

Austria in the pages of the Bulgarian press during the 1950s*

Dimitar Dobrev

Abstract: The focus of the studies that examine the Bulgarian-Austrian relations during the Cold War falls on the main aspects of the economic, political and cultural domains. The topic of Austria in the pages of the newspaper *Rabotnichesko delo* (“Worker’s Deed”), which was the printed organ of the Bulgarian Communist Party, has not been a subject of any research until now. The chosen time frame makes it possible to follow both the policy of the Soviet Union towards Austria from the beginning of the Korean War until the death of Stalin, but also how the country’s image gradually changed on the pages of the Bulgarian press, again in relation to Kremlin’s tactics after 1956 against the background of Kremlin’s peaceful coexistence policy.

Keywords: Austria, Bulgaria, Cold War, Soviet policy, newspaper *Rabotnichesko delo*

The capitulation of the Third Reich on 7 May 1945 ended World War II in Europe. Like Germany, Austria was also divided into four occupation zones, but the already triggered confrontation along the East-West axis, which set in train the Cold War, quickly changed the attitude of the former allies towards Berlin and Vienna, especially in the first post-war years.

Given the international situation thus produced, the Austrian State got a special role in the Kremlin’s plans. Austria became part of the USSR’s strategy on the German question and USSR’s desire to keep Germany divided and weak, and was also meant to secure Soviets’ influence in Europe. All of this had its roots in Stalin’s ambition to bring Austria to a peaceful transition to people’s democracy. The people’s democracy concept suggested that there would be communist-dominated governments, who would fight against the “reactionary” influences, forge an alliance with some other leftist parties, enthral the masses that would follow then and eventually win broad support through free elections.

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Therefore, the Soviet Union became a constant supporter of local communists in their fight for power. Their forces were supposed to gain momentum step by step, overshadowing political opponents, as a result of which people's democracy, and then socialism, was to eventually be built avoiding any revolutions. The ultimate goal was the insertion of Vienna into the Soviet orbit, which was supposed to be accomplished through governments that would pursue a policy of close bilateral economic and political ties with the USSR (Ruggenthaler 2015, 71, 107, 350; Mueller 2017, 65-66; Muller 2011, 14).

In this context, the People's Republic of Bulgaria would also contribute its bit into Moscow's common efforts to extend its influence throughout Central Europe. As many other totalitarian regimes, the regime in Sofia would make use of its media as a driver meant to both legitimise its own rule and shape up what was supposed to be the enemy/friend image. Following the groove of the Soviet policies, the pages of the media organ of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP), the pages of the daily *Rabotnichesko delo* ("Worker's Deed") would be seen into through the prism of what was then the bloc division of the world. Therefore, the decade 1950-1960 might be looked upon as a decade consisting of two periods, 1950-1953 and 1954-1960, directly related to the state of relations between the two blocs, which transformed the image of Austria into a "hostage" of the geopolitical and ideological rivalry between the USA and the USSR.

During the first period (1950-1953), in the articles printed in the *Rabotnichesko delo* and concerning Austria, what prevailed were expressions such as the "the aggressive bloc of NATO", "American imperialism", "denazification" and "demilitarisation". As a result, articles were published on the pages of the newspaper, through which the Bulgarian reader in one way or another was introduced to the growing influence of the "democratic forces" (*Rabotnichesko delo*, 41, 10.02.1950, 4; 128, 3.05.1950, 4; 272, 29.09.1950, 4) and those in which (along with other Western countries) the economic situation in the Central European country was presented in a tendentious and negative light (*Rabotnichesko delo*, 8, 8.01.1950, 6; 67, 8.03.1950, 4; 103, 13.04.1950, 4; 43, 9.02.1952, 4; 7, 7.01.1953, 3). There was a good reason for that and it was Austria's involvement in the Marshall Plan, with the latter being responsible for some direct economic effects and having played a sizeable part in Austria's cultural and political orientation to the West. For example, a relatively large article entitled "*May Day Appeal of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Austria*" directly states the "harm" of Vienna's participation in the Marshall Plan, which for communist propaganda was tantamount to involvement in "the system of American military preparations". This association was further boosted by the finding that Austria's close relationships with the USA and its Government's maintaining the current administrative policies would be the main culprits for the low standard of living of the Austrian people, and therefore, the country was "unstoppably and rapidly heading towards a catastrophe". According to the Communist Party of Austria (Kommunistische Partei Österreichs, KPÖ), the only feasible and correct response to the ruling coalition's administrative policies would be "friendship with the Soviet Union and support to USSR's peaceful agenda" (*Rabotnichesko delo*, 121, 1.05.1951, 4).

