliu Maniu for a potential

¹² *Ibidem*, page 139.

¹³ *Ibidem*

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, page 107.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, page 162.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, page 107.

cooperation and cooptation in the government¹⁸. These reports highlighted the idea that Petru Groza would hold his office until February, 10, 1947, when the Peace Treaty was to be signed; after that, a coalition government made up of N.P.P., N.L.P., S.D.P. and R.C.P. was to be established in order to hold new elections¹⁹. A few reports mentioned that Maniu intended to leave his country if the situation did not improve, in order to convince the British not to recognize the November fraud²⁰.

In order to intensify the fight against Communists and their allies, the N.P.P. launched, on January 18, 1947 an appeal „To the nation” signed by Iuliu Maniu²¹.

The document of paramount importance performed an accurate radiography of post-March 6, 1945 events, when a small group of people had confiscated power. They „dishonor the state institutions” by terror, lies and forgery²². The army was cleansed of capable people and the justice was kneeled. Workers, craftsmen, industrialists and merchants were hit in their legitimate interests. The government applied fascist and Hitler-like methods to the population, generalizing torture, persecution, the most infamous frame-ups, arrests and assassinations²³. When the Moscow agreement imposed democratic elections, the rulers brutally violated them. Here are some of the most frequent abuses committed by the power during the electoral campaign and the vote-counting:

- citizens with the right to vote were not put on the electoral lists
- citizens on the electoral lists did not receive election cards
- the population was tortured by thug gangs
- several assassinations were committed and the perpetrators were not punished
- ballot papers stamped prior to the election process were put into the ballot boxes
- election cards were distributed to persons not eligible to vote, who therefore voted several times
- the vote outcome was forged and the minutes of meeting modified²⁴.

Considering these illegalities and abuses, the government was guilty of „...the crime to having forged the national will”²⁵. The manifesto ended with a vibrant appeal to the citizens to start the fight against the dictatorship and tyranny²⁶.

This extremely resolute attitude had a strong impact on the Romanian society and caused troubles to the government. A few days later, during the Ministers Council meeting on January 23, 1947, Petru Groza referred to the election

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, pages 136, 163, 165, 166.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, page 138.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, pages 135-136

²¹ Ș. Rădulescu-Zoner, D. Bușe, B. Marinescu, quoted op., p. 222.

²² *Romania. Political life in documents. 1947*, Romanian State Files, Bucharest, 1994, p. 53.

²³ *Ibidem*.

²⁴ *Romania. Political life in documents. 1947*. quoted op. p. 54.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

process and found that many servicemen, gendarmes, magistrates, teachers and public servants proved hostility to the democratic regime²⁷.

Considering that the N.P.P. was looking for new ways of action, several trends took shape. The Safety of the State reports mentioned a group whose leaders were Aurel Leucuția și Cezar Simionescu. They developed a manifesto draft which was sent to local organizations²⁸. The document asked the government to assume its mistakes and to change its political program; otherwise, the group was to separate from the party and to claim its name²⁹. When several rumours about Iuliu Maniu's potential retirement started circulating, „Dreptatea” newspaper - the party's official journal- denied them in its January, 22 issue³⁰. Learning from the signals received, the party leadership took several organizational steps both centrally and locally:

- the Study workshop resumed its activity at the headquarters, suspended during the electoral campaign³¹
- the professional workshops were reactivated
- it was decided that local professional military workshops should be established until February 15³²
- preparations for communal electoral general assemblies started
- sub-county organizations were created to assure a better connection between the village and the county³³.

The result of these measures was immediate: the party activity improved at all levels.

One of the first steps taken against the opposition ever since Groza government had been established was to censor and ban its press on every occasion. At the end of 1946, at Soviet authorities' request, the N.P.P.'s official journal „Dreptatea” was suspended by the Information Ministry, after having published an article on the war compensations payment to the USSR. The last part of the article was apparently printed by eluding censorship³⁴. The government used this situation to take other press-related restrictive steps. During the Council of Ministers meeting on January 3, 1947, while extensively debating this issue, Petru Groza asked that a special law should be adopted „to bring these villains to reason”³⁵.

On January 8, the military censorship sent an address to „Dreptatea” newspaper board, saying that two conditions had to be met so that the journal could

²⁷ A.N.I.C., the Council of Ministers Presidency stock, Stenographs, file 1/ 1947, page 186.

²⁸ *Romania. Political life in documents. 1947.* quoted op. p. 58.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 58.

³⁰ „Dreptatea”, issue no. 263, January 22, 1947.

³¹ *Ibidem*, issue no. 266, January 26, 1947.

³² *Ibidem*, issue no. 263, January 22, 1947.

³³ A.N.I.C., the General Directorate of Safety Police stock, file 70/ 1947, page 169.

³⁴ A.N.I.C., the Council of Ministers Presidency stock, file 1/ 1947, page 20.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, page 24.

be re-published: the author of the article had to resign and apologize be published³⁶. The two requirements were finally met on January 18, and the newspaper was published again; it continued its traditional line, criticizing the mistakes and the incompetence of the D.P.B. government in well-documented articles. Thus, in its January 21 issue, analyzing the economic situation of the country, G. Florian stressed that the food issue was not settled, and several people died of hunger every day³⁷. The article went on saying that the current government „... had sabotaged work, wasted the capital, while the balance between prices and salaries had been turned upside-down”³⁸. In the same issue, Matei Odobescu wrote an article entitled „Action and reaction” that analyzed the dictatorial policy of the Communist party. The author concluded that the country suffered from famine, lacks and especially incompetence shown by the current government³⁹.

On January 26, the Peasants newspaper extensively wrote about the Study workshop meeting held in Bucharest a few days earlier which had brought together several leaders such as: Ion Mihalache, Nicolae Penescu, Ghiță Pop, Pan Halipa, Șerban Cioculescu, Vladimir Streinu, Nicolae Carandino and Nicolae Ciorănescu. At the end of the meeting, Ion Mihalache took the floor and made a detailed presentation of the party's restructuring activity; then, he said that the N.P.P. had to be well-organized and well-prepared to face the unfavourable circumstances⁴⁰.

At the end of January, Iuliu Maniu met professor Ioan Lupaș in Sibiu. They discussed issues extremely important for the Peasants immediate activity. The leader of the party declared he had asked local organizations to refrain from public manifestations until the Peace Treaty was signed. Maniu was convinced that the USA and the Great Britain would not recognize the elections, so that new elections were likely to be held in March or April at the latest⁴¹.

Signing the Peace Treaty with the Allied Powers on February 10, 1947, in Paris, was the key political event for Romania at that time. The treaty's clauses had been published in the press ever since January and were largely debated by the public opinion and closely analyzed by the ruling or opposition parties.

Politically speaking, article 3 was extremely important; according to it, the Romanian state had to guarantee all human rights and fundamental freedoms, freedom of expression and press freedom included⁴².

The way in which article 5 was interpreted caused strong frictions. Thus, according to the Armistice Convention, Romania had taken steps to dissolve all

³⁶ *Romania. Political life in documents. 1947, op.cit.*, p. 90.

³⁷ „Dreptatea”, issue no. 262, January 21, 1947.

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

³⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, issue no. 266, January 26, 1947.

⁴¹ A.N.I.C., the Council of Ministers Presidency stock, the Special Intelligence Service, file 25/ 1947, page 8.

⁴² *Romania. Political life in documents. 1947. quoted op. p. 92.*

fascist-type organizations and would not allow such parties in the future either⁴³. The Communists were constantly accusing the Peasants and the Liberals of conducting a fascist policy, opposing democracy and being the people's enemies⁴⁴. Showing things in this light, the communists searched the legal basis to justify the opposition becoming an outlaw. On the other hand, the historical parties highlighted that they had fought against fascism and dictatorship of all kind. Other Treaty provisions also resulted in controversies. Thus, the most-favoured-nation clause and the provisions regarding the Danube navigation were seen as positive by the opposition, while the D.P.B. parties stated they contradicted Romania's interests⁴⁵.

