

# **East European Fault Lines**

**Dissent, Opposition, and Social Activism**

**Janusz Bugajski**  
**Maxine Pollack**



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Janusz Bugajski  
and Maxine Pollack

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To Winifred, Arthur, Jadwiga, and Piotr



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*Janusz Bugajski*  
*Maxine Pollack*



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# Introduction

An extensive submerged network of social and political fault lines snakes across the Communist states of Eastern Europe, deepening where dissent and opposition are most trenchant. These areas of independent activity, which by definition challenge the Communist Party stranglehold on freedom of expression and public self-organization, indicate a corresponding systemic vulnerability. Though it would be premature to predict an imminent "earthquake" of revolutionary proportions resulting from these fault lines, the latter do constitute definite long-term weaknesses in the Leninist political bedrock. A comprehensive "seismological" study of this phenomenon is overdue. This work endeavors to provide a comparative analysis of oppositionist trends in the Soviet satellite states of contemporary Eastern Europe: Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Romania. It gauges, describes, and evaluates the extent and objectives of independent social activism in these countries, and explores both the causes and effects of public dissent. Limited space precludes a full assessment or even a complete listing of every dissident group, oppositionist trend, and independent public initiative in the East bloc. We principally single out movements and campaigns which serve as pertinent examples of distinct independent currents and strategies in the region. The study also provides an overview of the major literature on Soviet bloc dissent, and draws attention to less well known sources of unofficial ideas and actions.

Chapter 1 examines the main cycles of repression and resistance that have enveloped Eastern Europe since the post-World War II Communist takeovers. The Soviet-directed seizures of power in each state are chronicled, as are the more consequent instances of rebellion, resistance, and political opposition. In order to understand the severe limitations placed on dissent and autonomous social activism throughout the region, an interpretation of the essential structures and features of the Leninist Party-state is offered. Thereafter, the bloc-wide process of de-Stalinization is described, with special attention paid to the resultant upsurge of popular resistance to Communist rule. Subsequent sections explore more recent developments in Czechoslovakia and Poland respectively—the reformist "Prague Spring" in 1968 and the "normalization" that van-

quished it; the flowering of the Solidarity movement in 1980–81 and the imposition of martial law that outlawed it.

Chapter 2 explores categories of dissent and opposition, placing them in historical context, defining them, and assessing their objectives. Some notable comparisons and contrasts are drawn between dissent and opposition, and reformism and revisionism. Official government responses to organized dissent, involving various forms of repression, co-optation, manipulation, and neutralization of organized opposition are also discussed. Chapter 3 is a thematic continuation of the preceding chapter that focuses on various forms of extra-systemic social activism. Whereas revisionism and reformism attempt to change the system from within, social activism during the past decade in particular, emphasizes transforming the existing social, political, and economic order from outside the Communist power structure. One major dichotomy proposed here is that between revolutionism and evolutionism; the latter can in turn be subdivided into a predominantly social and an explicitly political strategy of change. In addition, manifestations of individual non-conformism, unorganized dissent, and non-violent protest are explored. Social movements of self-defense and public resistance are documented, as are more substantial independent mass movements and embryonic "alternative societies." A concluding section on dissident foreign policy highlights international cooperation between oppositionists within the Soviet bloc, as well as their points of contact with the West.

A country-by-country analysis of political movements and human rights campaigns is presented in Chapter 4. The first section deals with Solidarity's Poland, focusing on underground and above-ground structures of the free trade union movement and on the avowedly political groupings it has helped to spawn. A second part looks at the Charter 77 human rights campaign in Czechoslovakia, sketching distinctions between the diverse political currents subsumed under the Charter umbrella. From there, the discussion turns to contemporary Hungary and the dissident, largely intellectual activism therein which styles itself as the "democratic opposition." Also covered are the more traditionalist, rural-based Magyar "populists" opposition. Nascent human rights movements and political resistance in the GDR, Romania, and Bulgaria are enumerated in the last section.

An analytic overview of independent and institutional religious activities throughout the bloc is provided in Chapter 5. Special emphasis is accorded to dissident and oppositionist trends that are religious in origin or aim. Against a backdrop of official hostility to organized religious life, the assessment is primarily multi-denominational, with each significant faith examined in turn. The study focuses on Roman Catholicism in each country; on Protestant denominations in the GDR,

Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Poland; and on independent currents in the Orthodox Churches of Romania and Bulgaria. Finally, an assortment of minority religions throughout Eastern Europe are considered, such as the Uniate Catholics, small Protestant sects, Islam, and Judaism.

In Chapter 6, economic initiatives outside or on the periphery of the Party-state system are explored. The first section examines the parameters of government-sponsored economic reforms, and assesses the extent of privatization and free enterprise in agriculture and industry. The latter includes numerous small-scale manufacturers, "cottage industries," and a legion of self-employed petty entrepreneurs. A second section concentrates on parallel economies and informal distribution networks that supply a considerable volume of services and goods on the "black" and "grey" markets. Also considered are the extensive, self-serving bribery networks on the one hand, and charitable aid initiatives on the other. The nature, extent, and impact of free labor unionism and autonomous industrial self-management are also scrutinized in a concluding section.

In Chapter 7 independent social campaigns and cultural trends are covered in some detail. Peace and disarmament movements are documented, with particular attention given to the protests of conscientious objectors, nuclear disarmers, and anti-Warsaw Pact groups. Ecological campaigns against the unchecked degradation of the natural environment are then chronicled. The few organized human rights initiatives of several national and ethnic minorities are also explored. In addition, the growing number of autonomous youth currents and student movements is highlighted. On the cultural scene, alternative education programs and independent publishing in the region are examined, as are the political acts of graphic and dramatic artists who work outside official circles.

Emerging prospects for reform, dissent, opposition, and social activism in Eastern Europe are elaborated in the concluding Chapter 8. The impact throughout the bloc of recent developments, such as the accession to power of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, is analysed, with special focus on official East bloc reactions and dissident responses to the reformist winds blowing from Moscow. Plausible scenarios for economic and political change are considered, including government restructuring initiatives, and the prospects for any emerging independent public life. Appropriate and contingent Western policies are also discussed within a historical framework, and the potential for Western influence during the coming years is subsequently assessed.

# 1

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## Historical Dimensions

The historical context of contemporary dissent, opposition, and independent social activism in Eastern Europe will be assessed here by surveying the major political developments since the post-World War II Communist Party takeovers. Native Communist organizations obedient to Moscow's will imposed Marxist-Leninist dictatorships over those areas of Central-Eastern Europe that had been designated by the Allied powers as part of the Soviet "sphere of influence." "Revolutions from above" were engineered after the war in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Romania. At the outset, pseudo-democratic coalition governments and falsified national elections helped to reduce internal resistance and to deceive the West as to the ultimate political objective—unchallenged monopoly rule.<sup>1</sup> We will focus on the manner in which domestic opposition was eliminated during the capture of state power and the consolidation of Communist rule. The main characteristics of the sociopolitical systems thereby established will then be outlined and examined.