This thesis continued to be advanced in subsequent articles, such as the one dated 15 May 1951, and dedicated to the 60th anniversary of the prominent actor in the international workers' movement and chairman of the KPÖ, Johann Kopleng. The focus of that fairly voluminous and mostly biographical article was very much his work as a member of the first provisional government, in which he played a key role in the restoration of normal life in the country. However, while he and the Communist Party of Austria "pursue a policy of restoration of the country and of cooperation, friendship and confidence in the liberator [...] the USSR", some leading government figures such as Federal Chancellor Leopold Figl were branded as personae defending "the interests of the capitalists, [leading] a policy of enmity towards the USSR and handing over Austria to the Western imperialists" (Rabotnicesko delo, 135, 15.05.1951, 4).

All this was used as a pretext for a permanent agenda-pushing attack by the KPÖ against the ruling coalition government, composed of the Austrian People's Party (Österreichische Volkspartei, ÖVP) and the Social Democratic Party of Austria (Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs, SPÖ), which was conducted in two vectors. The first one was the internal policies and aimed at the publication of "exposing" articles about the past of Government Members, particularly targeting people from the ranks of the ÖVP. An article of this kind exposing "the fascist background" of the Austrian Chancellor, Leopold Figl, was published in the *Rabotnicesko delo*, the original being the KPÖ newspaper, the *Österreichische Volksstimme* (Rabotnicesko delo, 179, 28.06.1950, 4). As a matter of fact, the subject of fascism and denazification provided the necessary justification for the Kremlin to attack anyone who posed a danger to Soviet goals in Austria. Another article, associated again with the KPÖ, reiterated the danger of the economic, political and military "enslavement" that the Marshall Plan would lead to, pointing out that this was the fault of the ruling coalition, which "follows the orders of the Western imperialists" (Rabotnicesko delo, 306, 2.II.1951, 4). Sofia would also use the theme for propagandistic purposes to emphasize the superiority of the communist system over capitalism. In an article dedicated to Bulgaria's "great successes" at the Vienna Fair in 1952, the author, in addition to the impressions and congratulations declaimed by the Austrian workers on the achievements of socialist construction in the Balkan country, did not fail to point out that this triumph clearly demonstrated the difference between one country that took the path of socialism with the help of the USSR, and another, which was supported by the Marshall Plan (Rabotnicesko delo, 274, 30.09.1952, 4).

The results of the presidential election in May 1951 provided yet another occasion to criticize the government and at the same time demonstrate the "growing" influence of the "progressive forces". The support provided by the KPÖ to the Social Democratic Party of Austria and their candidate Theodor Körner, who won against Heinrich Gleißner, the ÖVP candidate, was presented as a major victory in the BCP's daily (Rabotnicesko delo, 150, 30.05.1951, 4). In a subsequent article dated 2 June 1951 and entitled "*Declaration of the Left Bloc in Austria*", the pinpoint of the article was the slogan about the resignation of the government because the election results showed that "the majority of the people do not agree with the [current] agenda, and the People's Party being entirely

responsible thereof". In addition, what the article suggested was that the SPÖ, which over the pre-election period advocated "social progress, strengthening peace and good relations with neighbouring countries" should form a government that was supposed to implement this programme (Rabotnichesko delo, 153, 2.06.1951, 4). This article makes an illustration of the strategy toward increasing the influence of the Communist Party and cooperating with other left-wing parties in order to break the government coalition the SPÖ was part of, promoting the principle of working-class unity with the power to make the transition to socialism.

However, the hopes of strengthening the communist influence (and hence the Soviet influence) in Austria did not materialize. In order to justify the poor performance of the KPÖ, the "smear campaign", "reactionary electoral system", "persecution" and "terror" against organizations such as the Free Austrian Youth (Freie Österreichische Jugend, FÖJ), the Union of participants in the resistance movement and victims of fascism and trials against editors of publications connected to the Communist Party were listed as reasons thereof (Rabotnichesko delo, 41, 10.02.1953, 4; 56, 25.02.1953, 4; 51, 20.02.1953, 4 173, 22.06.1953, 4).