A strong resistance from the opposition parties became manifest when the Economic agreement between Romania and the USSR was signed on February 20, 1947 in Moscow. According to the N.P.P., by this agreement Romania was totally enslaved by its Eastern neighbour⁴⁶. Referring to its provisions, Emil Ghilezan said that the Romanian delegation, led by Gheorghiu-Dej, had to concede to the USSR the oil, the railways and the mining industry⁴⁷.

Internally, the N.P.P. continued to show great interest for the organizational issues. As scheduled ever since late November 1946, the villages all over the country had to hold meetings in order to elect the new head and the local organization committee⁴⁸. To this effect, circular letters signed by Ion Mihalache and Nicolae Penescu - general secretary of the party- were sent to those county organizations that had not held elections in all villages yet, with a clear request to rush up⁴⁹. The circular letter also included the electoral regulation. According to the statute, a village organization was chaired by a committee elected for two years, made up by a president, a vice-president, a secretary, a treasurer and a delegate elected for every 50 members. Professional, youth and women organization were also established in bigger villages⁵⁰. The central leadership asked that each organization head should report to the county its necessities for the school, church and dispensary. It also requested a document containing the abuses committed by the B.D.P. local administration ever since March, 6, 1945 as well as a list with N.P.P. members persecuted for their political beliefs⁵¹.

Thus, several Safety sources showed that the Peasants' leadership sent a secret order to the local organizations with the following dispositions:

⁴³ *Ibidem*. p. 93.

⁴⁴ „Dreptatea”, issue no. 285, February 18, 1947.

⁴⁵ Ș. Rădulescu-Zoner, D. Bușe, B. Marinescu, quoted op. p. 226.

⁴⁶ A.N.I.C., the General Directorate of Safety Police stock, file 39/ 1947, page 270.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, page 244.

⁴⁸ *Idem*, file 70/ 1947, page 169.

⁴⁹ *Idem*, file 39/ 1947, page 160.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, page 161 and file 70/ 1947, page 170.

- to increase the resistance spirit in all the local factories and enterprises in order to be prepared for the general strike
- to make propaganda among the villagers against the forced collection of cereals
- to establish mixed teams of peasants and workers in order to help the villagers with their agricultural labours⁵².

Although it had to temper its critical notes against the government because of all pressures put on it, „Dreptatea” newspaper went on publishing editorials on actual events. Thus, in its article „The scamps' triumph”, the head of the newspaper, Nicolae Carandino, referred to the ruling politicians saying: „...those who have no virtue, the unscrupulous, the coward, the idle, and the fawner more easily accede to top positions and don't quit them so easily”⁵³.

At the local level, several party leaders such as Emil Ghilezan strongly attacked the prime-minister, blamed for the hard economic situation, as he had rejected the help offered by the USA and Great Britain but he had accepted the detrimental game of the USSR⁵⁴. He also advised peasants not to sell their products because the state offered poor prices⁵⁵.

In some counties less affected by famine, like Sibiu, the local N.P.P. organization decided to collect aids for those who needed help. The products were to be directly sent to some reliable persons in Moldavia, in order to be sure they would reach the appropriate destination⁵⁶. In Sibiu as well, during its workers' department meeting, the N.P.P. decided to establish 10-people teams, meant to intervene wherever incidents took place. Those nominated to take part in these teams were not allowed to carry firearms⁵⁷.

An extremely accurate perspective on the political events in the next two years was given in February 1947 by the Peasants' Leadership in Galați. They envisaged that after the Peace Treaty was signed, Romania would see kolkhozes, nationalized industry, expropriated houses, the monarchy abolished and the republic instituted⁵⁸.

During the monthly Peasants' organization meeting in Severin, its head Emil Ghilezan realistically stated that Groza government would not be overthrown, as it enjoyed the USSR support. Under these circumstances, he said, the N.P.P. would neither take part in the government, nor have a prime-minister, even if it was offered one⁵⁹. In the end, the speaker denied rumors stirring the party about a meeting

⁵² *Ibidem*, page 269.

⁵³ „Dreptatea”, issue no. 276, February 7, 1947.

⁵⁴ A.N.I.C., the General Directorate of Safety Police stock, file 39/ 1947, page 162.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, page 267.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, page 268.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, page 243.

between Maniu and general Susaikov. He claimed the meeting was not held, and even if it was, it had no political relevance⁶⁰.

The complex situation faced by the country led to the reactivation of older tensions and to the emergence of new ones within the N.P.P. Thus, an Old Kingdom Peasants' group took shape, claiming that the party's activity could be more efficient if Niculescu-Buzești, secretly backed by Mihalache, took the leadership⁶¹. If this change did not take place, the party was likely to split in the two groups already known prior to 1926⁶². Another group made up especially of Transylvanian intellectuals took shape around former minister Emil Hațieganu⁶³. He wanted to change the existing political orientation in order to cooperate with the D.P.B.. The new trend was due to the lack of British-American support for the democratic forces, which led to their isolation and the Communist regime consolidation. The Safety reports mentioned that Hațieganu had allegedly declared to a few persons close to him that Maniu was very ill and the leadership could be taken neither by Mihalache, nor by Mihai Popovici who "are politically played-out"⁶⁴. Some of the Peasants' elected deputies were also dissatisfied. Finding out that the government will not be changed they wanted to take part in the Chamber of Deputies works⁶⁵.

Also, some frictions between Maniu and the party leadership were obvious. Thus, when the central forum put forth the necessity to set up large protest meetings, the head of the party opposed; he argued that the population was hungered and disorders difficult to control might occur. Maniu asked that large protest should start in spring⁶⁶. In its turn, the Peasants' youth exerted great pressure so that a position considered to be platonic should be left off and a forceful attitude against the government should be adopted⁶⁷.

In order to slightly temper the tensions, Ion Mihalache announced loud and clear that Maniu was not going to resign as head of the party⁶⁸.

Providing the population with first necessity food supplies continued to be a long-standing problem yet to be settled. First, the government loosely tackled the issue; when the crisis extended throughout the country and the famine hit Moldavia, inconsistent steps were taken and the supply did not improve. In March, large quantities of food started to enter the country as an aid from the US, then from the Great Britain. Thus, on March 3, the 'S.S. Stephenson' ship arrived in Constanța harbor loaded with 210,500 boxes containing different food supplies, each weighing

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, page 269.

⁶² *Ibidem*.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, page 244.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, page 269.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, page 244.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, page 269.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, page 130.

22.5 kilos⁶⁹. The aids started to be distributed by the Romanian and American Red Cross in the region between the Siret and Prut rivers. This fact displeased the authorities, who censored the event as much as possible, then launching a virulent attack on the Romanian Red Cross, still not subordinated to the government⁷⁰. On the other hand, the opposition parties' leaders stressed that these food supplies came as a result of good relationships with the Western world⁷¹.

In the political circles, people greatly talked about a major change which was likely to happen in May, after the Peace Treaty was signed with Austria. On this occasion, the Soviet troops should have been withdrawn from Romania and Hungary⁷². However, about 50,000 Soviet servicemen were to be maintained in Romania in order to ensure communication lines with Austria. The public opinion considered that the number of servicemen maintained was insignificant and these troops were not able to repress the anti-Communist manifestations throughout the country⁷³. The opposition hoped that the D.P.B. government was running short. During a meeting held in Câmpulung Muscel, Ion Mihalache declared: „...in October at latest, the R.C.P. will no longer exist as a political party”⁷⁴.

Even Tătărescu's Liberals and Rădăceanu's Socialists, taking part in the government, considered their turning to the opposition, due to the growing chaos in the economic field⁷⁵.

On the other hand, signing the Peace Treaty with the Allies, closing an economic agreement with Moscow and decreasing the food crisis pressure by getting aids strengthened the Communist party's position and allowed it to pass on to the next stage in establishing dictatorship: the dissolution of the main opposition parties. The first on the list was the N.P.P. To this effect, the political cleansing in the central and local administration intensified, the meetings were banned and the press was heavily censored. In fact, a part of this program was not at all secret since on March 5, 1947 Petru Groza declared for the newspaper „Timpul” that compromised elements had to be eliminated from the state apparatus „...and ways and habits inherited from historical parties have to be outrooted”⁷⁶.

Considering that the opposition had not yet been defeated by these measures, on March 7, the government started extensive arrests among historical parties' members.