After the death of Soviet leader Jozef Stalin in 1953, a prolonged and often fitful process of "de-Stalinization" was set in motion throughout the bloc. It consisted of diverse currents of reform and retrenchment, liberalization and orthodoxy, rebellion and "normalization." Each Party-state endeavored to survive the ensuing internal and external political storms, while Moscow sought to maintain Communist control and overall Warsaw Pact cohesion. The contradictions and antagonisms between Communist supremacy and popular aspirations for political and economic freedoms continued to surface throughout the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras. The Hungarian Revolution, Polish October, Prague Spring, and Poland's Solidarity were the mainsprings of opposition in post-Stalin Eastern Europe; the significance of each phenomenon will be assessed in turn. This evaluation will then serve as an historical introduction to dissent, opposition, and social activism in the Soviet bloc during the past decade.

### **Communist Takeovers and Public Resistance**

Communist Party takeovers in all East European states, except Yugoslavia (expelled from the bloc in 1948) and Albania (which broke with Moscow in 1961), would not have been possible without a Red Army presence after their liberation from Nazi occupation in 1944–45.<sup>2</sup> Under the cover of Soviet military control and close political supervision, minority Communist Parties, which in most cases could claim little public support, imposed Leninist dictatorships and launched programs of “socialist construction” between 1945 and 1948. Having largely abandoned the idea of simply incorporating the East European countries into the Soviet Union, Stalin sought to establish stable and fully subservient Communist regimes to project and protect Soviet power, to undermine Western security, and to promote the eventual neutralization of Western Europe.<sup>3</sup>

Seton-Watson has outlined three distinct stages in the Communist takeover process.<sup>4</sup> First, each local Party entered into temporary coalition governments with non-Communist political organizations while excluding those parties and groups that were denounced as “undemocratic” or “reactionary.” Second, the semi-genuine “coalitions” were replaced with completely bogus “alliances” while political rivals were banned and eliminated. In many instances, the fiction of genuine cooperation between independent political organizations was upheld during the further strengthening of Communist control. Third, absolute one-party rule was established with the abolition of all oppositionist groups, or through forced mergers with the ruling Party. Communist-controlled “front organizations” were created to elicit and channel public activism in the desired direction. The length of the first two stages varied significantly between states. In Poland the first period was practically bypassed; in Romania and Bulgaria the first stage lasted for only a few months; in Hungary it was completed by the spring of 1947; in Czechoslovakia stage three was achieved only in February 1948.<sup>5</sup>

The omnipresence of Soviet forces and the widespread use of police terror generally dissuaded anti-Communist forces from undertaking open revolts against the Party administration.<sup>6</sup> Though the context of each takeover varied, several common factors helped to account for the absence of more widespread resistance during the consolidation of power. The wartime devastation played an important role in exhausting local propensities for armed opposition, and decimating the ranks of the intelligentsia as potential leaders for a postwar non-Communist political revival. The Soviet proxies exploited to their advantage the massive territorial adjustments, economic dislocations, and extensive population transfers. Early Western disengagement, and the limited military and

political leverage of the West in the Soviet "sphere of influence," both aided the Communist augmentation of power and defused local willingness to resist actively. Skilled Kremlin diplomacy during and after the war—particularly at the Tehran, Yalta, and Potsdam conferences—helped to seal Moscow's control over the region and precluded any substantive Allied assistance to non-Communist forces.

Growing numbers of East Europeans began to view Communist Party rule and Soviet domination as inevitable and irreversible, and adjusted their expectations accordingly.<sup>7</sup> The governing Parties embarked on a gradual process of Communization, with an initial appearance of pluralism and promises of well-being and democracy to pacify wide sectors of the population. The overall popularity of some of the programs espoused and policies initially adopted by the Communists must not be discounted. These were frequently appropriated from the more popular political parties and included the nationalization of industry, banking, and commerce, and redistribution of land to private small farmers. Promises of rapid economic development and a steady rise in living standards also played a part in subduing potential discontent. Nevertheless, though the postwar "reconstruction" programs clearly had a widespread resonance, the subsequent radicalization of state control in all sectors of public life began to breed fresh resentments among both the urban and rural masses.

The Communists also exploited patriotic and nationalist sentiments to promote their authority and legitimacy. In Poland, for example, the reclamation and resettlement of the formerly German "Western territories" and the Baltic Coast areas were manipulated by the regime to capture public support and divert attention from Poland's territorial losses in the East to the USSR. Among the politically active, some left-wing socialists and radical agrarians calculated that by cooperating with the Communists they could help moderate the latter's platform and prevent the imposition of a Soviet-type political system. The ruling Parties themselves encouraged and exploited such sentiments to gain recruits and defuse opposition. Large Communist-controlled bureaucracies were formed in each state, bestowing material benefits on loyal and obedient functionaries; millions of citizens were thereby enticed into the service of the Party-state.

Despite overall Soviet supervision, the early postwar period was characterized by considerable latitude for the local Parties. Decisions about the pace and content of Communization, the pattern of reconstruction, and the elimination of resistance was left largely to local leaders. However, after the supranational Cominform was created in September 1947 and Communist consolidation in each country was completed, Stalin sought to eradicate national divergencies and impose monocentrism and ideological uniformity while accelerating the "con-

struction of socialism." This second phase of the Communist stranglehold between 1948 and 1953 enforced Stalinism throughout the bloc. It involved the elimination of non-Communists from all influential posts—through imprisonment, exile, or execution. Totalitarian controls were extended to all spheres of social life. A vehement antireligious campaign was launched alongside extensive political and cultural repression and ideological-educational indoctrination. In the economic realm, the full-scale collectivization of agriculture was undertaken, and the nationalization program embraced all medium and small-scale enterprises aside from some marginal private trading.

