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The Czechoslovak Road to Socialism.  
The Strategy and Role of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in  
the Development of a Socialist Society in the 1945-1948 Period,  
Discussed against the Background of the Party's Earlier History.

in four volumes

VOLUME II

by Martin Roy Myant

Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Social  
Sciences Faculty of Glasgow University in January 1978.

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### PART III

#### THE NATIONAL REVOLUTION.

#### SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CHANGES IN THE CZECH LANDS AND IN SLOVAKIA FROM LIBERATION TO THE ELECTIONS OF MAY 1946.

The aim of Part III is to investigate the revolutionary changes that took place after the liberation of Czechoslovakia so as to provide an understanding of the nature, the conflicts and the possibilities of the resulting social formation. In an attempt to overcome stereo-typed views of what a revolution is, or should be, the changes are investigated in some detail at a number of different levels. It cannot be reduced to the simplistic terms of one class or party taking power. It appears that a complex and many-sided process took place creating new, and transforming old institutions and relationships. This can be seen in the various organs of political power, in relations between nationalities, in industry and agriculture and in economic policy generally. The structure of Czechoslovak society was fundamentally changed and a unique type of multi-party coalition government as the supreme political body.

Within so many-sided a process it was possible to support some of the changes while opposing others. This means that, although in a certain sense the revolution was one process and it was a politically important question whether a party supported it or not, it is not possible to reduce all political differences to such simple terms. Similarly, although the revolution was a conscious process, it did not follow any preconceived blueprint. The KSČ, operating in different ways and at various levels, was undoubtedly the most active in encouraging changes but the outcome was still a consequence of a complex interaction of ideas and intentions with sometimes unexpected consequences.

Part III therefore begins with a discussion of changes in particular fields and the role of the KSČ within them. Later



CHAPTER 12: THE GENERAL SITUATION IN THE CZECH LANDS.  
RELATIONS WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE  
STRENGTH OF THE COMMUNISTS.

III.12.1. The Communists consolidate their position within the  
government by the signing of the "Socialist Bloc"  
agreement.

The new government was welcomed back to Prague as organs of the new Czechoslovakia were establishing their authority over the territory of the state. Officially the government was to be subject to alteration and a Provisional National Assembly was to be quickly created. In practice the "transitional period" lasted almost six months and in the meantime many revolutionary measures were implemented. Generally this was referred to as the national revolution and its guiding document was the Košice programme which received exceptionally wide publicity, although many comments even by leading politicians suggest that its actual contents were often not remembered exactly. It could not be a precise blueprint for the revolution and was itself only given precise meaning and concrete shape when applied in practice. In some fields this application was not rigorous, while in others revolutionary measures went considerably further than had been laid down.

Rule was by the seemingly highly undemocratic means of Presidential decree, but this did not mean that Beneš behaved as a dictator. In fact he tried to stick to his principle of standing above parties and not intervening directly in disputes between them. On occasion he did disagree with government decisions but he made no attempt to publicly use his own prestige against the Communists. In his many public speeches he seemed rather to be searching for the middle ground towards which all parties could

compromise. His acceptance of the need for rapid social change was even incorporated into his general characterisation of the regime as a "socialising democracy", and he generally provided a constitutional rubber stamp to decisions of the government.

The KSČ tried to encourage National Committees to take the initiative themselves in implementing the Košice programme and not to wait for the formal passing of decrees by Beneš<sup>1</sup>.

So, although four Czech parties were created, the KSČ undeniably held the initiative. Organisations emerged from illegality or were formed quickly after liberation and the party was the first to hold a big rally in Prague. Gottwald, however, insisted that they had to exploit their initiative within the multi-party structure that had been created in Moscow. He answered the very popular alternative suggestion that there should be an immediate merger of the three socialist parties with the tactical argument that it would be premature. He feared that it would leave the right-wing of Social Democracy with the freedom and potential strength to create a significant anti-Communist organisation. He therefore advocated encouraging the continued independent existence of Social Democracy, which could in practice be dominated by the left<sup>2</sup>. A similar argument applied for the National Socialists, so that Gottwald was effectively confirming

<sup>1</sup> e.g. RP 19/5/45, p.2, and J. Ďuriš: Směrnice pro národní výbory o nejnutnějších opatřeních v zemědělství, 1945, p.3.