Consequently, Iuliu Maniu, C.I.C. Brătianu and Constantin -Titel Petrescu wrote a memoir addressed to the US secretary of state G. Marshall. On March 11, the document was submitted by the N.P.P. head to B. Berry, the US representative in

⁶⁹ „Dreptatea”, issue no. 315, March 30, 1947.

⁷⁰ *Romania. Political life in documents. 1947.* quoted op. p. 136.

⁷¹ A.N.I.C., the General Directorate of Safety Police stock, file 39/ 1947, page 34.

⁷² *Idem*, file 40/1947, page 332.

⁷³ Dinu C. Giurescu, *The iron curtain drops over Romania*, Bucharest, 2002, p. 126.

⁷⁴ A.N.I.C., the General Directorate of Safety Police stock, file 39/ 1947, page 34.

⁷⁵ Dinu C. Giurescu, quoted op. p. 77.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 113.

Bucharest⁷⁷. The memoir stated that the Romanian government did not observe Yalta, Potsdam and Moscow agreements on democracy reinstatement and triggered a new wave of terror⁷⁸. The memoir went on highlighting that the three signatory parties understood not to aggravate the country's disastrous situation due to the authorities' incapacity and that was why they had not initiated extensive protests. Even the Interior minister Teohari Georgescu admitted this fact. However, without an apparent reason, presidents, vice-presidents, general secretaries, as well as several workers, intellectuals and professors from the opposition started to be arrested in all counties⁷⁹. The persons arrested were not given any chance to address to the justice and were not brought any accusation against⁸⁰. In the final part, the state secretary was asked to „... act without delay in order to put an end to this unbearable situation, the worst of all dictatorial regimes ever in Romania”⁸¹.

Also, during his meeting with B. Berry, Maniu handed him in another memoir, from the N.P.P. exclusively. This document contained all the persecutions experienced by the opposition parties and for the first time it stated that the Communist Party - whose goal was "... to pauperize all the social classes" - was behind the retaliatory measures⁸².

In an emergency meeting on March 13, the N.P.P. Standing Delegation analyzed the recent events and issued a tough declaration rejecting the attempt to explain the arrests by a fascist plot⁸³.

Mihai Romniceanu, ex-Liberal minister in Groza government, asked to see Emil Bodnăraș, under-secretary of state in the Council of Ministers Presidency, trying to stop the abusive arrests among the opposition. During their meeting, he presented a valid protest, but he received no answer, except for a smile⁸⁴.

Another similar step was taken on March 18, when a Peasants' delegation led by Emil Hațieganu met the Interior minister Teohari Georgescu. Nothing was obtained this time, either⁸⁵. Due to the heavy censorship put on the main newspapers, no information on the recent developments was published, while „Dreptatea” newspaper veiledly tackled the issue in terms of fundamental freedoms, saying that democracy „... fights neither people, nor isolated individuals, but ideas and streams”⁸⁶.

Due to the growing repression, Maniu thought that the N.P.P. should pass to forcible actions which could have resulted in bloodsheds. During a meeting with B.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 81.

⁷⁸ A.N.I.C., the General Directorate of Safety Police stock, file 70/ 1947, page 165.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, page 166.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*.

⁸² Dinu C. Giurescu, quoted op. p. 80.

⁸³ Dinu C. Giurescu, quoted op. p 108.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 84.

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, p 108.

⁸⁶ „Dreptatea”, issue no. 305, March 13, 1947.

Berry, the Peasants leader informed him about his talk with King Michael on this issue and the latter had agreed on this option. But in order to be successful, they needed the support of the two Great Western Powers⁸⁷. A few days later, on March 19, 1947, the US government informed Bucharest authorities that: „...it cannot overlook Groza government's minority dictatorial ruling which opposes the democratic principles „...but it cannot support or advocate an overthrow attempt by violent means”⁸⁸. Confronted with such a refuse, the N.P.P. understood it had to give up a forcible government overthrow; the political struggle had to focus on other solutions suitable to the real situation. Future actions were to be mainly based on its own forces.

Still having close contacts with the US envoy, Maniu informed him that more than 300 Peasants and proportionally less Liberal and Independent Socialists had been arrested until mid-March⁸⁹. Even under these extremely unsafe circumstances, the activity went on at the N.P.P. headquarters located at 9, Clemenceau street. County organizations like those in Constanța and Arad suspended their meetings after several top members had been arrested⁹⁰. However, their activity went on by man-to-man work.

Considering the situation in Romania in terms of recent developments, B. Berry wrote in his report to Washington that the Communists' program for the opposition included: the arrest of as many opponents as possible who were to be sent to Târgu Jiu camp, the frame-up of a Romanian plot linked to a similar Hungarian operation as well as massive deportations to the USSR⁹¹. Then, the campaign meant to discredit the US Mission to Bucharest by revealing connections between the plotters and the US clerks added up to the above-mentioned goals⁹².

Although chased, persecuted and arrested, the Peasants went on fighting locally against the regime, by their own forces. Thus, a manifestation took place in Turnu Severin, on which occasion dr. Petre Iliescu held a conference on the inter-war period, stressing that the economic and political life ran freely⁹³. In Iasi, the Medicine student Merișor tried to turn the obsequies into a meeting against the authorities, while in Sibiu the local organization was still prosecuting 30 poll sections heads who had violated the law in November 1947⁹⁴.

On March 30, Iuliu Maniu, C.I.C. Brătianu and Constantin Titel Petrescu submitted a memoir to the Soviet, British, French and US Missions, writing about the arrests of the three parties members and denounced the non-compliance with international agreements signed by the Romanian government⁹⁵. The memoir showed that the arrests had been made in the middle of the night, without any legal

⁸⁷ Dinu C. Giurescu, quoted op. p.82.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 88-89.

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 89.

⁹⁰ A.N.I.C., the General Directorate of Safety Police stock, file 40/ 1947, page 332, page 335.

⁹¹ Dinu C. Giurescu, quoted op. p. 89.

⁹² *Ibidem*, p. 102.

⁹³ A.N.I.C., the General Directorate of Safety Police stock, file 40/ 1947, page 213.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, page 354.

⁹⁵ Dinu C. Giurescu, quoted op. p. 104.

proceeding. Many of them had been put to a jail for common law prisoners in Bucharest and were not allowed to contact their families. The detention regime was extremely hard to bear: the prisoners were squeezed in improper rooms, without food, clothes or medical assistance. It didn't matter that some prisoners were more than 75 years old or that they were priests⁹⁶. The memoir also mentioned that camps for tens of thousands of people were built all over the country⁹⁷.

On April 4, as a follow-up to his action to expose the D.P.B. regime abuses, Iuliu Maniu issued a press release for foreign correspondents⁹⁸. This measure triggered reactions from the Romanian public opinion, the top officials and the foreign diplomats. The censorship did not allow „Dreptatea” newspaper to immediately publish details about this event. Only on April 10, the article "Mr. Maniu to the worldwide press" was published on the first page. The text did not offer actual information on the party leader declarations, but it concisely informed that he had incisively criticized the way in which the country was governed⁹⁹. It also highlighted in general terms that Maniu offered real solutions for the current major problems. „Scântea” newspaper strongly reacted to the message sent abroad by the Peasants' leader. On April 15, Silviu Brucan published in the Communist official newspaper the article „No excuse”¹⁰⁰. Maniu was accused of having betrayed the Romanian interests during the Paris Peace Congress, as he had pleaded for the most-favoured-nation clause to be granted to Romania as well as for the principle of free movement on the Danube¹⁰¹. Brucan's longlasting accusations ended with the following remark: „...Maniu's pack of merchants would be able to sell the very last national wealth only to enslave again the people's freedom and to completely exhaust the workers and peasants as to serve its own interest and that of foreign businessmen”¹⁰².

B. Berry offered precise information on Iuliu Maniu's press release, stating that the latter had complained about the recent arrests, about the ongoing opposition persecution and about the government's incapacity¹⁰³. Supporting these statements with proofs, the Peasants' leader said he could not understand why the Allied powers were maintaining the current Romanian government. Even though the actual critical circumstances made the N.P.P. to prevent the population from anti-government manifestations, the authorities accused the party of instigation to rebellion¹⁰⁴.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 111.