To ensure Moscow's overall control and supervision, Soviet advisers were installed in key slots throughout the Party, government, military, police, and security apparatus. Each state was placed in a relationship of economic as well as political and military dependence on the Soviet Union. Ultimate Party control rested in the hands of reliable "Muscovite" cadres, who until about 1948 had shared power with the "native" Communists in each country.<sup>8</sup> The immediate postwar emphasis on "domestic peculiarities" was reversed during the "anti-nationalist" and "anti-rightist" drive in the late 1940s, especially after the "national deviation" and excommunication of Tito's Yugoslavia. Between 1948 and 1952 Kremlin controls over each Party were tightened. Real and suspected "national Communists" were hounded down, silenced, and liquidated in each satellite.<sup>9</sup> The sweeping purges of revisionists, "rightist deviationists," and "nationalists" were followed by campaigns against "cosmopolitans" between 1951 and 1953. A principal objective was to construct a monolithic political system in each state by eliminating Party divisions and eradicating disruptive frictions between competing interest groups. Though the degree of police terror varied—with the German Democratic Republic and Bulgaria at one extreme, and Poland at the other—all effective resistance to the Stalinist model was quashed both inside and outside each governing Party.<sup>10</sup>

It is useful at this point to summarize the chief highlights in the six Soviet bloc states during the Communist seizure of power and consolidation of Party rule, with particular emphasis on the elimination of political opposition. Though the Bulgarian Communist Party (*Bulgarskata Komunisticheska Partii*a, BCP) was active during World War Two in the armed underground resistance against the pro-Nazi regime, it was small and largely ineffectual.<sup>11</sup> Soon after the Soviet military occupation, the Fatherland Front coalition, established clandestinely in 1942, emerged from hiding and assumed power after a coup on 9 September 1944.<sup>12</sup> Several thousand actual and potential opponents of the new regime were branded as "fascists," "traitors," and "war criminals," summarily tried, and promptly executed.<sup>13</sup> The Fatherland Front itself encompassed some

left-wing agrarians and socialists, in addition to the Communist members who held the two key government positions—the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Justice. From this vantage point, the BCP proceeded to root out non-Communist leaders and supporters, and undermined the position of its purported allies. The Fatherland Front was steadily brought under full Communist control.

Georgi Dimitrov, a seasoned Comintern agent and diehard Stalinist, returned to Bulgaria from Moscow in late 1945 to take over the Party leadership and assume the premiership. With his arrival, the Communization process gathered steam. In September 1946 the monarchy was formally abolished and Bulgaria was proclaimed a “peoples’ republic.” The rigged elections to the National Assembly in October 1946 placed the BCP firmly in control, with the Fatherland Front allegedly receiving 70.8% of the vote. The regime temporarily tolerated a viable political opposition in the shape of the independent Agrarian Union. But following the adoption of the new “Dimitrov” constitution in December 1947, the Party initiated a reign of terror which swept aside the autonomous agrarians, absorbed the remnants of the Social Democrats into the BCP, liquidated the remaining political bodies that had desisted from joining the Fatherland Front, and rearranged the political system according to “Leninist norms.” During the renewed Stalinization drive in 1948–49, the “native” faction of the BCP was purged by the “Muscovites,” and many Bulgarian Communists were imprisoned or executed. Dimitrov died in July 1949 and was replaced by another staunch “Muscovite” Vulko Chervenkov who became both Prime Minister and Secretary-General of the BCP. Chervenkov tightened Party control in all areas in strict imitation of the Soviet system and eliminated all remaining “nationalist deviationists.” During Chervenkov’s six-year tenure, approximately 100,000 BCP members were expelled or demoted. Stalin’s economic model was imposed, with full-scale nationalization, heavy industrialization, and comprehensive agricultural collectivization. By 1960, 97.4% of all land was either collectivized under Party supervision or placed under the control of agricultural enterprises operated by the state.

In Czechoslovakia, the first post-war National Front government, established in April 1945, consisted of a system of power sharing between Communists, Social Democrats, Socialists, and Catholics in Bohemia and Moravia, and between Communists and Democrats in Slovakia.<sup>14</sup> All conservative and rightist political parties were swiftly banned, including the powerful pre-war Republican (Agrarian) Party. The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (*Komunistická Strana Československa*, CPCS) obtained several key ministries in the coalition administration, including those of the Interior, Agriculture, Information, Education, and Social Welfare. The CPCS also successfully maneuvered to gain control of the country’s

labor unions, youth groups, and various other mass organizations in order to build up its power base. During relatively free parliamentary elections in May 1946, the Communists gained a narrow majority, and Party leader Klement Gottwald became Prime Minister.

The CPCS delayed its seizure of absolute power until 1948, partly to correspond with Soviet interests in lulling the West and promoting Communist parliamentary victories in Western Europe, and partly because of its apparent conviction that the Party could obtain full control through legalistic means. But even though the CPCS was traditionally fairly strong and claimed to have substantial support among the working class, particularly in comparison to other East European Communist Parties, there were growing indications after 1946 of a steady decline in its popularity. Public opinion polls preceding the national elections scheduled for May 1948 revealed a sharp drop in public backing for the Communists. Growing domestic hostility to its policies, and fading chances for the CPCS in any genuinely democratic election, coupled with Stalin's growing impatience with the slow pace of Czechoslovak communization, compelled the Party to seize power and dispense with the electoral process altogether.<sup>15</sup>

The CPCS *coup d'état* was instigated during a cabinet crisis in February 1948. The ministers of three non-Communist parties resigned in protest when the CPCS Minister of the Interior packed the police force with his supporters despite official instructions to the contrary from a clear government majority. The CPCS pressurized President Eduard Beneš to form a new government containing a Communist majority. Both constitutional and illegal means were employed in the bloodless takeover, with the ever-present threat of force by armed, Communist directed workers' detachments. Several non-Communist leaders fled to the West, while others were arrested by the police. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jan Masaryk, was discovered dead under suspicious circumstances, and President Beneš resigned in June 1948 and died three months later. All "bourgeois" political parties were now prohibited and their property confiscated by the state, while parliament was transformed into a pliant instrument of one-party rule.

Klement Gottwald, the new Czechoslovak President and Secretary-General of the CPCS, was instructed by Moscow to resolutely impose a Stalinist political and economic model. The Party itself was reorganized and extended its control networks over all state bodies and bureaucracies, using the National Front as a convenient vehicle for building its monopoly of power. During the closely supervised national elections, staged in May 1948, the single list of Communist and pro-Communist candidates received almost 90% of the vote. This veneer of legality was supplemented soon afterwards by the passing of a new national con-

stitution based on the Stalinist prototype. The ruling Party was expanded with the creation of a loyal core of cadres; between 200,000 and 300,000 politically reliable people from proletarian and peasant backgrounds were elevated to high posts to serve CPCS aims. At the height of the Stalinization drive, "bourgeois elements," "national deviationists," "opportunists," and other non-conformists were purged from the Party; former CPCS Secretary-General Rudolf Slansky was hanged in 1952 as an "enemy of the people." In the early 1950s about 100,000 political prisoners were believed to be incarcerated in jails and concentration camps, and numerous political trials were held to root out any remaining opposition to Stalinism. By this time, resistance to Sovietization both within and outside the Party was scant among all sectors of the population; it was further extinguished by the mid-1950s.

