

PEASANTISM IN INTERWAR EASTERN EUROPE *

A decade ago Branko Pešelj, a leading student of peasant ideology, described peasantism as "the outlook of the peasantry on the complex of political and socio-economic issues in which the peasants are interested and for whose solutions they are fighting."¹ The definition is important in that it characterizes peasantism not as a rigidly formulated doctrine — "the artificial creation of an individual or group of individuals" — but rather as an interpretation and articulation of certain basic views traditionally held by the peasantry.

There is no general agreement among students of Eastern Europe on just what these traditional views are or on the extent to which they have been accurately rendered as "peasantist ideology" by their interpreters. This is not surprising since the peasants of Eastern Europe have always been inarticulate and particularly suspicious of urban investigators of their lives and problems. Those professing to understand the peasant have propounded a myriad of theories regarding his soul, social and political behavior, outlook on life. The distillate of their views and pronunciamentos is peasantism, the presumed tenets of which may be summarized as follows:

1) Peasantism has a profound spiritual basis stressing the existence of God and the need for religious beliefs;

2) Peasantism is dedicated to the principle of private ownership of the means of production and the individual's inviolable right to dispose of the fruits of his labor either independently or, preferably, through free cooperatives;

3) Peasantism advocates "peaceful coexistence" among all classes of society favoring social change by peaceful, evolutionary, means;

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1. Branko M. Pešelj, "Peasantism: Its Ideology and Achievements," C.E. Black, Ed., *Challenge in Eastern Europe* (New Brunswick, N. J., 1954), p. 118.

4) Peasantism favors democratic practices and institutions emphasizing local self-government, free elections and direct participation in the government by the greatest number of people.²

The purpose of this paper is to ascertain the extent to which peasantism was representative of peasant views and desiderata and provided viable solutions to the enormous problems faced by the East European countries in the interwar period.

It has been fashionable, particularly in the first years after the establishment of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe to link directly the failure of democratic rule in the East European countries (except Czechoslovakia) in the interwar years with the rejection by the ruling groups of the interests of the peasantry and the principles of peasantism.³ Had the overwhelmingly peasant states been governed by representatives of the majority of their people, had the former aristocratic oligarchies, the bourgeoisie, intelligentsia and proletariat accepted the olive branch extended by the leaders of the masses and worked together for the solutions of national and international problems might not the East European countries have avoided much of the turmoil that led to their downfall? This — the exponents of peasantism claim — would have been possible because of the fundamentally tolerant and democratic nature of the peasant and his ideology. In theory it may indeed be argued that the tenets of peasantism provided a framework of political and socio-economic organization flexible enough to accommodate the interests of most classes of East European society. In practice, however, the implementation of these principles presupposed the transferring of political control to the peasant and his representatives and this was unacceptable to traditional holders of political power. The question naturally arises: why was the peasant unable to overcome this resistance after the means for political victory became available at the end of World War I?

A variety of answers have been provided to this fundamental question, none, however, entirely satisfactory. There is, of course, no all-encompassing answer for Eastern Europe as a whole as conditions varied from country to country. Relatively simple explanations can be offered in the case of Hungary where the peasant was *de facto* disenfranchised and in Poland where the facade of democratic government was abandoned at a remarkably early date. But what about Bulgaria or Rumania where political expression was

2. Pešelj, *Ibid*, pp. 118-121; G.M. Dimitrov, "Agrarianism," Feliks Gross, Ed., *European Ideologies* (New York, 1948), pp. 396 ff.

3. The most balanced statement on these issues is by Pešelj, *op. cit.*, pp. 109-131.

possible and where the land belonged to the peasant? Did peasantism fail because it was unrepresentative of the true interests of the peasantry? Did it fail because the peasant parties betrayed the interests of their constituents? Did it fail because the peasant was fundamentally apolitical? Did it fail because it was unsuited to the requirements of the changing East European society of the interwar years? Each case must be considered separately.