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 112.

⁹⁸ „Dreptatea”, issue no. 319, April 4, 1947.

⁹⁹ *Idem*, issue no. 324, April 10, 1947.

¹⁰⁰ „Scântea”, issue no. 798, April 15, 1947.

¹⁰¹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰² *Ibidem*.

¹⁰³ Dinu C. Giurescu, quoted op. 104.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibidem*.

The non-compliance with laws on arrest and detention regime proceedings made the prisoners, helped by a few guardians, to send a protest letter to the authorities in charge. Thus, on April 7, 76 Peasants, Liberals and Independent Social-Democrats detained in Văcărești prison addressed to the Interior minister a letter containing all the deprivations they had to bear:

- the cells were small, stuffy and overcrowded
- the beds had no mattress
- the hygiene was precarious and the prisoners were tormented by bugs and lice
- at daytime, the political prisoners were kept together with common law prisoners, who suffered from tuberculosis, syphilis and typhoid
- no medical assistance was provided¹⁰⁵.

In the final part, the minister was asked to release the signers until April, 9. Otherwise, the prisoners were going to go on hunger-strike. The same day, a memoir with an identical content was also addressed to the Court of Appeal General Prosecutor in Bucharest¹⁰⁶.

In Pitești prison there were over 150 N.P.P. members. On April 15, they sent Maniu a letter asking his help¹⁰⁷. The prisoners said that in the beginning they had a gentler regime, but after Avram Bunaciu's visit¹⁰⁸ their conditions became harsher and harsher: they were no longer allowed to receive food, clothes, cigarettes and drugs. Their only means of existence was an old pickles soup¹⁰⁹.

„Dreptatea” newspaper was not allowed to say a word about the hundreds of political arrests throughout the country. However, as a veiled response to the ongoing developments, the Peasants' daily newspaper published the article „Freedom” stating that the main attribute of „the new man” so widely quoted was freedom¹¹⁰. In this context, the article argued that if the persecuted turned into persecutors, then the mankind would collapse into primitivism¹¹¹. Poor in format, the article ended with the assessment: „...those who practise tyranny have their fate sealed”¹¹².

In order to prevent the potential intruders from undermining the party from the inside, the central N.P.P. leadership in Bucharest decided at the beginning of April that former D.P.B. activists should not be accepted within the N.P.P.¹¹³.

As it wanted to extend control on the economy, the Communist Party decided on April 5, 1947 to establish a new Ministry of Industry and Trade that received large competences on collecting and distributing agricultural and industrial

¹⁰⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 132.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 134.

¹⁰⁸ Communist leader, Justice minister since April 1948, replacing Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu.

¹⁰⁹ Dinu C. Giurescu, quoted op. p. 134.

¹¹⁰ „Dreptatea”, issue no. 321, April 6, 1947.

¹¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹¹² *Ibidem*.

¹¹³ *Ibidem*, issue no. 323, April 9, 1947.

consumption goods, granting raw materials, investments regulation and credits control¹¹⁴.

Although the food aids received from the Western countries were significant, still they could not solve the issue of providing daily food, especially in central Moldavia counties. „Scântea” newspaper greatly advertised the canteens set-up by the government, which distributed food to the population. It stressed that their efficiency was proven by less people deceased by famishment, but it implicitly admitted that the food issue was mismanaged¹¹⁵.

On April 10, B. Berry issued a new report on the situation in Romania. He stated that the government, aware of the opposition showed by the great majority of population, adopted repressive measures, namely arrests with a questionable success, as it was consumed by internal tensions itself¹¹⁶. The report also wrote that from the outside, the D.P.B. seemed to be a strong organization, made up of 6 parties, but, in fact, some of them were just a cover, being led by the Communists¹¹⁷. They said the Bloc was troubled by dissensions between the Communists and Tătărescu’s Liberals¹¹⁸. The US diplomat said that in order to keep the power, the communists would increase repression against the opposition, starting with deportations in the USSR and ending with political assassinations. The report concluded that the opposition’s perspectives were gloomy, given the fact that „the restraint of personal resources and the will to resist cannot go beyond a certain limit in a country that cannot find support in the nations abroad”¹¹⁹.

Making a see-through reference to the Red Army’s ensuring the government’s „stability”, Nicolae Carandino underlined in „Dreptatea” newspaper that „...a national regime cannot invoke the external factor to legitimate its ruling”¹²⁰. As a result of numerous critical articles aimed at the Communists, Nicolae Carandino was suspended for a year from the professional journalists’ trade union¹²¹. By Easter time, „Dreptatea” journal deplored the attitude of several poets, actors and film directors in Bucharest that had proven „the highest villainy” by joining the power¹²². As a response to this critical attitude, „Scântea” newspaper declared in an article signed by Silviu Brucan that „Dreptatea” was a newspaper hundred per cent fascist-oriented¹²³.

¹¹⁴ Mihai Bărbulescu, Dennis Deletant, Keith Hitchins, Șerban Papacostea, Pompiliu Teodor, *Romania’s history*, Bucharest, 1998, p. 478.

¹¹⁵ „Scântea”, issue no. 797, April 11, 1947.

¹¹⁶ Dinu C. Giurescu, quoted op. p. 124.

¹¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 125.

¹¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 127.

¹²⁰ „Dreptatea”, issue no. 325, April 11, 1947.

¹²¹ *Ibidem*, issue no. 327, April 16, 1947.

¹²² *Ibidem*, issue no. 329, April 18, 1947.

¹²³ „Scântea”, issue no. 804, April 21, 1947.

On April 19, 1947, 240 prisoners -P.N.Ț., P.N.L. and P.S.D.I. activists- in Pitești sent Maniu a message showing that:

- the arrest warrants were issued by the Council of Ministries Presidency that lacked judicial competences
- they contained the wording „to retain the person” a non-existent legal term
- the warrants were void, as the 15-days term had expired.
- all warrants had the same number and the same pretext: „disturbance of public order and state safety”

The signers asked the Peasants' leader to inform the international fora and especially the Allied Control Commission¹²⁴.

The N.P.P. gave a special attention to the army and the discharged (politically cleansed) officers and non-commissioned officers. Ever since the end of 1946 military professional workshops had been created in most counties. Their members were retired or cleansed servicemen. The county organizations were subordinated to a Central Committee made up of 16 former officers out of which 5 generals¹²⁵. General Gabriel Negrei led this structure¹²⁶. The workshops were legally constituted and sometimes their declarations were published in „Dreptatea” newspaper. In the spring of 1947, the N.P.P. tightened its connections with the army while distributing US aids¹²⁷. The Peasants wanted to attract as many servicemen dissatisfied with the Communist regime as possible, especially those discharged. The Safety reports mentioned that about 30% of those discharged from the army registered in the N.P.P. or became its sympathizers¹²⁸. In the army, the political activity was carried out by man-to-man work, rumours spreading, countering the Communist propaganda, writing slogans on the barracks' walls, stealing weapons and attracting several pilots to flee from the country¹²⁹.

After a series of successive arrests, the activity of military workshops was disturbed in the spring of 1947.

As the 1st of May came closer, the Communist Party launched a series of new furious attacks against the opposition. On April 30, the Atheneum hosted a large meeting celebrating the Labour Day. Top communists and leaders of the parties making up the D.P.B. were among the participants¹³⁰. On this occasion, Gheorghiu Dej qualifies in his speech the historical parties' representatives as „... fierce enemies of liberty and peace, eternal agents of foreign imperialism, everlasting impallers of the working population...”¹³¹. The Labour General Conference

¹²⁴ Dinu C. Giurescu, quoted op. p. 139.

¹²⁵ A.N.I.C., the General Directorate of Safety Police stock, file 70/ 1947, pages 156-163

¹²⁶ *Ibidem*, page 150.

¹²⁷ *Ibidem*, page 149.

¹²⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹²⁹ *Ibidem*, page 151.

¹³⁰ Ș. Rădulescu-Zoner, D. Bușe, B. Marinescu, quoted op. p. 247.

¹³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 248.

launched an appeal claiming that „...past ghosts, traitors, saboteurs and profiteers as well as their Maniu-Bratianu-like movers opposed and are still opposing” the country’s progress attempts¹³².