After the entry of the Red Army on German territory, the "Ulbricht group" of German Communists arrived from Moscow in April 1945 to implement Soviet instructions.<sup>16</sup> Independent anti-fascist political groups and voluntarily formed citizens' aid committees, which sprung up in various cities in the wake of the Nazi defeat, were swiftly disbanded and suppressed by Soviet occupation forces in the Russian sector of Germany. Stalin was initially hesitant to establish a Communist state but tended to treat Germany as a single entity in order to extend Soviet influence, neutralize the entire country, and prepare the groundwork for a possible pro-Soviet united Germany in the years ahead. In June 1945, the German Communist Party was formally reorganized, and three other parties were founded in the Soviet Zone—the Social Democrats, Christian Democrats, and Liberal Democrats—under overall Communist supervision. This "Anti-Fascist Democratic Bloc," later renamed the "Democratic Bloc of Parties and Mass Organizations," formed a provisional German government until the creation of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in October 1949, when the Bloc became the National Front.

The Communist Party, in close cooperation with the Soviet Military Administration in Germany, placed its members in key administrative posts. In April 1946, the Communists and Social Democrats were amalgamated to form a Socialist Unity Party (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, SUP) in which the Communists were clearly in a dominant position. Meanwhile, the ranks of the Christian and Liberal Democrats were decimated and their political influence substantially diminished.<sup>17</sup> In late 1947, the SUP formed a People's Congress that established the new government for the GDR ("a socialist state of the German nation") and formulated a new constitution. National elections were held in May 1949 for representation in the Peoples' Congress; all candidates were meticulously screened by the SUP. The Third Party Congress in 1950 officially transformed the SUP into a Leninist organization and accelerated

the thrust toward totalitarianism. Party leader Walter Ulbricht imposed an austere, orthodox regime, overseen by Soviet forces and political "advisors," under the facade of "anti-fascism" and "peoples' democracy." The East German Communists became the principal executors of Stalin's will, while most of the regime's political opponents fled to the West during the mass migration of Germans in the 1940s and 1950s.

A provisional government was established in Budapest in December 1944, with a Hungarian Communist Party minority in addition to representatives of other parties—the Smallholders, Social Democrats, and National Peasants.<sup>18</sup> The Communists took command of the police, security service, army, and civil service with NKVD (Soviet security service) assistance. They proceeded to create and control various local and national mass organizations while penetrating the labor unions and other existing bodies. The process of attrition against rival political parties culminated in the elimination of democrats, socialists, and agrarians from decision-making.<sup>19</sup> The People's Courts, established in February 1945 to purge "reactionaries," alleged fascists and war criminals with assistance from Russian troops, summarily tried and deported about 150,000 people. Several thousand of the accused were executed or simply disappeared. Despite the Communist defeat in the elections of October 1945, a national "coalition" government remained in place, dominated by the Party which retained control over the police and security organs.

Within the Communist Party itself, the "Muscovite" and "native" factions were merged under the leadership of Moscow stalwart Mátyás Rákosi. Hungary was proclaimed a "peoples' republic" in January 1946 after which the Communists sharpened their drive for total power.<sup>20</sup> Rákosi's infamous "salami tactics" were employed to sow dissension within and between rival parties, to weaken their influence, and absorb their enfeebled remnants. Various "extra-institutional" measures and official prohibitions were also activated to disperse and eliminate the opposition. Following the Third Party Congress in September 1946, the program of eradicating the capitalist sectors of the economy was stepped up. The main offensive was launched against the Smallholders Party, especially after the national elections in August 1947 in which the weakened Smallholders still received the majority of the vote much to the chagrin of the regime. Subsequently, Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy was exiled, while other Smallholders leaders were imprisoned or executed. By early 1948, the Communists were preponderant in the state apparatus and had penetrated every government department. The Smallholders organization was dismembered, and in June 1948 the forced merger of the Hungarian Communist Party and the Social Democrats into a new Hungarian Socialist Workers Party (*Magyar Szocialista Munkaspart*, HSWP) signalled "unity among the working class" under firm Communist control.

During the fraudulent elections staged in May 1949 the newly created Peoples' Independence Front obtained 95.6% of the vote. In August the constitution of the Hungarian Peoples' Republic was adopted which formalized the country's subordination to the Soviet Union. Full blown Stalinization involved a major purge of the Party between 1949 and 1953, when more than 350,000 "revisionists" and "national deviationists" were expelled amid massive police terror. More Communists were executed during this period than under the prewar authoritarian regime of Admiral Horthy; they included the potential "Hungarian Tito," Interior Minister László Rajk. As in neighboring states, the Party also launched a collectivization campaign in the countryside in order to eradicate rural opposition to Communist rule.

With the arrival of Soviet forces on Polish territory, Moscow helped to establish the Polish Committee of National Liberation (or Lublin Committee) in July 1944 as a provisional Communist-controlled administration.<sup>21</sup> The initial coalition government proceeded to emasculate the mass-based peasant and socialist movements while ensuring its political stranglehold. The opposition was systematically undermined through hostile propaganda, disruption, harassment, and press censorship. Notwithstanding the overwhelming unpopularity of Soviet-imposed Communism, the Polish Workers Party was steadily built up through a vigorous recruitment drive and the offering of various privileges to new members. The remaining contingents of the war-time anti-Nazi resistance movement, the Home Army (AK), were liquidated by Polish Communist and Soviet forces, including detachments which refused to surrender their arms and disband their units.<sup>22</sup> About 200,000 AK troops voluntarily came out into the open during 1945, while about 30,000 to 35,000 continued fighting against Communist militia and military units. In some regions of the country this internal war continued until mid-1948.<sup>23</sup> The Warsaw regime claimed that nearly 15,000 of their troops died in sporadic clashes with the underground during this period; the latter reportedly suffered 7,500 killed and over 2,000 wounded. Thousands more were arrested and placed in former German concentration camps, while thousands of others were executed.

The political arm of the opposition was also eliminated by the Warsaw regime. The chief delegate of the legal wartime Polish government-in-exile was arrested by the NKVD, together with the commander-in-chief of the Home Army and fourteen other AK leaders; they were taken to Moscow, secretly tried and imprisoned. As in other states, after the liquidation of organized political opposition the peasants were neutralized through the initial land redistribution program, and much of the intelligentsia withdrew from public life into an "internal emigration" where silence usually signified passive resistance. A rigged referendum in June

1946 was followed by a fraudulent general election in January 1947, in which the government bloc purportedly obtained 78.9% of the vote. The ballot was marked by voter intimidation, the gerrymandering of electoral districts, the exclusion of independent socialists, and the repression of other parties and non-Communist candidates. Over one million voters were deprived of the right to cast their ballots, many Peasant Party candidates were arrested, and vituperative anti-Peasant propaganda was unleashed in the official media. The election result itself was falsified in favor of the Communist-controlled "Democratic Bloc" which reportedly received about 80% of the vote. The actual total was believed to be substantially lower, though officials prohibited any independent monitoring of the balloting.