It is fair to state that Hungarian peasantism — if such there was — was stillborn.⁴ The Hungarian peasant had shown greater proclivities toward more radical forms of political expression than envisaged by the idyllic concepts and hopes of their peasantist leaders. The peasant movement in Hungary, from its inception in the late nineties until its virtual burial by Stephen Nagyatádi-Szabó's Small Landowners' Party in the twenties, had displayed extreme forms of agrarian socialism. The peasant was infinitely more attracted to Sanodia Czisma's and Varkony's platform of radical expropriation of landlord estates than toward Szabó's credo of democratic land reform even after the debacle of Belá Kun and the establishment of the Bethlen cabinet.⁵ It has been argued that Szabó's compromises with Bethlen and the nationalist groups were supported by the peasant masses who had been unable to secure the desired land reform under Kun and who, during the White Terror, saw the error of their radicalism and wisdom of their leaders' policies of compromise. These conclusions are not substantiated by the historic evidence. First Szabó, then Gaul and his independent Small Landowners' Party as well as other self-styled advocates of peasant causes and ideology failed to implement their programs. Bethlen's vague promises of eventual land reform but *de facto* disenfranchisement of the peasantry was not opposed by Szabo. The Hungarian peasantry did not identify itself with its political leadership; it had, however, no avenue — short of revolution — for opposing the ruling coalition with its effective military and semi-military organizations. Although disenchanted with communism the Hungarian peasant had, by and large remained faithful to Czisma's brand of radicalism. A minority even showed sympathy for the Christian peasantism of the Arrow Cross — a combination of antisemitism, mysticism and advocacy of land reform very similar

4. In the absence of any comprehensive study on Hungarian peasantism the following should provide the essential information on this topic: G. Illyés, *Puszták Népe* (Budapest, 1943); A. Málnási, *Magyar nemzet őszinte története* (Budapest, 1937); J. Révay, *Marxism and Populism* (Budapest, 1946):

5. A brief outline of Hungarian developments is contained in Dimitrov, *op. cit.*, pp. 435-438. See also the stimulating views of Hugh Seton-Watson, *Eastern Europe Between the Wars 1918-1941* (3rd edition; New York, 1962), pp. 77 ff. and 185 ff.

to the Iron Guard philosophy of neighboring Rumania — which had nothing in common with peasantism as defined by the theoreticians.⁶ This “peasantism” was unknown in interwar Hungary partly because it was not representative of the masses’ views and partly because the spokesmen for these masses surrendered to the anti-peasant, aristocratic, landowning oligarchy and its lesser urban associates.

Strikingly similar was the situation in Poland.⁷ The moderate peasant movement headed by Wincenty Witos since 1905 proved ineffectual after World War I. Witos’ peasant party, *Piast*, advocated all accepted principles of peasantism except that of effective implementation of the promised land reform even after it merged in 1920 with the more radical peasant organization — Thugutt’s *Wyzwolenie* — to form the United Peasant Party. Thugutt’s demands for radical land reform and assumption of true political power by the peasantry through the *Wyzwolenie* rather than the *Piast* faction of the United Peasant Party was the main reason for the collapse of that Party in 1923 and Witos’ subsequent policies of accommodation with the conservative landowning and urban interests.⁸ The widely-held assumption that Witos’ policies enjoyed the support of the majority of the peasantry as evidenced by the attitude of the masses during the Russo-Polish war is open to question. That anti-Russian and anticommunist sentiments were rampant among the peasants in those years is true but the peasants’ support of the Polish regime was decidedly based on the expectation that a radical land reform would be effectuated at the end of the war. Witos’ collaboration with Pilsudski and, later, even with the Radziwills and Potockis did not improve the peasants’ lot or assure meaningful political representation in the authoritarian Polish state. In fact, as shown by the agricultural strike of 1936 and other less dramatic events, the Polish peasant was generally revolutionary-minded, demonstrating, few of the “democratic” aims alleged by Witos or, later, Mikołajczyk.⁹

Peasantism and the peasant political movement in interwar Czecho-

6. On Hungarian fascism and its relation to peasantism and the peasantry consult Seton-Watson, *Ibid*, 195 ff. and C.A. Macartney, *October Fifteenth: A History of Modern Hungary 1929-1945* (2nd edition; Edinburgh, 1961), Vol. II, pp. 90 ff.

7. Most informative study on the Polish peasant movement is A. Swietochowski, *Historia Chłopów Polskich u Zarysie* (2 vols; Warsaw and Lwow, 1927-1928).