A prominent Communist leader Gheorghe Apostol said on this occasion that „...we have to be intolerant with these people plunderers and send them to forced work in work camps”¹³³.

This torrent of threats was inauspicious. Indeed, on the night of May 4, the second series of extensive arrests started throughout the country. Some sources indicated that about 1000 people had been put in prison until May 7¹³⁴. The Interior Ministry confirmed that the Safety had made arrests among people that had violated the country’s laws by subversive actions, disorder instigations and sabotages¹³⁵. „Scântea” newspaper, the Communist Party forerunner usually announcing the steps to be taken especially in the political field, published on May 7 an article signed by Silviu Brucan saying that „...without the political removal of the 200 Romanian families related to the historical parties, as well as of their practices and speculations, the democracy cannot be thoroughly consolidated and the actual hardships completely eliminated”¹³⁶. On their way to totalitarianism, the Communists fully appealed to diversion. Thus, their daily newspaper published a long memoir signed by 68 workers from „Dreptatea” newspaper printing house protesting against their employer’s oppression and exploitation directed against them¹³⁷.

Confronted with an extremely difficult situation, the N.P.P reorganized its activity and took the steps necessary to survive as a party and to continue its activity under special circumstances¹³⁸. Thus, the central leadership ordered the following:

- to stop any visible propaganda in order to appear that such activity was over
- for the safety of instructions given to local organizations, only reliable persons unknown to the Communists were to be used
- the party members would act following the Maquis principles in order to avoid being arrested.
- only Communist workers would be used for discontent manifestations
- acting servicemen who were also N.P.P. members would no longer be involved in any activity and they would have to appear devoted to the Communists¹³⁹.

¹³² „Scântea”, issue no. 810, April 30, 1947.

¹³³ *Ibidem*, issue no. 813, May 4, 1947.

¹³⁴ Dinu C. Giurescu, quoted op. p. 136.

¹³⁵ „Scântea”, issue no. 816, May 7, 1947.

¹³⁶ „Scântea”, issue no. 816, May 7, 1947.

¹³⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹³⁸ A.N.I.C., the Council of Ministers Presidency stock, Special Intelligence Service, Political Parties, file 55/ 1947, page 30.

¹³⁹ *Ibidem*.

These steps had to be urgently adopted as all the information led to the assumption that the opposition suppression was just a matter of time.

On mid-May, „Dreptatea” newspaper, already strangled by censorship, diminished its critics once more. It published only general debates such as: the industrialization appropriateness, the politics morality or news on party leaders' visits throughout the country. Neither speeches and positions of Peasants' leaders nor upper fora decisions were published. As far as arrests and detention regime were concerned, the silence imposed was total. Sometimes, forms of protest such as publishing on a whole page in great-printer the few words on fundamental rights contained in article 3 of the Peace Treaty broke through¹⁴⁰.

On May 17, wives, mothers and sisters of several Peasants members detained in different camps submitted to general Schuyler, the US Military Mission chief, a memoir asking the US government to intercede for the release of people arrested¹⁴¹. A long list with N.P.P political prisoners held in Craiova was annexed to the memoir.

The extremely difficult situation of all opposition parties made their leaders to issue a joint press release on May 19, 1947 reaffirming their wish to fight together for saving the Romanian democracy¹⁴². Iuliu Maniu, C.I.C. Brătianu and Constantin-Titel Petrescu also highlighted that no change occurred in their attitude towards the government¹⁴³.

On May 20, the N.P.P addressed a long message to the king, asking him „not to sign any law which could essentially modify the political and economic structure of the country”¹⁴⁴. The king was also requested to make a new appeal to the Three Great Powers in order to establish a democratic regime¹⁴⁵.

The serious crisis the country confronted with made Gh. Tătărescu, the Liberal dissidence leader and also the vice-prime-minister, to write a detailed memoir, extremely critical about Petru Groza's two-year government¹⁴⁶. The document showed that due to the economic decline and the lower standard of living „...a wave of discontent against the government is growing every day throughout the country”¹⁴⁷. Also, the excessive preventive arrests made people think of a „...regime maintained by force and terror”¹⁴⁸. Besides the critical issues, Tătărescu offered several common sense, practical proposals, aimed especially at the economic recovery. This extremely pertinent analysis was submitted to the government

¹⁴⁰ „Dreptatea”, issue no. 350, May 16, 1947.

¹⁴¹ Dinu C. Giurescu, quoted op. p.144.

¹⁴² Ș. Rădulescu-Zoner, D. Bușe, B. Marinescu, quoted op. p. 251

¹⁴³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴⁴ Romania. Political life in documents. 1947. quoted op. p. 160.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴⁶ A.N.I.C., the General Directorate of Safety Police stock, file 69/ 1947, page 11.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibidem*.

members, the leaders of the D.P.B.' component parties and the two great Western democracies. Normally, such a measure should have triggered strong reactions from the Communists and the prime-minister. The memoir was not discussed in the government, while the Communist press completely ignored it, which proved that the plan to annihilate the opposition and its partners had already been settled and there was no need to complicate things.

In the second half of May, over 400 Peasants' political prisoners in Pitești sent Maniu a message informing him on the growing difficult conditions they had to bear in prison. Following the orders received by the Interior Ministry, the food ration diminished up to 427 calories per day. As a result of food restrictions and the lack of minimum hygiene, the typhoid, the dysentery and the malnutrition took their toll¹⁴⁹. More than 150 people were ill and starving, while the Mediaș Peasants' leader Ion Struguraș died due to the detention regime¹⁵⁰. The signers asked the N.P.P. to do its best in order to send a car with parcels to Pitești every Sunday. Money and drugs were also required. Hopeless, they asked Maniu to appeal to the Red Cross¹⁵¹.

In June, "Dreptatea" newspaper published a greater number of articles criticizing the government, and, unprecedentedly, the attacks launched by „Scântea” newspaper against the N.P.P. diminished. This fact could be explained by a temporary censorship relaxation, as well as a normality appearance before the final attack likely to come soon.

On June 1, „Dreptatea” newspaper criticized Vasile Luca's speech before the Chamber of Deputies regarding the Industrial Offices Law. The article claimed that the Communist leader's speech contained no doctrinal wit; on the contrary, it was full of confusions, while „...the arguments are far-fetched”¹⁵². A few days later, in response to the D.P.B. propaganda on the democracy which was said to define the government's steps, the Peasants' newspaper considered that a "crooked democracy" had been established in Romania after March 6, 1945¹⁵³.

The prisoners' letters and memoirs as well as the political leaders' intercessions with US attaches were finally successful. Thus, on June 5, the US military mission to Bucharest sent a letter to general I. Susaikov informing him on the detention regime in Pitești¹⁵⁴. That prison was considered to have turned into „...a grave of living people similar to Nazi camps”¹⁵⁵. Exposing the situation, the Soviet general was warned that „...no diplomatic proceeding or international protocol can prevent the Allied Control Commission from learning the situation...

¹⁴⁹ Dinu C. Giurescu, quoted op. p. 147.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibidem*

¹⁵¹ *Ibidem*

¹⁵² „Dreptatea”, issue no. 363, June 1, 1947.

¹⁵³ „Dreptatea”, issue no. 370, June 11, 1947.

¹⁵⁴ Dinu C. Giurescu, quoted op. p. 156.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

and asking the suppression of Hitler-like conditions”¹⁵⁶. In the end, Susaikov was requested to mediate for the law to be restored and for those guilty of „criminal practices” to be punished¹⁵⁷.

Frequently, the government sessions focused especially on ways to annihilate the opposition parties, rather than addressing economic recovery-related issues. Thus, on May 12, Petru Groza declared that the government made a mistake "forgiving" the reactionists for their November 8, 1945 manifestation; as a result, they wanted „no less than to drive us into the corner when the Soviet troops leave the country”¹⁵⁸. Further on, the prime-minister asked the government to act so that when the Red Army leaved the country „we shall have our scores cleared”¹⁵⁹. Then, speaking of the attitude towards the historical parties, the Justice minister Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu raised the question of actions brought against by a few N.P.P. local organizations against several poll sections heads who had violated the law on November 19, 1946. The minister said that criminal liability was invoked initially, but the government stopped the trials, granting oblivion for these cases. Nevertheless, „the historians” didn't lose their nerves and filed another action, asking for civil liability. In order to settle the issue, Pătrășcanu proposed and the government agreed to grant oblivion for their civil crimes as well¹⁶⁰.

