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## *Communist Authority and Opposition in Croatia after 1945*

### **The situation in Croatia after the end of World War Two**

Several facts were essential for the situation in Croatia after the end of World War Two. NDH (Independent State of Croatia) was abolished after its military defeat and the retreat of its leadership. At the same time the resistance, the National Liberation Movement of Yugoslavia, led by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (Komunistična partija Jugoslavije, KPJ) in alliance with the representatives of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, restored Yugoslavia with the name Democratic Federative Yugoslavia. The political, ideological and military influence of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), or the Soviet Union, was very strong. The number of casualties was high, and the material damage was extensive. The remaining anti-Yugoslav and anti-communist guerrilla groups, operating under the name "Crusaders", fought for their own survival as well as the renewal of NDH.<sup>1</sup> The changes of the Croatian borders were also radical – in comparison with the borders of the Croatian Bannate it lost parts of the Bosnia-Herzegovina region and Srem. However, it gained parts of its ethnic and historical regions – Baranja, Dvor na Uni, Rijeka, Zadar, the islands of Cres, Lastovo, Lošinj and the Croatian part of Istria. Istria had a special status, since it was under the Yugoslav Army military governance.

### **The pressure of the western forces and USSR**

The most important change, brought about by KPJ, was enforcing its dictatorship and carrying out mass vengeance and a premeditated execution of many potential opponents. It had total control over all essential instruments of power. It fought the opposition with its secret intelligence and security service, named the Department for the Protection of People (OZNA). It was established not only to uncover enemy activities and all the activities of the opposition against the communist authority, but also to neutralise all the potential adversaries who

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<sup>1</sup> For more information see Zdenko Radelić: *Križari – gerila u Hrvatskoj*. Zagreb 2002.

could obstruct the revolutionary measures of the Communist Party. OZNA operated as a Party and state body in accordance with the concept of a uniform Party and state authorities. Almost all members of OZNA were also members of the Communist Party. OZNA was the main instrument of the hidden revolution, carried out by the communists up until as late as 1947/1948. During the first years of their being in power, the communists covered up their revolutionary activities by numerous accusations of their opponents and wealthier people about their alleged collaboration with the enemy and their allies at fixed trials, the realisation of a monetary reform and seizure of war profits. As a rule all trials were concluded with the confiscation of property, which was a supplementary punishment.

KPJ also carried out open revolutionary acts, which were not hidden behind the allegations of hostile activities, but were based on the determination of the KPJ to reorganise the society in accordance with communist views and theory. In agriculture that primarily meant a large agrarian reform and the allocation of land to the farmers in August 1945, but after the condemnation by the Cominform members KPJ radicalised its agrarian policy and introduced a wide collectivisation through agricultural cooperatives. In December 1946 and April 1948 the private industrial sector almost completely vanished after an extensive nationalisation.

However, initially the total communist dictatorship was endangered by the pressures of the allies, which manifested itself in the introduction of regents, the establishment of the common government consisting of the members of the partisan National Committee for the Liberation of Yugoslavia (NKOJ) and the royal government on 7 March 1945, the expansion of the Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) and the elections into the Constituent Assembly on 11 November 1945. Communists agreed to most of the demands, but the formal parliamentarism was in fact just a matter of their tactics.

### **Communists and the public**

Communists proclaimed their policy publicly through the People's Front, specifically on the legislative level and through the legislation on elections, which supposedly enabled everyone to be politically active except for the "national enemy". Already during the war the communists claimed they were not fighting for the enforcement of their dictatorship and the realisation of radical social changes; instead, supposedly the main objective of the partisan movement was national liberation and "national democracy". They would assure political pluralism and private property. In this context the *Declaration of the Supreme Headquarters of the National Liberation Army and Partisan Detachments of Yugoslavia and the Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation of Yugoslavia* was released on 8 February 1943, and the *Declaration on the objectives and principles of the National Liberation War* was released on 26 May 1943 by the Country Anti-Fascist Council of

People's Liberation of Croatia (ZAVNOH) and the Supreme Headquarters of the National Liberation Army and Partisan Detachments of Croatia.<sup>2</sup>

However, these public declarations on democracy and political freedom were denied by their authors from as early as 1946. Thus Josip Broz-Tito denied the accusations that the KPJ strived for a single-party system, but at the same time he warned the public that the renewal of the multi-party system is out of the question.<sup>3</sup> This way the Communist Party combined the revolutionary procedures with formal observation of parliamentary rules.

### Croatian Peasant Party

Croatian Peasant Party (Hrvatska seljačka stranka – HSS) represented the strongest opposition to the new authorities in Croatia. However, various opposing forces within HSS agreed only to oppose the communist dictatorship, but they differed in the way they operated.<sup>4</sup> Due to drastic communist repression, HSS, like all other political parties, was unable to restore its position and function through local organisations.

During the war many members of HSS joined the partisans. The Communist Party politics in regard to the members of HSS had three basic goals: 1) to enlist as many HSS members as possible among the partisans, which would mean that a large percentage of Croatians would join them; 2) to bring down Vladko Maček, the president of HSS, and the HSS leadership with the excuse that they committed treason; 3) to enforce a new party leadership, use it as an instrument in the struggle for the change of authority and employ it into the service of the People's Front, which the Communist Party used to cover up the communist program.

It all depended on the main objective: to get as many Croatians as possible to join the partisans in the armed conflict, to win the war with as much support as possible, to gain power and achieve international recognition of the new Yugoslavia. Those HSS members who joined the partisans in contrary to the party politics, thus renounced the HSS leadership. They established the Executive Committee of HSS and proclaimed it the true representative of the party. In July 1945 the Executive Committee of Croatian Peasant Party was renamed into the Executive Committee of Croatian Republican Peasant Party (HRSS).

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<sup>2</sup> *Zemaljsko antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Hrvatske : Zbornik dokumenata 1943.* Zagreb 1964, p. 132.

<sup>3</sup> Vojislav Koštunica, Kosta Čavoški: *Stranački pluralizam ili monizam.* In: *Tribuna* (Ljubljana), special edition, 27 November 1987, p. 40.

<sup>4</sup> For more information see: Ljubo Boban: *Kontroverze iz povijesti Jugoslavije*, 1. and 2., Zagreb 1989; Fikreta Jelić Butić: *Hrvatska seljačka stranka.* Zagreb 1983; Zdenko Radelić: *Hrvatska seljačka stranka 1941.–1950.* (hereinafter Radečić, *Hrvatska seljačka stranka 1941.–1950.*), Zagreb 1996.