8. D. Mitrany, *Marx Against the Peasant* (Durham, N.C., 1951), pp. 87 ff.; Seton-Watson, *op. cit.*, pp. 157 ff.

9. Much insight may be gained from W. Witos, *Moje wspomnienia* (3 vols.; Paris, 1964-65).

slovakia holds an intermediate place between the Hungarian-Polish pattern, on the one hand, and the Rumanian and Bulgarian, on the other.¹⁰ Its virtues have been exaggerated by apologists of the democratic experiment in pre-communist Czechoslovakia, particularly peasantists stressing the consistently major role played by the Czech Agrarian Party in the country's political life and the economic attainments of the Czech peasantry in the interwar years. It is indeed true that the tenets of peasantism — political democracy, cooperative marketing and distribution of peasant products, etc. — were rigidly adhered to during the long years in which the Agrarian Party under Antonín Svehla played a dominant part in the numerous coalition governments of the Republic.¹¹ But it must also be remembered that the Agrarian Party was initially the party of the well-to-do Czech peasant and that its most striking success — the implementation of the long-urged expropriation of landlords' estates — was achieved at the expense of foreign — Austrian and Hungarian — landholders at the end of the war. Moreover, like their counterparts in Poland and Hungary — and for that matter also Rumania and Yugoslavia — the leaders of the Czech peasantry resorted to major compromises with the bourgeoisie which, in effect, made them increasingly less representative of the interests of the peasantry. The Agrarian Party became the stronghold of the Czech bourgeoisie and wealthier peasants in the thirties; it was the party of the urban and rural bourgeoisie representing bourgeois rather than peasantist values. Indeed, there is a marked difference between the policies advocated and implemented by the Agrarians in the thirties and peasantism, a fact which is best accounted for by the rejection of their platform and policies by the majority of the non-Czech peasants of Czechoslovakia. Surely the Slovak peasants had little sympathy for the Agrarians.¹² The fiscal and pricing policies of Prague were disastrous to the economy of rural Slovakia and, in the thirties, the economic status of the Slovak peasants was not much better than the Poles. Nor was peasant support of native leaders like Hodža a nationalistic manifestation as such; it was rather a sign of rejection of a Czech

10. On the Czechoslovak peasant movement in general see K. Galla, *Dolní Rověn* (Praha, 1939); K. Huebl, *Bauerntum und Landbau der Sudetendeutschen* (München, 1963) — both informative but sketchy.

11. An excellent critical discussion of the aims and policies of the Agrarian Party may be found in Seton-Watson, *op. cit.*, pp. 171 ff.

12. On Slovak politics and peasantism consult S. Cambel, *Agrárna otázka na Slovensku a naša revolúcia, 1945-1948* (Bratislava, 1958) and J. Kramer, *Iredenta a separatizmus v Slovenskej politike, 1919-1938* (Bratislava, 1957). The opposite point of view in J.A. Mikus, *Slovakia: A Political History 1918-1950* (Milwaukee 1963).

bourgeois peasantism incompatible with Slovak agrarian interests. It is in this light that the ultimate reactions of the Slovak peasantry — endorsement of Hlinka's ultra-nationalist, anti-Czech, views or support of communist doctrines — must be understood. The Slovak peasant was not opposed to peasantism *per se*; in fact he favored the tenets of that doctrine. But Czech peasantism, as it evolved in the interwar years, no longer corresponded to the needs or views of the Slovak masses.

Similarly, the failure of peasantism in Ruthenia may be ascribed to the unenlightened policies of the Prague Agrarians.¹³ The Ruthenian peasants, beneficiaries of post-war land reform, had supported the Agrarian Party as long as it adhered *de facto* to its peasantist platform. By 1935, however, their allegiance had shifted to the Agrarian Opposition — the truly independent but ineffectual Ruthenian peasantist group — or to the more powerful Communist Party or, in a few instances, even to the right-wing fascist Fenzig Party.

Having adapted their program and ideology to the realities of Czech industrial society the Czech peasant leaders were able to protect the interests of at least some of their constituents. In the process of compromise, however, the character of peasantism changed sufficiently to alienate the have nots, exacerbate the national and social problems of the new state and transform itself into a doctrine equally acceptable to the urban bourgeoisie and rural kulaks.

Comparable compromises in doctrine and practice with not altogether different effects are also recorded in multi-national Yugoslavia and Rumania. In Yugoslavia peasantism, like all other ideologies, became enmeshed with the all-encompassing nationality problems of the interwar years and its original aims and character underwent profound transformation.¹⁴ The Serbian peasant movement and ideology, for instance, was much more radical in origin than the Croat or Slovene.¹⁵ Originally it resembled the Bulgarian; the similarity of views between the People's Radical Party and the Bulgarian Agrarian Union was particularly striking in the early years of their existence.

13. Most informative is the documentary collection I.M. Vash, et al., Eds., *Shliakhon Zhlovnia; promovy ta interpeliatsii deputativ-komunistiv u Czechoslovats'komy parlamenti pro Zakarpats'ku Ukrainu, 1921-1938* (Uzhhorod, 1959).