After the elections the independent Peasant Party was finally eliminated; its branches were closed, its active members arrested, and its leader Stanisław Mikołajczyk escaped into exile. December 1948 marked the forced merger of the Polish Workers Party and the crippled Polish Socialist Party, at the first Polish United Workers Party (*Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza*, PZUR) Congress. With the onset of Stalinization, Władysław Gomułka, the Communist First Secretary between 1945 and 1948, was replaced by Moscow loyalist Bolesław Bierut; other "native Communists" were also removed from leadership positions.<sup>24</sup> A farm collectivization campaign was inaugurated in 1949, leading to widespread passive resistance by the peasantry and a serious decline in agricultural productivity. A crackdown against the Catholic Church was also launched in the late 1940s to neutralize religious influence, the authority of the clergy, and the breadth of the anti-Communist opposition.

Following a multi-party *coup d'état* in Romania in August 1944 against the wartime Antonescu government, the Romanian Communist Party strengthened its position in the country.<sup>25</sup> With assistance from the Soviet High Command and Red Army, the Party achieved a predominant role in the coalition government by March 1945 following three major reshuffles of the Bucharest administration.<sup>26</sup> Severe repression against wartime political leaders and postwar political allies aided the Party in neutralizing any credible non-Communist opposition and stymied the reactivation of viable peasant and liberal party organizations. The security organs under firm Communist control thwarted active resistance and arrested, tried, incarcerated, and executed the leaders of competing parties. During 1945 the Party captured control of most local government bodies, purged their political opponents from leading positions, and assumed a dominant central role. Falsified elections in the fall of 1946 sealed the Communist victory. King Michael was formally deposed in December 1947 and the largest independent political body, the National Peasant Party, was outlawed the same year. A new constitution was

adopted in April 1948 and Romania was declared a "people's republic."<sup>27</sup> Tens of thousands of Peasant and Liberal Party activists and members were imprisoned during the next few years: the survivors were not released until 1964.

In February 1948, the Communist Party was transformed into the Romanian Workers Party (*Partidul Muncitoresc Român*, RCP) through fusion with the leftwing of the dismembered Social Democratic Party. With the last source of organized opposition quashed, the Communist regime embarked on its own Stalinization program which included the nationalization of industry, central economic planning, and a reinvigorated collectivization campaign that swallowed up about 96% of arable land by 1962. At the height of Communist consolidation, the "native" Party Secretary-General Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej won the factional struggle against the "Muscovites," purged his rivals, and gained full control. By 1952 he was *de facto* leader of both state and Party. Despite his more independent stance toward Moscow, in comparison to other Soviet bloc heads, Gheorghiu-Dej was a doctrinaire Stalinist intent on rapidly Communizing Romania. As a result, his differences with the Kremlin did not reach breaking point, though they laid the foundations for Bucharest's semi-autonomous foreign policy after Stalin's death.

In order to understand the limitations placed on dissent, opposition, and independent social activism in Eastern Europe, it is important to examine the structure of Communist Party-states and enumerate the features common both to the original Lenin-Stalin model and its post-Stalin variants.<sup>28</sup> The ruling Parties claim and practice a monopoly of political activity and determine the objectives of state and society. The Communist Party itself is an organization standing above all domestic bureaucracies but closely intertwined with all of them. It formulates policy goals and monitors their implementation through its supervisory organs at each administrative level.

Each Leninist Party is governed internally by the principles of "democratic centralism," which guarantee strict inner-Party discipline and hierarchical control. A specialized political apparatus manipulates all internal Party elections, this is in turn subordinate to the self-appointed ruling Politburo. Following "open discussion" in the Central Committee and some input from lower Party echelons, the Politburo makes binding decisions and sets policy goals. These decisions are implemented by the Secretariat through its control over the Party apparatus and its numerous functionaries at each regional, institutional, and occupational tier. The executive committees of all lower-level Party bodies are nominated and vetted by higher Party organs. All such nominations are closely monitored by the central bureaucracy, which ultimately approves the composition of all dependent bodies. This *nomenklatura* system of appointments

extends to all national bureaucracies; it assures that only politically reliable cadres are selected for positions of authority and responsibility, and it helps guarantee elite oligarchic control. Political reliability is often more important than technical ability for ensuring job appointments through the *nomenklatura* network. In most cases all non-Party people are excluded from key positions in management and public administration. The entire Party apparatus is thereby sealed off from the masses, while the majority of members tend to join the Party for the material prospects or career opportunities it bestows, rather than from ideological or political convictions.

The Communist power apparatus embraces all governmental, military, judicial, police, economic, and other pyramidal bureaucracies. The Party supervises all state and local government activities. The parliamentary structure presents a facade of democratic participation by all social strata, political interests, and occupational groupings. The token representation of avowedly non-Communist parties and associations is a pluralistic smokescreen for single-Party control. There is little actual debate or dissension over state policies, particularly as all candidates are screened, selected, and scrutinized by the Communist apparatus. A multi-party fiction is maintained to create the appearance of genuine pluralism among "non-antagonistic" political groups.

The central government selected by the Party Secretariat controls parliament and passes executive decisions and ministerial orders which the national assembly duly approves. In effect, the legislature endorses, formalizes, and legitimizes Party decisions. It also selects the Head of State, whether an individual or a presidium; in some instances, the posts of Head of State and Communist Party First Secretary (or General Secretary) are filled by one individual. "National" or "Peoples' Front" umbrella organizations help to buttress Party control by channelling the interests of various affiliated public organizations in the desired direction. National fronts also have the exclusive right to nominate candidates for parliamentary and local government councils. Each local council, acting upon Party instructions, selects its Executive Committee and President; this pattern is replicated at all territorial-administrative levels up to the national tier. The population at large does not freely nominate or select either the local or central government members. Even where election ballots contain more than one nominee for each council or parliamentary seat, the candidates are first approved by Communist-controlled electoral colleges and commissions.

In Communist Party states political control is extended into spheres that are normally the province of non-political organizations in democratic countries. All public mass organizations, including occupational, cultural, youth, women's, war veterans', and pensioners' groups, are subject to

political regulation so that any independent social activities are effectively precluded.<sup>29</sup> All employees are supervised through a network of professional organizations. Official labor unions undertake all decisions pertaining to relations between workers and management; they dispense sizeable funds for health care, vacation and recreational facilities, or other welfare benefits, and help keep employees in check. For intellectuals such as writers and artists, the professional unions decide on the allocation of scholarships, royalties, and publishing rights. Occupational unions, often identified as "transmission belts," function as supportive organs by exercising control over the workforce through Party-appointed officials and staff. Rather than defending the interests of workers *vis-à-vis* management, the chief role of union officials is to enforce discipline, promote production, monitor the mood on the shop floor, and defuse worker discontent.