## Croatian Republican Peasant Party

The new Croatian Republican Peasant Party (Hrvatska republikanska seljačka stranka, HRSS) was used by the Communist Party to break up HSS. This communist HRSS, as I call it for the sake of argument, thwarted the demands of the HSS supporters to renew the original party. The excuse for this was that HRSS was the true HSS and that after Maček's treason it took the old name and renewed the struggle for a republic. Besides, the communists referred to HRSS as the proof that a multi-party system existed in Yugoslavia and that the accusations about the Communist Party dictatorship were nothing but hostile propaganda. It is a fact that communists acted within and through HRSS and that it was them who kept it alive, for it mustered little response from HSS members. Communists used HRSS in the 1945 Constituent Assembly election campaign as well as in the Croatian Constituent Assembly election campaign in 1946. When the elections confirmed their unlimited power and when HRSS completed its role, they discarded it and let it disintegrate quietly. It has to be emphasized that HRSS was never really a party, because it had no members of its own. It functioned exclusively through the Executive Committee, a few city and regional committees, mass meetings, and published the *Slobodni dom* publication.

## Croatian Peasant Party Leadership

In contrast with HRSS the party leadership of HSS insisted on passive policy and distanced themselves from communists after an unsuccessful attempt to come to an agreement with the Communist Party. Namely, the party vice-president August Košutić joined the partisans after an unsuccessful attempt at a coup by Ante Vokić and Mladen Lorković (ministers in the NDH government who wanted to steer NDH towards the Western allies). In this way he wanted to avoid the manipulations of Ante Pavelić.<sup>5</sup> After he joined the partisans he wanted to negotiate with the communists, but they interned him in October 1944 because they did not want to share the power with anyone, least of all HSS, which was their strongest political opponent in Croatia.

Maček, who was interned by the Ustashe on his land, emigrated in May 1945 before the partisans arrived in Zagreb, for he was convinced he would be treated the same way as Košutić. In an interview for the *New York Times* on 23 July 1945 he stated that Yugoslavia was facing a dictatorship of the communist regime. He said that he did not support Ivan Šubašić and Juraj Šutej, members of the Yugoslav government, because he thought that the new regime saw HSS as its main opponent in Croatia.<sup>6</sup> From his exile in Paris he sent secret instructions to HSS

<sup>5</sup> Radelić, *Hrvatska seljačka stranka 1941.–1950.*, p. 28.

<sup>6</sup> *New York Times*, 23 July 1945, Maček predicts the dictatorship of Tito. He states that in Yugoslavia the communist regime has been ensured, but that the Croatians would resist it. See

that it should not participate in the elections in November 1945. He was convinced that any cooperation with the authorities would mean that HSS gives legitimacy to the communist regime. At the same time he was convinced that a war would break out shortly between the East and the West and that HSS would reclaim power after the Western victory.

Košutić remained imprisoned even after the war, though without being convicted of a crime. However, with the help of his wife Mira Košutić, who visited him in prison, and through *Narodni glas*, the only opposition publication in Croatia after the war, he influenced the party policy heavily in accordance with Maček's policy.

### Ivan Šubašić

Šubašić, a member of HSS, the former ban of the Croatian Bannate and the minister of foreign affairs in the government of Josip Broz-Tito, who was forced on the king, the Greater Serbian circles and then also on the partisans by the British, argued for a policy of compromise.<sup>7</sup> He believed that by cooperating with the authorities he could prevent the absolute power of the Communist Party. He was convinced that the best solution would be to unify HSS and HRSS and participate together at the Constituent Assembly elections in the context of the People's Front. He saw a great advantage for the future of HSS in the fact that HRSS actively participated in the partisan movement.

Šubašić believed in the People's Front as an alliance of political parties. He expected that in time only two parties would remain – the peasant and the labourers' party: HSS and KPJ. However, in private Tito explained to him that People's Front is an association of individuals, not political parties, since the communist idea was that all parties shall actually dissolve in the People's Front, which would operate under the Communist Party leadership.

### HSS members in the Provisional People's Assembly

In the beginning of August many important political events took place. Immediately after the congress of the People's Front of Yugoslavia between 5 and 7 August 1945, the third meeting of AVNOJ, which included the so-called non-compromised members of the pre-war National Parliament of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, began on 7 August. The recommendations of the allies' Yalta Conference about the inclusion of non-compromised members of the pre-war National Parliament of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia into AVNOJ was thoroughly modified. With the explanation that the People's Assembly was elected in 1938 under non-democratic conditions, which was not even mentioned at Yalta, it was concluded

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Dinko Šuljak: *Tražio sam Radićevu Hrvatsku*. In: *Knjižnica Hrvatske revije*, Barcelona, München 1988, p. 409.

<sup>7</sup> On the activities of Ivan Šubašić Dragovan Šepić: *Vlada Ivana Šubašića*. Zagreb 1983.

that the AVNOJ should be expanded not only with a certain number of pre-war Members of Parliament, but also with the members of the political parties which existed at that time and with reputable public and cultural figures; however, the objective of this all was the inclusion of as many KPJ sympathisers as possible into the assembly. The Provisional People's Assembly included, in the name of HSS, 26 members, who, together with the former members of AVNOJ from the HRSS party, made up a group of 37 members. Out of 26 new Members of Assembly half of them belonged to the Šubašić's circles within HSS, and the other half were suggested by HRSS.<sup>8</sup>

### **Šubašić without the support of the rest of the party leadership**

Šubašić and his policy of cooperation with the Communist Party had little support within HSS. Thus the Members of Assembly from the Šubašić's circle negotiated without the consent of HSS leadership. Some HSS members gathered around Mira Košutić, who kept enforcing the policy of her husband. Košutić demanded total freedom of operations for HSS, which was the very reason why the communists kept him in prison.

On the other hand, Šubašić and his supporters planned that the Members of Assembly from HSS and HRSS would join forces in the Provisional People's Assembly and later the parties would follow their example and unify. However, the members of the HRSS Executive Committee thought that they were the ones to decide who of the HSS leadership should participate in the unified party at all. Instead of merger they actually proposed that HSS members should be incorporated into HRSS according to the criteria of the HRSS Executive Board. Thus the destiny of HSS would be completely overtaken by the leadership of the Communist Party, the original author of this political ruse. Besides, the HRSS Executive Board demanded that the supporters of HSS should immediately join the ranks of the People's Front. It is obvious that these were not negotiations among two equal parties – it was HRSS blackmail. The main objective of KPJ was to prevent the restoration of HSS, remove it from the political scene and replace it with HRSS. The negotiations lasted until September 1945.

Unsuccessful negotiations about the unification of HSS and HRSS motivated Šubašić to organise a party conference in Zagreb. There they were supposed to define the basic guidelines for the party activities. Thus on 2 September 1945 a large number of respectable party leaders met in the hotel Esplanade. The exact criteria by which the members of HSS were invited to the conference are not known, but it is obvious that those people occupying the higher party posts were invited who did not emigrate and were not imprisoned.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Branko Petranović: *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918–1988. godine*. Beograd 1988, (hereinafter Petranović, *Historija Jugoslavije 1918–1988*) p. 388; Radelić, *Hrvatska seljačka stranka 1941.–1950.*, p. 52.