14. The basic study on all aspects of this subject is J. Tomašević, *Peasants, Politics, and Economic Change in Yugoslavia* (Stanford, California, 1955).

15. On the Serbian peasant movement consult, aside from Tomašević's work, Seton-Watson, *op. cit.*, pp. 216 ff.

But by the end of the war the Radical Party had become a bourgeois group while the Union of Peasants, established in 1919 as the organization of all Yugoslav peasants, soon became dominated by "nationalist-centralist reactionaries." The exponents of democratic peasantism were silenced as were the Serbian peasants whose radicalism was feared by the Belgrade *caršija*. Similarly Slovene peasantism had little in common with the democratic doctrine.¹⁶ It guarded the cooperative principle, it protected the economic interests of the Slovene peasant and encouraged his cultural development but ultimately the peasantist movement was the captive of the conservative, nationalistic, anti-Serbian interests of the paternalistic Catholic Church and its political allies. Even the much-vaunted Croatian peasant movement could not withstand the pressures of destructive nationalism.¹⁷ The legacy of the most articulate spokesmen for democratic peasantism—the brothers Radić—survived in interwar Croatia. The basic principles of democracy, cooperation, coexistence, etc. enunciated by Stephen Radić since 1905 were restated and implemented in later years by several able disciples, most notably Vlado Maček. However, the Croatian peasant movement was afflicted by the internal problem of reconciliation of the conflicting interests of those favoring strict adherence to democratic peasantism and those inclined to compromise with the nationalist intellectuals and bourgeoisie seeking to transform the Croatian Peasant Party into an instrument of opposition to Serbian centralism. In the thirties the Croatian Peasant Party had become an organization dominated by the chauvinist bourgeoisie and intelligentsia, separatist and both unsympathetic toward and unrepresentative of the peasantist tradition it professed to follow. Nevertheless, the Croatian peasantry remained generally loyal to their party recognizing that compromises had become necessary as a result of Serbian political attitudes. Remarkably too, the Croatian Peasant Party even commanded the support of much of the Serbian peasantry which, like the Croatian, regarded Maček as the only exponent of peasant rights and political representation. Unfortunately, their faith was misplaced as the leadership, afraid of peasant radicalism and committed to bourgeois-nationalist policies, had *de facto* rejected the peasantist legacy of the Radićs without formally abandoning the old premises.

In Rumania, the only Balkan country other than Bulgaria where practical application of the peasantist doctrine was possible, the compromises

16. Supplementary data in J. Mal, *Slovenci v d setelju 1918-1928* (Ljubljana, 1928).

17. See in particular R. Herceg, *Die Ideologie der kroatischen Bauerbewegung* (Zagreb, 1923).

were of a different nature but the fate of the movement similar.¹⁸ The peasantist ideology as first enunciated by Constantin Stere in his interpretation of the nature and significance of the violent peasant revolt of 1907 had suffered major alterations by 1918. Stere's romantic views stressing the mysticism, national genius and democratic tendencies of the Rumanian peasant were ill-adapted to the requirements of the multi-national industrial state. However, Mihalache, the head of the Peasant Party and leader of the pragmatic post-war peasant movement, provided a more realistic approximation of the peasant's true wishes. The peasant wanted land, government by his representatives and freedom to pursue his economic ventures cooperatively or individually. He was not opposed to other social classes or nationalities nor did he wish to prevent industrial development. The well-being of all depended on adjustment to the economic realities of the era. Mihalache's compromise was acceptable to his constituents but he was never able to implement it. Maniu's Transylvanian nationalists --the necessary allies of Mihalache's party -- and the Bucharest bureaucracy, bourgeoisie and intelligentsia on whose support he also depended, entertained different views on the role of the peasant in post-war Rumania. According to these the interests of the peasant had to be subordinated to those of the industrial bourgeoisie and professional defenders of the territorial integrity of Greater Rumania against foreign revisionists. The rights of the peasant were to be respected only to the extent to which his unscientific demands and general economic backwardness would not interfere with the greater interests of the nation. This political philosophy, manifested even during the years in which the National Peasant Party held power, proved fatal to the peasantist movement and spelled economic and political disaster for the Party and peasantry itself. For Maniu's economic policies, particularly those favoring industrialization with foreign capital, in no small measure contributed both to the ruin of the peasant during the great depression and the destruction of the embryonic democracy which had appeared possible in 1928, the year of the only honest election in the country. The Rumanian peasant did remain loyal to his representatives, particularly Mihalache, even after the political debacle of the thirties. But, as in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, the loyalty became less firm as a new peasantism, the Iron Guardist movement, reflecting Stere's