The legal system in Leninist states is wielded to pacify society and subdue political deviance. All courts and their personnel are selected by the Party or its client organizations. The "procuracy" system combines the role of public prosecutor with that of defending "socialist legality" as interpreted by Communist officials. The law thereby enshrines the interests of the state against the atomized and virtually undefended society. The police and security apparatus further assist in protecting Party rule by neutralizing nonconformists and potential political opponents. In addition, an extensive network of police agents and informers permeates practically every sphere of society to forestall the crystallization of organized opposition and to keep the Party informed about the activities of dissidents.

The all-embracing web of political, administrative, judicial, and police controls is supplemented by powerful economic levers at the Party's disposal. The country's economic bureaucracy sets the national economic plan and supervises its implementation, controls national investments, the money supply, and foreign and domestic trade, sets wages and prices, manages all financial institutions, work enterprises, state farms, and wholesale and retail outlets. The bulk of society, including practically every economic unit, is organized into a vast productive enterprise controlled by the state apparatus. All crucial economic decisions are made by the Communist elites, whereby free market principles have been largely replaced by administrative directives and state plans. Since the mid-1950s, the ruling Parties have sought to eliminate the worst anomalies of central planning by incorporating more "scientific" management methods and catering for "consumerism" to avoid serious economic crisis and social turmoil. Some leeway has been allowed in the more "liberalized" post-Stalin systems for privatization in certain sectors of the economy, such as agriculture, small-scale manufacturing,

and services. In addition, a shadow "second economy" or "black market" is commonly tolerated to help meet the grossly unsatisfied popular demands for goods and services.

### **De-Stalinization, Rebellion, and Normalization**

Domestic and international developments in the years following Stalin's death in 1953 did not fundamentally alter the principle and practice of Leninist hegemony in Eastern Europe. However, they did herald a period of political conflict, internal power struggles, and in some instances, popular opposition to Communist Party rule. Moscow's "New Course" meant some economic and cultural concessions within the bloc, while preserving Party control over the most significant aspects of public life. For example, forced heavy industrialization was muted in favor of a more pronounced consumer orientation; police ubiquitousness was somewhat curtailed, state arbitrariness refined, and some cultural liberalization tolerated. In the Soviet Union and most East bloc states, the "cult of personality" was replaced by a "collective leadership," with the Party First Secretary made more accountable to the Politburo. The relaxation of Kremlin controls, ideological inconsistency, political instability, and leadership divisions in the immediate post-Stalin era also set in motion various political initiatives and public opposition in Eastern Europe. In some cases, domestic confusion as to the limits of Soviet tolerance and attempts at Party democratization led to profound political crises and sparked popular rebellion against some or all features of Communist rule. Moscow in turn tried to immunize itself against open revolt and ensure bloc-wide cohesion during this "thaw" period, and sought to delineate the parameters of reform and political freedom.<sup>30</sup>

Despite the dissolution of the Cominform in April 1956, and the greater leeway for East European regimes in their pursuit of "national roads to communism," no extensive diminution of Party control was envisioned. Restrictions were placed on economic experimentation and the Warsaw Pact alliance system was deemed sacrosanct. Particularly after danger signals began to surface in Hungary, Poland, and elsewhere, Moscow shifted the emphasis from reformism to retrenchment and the preservation and protection of the Communist system throughout the bloc. The creation of the Warsaw Pact in May 1955 had formalized Soviet military domination over Eastern Europe and provided a legalistic justification for maintaining Red Army troops in these states. The Warsaw Treaty of Mutual Assistance was in fact an immediate precursor to the "Brezhnev Doctrine," which "legitimized" direct Soviet intervention in the internal affairs of East European states.

Government relaxation in the mid-1950s spurred opposition movements of variable strength, scope, and duration in a number of countries. This phenomenon was in several instances seriously underestimated by the Kremlin. We shall examine the two most important and extensive rebellions against the Party-state during this period—the Hungarian Revolution and the “Polish October”—and also survey post-Stalin dissent and opposition in the remaining East European states. Hungary’s Stalinist leader Rákosi was reluctant to implement Moscow’s “New Course” and allow for a measure of power-sharing with less hard line comrades. As a result, the leadership was riddled with conflict for several years. Unable to pursue vigorously any one political program, the Party’s authority was measurably undermined and eventually endangered. In 1953, Rákosi was forced by Kremlin pressures to relinquish the premiership; he was replaced by Imre Nagy who sought to limit repression and restrain the forced collectivization program. After two years, Nagy himself was ousted for “right-wing deviation” and expelled from the Party. Rákosi’s return in February 1955 reversed the liberalization process, but failed to stem rising popular aspirations for democratization. Khrushchev’s “secret speech” in 1956 against Stalin’s policies breathed new life into Hungarian reformers and helped to increase dissent among students, intellectuals, and workers demanding Nagy’s reinstatement as well as the implementation of numerous civil liberties. Paradoxically, according to Griffith, Communist revisionists

unwittingly paved the way for their own loss of political leadership. For the more they succeeded in arousing latent popular forces of opposition, the more they tended to be displaced in popular favor by ‘legitimate’ spokesmen of the older political and social trends—i.e. peasant, worker, and religious leaders deriving their popular support from past positions of influence and their adherence to traditional patterns of national patriotism and social and parliamentary democracy.<sup>31</sup>

De-Stalinization increased popular restlessness in Hungary amid demands for lessened Party control over all aspects of social life. Brzezinski points out that in such a potentially revolutionary situation, halfway measures by Rákosi and Ernő Gerő, his replacement as Party First Secretary in July 1956, “could not satisfy the masses which were by then craving a political reform.”<sup>32</sup> Hungarian intellectuals, both Communist and non-Communist, became increasingly vociferous in their campaign to restore democracy; they became more radicalized by Rákosi’s dogmatism and intransigence. Gerő proved to be an equally doctrinaire Communist unable to forestall mounting discontent through relatively minor concessions such as wage increases. Even the reappearance of

Nagy as Prime Minister in October 1956 failed to stop the escalation of protest actions and political demands among various social groups.