<sup>9</sup> For more information see Radelić, *Hrvatska seljačka stranka 1941.–1950.*, pp. 54–60; id., *Konfe-*

At the conference, Šubašić presented three dilemmas: 1) the unification of HSS and HRSS; 2) the inclusion of the party into the People's Front; 3) the participation of HSS at the elections. Two viewpoints formed. The majority of them supported the idea that Šubašić and Šutej should resign their positions in the government and that HSS should not participate in the elections together with HRSS, let alone in the context of the People's Front. They advised that HSS should remain in opposition, and they founded this opinion on the fact that the party president Maček emigrated, while the vice-president Košutić was in prison. A few of them argued that the party should cooperate with the People's Front. Finally Šutej thought of a compromise: Šubašić should go to Paris and meet with Maček, who should decide the future actions of the party. At the same time, Košutić should also give his opinion.

### **Šubašić and Košutić**

Šubašić was convinced he would win Košutić over with his policy. He demanded that the communist authorities free him from prison. But the Communist Party presumed that freeing Košutić in the time before the Constituent Assembly elections could endanger the final elimination of HSS, thus they wanted to force certain conditions upon Košutić. We can only guess at the nature of these conditions. Certainly one of them was to incorporate the party into the People's Front or to retreat from politics. Košutić obviously refused, so he remained in prison without any rights to trial.

Šubašić only had the support of a few of his backers, for example eng. Franjo Gaži and Tom Jančiković. Due to the pressure from most of his party colleagues he decided to travel to Paris and explain the difficult political situation to Maček. He requested help from the British, who made a plane available to him. However, on 10 September 1945, the day before his journey, the vice president of the government Edvard Kardelj informed Šubašić that he was not allowed to go to Paris and meet Maček. In the evening of the same day Šubašić suffered a minor stroke. When the plane arrived from Italy, the army blocked his house. They informed the public of Šubašić's illness and stated that the medical board recommended he should have "absolute peace". Thus Šubašić found himself in house arrest.

### **Šubašić's and Šutej's resignation from the Yugoslav government**

In just a few months Šubašić suffered a number of defeats: 1) The Potsdam Conference in the end of July and in the beginning of August 1945 did not go according to the expectations and failed to put pressure onto the Yugoslav authorities to finalise the Tito – Šubašić Agreement (on 2 August); 2) king Peter II Karađorđević revoked his regents' rights to represent him (on 8 August); 3) the vice-

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*rencija prvaka HSS-a u hotelu Esplanade u Zagrebu 1945.* In: *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, 1993, No. 2–3, pp. 149–164.

president of the government Milan Grol resigned his position (on 18 August); 4) the leaders of the Serbian bourgeois parties who remained in emigration sent a special memorandum to the Conference of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs in London, wherein they condemned the policy of the Yugoslav government (on 10 September); 5) the Bishops' Conference of Yugoslavia published a Pastoral Letter and accused the communist regime of persecuting the Catholic Church (on 20 September). We should not forget that Šubašić as a member of the government and the Minister of Foreign Affairs doubtlessly felt responsible for all the violence of the regime, regardless of the fact that his position as a minister was merely formal and controlled completely by the Communist Party. Finally, on 8 October 1945 Šubašić and Šutej resigned from the government.

### **The *Narodni glas* group**

The other leading members of HSS gathered around Mira Košutić, who kept enforcing the policy of her husband and Maček. The president and vice-president of the party demanded complete freedom of operations for HSS.

Mira Košutić published the magazine *Narodni glas čovječnosti, pravice i slobode* ("National Voice of Humanity, Justice and Freedom") with the aid of Marija Radić, Stjepan Radić's widow, and Ivan Bernardić, editor in chief and the responsible editor. The only issue came out on 20 October 1945. The public prosecutor in Zagreb temporarily forbade the sale of the magazine with the excuse that it contained texts opposing the National Liberation Struggle, spread lies, provoked national intolerance and supported the enemy. However, the true reason for the suppression were the articles on communist dictatorship, the use of HRSS by its "true masters" the Communist Party, and an appeal for the boycott of the elections.

Bernardić also prepared the second issue of the *Narodni glas* magazine; however, according to a notification published in *Vjesnik*, the party paper of the People's Front of Croatia, the workers in the People's Printing House refused to continue printing *Narodni glas* with the excuse that it was reactionary. Of course, obviously the communist authorities rendered the publishing of the magazine impossible. Soon after that, in November 1945, a bomb exploded in front of Radić's bookstore in the centre of Zagreb, where *Narodni glas* was sold. Due to the fact that the communist youth already broke into the bookstore in August and broke the pictures of Stjepan Radić and Maček, the editorial board had no choice but to give in to the pressures of the authorities and desist from publishing the *Narodni glas* magazine.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> For more information see Zdenko Radelić: *Narodni glas – glas oporbe 1945*. In: *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, 1994, No. 2, pp. 299–315.



### What *Narodni glas* wrote about

In the introductory article *Why we will not take part in the elections* HSS defined their activities. They emphasized that freedom was the foundation for any political activities. They denied the claims of the regime that Radić's program was being realised under the KPJ leadership. Furthermore, they condemned HRSS and stated clearly that KPJ was its true master. They declared openly that the Communist Party introduced a dictatorship and that it wrongfully accused its political opponents of being fascist in order to be able to persecute them. However, it did not declare its revolutionary acts openly, because it acted in accordance with the international situation. Besides, they stressed that the government did not observe personal freedom and the freedom of private property, and that federal units, Croatian ones among them, had no jurisdiction whatsoever. They warned that the free will of the people would not be expressed at the Constituent Assembly as the authorities claimed that they would defend all they had gained with the National Liberation Struggle by all means necessary. Finally, the *Narodni glas* magazine appealed to its readers and especially HSS supporters to boycott the elections.

### KPJ, HSS and the parliamentary elections

The Constituent Assembly elections were of utmost importance for the future of democracy and the national regime of Yugoslavia. That is why all the political activities of KPJ and its weak bourgeois opposition focused on these elections, especially as far as the legislative activities were concerned. The electoral laws, passed by the Provisional People's Assembly in the summer of 1945, which defined that the members of "enemy military formations" and "their collaborators" had no right to vote, were especially important. At the same time the pre-war electorate was doubled, since women, people over 18 years of age and soldiers also got the right to vote. The decree in accordance to which the fighters and soldiers of the Yugoslav Army were able to vote regardless of their age at any location they were at on the day of the elections, regardless of whether they were registered in the electoral register or not, was especially problematic.<sup>11</sup>

In response to the boycott of the elections by the Croatian and Yugoslav opposition, the authorities introduced ballot boxes without a list. Besides secrecy, these ballot boxes supposedly ensured that the voters had the possibility to choose.