18. The standard work on Rumanian problems is Henry L. Roberts, *Rumania: Political Problems of an Agrarian State* (New Haven, Conn., 1951). On Rumanian peasantism *per se* consult V. Madgearu, *Tărănismul* (București, N. D.).

views, spread to the villages.¹⁹ There is little doubt that the mystical-religious and supernaturalistic doctrine of the Legionnaires combined with the demagogic promises of land reform captivated the imagination, and frequently the allegiance, of the masses. Similarly, proposals for socialization of agriculture in a cooperative, peasantist, manner emanating from left-wing peasant organizations like Petru Groza's Ploughmen's Front evoked much more favorable a response from the peasantry, particularly in Transylvania, than has been generally assumed. This was particularly the case after Michalache's eclipse following the Maniu-Codreanu deal of 1937 and the subsequent establishment of Carol's royal dictatorship. Unhindered, Mihalache's brand of peasantism could have provided solutions acceptable to all but a few supernaturalists and reactionaries. But the compromises forced upon the peasant leader by Maniu's group and particularly the pressures generated by the depression doomed the peasantist experiment and democratic practices in Rumania.

The other and in fact only true test of peasantism in theory and practice during the interwar years is that of Bulgaria.²⁰ The Bulgarian Agrarian Union and Stambolinski's peasant state and government of the early twenties has been justifiably looked upon as an example of successful peasantism in action. Stambolinski's writings, particularly his *Political Parties or Professional Organizations*, have been hailed as ideological and pragmatic masterpieces. His international programs have been applauded as a model for realizing the aspirations of all peace-loving East European masses and a blueprint for unity and peace in the Balkan Peninsula.²¹ Since 1896 the Bulgarian Agrarian Union had been a constant and representative spokesman for the Bulgarian peasant's basic aspirations: land, freedom and governmental decentralization. Upon assumption of power at the end of World War I Stambolinski's party fulfilled the basic desiderata of the peasantry. Stambolinski's program promoting the cooperative movement, liberal tax and educational reforms, private ownership of the land by those who tilled it, satisfied the Bulgarian peasantry. Stambolinski's proposal for a federation of peasant states as a guarantee to prosperity, peace and freedom was also acceptable to the Bulgarian masses.

19. Brief discussion of the rural aims of the Iron Guardists in K. Charle, *Die Eiserne Garde* (Berlin, 1939), *Passim*.

20. Outstanding, but brief, summary of Bulgarian conditions in J. J. Rothschild, *The Communist Party of Bulgaria; Origins and Development, 1883-1936* (New York, 1959), pp. 85 ff. See also D. Kosev, *Septemvriiskoto vustanie v 1923 godina* (Sofia, 1954).

21. A. Stambolinski, *Politicheski partii ili saslovni organizatsii?* (3rd edition; Sofia, 1945).

However, his peasantism was hardly democratic. It catered to the revolutionary radicalism of the peasantry and in effect carried out a major socio-economic and political revolution in post-war Bulgaria. It was also supremely intolerant of the interests of all other social groups, unwilling to compromise with anyone opposed to peasant supremacy. Stambolinski and his followers indeed established the dictatorship of the peasantry, a "peasants' democratic state." The brutality and extreme dogmatism of his regime, reflecting as they did the attitudes of the masses, belied the theory of democratic peasantism. The Bulgarian peasant was basically against the urban bureaucracy, against the army, against the intellectuals and against the bourgeoisie. The Union's congress of 1921 actually adopted a platform which, *inter alia* prohibited marriage between peasants and townspeople and advocated complete expropriation of joint stock companies, socialization of medicine, and other such radical measures.²² Clearly no compromise was possible with the opposition. No wonder then that following Stambolinski's assassination and the subsequent failure of the communists to exploit the radicalism of the peasantry in the 1923 revolution, the peasant became the main victim of those whom he had previously victimized. It is undeniable that the regimes that succeeded Stambolinski's were undemocratic. They could, however, invoke the excuse that peasant democracy was no democracy at all that peasantism was a dangerously radical doctrine.