A mass demonstration in Budapest on 23 October 1956, organized by the dissident Petofi Circle, triggered the Hungarian Revolution after the Secret Security Police (AVO) intervened by firing at the demonstrators. The initial deployment of Soviet troops did not succeed in "restoring order." Instead, the rebellion swiftly spread, and the number of armed revolutionaries rapidly increased. They were joined by units of the Hungarian army and by sympathetic policemen who supplied weapons and ammunition, and fought alongside the insurgents against Soviet forces; the rest of the Hungarian army disintegrated. During the fighting, the rebels put forward a program for extensive political, economic, and social change, including full pluralism, civil liberties, free elections, independent labor unions and workers' councils, the abolition of the security police and collective farms, and the restoration of parliamentary democracy and a mixed economy. Their demands exceeded the policies proposed by revisionist Communists such as Nagy, who was eventually swept along in the popular tide and bowed to public pressure for national independence and the termination of Leninist dictatorship. Following the temporary Soviet withdrawal Nagy announced the abolition of the one-party system. This was to involve the recreation of independent political parties including the Smallholders Party, and the establishment of an authentic coalition government in which the Communists would occupy a minority position in line with their actual support in the country. Local self-government councils were formed in various parts of Hungary to represent various social and occupational strata, and workers' councils effectively took over factory management. As the Party structure disintegrated under democratic pressures, the government surrendered its monopolistic central controls.

The Kremlin increasingly feared that the Hungarian Communists would permanently lose power if free elections were allowed to take place. The gathering pace of democracy was interrupted by the second Soviet armed intervention on 4 November 1956. Moscow relied on the massive use of force to crush the rebellion and install a pro-Soviet single-party regime; about 200,000 Soviet troops were employed.<sup>33</sup> Aside from fierce clashes in Budapest, the fighting quickly spread to several major cities, including Gyor, Szeged, Pecs, Miskolc, and Szolnok. An estimated 25,000 to 50,000 Magyar insurgents were killed in the fighting, together with about 7,000 Soviet soldiers. Over 200,000 people fled the country, while several thousand were arrested, imprisoned, executed, or deported to Soviet labor camps.<sup>34</sup> Most armed resistance was subdued by 8 November, and the remaining rebels surrendered by 14 November. The Russian invasion was followed by Nagy's declaration of Hungarian neutrality

and cessation from the Warsaw Pact. Simultaneously, a general strike was proclaimed by the independent trade unions in the midst of the fighting. In fact, during the uprising the real centers of authority were the revolutionary workers' councils established spontaneously when Party control and police supervision collapsed.

The Soviet authorities dissolved Nagy's government and assembled a group of loyal pro-Moscow Hungarian Communists to form a new administration under the leadership of First Secretary Janos Kádár; Nagy was later executed. Further clashes erupted in various parts of the country until Kádár declared martial law on 9 December 1956. The workers' councils were officially dissolved; the responses to calls for a general strike were mostly sporadic. A wave of mass arrests and dismissals swept the country, and about 5,000 people were executed by the regime during the post-revolutionary reprisals. Kádár's "normalization" program banned all autonomous organizations and re-established Communist controlled bodies in all areas of public life. Once the resistance had been crushed and order restored, Kádár endeavored to gain the trust if not the loyalty of citizens through an unwritten "social contract" in which society would forsake political involvement in exchange for economic security and rising living standards. Kádár's solution did not envisage a return to Stalinist measures once political opposition had been eliminated; it also precluded any replication of Nagyst liberalization. A mass Party recruitment drive was launched in 1957, and the Eighth HSWP Congress in November 1962 declared the country to be embarking upon the construction of a fully socialist society. In 1968, Budapest launched its New Economic Mechanism, combining some market elements with decentralized planning, and greater enterprise autonomy with regard to production and investment. This loosened some state economic controls and allowed for a modicum of private and cooperative enterprise, but did not undermine the Communist political and economic monopoly.

In Poland, PUPW leaders were initially extremely cautious de-Stalinizers and managed to contain any liberalizing trends until mid-1956. The system then lost some of its most obvious oppressive features and social protests gained in strength. However, the bulk of the emerging opposition was not centered among Party revisionists or any organized political movement. It was largely an amorphous expression of frustration, devoid of any singular political platform and susceptible to state disruption. The major eruption of public protests by workers in Poznań on 28 June 1956 was put down within three days by police and army units. The strikes and demonstrations were provoked by the introduction of an unfair bonus system requiring an increase in productivity that effectively diminished the already low wages. The regime estimated that 48 people were killed in the clashes, but unofficial sources claim the

figure was closer to 300, with over 1,000 subsequent arrests.<sup>35</sup> The authorities displayed sufficient tactical skill following the Poznań riots to defuse a potentially explosive situation—through leadership changes and promises of reform—while keeping the anxious Soviets at bay. Warsaw publicly admitted to policy mistakes as one justification for the workers' grievances, but warned about "provocateurs" and "agitators" whose attempts to detach Poland from "socialism" would be mercilessly crushed.

One repercussion of the widespread popular ferment and discontent, of which Poznań was the most dramatic manifestation, was the replacement of Party First Secretary Edward Ochab by the "native" Communist Władysław Gomułka in October 1956. The threat of direct Soviet military intervention subsided once Moscow was assured that Gomułka's "Polish road to socialism" would run parallel with the Kremlin's main avenue, and that Warsaw's policies posed no threat to Moscow in the international Communist movement. The leadership changes in the PUWP evidently took some account of popular feelings, as Gomułka purportedly represented an anti-Stalinist, "national-focused" brand of Communism not responsible for the Stalinist terror. Gomułka gained the support of many critical students and non-Party intellectuals who believed that he could provide a significant spur to the budding liberalization movement; but their initial hopes proved to be misplaced.<sup>36</sup> The new Party leadership also pacified the bulk of the workforce through concessions to industrial workers, farmers, and the Church, amid promises of greater rewards in the future. Constant appeals were made to patriotism, while direct Soviet control over Polish internal affairs visibly lessened. The blatantly uneconomic collective farms were largely dissolved, leading to a re-privatization of the bulk of agriculture.<sup>37</sup> Religious freedoms were restored following the release of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński from prison. Gomułka aimed to bolster the legitimacy of his regime through a guarded reconciliation with the Catholic Church, but the honeymoon proved to be short-lived.