On the basis of the electoral laws 194.158 people in Yugoslavia and 69.109 people in Croatia lost their right to vote. That means that out of 2.034.628

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<sup>11</sup> Kartarina Spehnjak: *Javnost i propaganda : Narodna fronta u politici i kulturi Hrvatske : 1945–1952*. Zagreb 2002 (hereinafter Spehnjak, *Javnost i propagand*), p. 128; Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918–1988*, p. 382; Jerca Vodušek Starič: *Prevzem oblasti 1944–1946*. Ljubljana 1992, (hereinafter Vodušek Starič, *Prevzem oblasti*) p. 365.

Croatian voters 3,28% were left without a right to vote. Actually the communist regime, on the basis of these laws, narrowed the number of voters in accordance with their needs.<sup>12</sup>

The elections took place on 11 November 1945. In regard to the situation and the fact that the authorities threatened the population, forcing the people to vote, the number of the people who stayed at home was probably a strong indicator of opposition. However, opposition was actually shown only by those who cast the rubber balls into the ballot boxes without a list. Poor turnout was most prominent in the northern regions of Croatia. In the Varaždin region 20% of voters did not vote, and 15% of voters cast their rubber balls into the ballot boxes without a list. 17% of voters abstained in the Bjelovar region, while 15% of voters cast the balls into the ballot boxes without a list.<sup>13</sup>

The People's Front won with an absolute majority – with about 90% votes out of 90% of voters who came to the elections. Of course, the official results have to be considered taking into account the conditions in which the opposition worked or the fact that it did not participate at the elections as well as the methods used by the Communist Party. The election campaign was completely in the hands of KPJ; communists controlled all the media, organised the polling stations and election committees, prepared the electoral registers and counted the votes in the end. Not only did the opposition not take part in the elections, but they did not even monitor the counting of the votes. People were frequently forced to vote; however, the secrecy of the elections was not ensured. Those who refused to vote were intimidated by the authorities. The authorities threatened them with taking away their ration cards, pensions, apartments, as well as with persecuting them legally and executing them. The ballot boxes without a list were referred to as "enemy ballot boxes", "black boxes" and "Ustashe boxes". They often had narrow openings, so the voters could not reach inside, and dropping rubber balls inside was audible. There were also known cases of transferring the balls from the ballot boxes without a list into the People's Front ballot boxes. Where not many voters voted until 7pm, they extended the deadline. There are reports of the authorities finding a way of monitoring how the voters voted. Those who voted into the "black box" were often victims of open or secret state repression. Many of them were sent to "various works".<sup>14</sup>

Out of 524 Members of the Constituent Assembly of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia more than 400 were members of KPJ. Croatia sent 86 individuals into the Federal Assembly, among them 56 members of the Com-

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<sup>12</sup> Spehnjak, *Javnost i propaganda*, p. 131; Vodušek Starič, *Prevzem oblasti*, p. 344; Dušan Bilandžić: *Hrvatska moderna povijest*. Zagreb 1999, p. 220.

<sup>13</sup> Spehnjak, *Javnost i propaganda*, p. 132.

<sup>14</sup> Radelić, *Hrvatska seljačka stranka 1941.–1950.*, pp. 89–90; Vodušek Starič, *Prevzem oblasti*, p. 365; Hrvatski državni arhiv (HDA), fund CK SKH, Komisija za narodnu vlast CK KPH, Informacije o izborima za Sabor NR Hrvatske na kotaru Kostajnica.

munist Party, 26 members of HRSS, 3 members of the Independent Democratic Party (SDS) and 1 nonpartisan individual. Among 25 Croatian Members of the Assembly of Nations, 14 were members of KPJ, 6 were members of HRSS and 5 of them were nonpartisan individuals.<sup>15</sup> Altogether there were 111 Croatian Members of the Constituent Assembly, among them 70 members of KPJ, 32 members of HRSS, 3 members of SDS and 6 nonpartisan individuals.

After the federal elections the communists only had to confirm their power at the republic elections. This time the ballot boxes without a list did not exist anymore, since exclusively individuals and not lists were running for these elections.<sup>16</sup> The electoral registers included 2.045.740 voters. 1.859.444 of them voted on 10 November 1946, so the participation was around 90%. The regional results show differences between certain areas. In the Lika region the participation was 99,91%, in the Varaždin region 94,27% and in the Slavonski Brod 80%.<sup>17</sup> However, not many reports about what went on before the elections into the Constituent Assembly exist, even though perhaps a glimpse of events at that time can be acquired in another manner. Namely, the party report from Split, dating back to 3 December 1946, states that after the elections in this region there was a "struggle against those who refused to vote".<sup>18</sup>

176 Members of the Constituent Assembly of the People's Republic of Croatia were elected. All of them were members of the People's Front, but 30 of them represented themselves as members of HRSS. The government of the People's Republic of Croatia included 10 members of KPJ, 4 members of HRSS and 3 nonpartisan individuals.

The elections for the Constituent Assembly in Istria, Lastovo, Rijeka and Zadar were not organised before 30 November 1947, when these regions were annexed to Yugoslavia in accordance with the peace treaty with Italy. 150.209 people voted, and 94% of them voted for the People's Front. 15 Members of Assembly were elected.<sup>19</sup>

The possibility of voters losing their right to vote remained in force until 1951, when the criminal laws were changed to include the possibility of limiting this right, but taking it away was no longer provided for. Where before the interpretation of an unspecified arbiter could take away people's rights to vote on the basis of unspecified verdicts, in this case the voters could be given back their rights on the basis of an evaluation of their patriotism. However, the "enemies" were still imprisoned or threatened immediately before elections.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Spehñjak, *Narodni front Hrvatske 1945.*, p. 134.

<sup>16</sup> Spehñjak, *Javnost i propaganda*, p. 135; id., *Funkcioniranje "plebiscitarne demokracije" u Hrvatskoj 1945 – 1952 : zborni aspekt organizacije legitimacijskog procesa*: In: *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, 1991, No. 1.–3, pp. 215–242, 225.

<sup>17</sup> Spehñjak, *Javnost i propaganda*, pp. 136–137.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>19</sup> Spehñjak, *Javnost i propaganda*, p. 137, 141; Ivo Perić: *Hrvatski državni sabor 1848.–2000. Treći svezak: 1918.–2000*. Zagreb 2000, (hereinafter Perić, *Hrvatski državni sabor*) p. 215.