During the same session, a report signed by general Dumitru Dămăceanu and professor C.I. Parhon on the dramatic consequences of famine in Tecuci county was dispatched without any response¹⁶¹.

On June 16, „Scântea” newspaper published on its front page, in capital letters, „R.C.P.'s proposals to improve the economic and financial situation of the country”. The measures included an increased state control on the industrial production, on the goods' movement and consumption, as well as on the agricultural products collection operations¹⁶². In response, „Dreptatea” newspaper countered this program on June 18, stating that it hid the current economic failure. It ended with the following words: „... desperate, the R.C.P. makes big fuss about calling the people to fight again and tells us how our country will abound in milk and honey”¹⁶³.

Tenacious in his efforts to intercede with Western democracies' attaches, on June 17 Maniu met Roy Melbourne, the US deputy representative, informing him on the latest internal political developments, insisting on the terror the opposition had to experience. He announced that the number of prisoners amounted to 900, out of which 818 were Peasants and the rest Liberals and Independent Social-Democrats¹⁶⁴.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 157.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵⁸ A.N.I.C., the Council of Ministers Presidency stock, Stenographs, file 6/ 1947, page 13.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶¹ *Ibidem*, page 23.

¹⁶² „Scântea”, issue no. 847, June 16, 1947.

¹⁶³ „Dreptatea”, issue no. 376, June 18-19, 1947

¹⁶⁴ Dinu C. Giurescu, quoted op. p. 159.

For the sake of accuracy, on top of it all, thousands of people had left their homes and were hiding in different places for fear of new arrests. The Peasants' leader insistently asked the US government to take a strong line, like in Hungary, given the fact that article 3 of the Peace Treaty had been flagrantly violated¹⁶⁵. In fact, the arrests were another crucial component of the Communist plan aimed at seizing the power, namely to induce a state of generalized fear throughout the country, meant to block not only any move of the opposition but also of the population as a whole.

After his meeting with the US diplomat, the N.P.P. head sent a long memoir to the Interior minister Teohari Georgescu, exposing the gloomy situation of the opposition parties' members and the fascist-like methods used by repression forces¹⁶⁶. It also mentioned that a 400-calories daily ration led hundreds of prisoners to death by starvation¹⁶⁷. The memoir protested against impediments in sending parcels to the prisoners. Thus, in the first two weeks parcels could be delivered to the prisons' offices; subsequently an order came providing that food stuffs were to be mailed on a monthly basis. Seeing that, with all deliberately caused delays, some food supplies had not been altered and were still edible, the Ministry ordered that mail-deliveries should be suspended; the parcels were to be personally brought only by first-degree relatives¹⁶⁸. Maniu protested in the name of his party against physical tortures suffered by several Peasants members, namely colonel Poșa from Botoșani and Ion Bărbuș, the University youth central leader. The case of Public Works ex-minister, Virgil Solomon was also mentioned: he was old and ill but he received no medical assistance¹⁶⁹. In the end, urgent release of prisoners detained in Pitești, Craiova, Gherla, Miercurea Ciuc and București was asked¹⁷⁰.

After the US Senate had ratified the Peace Treaty with Romania, Bulgaria, Italy and Hungary on June 5, 1947, the US government felt obliged to send a protest note to Bucharest on June 24, expressing its concern on the hundreds of political arrests that had been confirmed¹⁷¹. The US noted that although the May 6 declaration issued by the Interior Ministry stated the arrests had been made among people accused of subversive activity, actually this was „...a deliberate attempt to intimidate or suppress by terror the democratic elements opposing the current regime”¹⁷². The document also pointed out that the developments in Romania contradicted Groza government's guarantees. The straight reference to the provisions of article 3 of the Peace Treaty proved the protest determination¹⁷³. The next day, on

¹⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 160.

¹⁶⁶ A.N.I.C., the General Directorate of Safety Police stock, file 70/ 1947, page 167.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, p.168.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷¹ Romania. Political life in documents. 1947.quoted op. p. 179.

¹⁷² *Ibidem*.

¹⁷³ *Ibidem*. p.180.

June 25, the British government submitted a similar protest note¹⁷⁴. Normally, the Bucharest authorities' reaction should have been as prompt as possible.

On July 9, this issue was finally tackled during the Council of Ministers session. After reading the two notes, Gh. Tătărescu declared that the government could do nothing but reject them, because these positions were nothing but an interference in Romania's internal affairs¹⁷⁵. As none of the ministers took the floor, Petru Groza concluded that the Western governments raised the same questions on civil liberties like „our historians” and therefore the country would continue to fight against fascism and hitlerism¹⁷⁶.

On July 4, the British and French governments invited Romania to take part, together with other countries, in the Paris Conference on Europe's economic recovery according to G. Marshall's plan. The plan provided that US credits should be granted to help European countries ruined by the war¹⁷⁷. This time, the Romanian government promptly answered the next day that it could not take part in an economically useless action which was also politically dangerous¹⁷⁸. Bucharest authorities claimed that a recovery of European countries was possible only with the Soviet Union's cooperation.

The Romanian Communist regime establishment -related issue must be correlated with events simultaneously occurred in the other Eastern countries fallen under the Soviet domination. Although there are some elements specific to each case, the facts generally had a similar progression. For example, in Poland, the Peasants' Party led by Stanislaw Mikolajczyk was defeated due to electoral frauds committed by the Democratic Bloc on January 19, 1947. Communists and Social -Democrats controlling the Democratic Bloc won 80.1% of the votes. In the same autumn, Mikolajczyk together with other leaders had to seek refuge in Western countries, otherwise they risked to be put in prison¹⁷⁹.

Similarly, the Bulgarian Agrarian Party leader Nikola Petkov was arrested in the Parliament premises on June 5, 1947, accused of conspiracy meant to overthrow the government¹⁸⁰.

As far as Romania was concerned, the plan for fully seizing the power had been drafted by the Soviet Foreign Affairs vice-minister A. I. Vişinski , who subsequently submitted it to Stalin for approval¹⁸¹. An essential stage in this process was the annihilation of the most important anti-Communist force, namely the

¹⁷⁴ Ş. Radulescu -Zoner, D. Buşe, B. Marinescu, quoted op. p. 259.

¹⁷⁵ A.N.I.C., the Council of Ministers Presidency stock, Stenographs, file 7/ 1945, page 60.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷⁷ Romania's history in data, Bucharest 2003, p. 494.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷⁹ Joseph Rothschild, *Istoria politică a Europei Centrale și de Est după al doilea război mondial (The political history of Central and Eastern Europe after the second world war)*, Oradea 1997, p. 125-126.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 174.

¹⁸¹ Dennis Deletant, *România sub regimul communist (Romania under the Communist rule)*, Bucharest, 2006, p. 78.

Peasants politically represented by the N.P.P.¹⁸² In order to outlaw the most important opposition political party, a credible enough instigation had to be arranged so as to justify a radical decision. The N.K.V.D. superior officer Pintilie Bodnarenko was assigned this task¹⁸³. Knowing the top-level N.P.P. problems, he found a clue favourable to carry out a large diversion.

For some time and especially after the November 19, 1946 elections, Iuliu Maniu and Ion Mihalache had been analyzing the party's political prospects after the Communist regime instauration. They concluded that a representative delegation had to be sent abroad in order to explain to the governments and the Western public opinion the Romanian state of facts¹⁸⁴. The group, led by Ion Mihalache, included several stalwarts such as: Nicolae Penescu, Ilie Lazăr and Nicolae Carandino¹⁸⁵.