<sup>2</sup> K. Gottwald: "Projev soudruha Gottwalda na 1. aktivě KSČ v osvobozené Praze", Příspěvky k dějinám KSČ, 1961, No.3., p.408.

the permanence of the political structure accepted during discussions in Moscow.

Faced with a situation in which they had difficulty justifying their own existence and could only watch their former members appearing within the ranks of the KSČ, it was at first natural for domestic National Socialist leaders to oppose the re-establishment of their independent organisation and to suggest a merger with the KSČ<sup>3</sup>. Instead, they were given implicit Communist encouragement to revive their party and they even claimed that parity between parties plus non-party specialists - as in the government - was agreed to for National Committees: this enabled them to demand places where their influence otherwise was negligible<sup>4</sup>.

In this situation the National Socialists still had no choice but to go along with the revolutionary changes. They had evaded firm commitment to any real unity with the KSČ in London and then again in Košice and they still stuck to their guns in the new republic<sup>5</sup>. They pressed rather for changes in the government with the inclusions of representatives of the domestic resistance, for the principle of parity between political parties to apply everywhere, for direct and secret voting to National Committees and for the speediest possible formation of the promised Provisional National Assembly<sup>6</sup>. The point about the domestic resistance was

<sup>3</sup> PL 23/5/46, p.2, PL 4/4/46, p.1, and B. Laušman: Kdo byl viněn?, Videa, 1953, p.44.

<sup>4</sup> SS 20/5/45, p.1, and PL 19/5/45, p.1.

<sup>5</sup> See P. Drtina, replying to such criticisms, SS 2/6/45, p.2.

<sup>6</sup> SS 24/5/45, p.1.

important as, although the KSČ had previously always spoken of precedence to domestic organisations, they opposed any alterations to the Košice government. This meant that all the Czech ministers were from emigration and it was the National Socialists who gave prominence to the ČNR and even to Smrkovský in their first attempt to alter the results of the Moscow discussions. As, however, their own role in the resistance and uprising had been minimal<sup>7</sup>, this line of argument was only half-hearted and soon forgotten.

They were, in fact, forced to accept a compromise agreement whereby the three socialist parties formed a bloc committed to reaching agreement on policies, including support for the Košice programme and commitment to the idea of united mass organisations. In return, the National Socialists were assured that there would be parity in National Committees at all levels where possible and that there would be parity in the Provisional National Assembly. Zenkl would also be elected mayor of Prague<sup>8</sup>. Although the National Socialists did not keep to the agreement for long it was important in confirming the impossibility of a bloc of the two right-wing parties during discussions of important revolutionary measures. As it simultaneously confirmed the irrelevance of the People's Party during these first months, Communist Party leadership could be pretty definite.

This was achieved despite the existence and nature of the effective supreme political body which was known as the "National

<sup>7</sup> This is evident from F. Zemínová's accounts, SS 10/10/45, p.3, and SS 5/5/46, p.1-2. See also Machotka: "Česká", and Kotrlý: "Moje".

<sup>8</sup> SS 17/6/45, p.1, RP 17/6/45, p.1, and E. Dvořáková, P. Lesjuk: Československá společnost a komunisté v letech 1945-1948, Praha, 1967, p.31.

Front"<sup>9</sup>. The KSČ wanted this to include mass organisations alongside the parties, but in practice they had eventually to accept the supremacy of the four party structure that had been created in Moscow. Resolutions of this body were binding both on the government and, when it was formed, on parliament. This helped to smooth over all sorts of disagreements so that, in the whole period up to 1948, there were hardly any cases in which a vote in parliament was contested<sup>10</sup>. It also meant that the four parties could decide over an enormous range of political and social questions.

They agreed that none would try to organise as an all-state party, i.e. covering both Slovakia and the Czech lands. They also arrogated for themselves the right to decide whether any new party could be formed and they insisted that all legal parties should be government parties. They thereby agreed on the banning of the pre-war right-wing parties. This was surrounded by some uncertainty at first as even Ďuriš, speaking on 1/7/45 and evidently not fully convinced that the heritage of Agrarianism had vanished, used the authority of the former Agrarian leader Suchý, who had just returned from a concentration camp, as proof that "the Czech and Slovak peasant did not collaborate with the enemy but fought against him, died on the scaffold and in the common fight of the united nation"<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> This term thereby acquired two distinct meanings. It referred both to a specific institution and to a general idea of national unity.