<sup>20</sup> Spehñjak, *Javnost i propaganda*, pp. 142, 145.

The second elections for the People's Assembly of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia took place on 26 March 1950. The electoral registers contained 2.565.800 Croatian citizens. 2.321.780 of them, that is 90,4%, voted. 2,14% or 49.629 citizens cast their vote into the ballot box without a list.<sup>21</sup>

Even though according to the reports of the British diplomats the opinion of a large part of the population supported the Communist Party and the People's Front, the authorities once again threatened the voters. Thus the British discovered that abstaining from the elections could even result in evictions from apartments. Even though the number of votes was strongly in favour of the People's Front, the Communist Party was not satisfied, so it "adjusted" them a bit. The results of the elections were falsified in all parts of Croatia, but according to the information of the People's Commission of the Central Committee of the Communist Part of Croatia, there was no need to "adjust" the results in the region of Dalmatia, Rijeka and Zagreb.<sup>22</sup> According to the report of the Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Croatia for Dalmatia, in the Dalmatia region the State Security Administration (UDBA) carried out its share of the pre-election activities. UDBA called in around 200 "headstrong individuals", had an "interview with them", which "mostly yielded good results".<sup>23</sup>

However, on the day of the elections numerous voters "left for the nearby hills, forests, vineyards and fields" in order to avoid pressures. Except for passive resistance the party authorities also reported some banners being torn down, triumphal arches destroyed, telephone wires cut, as well as some physical attacks against the People's Front activists. The police killed two attackers "in self-defense". Some people in the Križevci region came up with an original way of passively resisting the pressure of the communist activists – some of them got so drunk they were unable to carry out their responsibility as citizens. The authorities took measures against "hostile elements" – they imprisoned them, interrogated them, gave out administrative penalties and made them participate in work actions. One of the reports stated that thus the "masses of people" were delivered of their "fear of the enemy" and "aligned themselves with us".<sup>24</sup>

Before the Parliament of the People's Republic of Croatia elections on 5 October 1950, the republic legislation was brought in line with the federal legislation, especially the decrees about the candidates being individuals exclusively and the introduction of ballot boxes without lists.<sup>25</sup> These were the final

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<sup>21</sup> HDA, CK SKH, Komisija za narodnu vlast CK SKH, 25. 12. 1952.; *ibid.*, Politbiro CK KPH, Analiza izbora za kotarske, gradske i oblasne narodne odbore, bez d., inv. br. 2155a; *ibid.*, Komisija za narodnu vlast CK KPH, Izborni rezultati za oblast Bjelovar, Dalmacija, Karlovac, Osijek, Rijeka, Zagreb i grad Zagreb za Sabor 1950., 5. 11. 1950.

<sup>22</sup> Spehnjak, *Javnost i propaganda*, p. 135, 149–152, 284.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>24</sup> HDA, CK SKH, Politbiro CK KPH, Analiza izbora za kotarske, gradske i oblasne narodne odbore, bez d., inv. br. 2155a.

<sup>25</sup> Spehnjak, *Javnost i propaganda*, p. 152; Perić, *Hrvatski državni sabor*, p. 229.

Parliament elections with rubber balls in Croatia (as well as the whole of Yugoslavia); namely, in 1952 a modern way of voting with voting papers was introduced. Because in the same year the exclusively individual candidacies were imposed, the ballot boxes without lists were also not used anymore.

The election results for the Parliament of the People's Republic of Croatia definitely got close to the ideal of 100% of voters giving 100% of their votes for the People's Front. However, the regional data shows great differences among different regions. Thus 0,50% of votes in the Dalmatia region ended up in the ballot box without a list, while in the Križevci III electoral district in the Bjelovar region this box contained as many as 12,68% of votes.<sup>26</sup>

The function of elections was mostly that of a manifestation; the high participation showed the support to the authorities, which protected everything they had gained with the armed struggle by means of state repression, elaborate propaganda and by including the population into mass organisations.<sup>27</sup> At the Executive Committee of the National Front of Croatia on 11 May 1951 it was stated clearly in what way the People's Front acquired more than 90% of votes. "We solved this issue by achieving perfection with the use of measures of force and repression; even though the elections themselves were quite democratic (we have not actually beaten up anybody), there were still means available to us which we could use to get them to vote."<sup>28</sup>

### The dispute about the registration and legalisation of HSS

Also in the time after the elections the main question concerning HSS was whether the party would be registered or not. Under the *Societies, Meetings and Other Public Gatherings Act*,<sup>29</sup> all political parties which wanted to restore their activities were obliged to report that. Two ways in which parties could function existed: 1) the declaration of accession to the People's Front; 2) the lodging of a request to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, including the program and the statute of the party.<sup>30</sup>

Among the HSS leaders, who opposed the cooperation with the People's Front, two approaches to this question were formed. Košutić was against registration and active operations, while Šutej wanted the party active. That was one

<sup>26</sup> HDA, CK SKH, Komisija za narodnu vlast CK KPH, Izborni rezultati za oblast Bjelovar, Dalmacija, Karlovac, Osijek, Rijeka, Zagreb i grad Zagreb za Sabor 1950., 5 November 1950.; Spehnjak, Javnost i propaganda, p. 154.

<sup>27</sup> Spehnjak, Javnost i propaganda, pp. 50, 57.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>29</sup> Službeni list DFJ [Official Gazette of the Democratic Federative Yugoslavia], No. 65, of 31 August 1945, Act No. 612.

<sup>30</sup> Momčilo Pavlović: *Politični programi Demokratske, Narodne radikalne, Jugoslovenske republikanske demokratske, Socijalističke i Socijal-demokratske stranke Jugoslavije iz 1945. godine*. In: *Istorija XX veka*, 1985, No. 1, pp. 119–155.

of the reasons for the convening of the new party conference. It took place at the Priest's House in Zagreb on 15 November 1945, and 26 HSS leaders attended. Most of them supported the registration of the party. Ivan Andres, Sigismund Čajkovac, eng. Franjo Gaži and Tomo Jančiković were among them. They believed that the legalisation of the party was essential for public political activities. That would enable them to contact foreign diplomats. In this way they would prevent the possibility that the authorities could accuse HSS of illegal work and treat it the same way as the Ustashe. However, the opponents of legalisation warned them that only Košutić and Maček could decide such matters. Ivan Stilinović, Jakov Silobrčić and Karlo Žunjević were the most fervent antagonists of the legalisation. Finally they agreed that vice-president Košutić should be the one to give the final opinion. In a short while, Košutić sent them a secret letter, opposing the registration of HSS resolutely.

The communist authorities were aware of Šutej's plans to activate the party for the 1946 Constituent Assembly elections, which was in conflict with the policy that was agreed upon. That is why they decided to release Košutić from prison, because his passive policy suited them. Košutić was released in September 1946. Immediately after that he stopped all activities which would cause the state repression against HSS members.