Soon after ascending to power, Gomułka embarked on a "middle course" between the harder-line Stalinist elements within the Party and potential liberalizers; after dealing with Stalin's "old guard" he turned his offensive against the reformers. Once Gomułka had consolidated his position within the PUWP, ideological revisionists were purged and the screws were tightened on dissenting intellectuals and non-conformist students. The "Polish October," which bloomed fleetingly in the late 1950s, was both a social revolt by wide sectors of the populace against dictatorial rule, and a moderately revisionist movement within the Party itself. Both strands of opposition were extinguished, preventing the creation of any organized counterforce to "democratic centralism." The

liberalizing Polish "October" was converted into the "little stabilization" of the post-Stalin turmoil. The Hungarian episode was not repeated in Poland because of overall policy continuity and gradualism within the Party despite leadership reshuffles; firm brakes were placed on any national democratic revolution. There was no unification of any organized opposition forces, and no tangible all-encompassing program of action emerged either among intellectuals or workers. The upper echelon of the Party did not undergo any major political split, nor did it lose control over the situation at the grassroots.<sup>38</sup> The leadership was also able to reassure the Soviets that socialism would be strengthened by Gomułka's program. Moscow's latitude toward Polish developments showed that the USSR was willing to make some allowances for national diversity in the process of domestic political stabilization. Aside from Hungary, each East European regime was able to adjust to changing circumstances without provoking Soviet intervention by reassuring the Kremlin that Party rule was not under threat.

The significant democratizing gains of the "Polish October" were gradually eroded. The workers' councils that emerged in 1956 were rendered powerless as their authority was never clearly defined and they displayed little real autonomy in decision-making. By the close of the decade they became fully subordinate to the Party and the management controlled factory committees. Unlike in Hungary, the Warsaw regime was unable to register any dramatic economic improvements, as the command system was not substantially relaxed to allow for individual enterprise, decentralization, and marketization. In local and national elections, voting rights were not greatly extended as all candidates remained Communist Party nominees. Liberalizing elements within the PUDP were purged and condemned for weakening Leninist discipline and leadership. The independent and influential student weekly *Po Prostu* was banned in 1957, leading to student disturbances and clashes with police in which several hundred people were detained. The *Krzywe Koto* and other autonomous discussion clubs were outlawed as they threatened to exceed the bounds of permissible de-Stalinization. Strict censorship was restored throughout the mass media by October 1957, and the ice age of Gomułkism persisted for more than a decade over the Polish political landscape.

In the German Democratic Republic, the initial shock waves following Stalin's death led to programmatic divisions within the Party leadership and disruptions in the functioning of the political apparatus. These developments were in turn fanned by serious workers' revolts on 17 June 1953, incited by 10% increases in work norms and unrealistically high state plans that would have drastically cut basic wages. About 25,000 to 50,000 workers staged protests in East Berlin, spurring dem-

onstrations in about 270 different locations throughout the Soviet zone of occupation. The embryonic insurrection, in which workers demanded economic improvements, free elections, and the release of political prisoners, was violently suppressed by the Red Army as the local Party militia stood by, powerless. According to independent estimates, about 400 German workers were killed in the clashes and dozens were later executed under the cover of martial law. Soviet military courts also sentenced several thousand protest organizers to long prison terms.<sup>39</sup> The regime combined repression with promises of leniency, hasty supplies of food to placate disgruntled employees, and the rescinding of increases in work norms. Though further sporadic strikes were reported in several cities between July and September 1953, the security forces eventually quashed all active resistance.

After the Hungarian Revolution, Soviet forces in East Germany were reinforced to prevent any repetition of rebellion. The East Berlin regime remained one of the most rigid and illiberal in the bloc, even though the Soviet occupation administration was formally dissolved in March 1954 and GDR sovereignty recognized. Stalinist stalwart Walter Ulbricht remained in power and on guard against any liberalizing trends among intellectuals or Party members. Moscow backed Ulbricht in his purge of revisionists and reformers within the SUP and the persecution of non-Party dissidents. Renewed student unrest in 1957 in East Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden, and other cities was resolutely suppressed. The construction of the Berlin Wall and the general fortification of the border between East and West Germany in August 1961 constituted a major move against internal opposition. It also sealed off an important escape hatch for skilled workers, technicians, and other professionals whose exodus had gravely weakened the GDR economy.<sup>40</sup> The collectivization of German agriculture was accelerated, so that by 1961 84% of arable land was under "cooperative control," as compared to only 50% in 1959. The "New Economic System" (NES), announced in 1963, modified the central planning model and instituted certain alterations in Party organization. Greater emphasis was placed on "economic levers," enterprise profitability and cost effectiveness, with personal incentives and rewards for managers and workers. By 1968 the "leading role" of the SUP had been re-emphasized, and the importance of centralized state planning underscored. Ulbricht was replaced in May 1971 after the NES was finally abandoned in the wake of mounting economic strain. Erich Honecker took over as General Secretary in a fairly smooth leadership transition. He successfully kept the lid on dissent within and outside the Party, while steadily improving economic performance and living standards.

In Czechoslovakia, de-Stalinization did not gather significant momentum until the mid-1960s; it merely consisted of small-scale modifications of the existing structure.<sup>41</sup> Antoni Zapotocky succeeded Gottwald after the latter's death in March 1953. His initial attempts to liberalize the system were quickly checked and he was soon replaced as the party's first secretary by the more orthodox Antonin Novotny, who was also named President after Zapotocky's death in 1957. Novotny resisted pressures for change and delayed the political and social shock waves of de-Stalinization. Events in Hungary and Poland in 1956 strengthened his hand to tighten Party discipline and oust reformist elements. Czechoslovakia also experienced workers' protests in May 1953, due to a "currency reform" which confiscated the savings of skilled workers and lowered the purchasing power of the entire workforce. For several hours workers in Plzen took over the entire city and demanded better economic conditions and political liberties. The demonstrations were suppressed by militia units brought in from Prague; at least six workers were shot dead and a number of organizers and participants were later excluded from benefits disbursed by the official labor unions. Further workers' protests in Ostrava and Brno in May and June 1953 were also speedily quelled by security troops.

From 1955 Czechoslovak writers and students began to voice demands for greater cultural freedom. In October and November 1956, some intellectuals and workers demonstrated in support of the Hungarian Revolution, but were dispersed by the police. Prague tightened censorship and police surveillance, while several political trials were staged to root out alleged spies and saboteurs. Yugoslav, Hungarian, and Polish forms of "national Communism" were condemned as serious nationalist or "rightist deviations." The political turbulence in neighboring states was used as a pretext for maintaining repression, even though the centralized economic reins were loosened somewhat with less priority given to heavy industry after 1958. A new constitution was adopted in 1960, ending the "peoples' democracy" phase and declaring Czechoslovakia a "socialist republic." Czech centralism was also reinforced to the detriment of any remaining Slovak self-determination.

The populations of Bulgaria and Romania were effectively shielded from post-Stalin political turbulence and the regimes were not faced with any serious domestic disturbances. Any liberalizing trends were suppressed in Bulgaria while some changes were introduced in the Party leadership. After Stalin's death Chervenkov fell from grace and was removed from Party leadership; his replacement Todor Zhivkov also became premier in 1962, succeeding Anton Yugor. Chervenkov still remained a force within the government, and as Minister of Culture in 1957 he helped to silence those intellectuals who were pressing for