The second vector the communist propaganda would use was associated with exterior policy. The reason for the above was that several events happened over the period 1949-1950, which seriously affected the international situation. The establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (4 April 1949) and the successful Soviet nuclear test, ending the American monopoly on nuclear weapons, were followed by the outbreak of the Korean War (1950-1953), which had a great psychological and political impact because of the possibility of a rapid escalation into an armed conflict between the USA and the USSR. All this has a highly radicalizing effect on the East-West confrontation and, in the long run, lead to further militarization of the collective security system of Western states (Baev 2010, 53-54; Egorova 2003, 197; Weathersby 2003, 257-259; Ruggenthaler 2015, 186-187). Thus, Moscow's struggle against the formation of Western blocs such as NATO and the European Defence Community (EDC) in the first half of the 1950s would have to be added to the strategy for a peaceful transition to people's democracy (Mueller 2011, 46). Consequently, the Austrian communists, who together with their comrades in Western Europe, needed to vigorously join the "struggle for peace", defined as the "most important task of the Austrian workers", were actively used to "expose" the Western policy towards Austria, which would prevent Vienna from joining any Western alliance (Rabotnichesko delo, 96, 6.04.1950, 4; 115, 25.04.1950, 4; 133, 18.05.1950, 4; 139, 19.05.1950, 4).

The trendy articles prepared and published in the BCP's newspaper created the impression of people's large-scale involvement in the peace movement. Setting up a regional council in Styria (in the American occupation zone) was presented as a "success". In it, the various parties (without specifying which parties were meant) called for the deployment of mass resistance against the "warmongers", referring to the West and above all the USA (Rabotnichesko delo, 46, 15.02.1950, 4). And neither was overlooked mentioning of the names of the factories whose workers signed the appeals for peace and the prohibition

of nuclear weapons. An article printed on 20 March 1951 specified that “there was not a single factory where the peace appeal was signed by at least half of the workers”. There was an example thereof and that was the AEG-Union plant in Vienna, where all 350 workers signed it (*Rabotnichesko delo*, 79, 20.03.1951, 4). At the same time, however, it failed to note that the factory in question was located in the Soviet occupation zone and was part of the Administration for Soviet Property in Austria (*Upravlenie sovetskim imushhestvom v Avstrii*, USIA), a Soviet corporate group that existed until 1955 and in which mainly communists were appointed as workers.

Cooperation with the USSR and the “support of its peace policy” were perceived as the only possibility for the conclusion of a peace treaty and the independence of Austria (*Rabotnichesko delo*, 121, 1.05.1951, 4). The connection between the re-militarization of Germany and the danger of a new “Anschluss” of West Germany and the territories occupied by the USA, Great Britain and France in Western Austria was pointed out. It should be noted here that the Kremlin considered the German and Austrian issues to be interrelated, but until the summer of 1953, the articles published in *Rabotnichesko delo* did not indicate such a connection at all, but gave Italy and Trieste¹ as an example (*Rabotnichesko delo*, 355, 20.12.1952, 3).

In connection with this, on the pages of the BCP’s daily, considerable attention was being paid to topics related to the Austrian State Treaty. In a relatively extensive article entitled “*The USA, England and France are obstructing the drafting of a peace treaty with Austria*”, the Bulgarian reader was informed that at the Meeting of the Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs on the Austrian question, the Soviet representative Georgy Zarubin rejected “the attempts of the British representative to accuse the Soviet delegation of delaying preparations for the conclusion of a peace treaty”. The violations in the western occupation zones, where the decisions on “denazification” and “demilitarization” were not implemented, were cited as arguments (*Rabotnichesko delo*, 127, 7.05.1950, 6). The theme continued to be exploited in a subsequent publication of 15 May 1950. It again presented the Soviet point of view on the Austrian question, and the declaration by the representatives of the United States, Great Britain and France that Austria was completely disarmed was defined as the thesis of “hardcore demagogues and falsifiers of the truth” (*Rabotnichesko delo*, 135, 15.05.1950, 4).