<sup>10</sup> For an account of how the National Front functioned, see M. Bouček, M. Klimeš: "Národní fronta Čechů a Slováků 1946-1948", Sborník historický, No.20, 1973.

<sup>11</sup> J. Ďuriš: Odčičujeme Bílou horu, Praha, 1945, p.6.



In practice the National Socialists were even more definite about banning the Agrarian Party although their reasons were very different from those of the Communists<sup>12</sup>.

Thus the basic outline of the new political structure took shape. It gave the KSČ scope to exercise considerable authority but they were constrained both by the need to reach compromise agreements and by the immensity of the economic tasks which are discussed in the next section.

### III. 12.2. The Czech lands are faced with a dreadful economic situation.

In addition to all its other tasks and problems, the new regime was restricted by the catastrophic consequences for the economy of the war. To estimate the extent of losses is extremely difficult as there were no statistics at the time of liberation. The occupation had led to gross distortions in the economy. This was compounded by damage from actual bombing and fighting and also by the removal of industrial and transport equipment by the occupiers at the close of the war. One, possibly conservative estimate puts the total losses as equal to the total national income produced in the six year period 1932-1937<sup>13</sup>. Moreover, damage was particularly severe in the key sectors of transport and energy<sup>14</sup>. It was

<sup>12</sup> See below Section III.18.7.

<sup>13</sup> Stručný, p.331. See also L. Chmela: Hospodářská okupace Československa její metody a důsledky, Praha, 1946, esp. p.177.

<sup>14</sup> Later in 1945 there were only 16,000 out of 93,000 pre-war railway wagons (Svobodný zítřek 29/11/45, p.7) rising to 61,322 in 1946; Statistická příručka ČSR, Praha, 1948, p.72.

therefore necessary to continue, as in war-time, with strict controls over scarce products and inputs with considerable possible punishments for non-observance<sup>15</sup>.

So the first rejoicings at liberation were mingled with deep fears at the serious economic situation and particularly at acute food supply shortages. There was significant help from the Red Army, which was well publicised in all the press, and also from UNRRA: their first gift arrived on 2/5/45 and helped to limit pessimism<sup>16</sup>: their help was also crucially important in providing vital raw materials in some key sectors<sup>17</sup>. It proved possible to increase rations at the end of 1945 so that an adult would receive 1800-1900 calories instead of 1300: this was still way below the desirable level<sup>18</sup>. Majer summed the situation up with the assurance that the population would not actually starve over the winter, but that difficulties would continue for several years<sup>19</sup>.

Difficulties in restoring the economy were compounded by labour problems as the war economy had relied heavily on compulsion which was no longer possible in this particular field after liberation. So, for many, liberation was an opportunity to take a holiday: this apparently applied particularly to those employed in factories that had been damaged so that production had stopped and to those

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<sup>15</sup> Decree No. 109/1945 of 27/10/45, Sbírka zákonů a nařízení, 1945, p.255-256.

<sup>16</sup> V. Majer: UNRRA a Československo, Praha, 1946, p.8.

<sup>17</sup> See below Vol.III, p.150.

<sup>18</sup> Stručný, p.377-378.

<sup>19</sup> PL 12/12/45, p.2.

returning home from forced labour in Germany<sup>20</sup>. There were also many taking the opportunity to shift their employment. This generally was in two undesirable directions. There were workers leaving sectors that were not part of the war economy and were therefore badly paid and transferring to other sectors or going to the frontier zones<sup>21</sup>. This slowed the re-development of civilian production. The second shift was from heavy manual labour, particularly mining, into more desirable employment in offices. Sometimes this amounted to workers returning to their pre-war employment<sup>22</sup>, but figures for industry as a whole suggest that the shift was more widespread than that: it was, of course, particularly acute in mining.

Table 1: Employment in Industry in the Czech lands.<sup>23</sup>

Date	31/12/37	31/12/44	31/8/45
Number	100	128,2	78,4

Not only had total employment declined: there was also a striking drop in the hours worked from a daily average of 7,2 before the war to only 5 at the end of 1945<sup>24</sup>. Although it is impossible to know how much of this was caused by industrial disorganisation, it became usual to refer to a collapse in labour morale as one of the worst consequences of the occupation: Gottwald even claimed, in a

<sup>20</sup> Zápotocký, RP 6/9/45, p.1.