It has been argued that Bulgarian conditions and the Bulgarian peasant were a typical phenomena even in Eastern Europe. It has also been pointed out by apologists of the regime that Stambolinski's peasantism did provide democracy for the majority of the people. Be this as it may, the Bulgarian experiment has been regarded, on the one hand, as the triumph of an ideology and, on the other as the primary reason for the failure of peasantism as a viable and effective political doctrine able to provide solutions to the problems that confronted Eastern Europe in the interwar years.

The failure of peasantism, however, was not so much due to the inability of the doctrine *per se* to offer solutions to the outstanding problems of the twenties and thirties as to the fact that it was unrealistic and hence inapplicable. It was inapplicable first because it idealized the nature and intentions of peasant political, economic and social aspirations, disregarding in fact the pragmatism, radicalism and essentially undemocratic nature of the peasant movement. If Stambolinski's peasantism—theoretical and practical—be representative, it must be recognized that his solutions to the pro-

22. Rothschild, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-87, note 6.

blems of interwar Eastern Europe were applicable only to the underdeveloped countries of the region and acceptable only to certain strata of the Balkan peasantry. It may be argued that Stambolinski's peasantism could have offered viable solutions to the internal problems of Yugoslavia, even Rumania. But it is still doubtful that policies and practices adequate for agrarian Bulgaria would have been suitable for agrarian Slovenia and Croatia or, for that matter, Transylvania. And even those sympathetic toward his domestic and overall international views would not accept his theories on state organization and relations among "peasant states" as they provided solutions only through the general "peasantization" — social, economic and political — of the Peninsula. But even more sophisticated remedies as proposed by Mihalache, for instance, stressing coexistence with all social classes in an industrialized state or those incorporated in the program of the Green International, assigned a dominant role to the peasantry in the national economy and political life.²³ To attain their goals the proponents and exponents of peasantism either had to adjust themselves to the objective conditions prevailing in their own countries and hence compromise with anti-peasant interests or, as in the case of Bulgaria, seize and maintain power with the support of a peasantry that was far more radical than leaders and theoreticians dared admit. The former solution resulted in reformulation of the doctrine which in practice brought the destruction or subordination of the peasant movement to the interests of the bureaucracy, bourgeoisie or landowning groups; the latter in counter-revolution by those with whom the peasantry and its leaders refused to compromise.

It is evident that had the peasant had his way the theory and practice of peasantism would have assumed forms very different from the idyllic synthesis devised by its theoreticians. The Bulgarian version — fundamentally the most characteristic of the peasant's true aims and methods — was indeed a dictatorship of the peasantry supporting the principles of private ownership of land, a rural cooperative economy, virulent anti-urbanism and peasant internationalism. Such peasantism — domestically a social revolutionary movement transcending "bourgeois nationalism" and, internationally, rejecting both revisionism and international communism — was a direct and immediate threat to all vested interests at the end of World War I. Next to communism it was the ideology most feared not only by non-

23. On the "Green International" and the international peasant movement in general consult S. Gargas, *Die Grüne Internationale* (Halberstadt, 1927); J. Rutaj, *Peasant International in Action* (London, 1948).

peasant groups but also by the well-to-do peasantry and the leaders of the peasant movements themselves. In the ensuing compromises determined by conditions specific to the countries of Eastern Europe but at all times based on the realization of the revolutionary nature of the peasants' desiderata the alleged representatives of the peasantry elaborated and dwelled on the democratic nature of the peasant movement with resulting violence to the interests of the majority of the peasantry. These compromises facilitated the spreading of fascist versions of populism and the fictitious slogans of working peasant-workingman's alliance. Neither of these extremist doctrines coincided with the desiderata of the peasantry whose views—even in the thirties—could still have been more readily equated with those of a Maček or Miha-lache. But in the grim years of the depression and dictatorships the number of spokesmen for the peasantry and its desires was few and peasantism was moribund.

It may, of course, be argued that conditions prevailing in interwar Eastern Europe prevented the triumph of democratic peasantism. Indeed, unless the leaders of the East European nations had voluntarily agreed in 1918 that agricultural self-sufficiency and the economic and political philosophy of peasantism were the most appropriate solutions to the problems of underdeveloped nations, peasantism was doomed to failure. Inasmuch as the politically-relevant elements of Eastern Europe did not reach this conclusion, peasantism even as reformulated in the interwar years was unpalatable to the aspirations of the politically powerful and unrepresentative of the aims of the peasantry as well. As an unrepresentative and inapplicable doctrine—except under ideal circumstances—peasantism had expired long before its official interment under communism.