Another article dated 29 May 1951, accused Western countries of deliberately allowing printed materials into their occupation zones propagandizing “Nazism”, “Pan-Germanism” and “militarism”, and relations between Vienna and Bonn, according to the Soviet side, followed “a policy, aimed at the annexation of Austria to Germany with all the resulting consequences” (*Rabotnichesko delo*, 149, 29.05.1951, 4). In his speech, KPO

¹ While UN Resolution No. 16 of 1947 acknowledged the establishment of Free Territory of Trieste (divided into two administrative zones, A and B), its supposed self-government never came to life. Instead, Zone A was kept under American and British military occupation until 1954. This gave Soviet propaganda an opportunity to portray Trieste as a US-British military base, and that was what Austria could be turned into.

chairman Johann Kopenig on 3 October of the same year made an indirect association between the revival of the West German military-industrial potential and the “militarization” of Western Austria, which was carried out with the “knowledge of the government parties” who aimed to include the country in the Atlantic Bloc and the transformation of Austria into a “military bridgehead for the Americans”. The danger of accomplishing this goal would turn “the struggle for peace and freedom of the nation [into] the most essential issue” (*Rabotnicheskoe delo*, 278, 5.10.1951, 3). In order to “expose” the cooperation between Austria and West Germany and to show a connection between these two countries and the emerging military coalition in South-Eastern Europe between Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey (which gave rise to the Balkan Pact of 1953/1954), with the possible participation of Italy, a short article was published on 24 November, entitled “*The Bonn-Vienna-Belgrade Military Axis*” (*Rabotnicheskoe delo*, 328, 24.11.1951, 3).

All that would provide the USSR with a reason to reject any option for solving the Austrian question outside the framework and principles of the Potsdam Agreement of 1945 and the Moscow Declaration of 1943, either through the UN or through the so-called Abbreviated Treaty proposed by the USA, UK and France. The main reason was the impossibility of guaranteeing the “democratic rights and freedoms to the Austrian people [which] opens up a wide scope for the restoration of the fascist regime” in Austria and its use for the “aggressive plans of the North Atlantic Bloc” (*Rabotnicheskoe delo*, 355, 20.12.1952, 3). It is worth noting here that a publication dated 31 August 1953 on another Moscow’s rejection to accept the “abbreviated treaty”, it was the first time when the German and the Austrian questions were considered as mutually related (*Rabotnicheskoe delo*, 243, 31.08.1953, 4).

Alongside with this, the *Rabotnicheskoe delo* published a series of articles that were supposed to testify on the good relationships between the Bulgarian and Austrian “working peoples”. Those were primarily associated with commemoration of the anniversaries of the death of Georgi Dimitrov, commemorations of memorable dates such as the October Revolution, 9 September, greetings from the Central Committee of the BCP to the Central Committee of the KPÖ on various occasions and visits of prominent Austrian communist figures to Bulgaria (*Rabotnicheskoe delo*, 251, 8.09.1950, 4; 254, 11.09.1950, 4; 308, 24.11.1951, 3; 274, 30.09.1952, 4; 185, 4.07.1953, 4; 195, 14.07.1953, 4). Following the policy of the USSR towards Austria, one gets the impression that the People’s Republic of Bulgaria would see its relations with Vienna through the lens of contacts between the BCP and the KPÖ rather than with the Austrian government. For the period 1950-1953, only one short notice was published on the pages of *Rabotnicheskoe delo* that from 21 May to 7 June 1952, official negotiations were held in Sofia between a Bulgarian and Austrian government delegation searching to increase trade between the two countries (*Rabotnicheskoe delo*, 162, 10.06.1952, 4). Virtually almost all Austria-related news on the newspaper’s pages comes from the press gravitating around the communists in that Central European country, the Soviet occupation authorities and their publications such as the *Österreichischen Zeitung* or publications of the Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union (Telegrafnoe agentstvo Sovetskogo Sojuza, TASS).

Stalin's death in 1953 proved to be a turning point in international relations and marked the beginning of a certain "thaw" and reduction of tension between the two blocs, which could not help but reflect on all round the Bulgarian press. In the second period (1954-1960), on the pages of *Rabotnichesko delo* the ideological "rigidity" gave way to a more flexible approach, which led to a gradual change in the image of the Austrian state. One cannot help but notice the much greater presence of news related to the Republic of Austria, if compared to 1950-1953.