### **The alliance with the Serbian and Slovenian opposition**

In the spring 1946 the initiative for the establishment of the Peasant Members of Parliament Club in the People's Parliament of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia was presented; actually it was about establishing the Peasant Bloc (HRSS, HSS, National Peasant's Party and the Agricultural Workers' Union). In May 1946 Imro Filaković, a HRSS representative, and the priest Ante Salacan, independent Member of Parliament in the People's Front, joined this initiative. Both of them were disappointed in the policy of the HRSS Executive Committee, so they sought to establish contact with the HSS group, gravitating towards Šubašić and Šutej. However, none of the other Members of Parliament from HRSS wanted to sign a statement of accession to the Peasant Bloc.

In July 1946 Imro Filaković, Ante Salacan, Dragoljub Jovanović and his National Peasant Party (NSS), during the meeting of the People's Parliament of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, renewed the idea of establishing a Peasant Club and Peasant Bloc, which would be made up of HSS, NSS, Agricultural Workers' Union, Slovenian People's Party, Peasant Party and a group of peasant Members of Parliament from Macedonia. However, they have not made any concrete steps. The reason for this was the lack of unity within individual parties as well as the repression of the communist authorities.

Occasional contacts among party leaders were preserved until the beginning of 1947. Meanwhile, the opposition activities in the People's Parliament boiled down to mere discussions of the braver individuals, who disagreed with individual

legislative proposals. Imro Filaković, who was expelled from HRSS already in 1946, was the last one to contradict the communists – on 21 January 1950 he protested the reintroduction of the ballot boxes without lists.<sup>31</sup> He thought that the opposition could run in the elections with their own list, but that the proposal about the ballot boxes without lists is not in line with the democratic nature of the law. However, during his speech the members of the parliament, not for the first time, yelled at him, that "that was not an Ustashe country". Filaković nevertheless took advantage of his speech and also protested the fact that people were dragged to interrogations during the night. He emphasized that better future could only be found "in the garden called freedom".<sup>32</sup> His speech was the last voice of opposition to be heard in the People's Assembly of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia. He was not elected at the next elections.

### Maček's message

Maček has kept in contact with HSS through secret channels since as early as November 1945. In the spring of 1946 Šutej wrote a message which was sent to Maček in Paris, probably through the French or the US consul in Zagreb. In July of the same year eng. Gaži, with the knowledge of Jančiković and Šutej, sent an oral message to Maček through an official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia. He warned him that HSS should be activated as soon as possible. He demanded that Maček agree to the election of the new provisional leadership of HSS.

Maček's answers, which arrived in July and September, had four essential points: 1) HSS should not be registered; 2) it should not cooperate with the Communist Party; 3) it should establish a Peasant Bloc with the other Yugoslav peasant parties; 4) it should expect that United States and Great Britain would support the democratic forces in Yugoslavia.

### Košutić's release

As I have already emphasized, the communist authorities knew about Šutej, Gaži and Jančiković's plans of activating the party. Because the Constituent Assembly elections were drawing near, there was a danger that this time HSS would take part in them. That is why the authorities decided to release Košutić from prison. Namely, they knew that since 1944 he has changed his tactics that he was imprisoned for, which was to attempt to cooperate with communists, to

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<sup>31</sup> Radelić, *Hrvatska seljačka stranka 1941.–1950.*, pp. 178–182; id., *Izvršni odbor Hrvatske republikanske seljačke stranke i njegovi otpadnici (1945.–1948.)*. In: *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, 1992, No. 2, pp. 59–81, 64.

<sup>32</sup> *Peto vanredno zasjedanje Veća naroda i Saveznog veća, 20–21 januara 1950 godine*, stenografske beleške, Prezidijum Narodne skupštine FLRJ, Beograd, no year of publishing, pp. 85–87.

the very opposite. He argued for the policy of waiting for the international circumstances to change. Such policy now suited the Communist Party, so on 6 September 1946 they released Košutić from prison. Together with him Stipe Pezelj and Bariša Smoljan were also released.

Immediately after the release Košutić met with Šutej. Šutej tried to convince him that registering the party is the basic condition for its continued existence. Namely, Šutej was convinced that this was the only way for the leaders of HSS to work together against the People's Front, and he also thought that HSS should participate at the Constituent Assembly elections in November 1946. However, Košutić persisted at his and Maček's conclusion that the party should not be registered and that its activists should not take part in any political activities. He knew that by acting they would provoke the reaction of the regime, which was prepared to use every resource at its disposal to thwart the opposition.

### **Božidar Magovac**

Unlike the party leadership, in 1943 Božidar Magovac renounced the policy of passive waiting and of the equal attitude of HSS towards the Ustashe and the communists.<sup>33</sup> He was convinced that HSS should join the Communist Party in its struggle against fascism, not only because of the common goals of this struggle, but also in order to prevent the communists being the only victorious side. Magovac led his policy in opposition to what the party leadership wanted. He was convinced that in this way HSS would benefit in the end, because this tactics would prevent the Communist Party from enforcing its authority. He believed that if a large number of HSS supporters joined the fight, that would, as he stressed, neutralise the "communist colour" of the partisans.

Magovac joined the partisans in June 1943. The communists accepted him because they believed that not only was Magovac an influential bourgeois politician, who would ensure a greater support for the partisans among Croats, but also the politician who they could use to enforce HSS with a new leadership under the communist influence.

Magovac planned that the ZAVNOH would be organised like a kind of a coalition of political parties, actually like a coalition between HSS and KPJ. He insisted on the public statements of the National Liberation Movement leadership up until then – that their primary goal was to liberate the nation and that they guarantee pluralism and private property. Magovac was the founder of the HRSS Executive Committee. When after several months of intense negotiations and pressures the communists established a pro-communist movement within the HSS Executive Committee, led by Franjo Gaži and Franjo Frol, they renounced Magovac. Meanwhile, Magovac nevertheless became the vice-

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<sup>33</sup> For more information on Božidar Magovac see Zdenko Radelić: *Božidar Magovac : s Radicom između Mačeka i Hebranga*. Zagreb 1999.



president of the NKOJ partisan government.<sup>34</sup> After a short while he had to resign his position in the Executive Committee and his post as the editor of *Slobodni dom*. After the allies forced Šubašić on the communists (on 16 June 1944) as a new partner, Magovac was forced to give up all of his other duties as well.

### Magovac becomes active again

In August 1944 Magovac was first interned on Vis, and from May to June 1945 he was in house arrest in Zagreb. Later, when he was employed as the director of the Zagreb city library, he resumed his political activities. He believed that communists would accept him as a political ally, because the state found itself in political and economic problems, not only due to the casualties and material damage, but also because of the revolutionary terror and radical economic reforms. He hoped that his concepts would be acceptable to communists, because with his and Šubašić's assistance, whom he befriended, the authorities would gain the support of the Croatian people.