The communist agents interposed at this point, when helped by a disloyal pilot, they staged the Tămădău event. Those who were scheduled to leave met Iuliu Maniu on July 13, late in the evening. Their leader showed them the route, which included a flight to the Turkish city of San Stefano, then to Istanbul, Paris, London and the United States¹⁸⁶. Maniu said he would not go because he was too old for such a long way¹⁸⁷. On July 14, at dawn, the Peasants' group reached Tămădău, a city 46 km. away from Bucharest, where they waited for the planes which had to fly them abroad. Two small YAR- 39 biplanes arrived at around 7 a.m., but they could carry on-board just a few passengers. Just before getting on the plane, 30 agents led by inspector Zaharia showed up, shot fires and challenged them to surrender¹⁸⁸. 14 people were arrested, including Nicolae Penescu's and Nicolae Carandino's wives. They were immediately taken to the Malmaison prison, where in the afternoon the events were retraced¹⁸⁹. Iuliu Maniu was also arrested in the same evening.

A well-planned operation was launched immediately throughout the country, resulting in arrests and searches among the N.P.P. leaders¹⁹⁰.

„Dreptatea” newspaper announced in its last issues the extraordinary meeting of the N.P.P. Central Committee, aimed at discussing some general politics issues, but it didn't mention a thing about Tămădău and the ongoing arrests.

For two days, the authorities offered no information about the latest events. Only on July 17, „Scântea” newspaper announced on its front page, in great-primers, that a group of Peasants „...sold to foreigners” tried to flee from the country at

¹⁸² Ghiță Ionescu, *Comunismul în România (Communism in Romania)*, Bucharest, 1994, p. 161.

¹⁸³ Dennis Deletant, quoted op. p. 78.

¹⁸⁴ Apostol Stan, Ion Mihalache, *Destinul unei vieți (A life's destiny)*, Bucharest, 1999, p. 290.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸⁶ Nicolae Carandino, *Nopti albe, zile negre (White nights, black days)*, Bucharest, 1992, p. 295.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸⁸ Andrea Dobeș, Ilie Lazăr, *Consecvența unui ideal politic (A political ideal's consistency)*, Cluj-Napoca, 2006, p. 162 and Apostol Stan, quoted op. p. 290

¹⁸⁹ Andrea Dobeș, quoted op. p. 162.

¹⁹⁰ „Dreptatea”, issue no. 393, July 13/ 14, 1947 and issue no. 398, July 15/ 16, 1947.

Maniu's order¹⁹¹. On the same page there was a picture of the prisoners' group in front of a YAR -39¹⁹². In the next days, the Communist press launched a furious campaign, bringing extremely serious charges against the N.P.P., meant to justify its immediate outlawry. Thus, on July 18, Silviu Brucan signed in „Scântea” newspaper the article „The show-down” highlighting that those who followed Horia Sima, Grigore Gafencu or Alexandru Cretzianu in order to establish abroad a hotbed of turmoil against „... the country have to be ruthlessly hit”¹⁹³. The same issue announced that the workers held meetings all over the country asking that the traitors should be severely punished¹⁹⁴. Simultaneously, Teohari Georgescu and other Communist leaders received telegrams with a similar content¹⁹⁵.

A few Peasants' leaders who had left their homes and thus escaped imprisonment established a resistance group. On July 18, this group issued a declaration in the name of Maniu stating that the real traitors that currently had the power „...started to destroy our people and party political leaders in order to more easily attain their criminal goals against our homeland”¹⁹⁶. In the end, the document rejected all government' bouncers¹⁹⁷.

The same day, the Deputies' Assembly agreed the request issued by the Justice minister Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu to repeal the privilege of Parliament for 6 Peasants' deputies: Iuliu Maniu, Grigore Niculescu- Buzești, Ilie Lazăr, Aurel Leucuția, Vasile Serdici and Emil Ghilezan¹⁹⁸. From that moment on, developments were even more dramatic not only for the N.P.P.'s future but also for Romania's faith.

On July 23 the D.P.B. Political Council met in order to analyze the National Peasants' „the conspiracy” and unanimously decided to sustain a law providing the dissolution of the key opposition political party¹⁹⁹.

On July 27, Gheorghiu Dej, Ana Pauker and Teohari Georgescu met general Susaikov in Snagov in order to plan the final details of the N.P.P.'s dissolution²⁰⁰.

The final decision on this issue was made during the Council of Ministers meeting on July 29, 1947, when Teohari Georgescu's report was discussed²⁰¹. In this document, those who intended to leave the country were called conspirators who wanted to attempt against Romania's national sovereignty and to generate a civil war.

¹⁹¹ „Scântea”, issue no. 872, July 17, 1947.

¹⁹² *Ibidem*.

¹⁹³ „Scântea”, issue no. 873, July 18, 1947.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹⁶ A.N.I.C., the Council of Ministers Presidency stock, the Special Intelligence Service, Political parties, file 55/ 1946, page 18.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹⁸ Ș. Rădulescu- Zoner, D. Bușe, B. Marinescu, quoted op. p.265.; Andrea Dobeș, quoted op. p. 163.

¹⁹⁹ Romania's history in data, quoted op. p. 495.; Ș. Rădulescu –Zoner, D.Bușe, B. Marinescu, quoted op. p. 265.

²⁰⁰ A.N.I.C., the Council of Ministers Presidency stock, the Special Intelligence Service, Political parties, file 55/ 1946, page 67.

²⁰¹ A.N.I.C., the Council of Ministers Presidency stock, Stenographs, file 7/ 1947, page 108.

Then, there was a list of supposed betrayals of national interests committed by the National Peasants' Party after August 23, 1944. The accusations included:

- sabotage of anti-Hitler war
- opposition to the fascism removal process
- supporting general Rădescu's criminal regime
- strong opposition to the agrarian reform
- preventing the country reconstruction work
- establishment of terrorist organizations such as: „The T organization”, „ The Black Coats”, „The Voice of the Blood”, „Avram Iancu's outlaws”, „N.N.R.” etc.
- betrayal of national interests during the Paris Peace Conference
- attacking the elective offices on November 19, 1946
- instigation to rebellion and assassinations
- intercession abroad for not sending aids
- submitting memoirs to Western countries²⁰²
- planning several party leaders' flee from the country

Considering all these, Teohari Georgescu asked the N.P.P.'s dissolution, the closeout of its headquarters and premises, the seizure of files and the entire heritage disintegration²⁰³. The Justice minister Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu took the floor and declared he totally agreed with the report, while the motivation was in accordance with the Romanian people's interests²⁰⁴.

This resolution was approved by the government and submitted for debate in the Deputies' Assembly, while on July 30, 1947 it was published in the Official Journal.

The Romanian developments generated obvious concern in the capitals of great Western powers. On July 21, the British government addressed a protest note to the Romanian government, pointing out that recent political arrests were in direct contradiction with the provisions of article 3 of the Peace Treaty²⁰⁵. A few days later, on July 23, the British Foreign Affairs minister Ernest Bevin, questioned in the House of Commons about the situation in Romania, said that Bucharest authorities continued the political repression and violated the international agreements²⁰⁶.

The arrests of N.P.P. leaders, local offices members as well as mere party members went on continuously in late July and throughout August. A few central and local leaders managed to hide and for a while they used their freedom to continue the fight against Communism. However, their means got poorer and poorer. Therefore, several leaders from Dolj county, including Constantin Potârcă - party leader and Eugen Potârcă - local deputy sent Petru Groza a memoir protesting

²⁰² *Ibidem*, page 108-110.

²⁰³ *Ibidem*, page 110.

²⁰⁴ *Ibidem*, page 111.

²⁰⁵ Dinu C. Giurescu, quoted op. p. 176.

²⁰⁶ *Ibidem*.

against the party leaders' arrest and warning him that the Romanian people and the free Peasants would not surrender, waiting for truth and justice to triumph²⁰⁷.

In late August, Roy Melbourne pointed out in a report sent to Washington that the arrests did not decrease and this was not possible as long as the government was, "...determined to completely annihilate the opposition by all means"²⁰⁸.

Starting with August 2, the houses of Peasants leaders put in jail had been confiscated and then readily allocated to several political leaders in office, central institutions leaders or Safety officers²⁰⁹.

The case of Iuliu Maniu and his main collaborators was heard during October 29 octombrie -November 11, 1947. As a result of the Stalin-like judicial frame-up, Iuliu Maniu and Ion Mihalache were sentenced to imprisonment at hard labor for life. The other leaders were also sentenced to long imprisonment²¹⁰.