The peace treaty topic appears to be dominant and covers over 90% of all published information concerning the Alpine country on the pages of the BCP's central newspaper for the period from February 1954 to May 1955. During this period, the main party printed media regularly reprinted items mainly from TASS dedicated to the progress of negotiations or official statements made by the Soviet side. They clearly stated the conditions for signing a peace treaty, such as Vienna's non-participation in any alliances and refusal to build foreign bases on Austrian territory (*Rabotnichesko delo*, 44, 13.02.1954, 3; 45, 14.02.1954, 4; 46, 15.02.1954, 3; 72, 13.03.1955, 4). The reason for this was that under the leadership of Nikita Khrushchev and following the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), Soviet policy began to emphasize "peaceful coexistence" and peaceful competition between capitalism and socialism. In parallel, Soviet policy promoted "neutrality" and "non-alignment" to delay the integration of non-socialist countries into the Western sphere, which was directly related to the processes of decolonization in Africa and Asia and the accession of West Germany (after the failure of the EDC) into NATO in 1955 (Harrod 2010, 219; Stourzh 1981, 186; Ferring 1968, 656, 658; Mueller 2011, 48; Gaddis 1997, 207-208). As a result, emerged the possibility for Austria to "become an important stabilizing factor in the centre of Europe, which is an essential contribution to the strengthening of European security" (*Rabotnichesko delo*, 44, 13.02.1954, 3).

Essentially, this meant the adoption of a policy of neutrality, but the propaganda in favour of it was left to the local communists, as in the Soviet statements contained in the *Rabotnichesko delo*, the term "neutrality" was not used until the signing of the peace treaty. In several successive publications related to the KPÖ, it was stated for the first time that the correct direction for solving the Austrian question meant "neutrality" (*Rabotnichesko delo*, 53, 22.02.1954, 4; 60, 1.03.1954, 6; 71, 12.03.1954, 3; 136, 16.05.1954, 3). In connection with this, the Bulgarian newspaper published a number of articles, mainly by the Austrian communists, through which the fears of an impending "Anschluss" and of the "subjugation" of the Austrian economy to the West German monopolies were constantly fanned (*Rabotnichesko delo*, 135, 15.05.1954, 3; 233, 21.08.1954, 4; 363, 29.12.1954, 3; 103, 13.04.1955, 3; 136, 16.05.1954, 3; 103, 13.05.1955, 3). The possible adoption of the policy of neutrality would make it possible for the Austrian state to be presented as a "model" for coexistence that would be tempting for other European states as well. An example is Dino Kyosev's extensive op-ed entitled "*The Austrian Example and the German Question*", published a week after the planned visit of the Austrian government delegation to Moscow in April 1955. In it, the Soviet-Austrian agreement was presented as a good model for comprehensive solution of the German question using the same propositions -

non-participation in military alliances and elimination of foreign military bases (Rabotnichesko delo, 128, 28.04.1955, 3).

The preparation and the actual signing of the Austrian State Treaty received wide coverage in the pages of *Rabotnichesko delo*. For the period from 14 May to 19 May, the pages of the newspaper contained a number of articles devoted to the Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the USA, the USSR, Great Britain and France, to the speeches of the Soviet leaders and speeches of thanks from the Central Committee of the KPÖ to the Central Committee of the CPSU. Everywhere the peace treaty with Austria was presented as a victory for the “peaceful policy” of the Soviet government (Rabotnichesko delo, 134, 14.05.1955, 6; 136, 16.05.1955, 3; 137, 17.05.1955, 3; 139, 19.05.1955, 4). Again, in connection with this, articles began to be published in which, in parallel with the ideology, attempts were made for a more serious analysis of the geopolitical dimensions in solving the Austrian question. An assessment was made of Austria’s geographical location, economic potential and wealth of natural resources (Rabotnichesko delo, 125, 4.05.1955, 3). An article from late March 1955 analysed the strategic location of Innsbruck, which was an important air and transport corridor for the Alliance. Based on publications from the pro-Western Austrian press, it was stated that the signing of a peace treaty created opportunities for the Eastern Bloc and the USSR to cut NATO lines of communication along the north-south axis, which would have consequences for the overall military strategy of the West. Moreover, this would also create prerequisites for the formation of a neutral belt of states in Central Europe (Rabotnichesko delo, 88, 29.03.1955, 3).