He was convinced that a war would break out between the Western forces and USSR. He believed that USA and Great Britain would win. It was important for him that the representatives of HSS should be "side by side" with the communists in the decisive moments, so that they could take over the power and pass it on to Maček. So even in 1946, just like in 1943, Magovac saw himself as a HSS leader.

He insisted that the HSS representatives should participate at the Constituent Assembly elections on 10 November 1946. He knew, though, that KPJ did not want to have HSS as a partner, so he saw the alternative in only some of its most important individuals running as candidates. Obviously he thought those individuals should include himself and Šubašić as former allies of the Communist Party. Magovac prepared a special *Plan* for the negotiations with the communist authorities, in which he demanded that the Communist Party acknowledge the "democratic parliamentary" regime and compliance with political freedom, guaranteed with the constitution.<sup>35</sup> He suggested changes, which would prevent the possibility of a civil war. In October 1946 Šubašić took his *Plan* to a discussion with Vladimir Bakarić and Ivan Krajačić-Stevo, members of the Croatian government and the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of Croatia, but they firmly refused the suggestion that the Communist Party should let them run at the November 1946 elections.

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<sup>34</sup> Eng. Franjo Gaži and Franjo Gaži are two different individuals.

<sup>35</sup> Archives of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, RO B. Magovac, XI.

### **Magovac's new initiative**

Even though the repression by the authorities intensified in 1947, also against several HSS leaders, Magovac and Šubašić were not demoralised. In July they started a new initiative. They intended to demand that the KPJ stop the violence and organise free elections, and to assign Šubašić to the post of the "president of the Presidium" of the Parliament or the post of the "Prime Minister of Croatia", while Magovac should become a minister in the federal government. They also intended to insist on political amnesty and reprieve, abolishment of the death penalty, stopping the violence of the regime and organising free elections. But, as could be expected, on 19 August 1947 the police arrested Magovac on the railway station in Karlovac as he was returning from a visit to Šubašić at his vacation house in the city outskirts and took him to the prison in Zagreb. In November 1948 he was tried under false allegations and sentenced to six years in prison.

### **Imprisoned HSS leaders**

Thus Magovac joined many HSS members sentenced to jail. Namely, in the beginning of 1947, the Central Committee of KPJ decided to take strict measures against everybody who acted in opposition to KPJ. Therefore in 1947 many court proceedings against HSS members took place. The most respectable and influential people among them were Tomo Baburić, eng. Franjo Gaži, Tomo Jančiković, Andrija Papa, Ivan Štefanac and Karlo Žunjević. IN 1949 Bariša Smoljan was also imprisoned. The rest of them – August Košutić, Marija Košutić, Marija Radić, Ivan Šubašić and Juraj Šutej – were under constant surveillance by the authorities, who not only checked and recorded their phone conversations, but also followed them personally. For all of them, including Maček and Juraj Krnjević, they prepared detailed files for any possible trials.

Due to the resolute actions of the authorities all opposition soon ceased. It should be noted that in 1951 the police had some information about Šutej and Šubašić supposedly putting together a memorandum with the intent to send it to the representatives of the Western countries.<sup>36</sup>

But nevertheless, Magovac's initiative was actually the last initiative of HSS. With a number of court proceedings and other forms of repression, the Communist Party completely obliterated HSS, the most dangerous opposition party in Croatia. Since then HSS was only active abroad.

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<sup>36</sup> HDA, MUP, 010–37, kut. 15, Šutej dr. Juraj.

## **Conclusion**

The process of the increasing differences within HSS gained momentum because of the formation of NDH in April 1941 as well as because of the resistance towards the Ustashe regime, the Kingdom of Italy and the units of the Third Reich, and the expansion of the partisan movement led by the Communist Party. However, HSS was left completely without leadership after the war ended. Vladko Maček emigrated to France with some of the leaders, and then to USA, because he thought that was the best way to attempt, at least indirectly, to influence the political processes in his homeland. The group led by Košutić followed Maček's standpoint. Just like they opposed the Ustashe regime before, they also opposed the communist regime later. They demanded complete political and civil freedoms, and the right for the Croats to choose their representatives and the form of government freely at free elections.

The objective of the Communist Party was to present Maček's positions as Ustashe positions. In this way they wanted to neutralise Maček as the most dangerous political opponent among Croats. Therefore they established HRSS in order to replace HSS. HRSS was a party without organisation and members, and its Executive Committee carried out the Communist Party program under the old party name. This formation, a kind of a communist peasants' section, whose activities depended on the work of its select leadership and local communist organisations, operated with the aim of eliminating the fear of communism among the Croatian peasants. That is why the communists from HRSS were most active in the People's Front election campaign. When the Communist Party position was ensured, HRSS quickly became inactive and vanished from the political scene.

With a total takeover of the state apparatus, the Communist Party ensured all the conditions for the victory of the People's Front at the Constituent Assembly of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia and the Constituent Assembly of the People's Republic of Croatia elections, thus formally confirming its total dominance. The Communist party stopped the rare initiatives of some of the members of HSS leadership with stronger repressive policy in 1947 and with political court proceedings. The leaders of HSS were convicted of treason, collaborating with the enemy, establishing contacts with imperialist forces, spying and terrorism.

The words "mačekovština" and "mačekovci" became synonyms for betrayal and for supporting the Ustashe regime, which was the most effective manner in which the authorities could prevent all HSS activities. Unlike HSS, the Ustashe movement, which was partially preserved through the activities of the Crusaders, the Ustashe guerrilla groups, adapted to the new conditions after its military and political defeat and started looking for new allies among the Western forces. However, the advantage that the communists had was unbeatable.

Vengeance was the right of the victorious side, thus there was no reaction from the major forces – they treated all of the defeated sides similarly. The communists justified their radicalism, which sometimes on the lower levels also

included vengeance based on the Serbian nationalism, as vengeance for the Ustaše radicalism. The communist Yugoslavia, a dissident in regard to the world communist movement, found itself on the borders of the world divided by the Cold War. That is why the major world forces strived to win Yugoslavia over to their side, or at least not to push it towards the other side. Under such conditions the opposition could not gain a stronger support – the citizens, tired of the war and the post-war violence and poverty, agreed to the communist regime, which, especially to the young generation, offered new hope for a better life and a more just system. Even the most fervent supporters of HSS and the Crusaders quickly lost their will for a serious long-term resistance.