As a result of the N.P.P.'s dissolution and the tens of political trials that followed, the Communists badly shook the Opposition, getting Romania even closer to its complete Sovietization.

DEȘFIINȚAREA PARTIDULUI NAȚIONAL ȚĂRĂNESC, O NOUĂ ETAPĂ ÎN PLANUL DE SOVIETIZARE A ROMÂNIEI

- Rezumat -

Aflată sub ocupația Armatei Roșii, România a fost supusă unor transformări rapide, menite a anihila instituțiile democratice tradiționale și economia de piață în scopul creării unui stat tipic comunist care să reprezinte o copie fidelă a sistemului existent în Uniunea Sovietică. Un prim pas în această direcție l-a avut instalarea prin forță la 6 martie 1945 a guvernului Petru Groza. Alegerile, grosolan falsificate din 19 noiembrie 1946 au adus comuniștilor și aliaților lor de parcurs mult necesara putere legislativă în stat.

Opoziția democratică reprezentată de Partidul Național Țărănesc, Partidul Național Liberal și Partidul Social Democrat Independent a încercat prin toate puterile să se opună instaurării noii dictaturi. Lipsa sprijinului Occidental a făcut ca acțiunile partidelor istorice, conjugate cu cele ale regelui Mihai să fie zadarnice.

²⁰⁷ *Romania. Political life in documents. 1947*, p. 206.

²⁰⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 213.

²⁰⁹ Iuliu Maniu's house, located at 57, Barbu Delavrancea street was given to Emil Deciu, from the High Court of Cassation; Vasile Serdici's apartment, located on Cristian Tell street, was given to Pârvulescu și Aurel Pană families, while an apartment located on Vânători street was given to Ștefan Voitec. (A.N.I.C., the General Directorate of Safety Police stock, file 70/ 1947, page 184-187.)

²¹⁰ *Romania's history*, Bucharest, 2003, p. 499.

Situația țării la începutul anului 1947 era dezastruoasă. La doi ani de la instalarea guvernului Blocului Partidelor Democratice, produsul intern brut reprezenta numai 48% din nivelul anului 1938. Jumătate din acest procent se plătea U.R.S.S.-ului ca despăgubire de război. Haosul și dezorganizarea erau prezente în toate domeniile vieții publice. În același timp, opoziția a fost supusă unui bine regizat proces de anihilare. Mitingurile și adunările acesteia au fost interzise, libertatea presei a fost suprimată, iar arestările și chiar asasinatele se țineau lanț.

La 18 ianuarie 1947 liderul Partidului Național Țărănesc a lansat un „Apel către națiune” în care, după ce demasca abuzurile comise de minoritatea care a confiscat puterea, chema cetățenii la luptă contra dictaturii și a tiraniei.

Președintele P.N.Ț Iuliu Maniu și o serie de alți lideri precum Ion Mihalache, Nicolae Penescu, Ghiță Pop, Nicolae Carandino, Emil Ghilezan și Pan Halipa au elaborat o strategie menită a reorganiza partidul, a crește influența lui în rândul populației și a contracara ofensiva comunistă. Semnarea Tratatului de pace cu România a consolidat guvernul Groza, care a decis să treacă la următoarea etapă a planului elaborat de Moscova: desființarea partidelor de opoziție.

La 7 martie 1947 a început primul val de arestări masive în rândul partidelor istorice. Conducătorii acestora au adresat mai multe memorii de protest Misiunilor Aliate din România în care denunțau nerespectarea acordurilor internaționale și condițiile inumane de detenție: celule mici, neaerisite, supraaglomerate, paturi fără saltele, condiții precare de igienă, lipsa asistenței juridice și interzicerea dreptului de a primi alimente și medicamente.

În preajma zilei de 1 mai atacurile liderilor comuniști împotriva membrilor partidelor de opoziție care sunt numiți „strigoii ai trecutului, trădători de neam, speculanți și sabotori” se întetesc, prevestind al doilea val de arestări care se va dezlănțui la 4 mai. În câteva zile, numărul celor întemnițați ajunge la circa 1000 de oameni. Ziarul „Scânteia” care era vârful de lance al Partidului Comunist scria că „fără lichidarea politică a celor 200 de familii românești din partidele istorice... nu se poate consolida temeinic democrația”. Cei mai mulți din cei arestați au fost încarcerați la Pitești în condiții deosebit de grele urmărindu-se de fapt exterminarea acestora. Ministerul de Interne condus de Teohari Georgescu a dat dispoziții ca rația de hrană să fie redusă la 427 de calorii.

Liderii partidelor istorice au avut mai multe întâlniri cu reprezentantul S.U.A. la București B. Berry în care i-au prezentat evoluția ultimelor evenimente, solicitând intervenția guvernului american în vederea eliberării celor arestați. Din păcate, o reacție oficială a Washingtonului s-a lăsat mult timp așteptată. Abia la 5 iunie, misiunea militară americană trimitea o scrisoare generalului sovietic I. Susaikov locțiitor al președintelui Comisiei Aliate de Control, în care îi aducea la cunoștință condițiile de detenție de la Pitești subliniind că închisoarea de acolo s-a transformat „...într-un mormânt de oameni vii asemănător lagărelor de concentrare naziste”. La 24 iunie guvernul Statelor Unite trimite o notă de protest Bucureștiului în care își exprima îngrijorarea față de sutele de arestări politice ce aveau loc în

România. Nota avea un caracter ferm, făcând trimitere la încălcarea articolului 3 al Tratatului de Pace cu România.

Pentru țara noastră, planul de acaparare deplină a puterii de către comuniști a fost elaborat de A. I. Vișinski care l-a supus apoi spre aprobare lui Stalin. O etapă esențială în derularea acestui proces o constituia anihilarea celei mai importante forțe de rezistență care era țărănimea reprezentată în plan politic de P.N.Ț. Scoaterea în afara legii a acestui partid presupunea organizarea unei diversiuni suficient de credibile pentru a putea justifica astfel o decizie radicală. Misiunea respectivă i-a fost încredințată ofițerului superior N.K.V.D. Pintilie Bodnarenko. Acesta, fiind pus la curent cu problemele existente în P.N.Ț. la nivel de conducere, a prins un fir favorabil realizării unei diversiuni de amploare.

De mai mult timp și mai ales după alegerile din noiembrie 1946, Iuliu Maniu și Ion Mihalache au analizat perspectivele politice ale partidului în condițiile instaurării unei dictaturi de tip sovietic. Cei doi au ajuns la concluzia că era necesară trimiterea în străinătate a unei delegații reprezentative care să explice guvernelor și opiniei publice occidentale realitatea din România. În acest moment al pregătirilor au intervenit agenții comuniști care datorită unei trădări au regizat evenimentul de la Tămădău. În dimineața zilei de 14 iulie 1947 mai mulți lideri țărâniști au fost arestați în momentul în care încercau să se îmbarce în două mici biplane. Imediat, în întreaga țară s-a declanșat o operație bine pusă la punct de arestări și percheziții în rândul conducătorilor Partidului Național Țărănesc. Concomitent s-a declanșat și o furibundă campanie de presă împotriva țărâniștilor cu scopul de a justifica scoaterea acestora în afara legii. La 18 iulie ca urmare a cererii formulate de Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu ministrul de Justiție, Adunarea Deputaților a votat ridicarea imunității pentru 6 deputați țărâniști: Iuliu Maniu, Grigore Niculescu-Buzești, Ilie Lazăr, Aurel Leucuția, Vasile Serdici și Emil Ghilezan. Câteva zile mai târziu Gheorghiu-Dej, Ana Pauker și Teohari Georgescu se întâlnesc la Snagov cu generalul Susaikov pentru a pune la punct ultimele detalii privind desființarea P.N.Ț. La 29 iulie în Consiliul de Miniștri conducătorii acestui partid sunt învinuiți de atentat contra suveranității naționale a României și intenția de a provoca un război civil, hotărându-se dizolvarea P.N.Ț., închiderea sediilor și a localurilor, confiscarea arhivelor și lichidarea întregului patrimoniu. Protestele Occidentale față de această turnură a evenimentelor nu au putut diminua procesul de sovietizare a României.