It is no coincidence that in the articles related to Austria, the pages of *Rabotnichesko delo* saw the replacement of slogans such as “denazification”, “fascism” and “demilitarization” with those of “neutrality”, “struggle for peace” and “disarmament”. Last but not least, criticism of the government in Vienna was very limited and, if any, was mostly left to the KPÖ. As a result, the image of Austria, which continued to be seen as a pro-Western country, began to take shape in relation to the Soviet policy of peaceful coexistence, in which it should, first of all, serve as a “model” for other countries of Europe and secondly, to present himself as a “victim” of the USA and NATO. The new line was not affected even during the Hungarian Revolution from 23 October to 11 November 1956, and this clearly stands out in the pages of the newspaper.

Of course, Sofia expressed solidarity with the USSR and the other socialist countries, and for the period of December 1956 - January 1957, several articles appeared with accusations that the Austrian authorities were “detaining” Hungarian refugees and “assisting” in sending them to Canada, South America, Australia and the USA, and also concerning the propaganda of Radio Free Europe or the “recruitment of refugees by West German agents” (Rabotnichesko delo, 336, 1.12.1956, 4; 338, 3.12.1956, 3; 342, 7.12.1956, 3; 345, 10.12.1956, 4; 346, 11.12.1956, 3; 355, 20.12.1956, 4; 2, 2.01.1957, 4). It is noteworthy that while such publications were mostly spreads either from TASS or of Hungarian origin, any statements by Bulgarian State leaders were being avoided. After 1955-1956, Bulgaria was virtually engaged to “respect” the adherence to the Austrian neutrality and to avoid standing extreme positions vs. Vienna. Thus, at the height of the campaign of Hungary and the Eastern Bloc against “Austrian

interference” in the Hungarian events, we learn from the newspaper at the beginning of January 1957 that an Austrian government delegation had arrived in Sofia for negotiations on the exchange of goods between Austria and Bulgaria (Rabotnichesko delo, 11, 11.01.1957, 1; 26, 26.01.1957, 1).

Moreover, keeping anti-Americanism as one of the main tools of propaganda, the *Rabotnichesko delo* was used at every opportunity to present Austria as a “victim” of the American policy. These would include accusations against the USA and NATO for violating Austria’s sovereignty. A number of articles were published about the numerous violations of the country’s airspace by American aircraft (Rabotnichesko delo, 45, 14.02.1956, 3; 223, 11.08.1958, 3; 284, 10.10.1960, 3). In a Soviet note, the text of which was placed in the newspaper, the actions of the United States were defined as “illegal, contrary to the principles of international law and a gross violation of the Austrian State Treaty”. According to the Soviet side, the non-respect of the protests of the Austrian government confirms that that was a deliberate violation, which the USSR strongly condemned (Rabotnichesko delo, 203, 22.07.1958, 3). Special attention was paid to the relations between Vienna and Bonn. Symbolism was sought in the founding of the so-called German Club, which coincided with the visit of the West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer to Austria and the publications of the German press that “the Austrian army must side with the West” (Rabotnichesko delo, 182, 1.07.1957, 4).

Support for Vienna was also demonstrated in the article entitled “*US pressure on Austria*”, which was symptomatic of communist propaganda. According to that article, the country was viewed with “suspicion” in the West, although economic ties with the Soviet Bloc were too weak (Rabotnichesko delo, 53, 22.02.1959, 5). The issue of South Tyrol would also provide an additional reason for Vienna to be presented as a “victim” of the military strategic policy of NATO and the USA. In several articles addressing this problem, it was repeatedly emphasized that because of the construction on Italian territory of missile bases for nuclear weapons, “Rome feels the support of NATO” and can afford not to “make no bones of Austria and national sentimental feelings of the South Tyroleans” (Rabotnichesko delo, 114, 24.04.1959, 4; 289, 16.10.1959, 4).