### *Povzetek*

#### *Komunistična oblast in opozicija na Hrvaškem po letu 1945*

Proti koncu druge svetovne vojne in po njej je politično situacijo v Hrvaški bistveno opredelilo nekaj dejstev: uničenje in razpad Neodvisne države Hrvaške, obnova Jugoslavije, močen vpliv ZSSR, ki je izrinil vse ostale vojaške, politične in ideološke konkurente; velike človeške žrtve in ogromna materialna škoda; delovanje preostalih ustaških in v manjšem številu, četniških skupin po vojni; oblast komunistične partije, ki ji je uspela vsiliti svojo diktaturo in izvesti maščevanje nad poraženci, pa tudi načrtovano likvidacijo mnogih potencialnih vojaških in političnih konkurentov; radikalna sprememba zunanjih in notranjih meja Hrvaške, ki je v primerjavi s stanjem iz leta 1939 izgubila del bosansko-hercegovega območja in Srem, a dobila je del svojih etničnih ali zgodovinskih območij (Baranjo in Dvor na Uni, Rijeko, Zadar, Istro in otoke Cres, Lastovo, Lošinj); poseben položaj Istre, ki je do 1947 bila pod vojno upravo in se je tega leta združila s Hrvaško (Buje, Novigrad in Umag so pripadli Hrvaški 1954).

Komunistična partija je imela popolni nadzor nad vsemi bistvenimi inštrumenti svoje oblasti od začetkov partizanskega gibanja. Toda popolna komunistična diktatura je bila ogrožena zaradi pritiskov zaveznikov, ki so rezultirali z dogovorom Tita s Šubašićem (16. junija 1944), ustanavljanjem skupne vlade iz članov partizanskega NKOJ in kraljeve vlade (7. marca 1945), uvajanjem kraljevih namestnikov, razširitvijo AVNOJ in z volitvami v Ustavodajno skupščino (11. novembra 1945). Čeprav so komunisti pristali na večino zahtev, je bilo formalno spoštovanje parlamentarizma, dejansko samo vprašanje njihove taktike. Ne glede na vse poskuse omejevanja komunistične oblasti, so to komunisti obdržali v celoti.

Odločilno vlogo za državno ureditev Jugoslavije so bile volitve v Ustavodajno skupščino. Zato se je vsa politična aktivnost komunistične partije in meščanske

opozicije osredotočena v to. Različne opozicijske struje znotraj Hrvaške kmečke stranke (Hrvatska seljačka stranka – HSS) so bile enotne samo v nasprotovanju komunistični diktaturi, razlikovale pa so se po načinu delovanja. Postavljale so vprašanje o položaju Hrvaške v Jugoslaviji, politični ureditvi, svobodčinah, še posebej svobode političnega delovanja. Glede na močno komunistično represijo in vseprisotni strah na eni in na zmagovalno navdušenost in prepričanje enega dela prebivalcev, da bo komunistična stranka zgradila pravičnejšo družbo, na drugi strani, se nobeni drugi politični stranki ni uspelo obnoviti in tudi ne sestaviti zaočkroženi politični program, še manj pa dolgoročno delovati preko lokalnih organizacij. Obdobje od 1945 do 1950 je zaznamovala komunistična stranka, ki je uspešno kombinirala revolucionarne postopke z formalnim spoštovanjem parlamentarnih pravil. Na podlagi dejstva, da je obnovila in obdržala Jugoslavijo na strani zmagovite protifašistične koalicije, je uresničila svojo brezmejno oblast.

Najmočnejša predvojna stranka na Hrvaškem je bila Hrvatska seljačka stranka (HSS). Toda sposobnost komunistične partije da prikaže usklajenost programa HSS z programom Ljudske fronte, je vplivala na to, da so se mnogi pripadniki HSS priključili partizanom. Politika komunistične partije je imela glede pridobivanja članov HSS tri bistvene točke: pridobiti čim večje število članov HSS v partizane, kar bi, seveda, pomenilo da jim se bo priključil velik del Hrvatov, ki so do tedaj, razen na ozemlju Hrvaške v okviru Kraljevine Italije in pod njeno kontrolo, bili bolj ali manj pasivni; zavreči Mačeka in vodstvo HSS pod izgovorom da so izvršili izdajo; vsiliti novo vodstvo stranke in ga instrumentalizirati v boju za oblast ter ga vpreči v službo proklamiranega programa Ljudske fronte, ki je bil pravzaprav prekriti komunistični program.

Novoustanovljena Hrvatska republikanska seljačka stranka (HRSS) je postala sredstvo komunistične partije, ki ga je izkoristila za razbijanje HSS. Poleg tega so komunisti HRSS izkoristili kot dokaz obstoja večstrankastva in demokracije v Jugoslaviji in da so obtožbe o diktaturi komunistične partije sovražna propaganda. Hkrati je takšen, pogojno ga imenujem komunistični HRSS, onemogočal zahteve pristašev HSS, da se stranka obnovi, pod izgovorom da je HRSS prava HSS, ki je po Mačekovi izdaji prevzela stari program in obnovila boj za republiko. Komunisti so zato uporabili HRSS v predvolilni kampanji v Ustavodajno skupščino 1945, kakor tudi za hrvaški republiški ustavodajni sabor 1946. Pravzaprav so, vse dokler se komunistična oblast ni čutila dovolj močno, HRSS obnavljali in jo ohranjali pri življenju. Ko pa so z zaplembami in širjenjem državne lastnine, izgraditvijo represivnega aparata in z volitvami potrdili svojo neomejeno oblast, so komunisti HRSS zavrgli in jo prepustili tihemu odmiranju.

Vsi poskusi Ivana Šubašića in njemu nasprotnega strankarskega tabora zbrana okrog edinega poveljnega hrvaškega opozicijskega glasila Narodni glas in od oktobra 1944 priprtega podpredsednika stranke Augusta Košutića, so se končali neuspešno. Onemogočeni so bili z komunističnim monopolom v koalicijski vladi in z bombaškim napadom skojevcev na uredništvo Narodnega glasu ter s sodnim pregonom in zaporom glavnega urednika Ivana Bernardića.

Državni teror, likvidacije in prekrita revolucija, ki se je uveljavljala z množičnimi obtožbami o sodelovanju z okupatorji in narodno izdajo, so se od leta 1946 in 1947 prelevili v odkrito revolucionarno delovanje (nacionalizacija) in organizacijo sodnih procesov proti tistim članom HSS, ki so naivno verjeli deklarativni politiki komunističnih oblasti. Skupaj z vojaškim uničenjem maloštevilnih gverilcev, ki so nastopali pod imenom križarji in popolnim mednarodnim priznanjem Demokratične federativne Jugoslavije, je komunistični partiji uspelo popolnoma onemogočiti opozicijsko delovanje na Hrvaškem, kar je veljalo tudi drugod v Jugoslaviji.