Of course, some of the Soviet goals, such as the transition to socialism in Austria, were not abandoned, on the contrary. That was supposed to happen within the conditions being created by the new Soviet policy. In this context, some articles were published by the KPÖ printed media, the *Österreichische Volksstimme*, related to the 12th Party Plenum, where emphasis was placed on the new prospects opened by the 20th Congress of the CPSU (and the KPÖ was supposed to adapt itself to them) to the international worker’s movement in its “struggle for peace and socialism” (Rabotnichesko delo, 201, 19.07.1956, 4). The new elements in this “struggle” were presented in the article “*The Austrian Communist Party before its 17th Congress*”. In addition to fending off “enemy” attempts to divert the party from the path indicated by the 20th Congress, a document entitled “*Guiding principles for the Austrian Road to Socialism*” received much attention in the publication. That one stated that for Austria, which lies “immediately on the border of the socialist world, there is a possibility of a peaceful parliamentary transition from capitalism to socialism”, and hence for

the domination of the working class. Moreover, all the efforts of the latter were to be directed to the goal “not to allow the capitalist forces to stand in the way [of] such a peaceful path” (Rabotnichesko delo, 55, 24.02.1957, 5).

Another spread addressing the “*Principles*” stated that in the construction of socialism in Austria, certain rules “which are from the experience of the international revolutionary workers movement” must be taken into account. But at the same time, this experience was supposed to be applied “according to the specific conditions of a given country”. In Austria, a number of enterprises belonging to a variety of sectors such as the mineral extraction, machine-building and chemicals, part of the transport and some banks were nationalized. If this is taken as a basis, there would be “starting positions and prerequisites” for the transition to socialism, because a strong industry “can quickly develop on the foundations of already existing enterprises” that industrially backward countries do not have. According to the KPÖ, the current condition of agriculture, which was highly mechanized and with a considerable percentage of cooperatives, would also offer a footing for success. It was also noted that the international position of Austria, which bordered socialist countries to the north, east and south, coupled with the power of the Kremlin, which was an indisputable factor, was of no less importance. It is also interesting to note that while in the past, the leaders of the Social Democratic Party separated the working class with their policies, now the “*Principles*” create “preconditions for a united front between socialism and communism” (Rabotnichesko delo, 82, 23.03.1958, 5).

Particular attention was paid to spreads that presented Austria as a “model” for cooperation between a neutral country and the Eastern Bloc. To this end, the *Rabotnichesko delo* would regularly cover visits of Soviet and Austrian statesmen to Vienna or Moscow, respectively, and joint declarations and communiqués were presented as evidence of the developing Austrian-Soviet relations. Examples of this would be the articles related to the visit of the First Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR Anastas Mikoyan to Austria, who praised the Austrian government for the policy of neutrality, which, according to him, demonstrated the country’s desire to live in peace and friendship with all nations, to pursue an independent foreign policy and to help reduce international tensions. The fact that Austria did not participate in military blocs such as NATO, that the USSR intended to develop its relations with Austria in the future, and that talks with Austrian leaders would only serve for “further development of friendly relations between the two countries” was indicated as “great happiness” (Rabotnichesko delo, 115, 25.04.1957, 3). A joint Soviet-Austrian communiqué followed indicating the positive contribution of signing the State Treaty, which turned Austria’s neutrality into “a very significant peace factor” (Rabotnichesko delo, 118, 28.04.1957, 6).

There was another article where the benefit of neutrality was also mentioned. That article pointed out as an example that the two years that had passed since the conclusion of the Austrian State Treaty had led to an increase in the volume of Austrian-Soviet trade, while the development of political cooperation “responds to the interests of the people of both countries”. Of course, it did not fail to punctuate that there were still “forces in Austria which are trying to divert

[the country] from the path of neutrality”, but the USSR “attaches the greatest importance to the Statement of the Austrian government [that the republic] will adhere to the principles of permanent neutrality” and cooperate with the Kremlin “to strengthen peace and economic ties” (*Rabotnichesko delo*, 119, 29.04.1957, 3). Taking advantage of this and as a faithful executor of the goals of the 20th Congress of the CPSU, the KPÖ called on the federal government in the interest of neutrality and peace to support Soviet initiatives for disarmament and the reduction of international tension (*Rabotnichesko delo*, 8, 8.01.1958, 3; 17, 17.01.1958, 3).

The benefit of the policy of neutrality continued to be a topic in the pages of the *Rabotnichesko delo* in some more articles related to the visit of Chancellor Julius Raab to Moscow. The focus once again would fall on economic relations, with the Bulgarian reader being introduced to the significant reduction of “Austrian reparation supplies to the USSR”, which were supposed to be paid in exchange for the handing over of enterprises from the USIA concern in 1955, and Vienna’s desire to become a member of the Danube Commission. In addition, a comparison was made between the constant violation of Austrian airspace by USA planes transporting troops to Lebanon and “friendship and cooperation with the USSR, which turns out to be not only possible, but also of great benefit to the Austrian side” (*Rabotnichesko delo*, 206, 26.07.1958, 3; 223, 11.08.1958, 3). The visit of the President of Austria Adolf Schärf to the USSR was presented in the same favourable light. In a somewhat brief publication, the *Rabotnichesko delo* dwelled on the most important part of the speech of the Austrian president, according to whom the differences “cannot prevent the two countries and the two peoples from living in complete understanding” (*Rabotnichesko delo*, 287, 14.10.1959, 4).

Undoubtedly, Khrushchev’s visit to Austria received the most attention. It can be said that there was no event in the 1950s related to Austria that was so widely covered in BCP’s main gazette, the *Rabotnichesko delo*. In the period from the end of June and the first half of July 1960, the pages of the newspaper were “flooded” with materials highlighting the visit of the Soviet leader. It became an endless manifestation of Soviet-Austrian relations, the policy of neutrality, the policy of peaceful coexistence and disarmament (*Rabotnichesko delo*, 187, 5.07.1960, 1, 4; 188, 6.07.1960, 1, 4; 189 7.07.1960, 1, 4; 190, 8.07.1960, 1, 4). On the pages of the newspaper, the visit was described as “positive” and “a brilliant success of the Soviet peace-loving policy”, and that it demonstrated once again that “peoples with different ideologies and different social systems can coexist”. In that context, a rather extensive article by Dino Kyosev was published, in which a brief historical reference was made about the Austrian state, about the internal political situation in the country, as well as about the “circles” that want to link it more closely with the West through the General market. According to author’s opinion, Austrian neutrality was not respected by a number of countries, such as the USA and West Germany, which would be just the contrary to the “positive” and “correct attitude” of the USSR (*Rabotnichesko delo*, 179, 27.06.1960, 1, 4; 191, 9.07.1960, 1, 3, 4). In a subsequent article from the end of June, the emphasis was once again on “the experience that capitalist-ruled Austria has drawn so far and continues to draw from its relations with the great

Soviet Union [...] which far exceeds the borders of Austria itself" (*Rabotnichesko delo*, 182, 30.06.1960, 4).

Along with purely propagandistic articles highlighting Bulgaria's "great economic successes", the desire to "establish closer trade relations" and guest appearances by figures related to various initiatives of the KPÖ, on the pages of the *Rabotnichesko delo*, more and more often items would also appear on signed agreements on air communications, on the expansion of trade between Sofia and Vienna, visits by government delegations and congratulations from Bulgarian state officials on the occasion of the national holiday of Austria (*Rabotnichesko delo*, 224, 12.08.1957, 1; 182, 1.07.1958, 1; 290, 17.10.1958, 4; 57, 26.02.1958, 6; 210, 29.07.1959, 3; 272, 29.09.1960, 1; 273, 29.09.1960, 3; 274, 30.09.1960, 3). These predominantly brief publications actually show, in contrast to 1950-1953, a policy of Sofia towards seeking a way for closer relations with the Austrian government and state.

The analysis of the articles in *Rabotnichesko delo* in the 1950s shows that the image of Austria was a "hostage" of the geopolitical and ideological confrontation between the East and the West. Following the Soviet policy, the BCP and its printed main gazette, the *Rabotnichesko delo*, formed the image of Austria in a mostly negative light. Until Stalin's death, that country was presented more as firmly connected to the West, especially in the economic area, and (to some extent) as a potential military element of West's system. This situation gradually began to change from 1955, when again the new Soviet policy created the prerequisites for a gradual evolution in the attitude towards Vienna. Although it retained its pro-Western appearance in the pages of the BCP's printed organ, there was a brief period of time when the image of Austria "walked" the path from being a "military bridgehead" against the Eastern Bloc and the USSR to a propagandized "model" for the needs of the policy of peaceful coexistence with the socialist countries.

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Assist. Prof. Dimitar Dobrev, PhD
 Institute of Balkan Studies and Center of Thracology
 Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
 45 Moskovska Str.
 1000 Sofia, Bulgaria
 Email: corsair_@abv.bg