<sup>21</sup> O. Mrázek: Lidovláda v hospodářství, Praha, 1945, p.17.

<sup>22</sup> V, Vlk, RP 28/7/45, p.1.

<sup>23</sup> O. Mrázek, Nové hospodářství, II, No.9, 1946, p.129.

<sup>24</sup> Frejka, RP 6/12/45, p.1. These figures are for the engineering industry.

speech on 16/8/45, that foreign visitors often noticed it<sup>25</sup>.

In this extremely serious situation revolutionary measures had to be judged to a great extent according to how they would help in overcoming immediate problems. This can be seen in arguments surrounding particular measures. It makes nonsense of the suggestion that the KSC could have seized power and ruled alone from the time of liberation<sup>26</sup>. That view could only stem from a realistic assessment of the numerical weakness of all other parties but not from an appraisal of the Communists' actual ability to overcome alone the difficulties they would have faced.

III.12.3. The Communists' notion of national democratic revolution requires some modification and development after liberation.

A discussion of the growth and evolution of the KSC in 1945 logically belongs at the start of a discussion of the wider revolutionary changes. This is not because the revolution followed exactly the course predicted by the KSC in Moscow: there were in fact spheres in which changes went considerably further than even the Communists expected. Nevertheless, in local administration, in the armed forces, in industry and the economy generally and even in the legal system there was always a powerful KSC influence. The other parties were not completely powerless, but they very rarely took the initiative: there therefore was a very real sense in which the KSC was the leading force, although that leadership

<sup>25</sup> Gottwald: Spisy, XII, p.116-117.

<sup>26</sup> e.g. H. Seton-Watson: The East European Revolution, London, 1950, p.181.

was generally applied within the context of a much broader unity which required some degree of compromise and was therefore a qualification to that leadership.

The contrast with Social Democracy in 1918 is very striking. In 1945 the KSČ did not vacillate and split but was able to act with unity and decisiveness. The principal reasons for this were twofold: first, the KSČ, armed with the Košice programme, had policies that roughly corresponded to the needs of Czech society in 1945 and, secondly, the party's organisational structure was such as to allow for united, conscious action to implement those policies.

The programme which was developed from the concept of a national democratic revolution had, as has been argued, several weaknesses and ambiguities<sup>27</sup>. It needed a degree of modification and adaptation in the months after liberation. In particular, ideas about the social aspects of the revolution had to be developed.

As is argued above, the original KSČ conception of the revolution was principally concerned with the question of political power. This was reflected in the first post-liberation months when the KSČ leaders seemed to believe that the main problem would be a political-power struggle with "reaction". This term had an obvious propaganda impact and was never precisely defined: it could be applied in a general way to the pre-war right-wing, war-time collaboration, post-war opposition to government policies, the black market and those spreading unpleasant or false rumours. At

<sup>27</sup> See above Section II, 9.12.

first Communists seem to have expected "reaction" to appear as an organised force owing allegiance to General Prchala who was so right-wing that he even remained in emigration after the war and accused Beneš of being a "usurper of power"<sup>28</sup>. The apparent re-emergence of "reaction" in late 1945 will be discussed later as it clearly represented a far more complex political situation. The point earlier in 1945 was that the KSČ seemed to expect very real and strong opposition from traitor and collaborator elements such that they would be the main obstacle to constructing the new republic<sup>29</sup>. Their apparent absence was met with warnings that "reaction . . . has been beaten, but . . . by no means fully defeated"<sup>30</sup>.

"Reaction", it was believed, could aim to repeat the events of 1918 and its starting point would be the speedy dissolution of the National Committees<sup>31</sup>. This warning fitted with the argument that the national democratic revolution was far from "exhausted", so that the period was still definitely not one of socialist revolution<sup>32</sup>. Nevertheless, expecting a fierce political struggle, the KSČ leadership felt justified in continuing to emphasise the primacy of political power questions, although apparently some KSČ members felt they had chosen the wrong ministries during the Moscow discussions and should have taken the key economic ones<sup>33</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> RP 12/1/46, p.1-2 contains an account of the police uncovering some of Prchala's agents inside Czechoslovakia.

<sup>29</sup> e.g. Gottwald's speech of 18/5/45, Spisy, XII, p.32.

<sup>30</sup> Gottwald's speech of 2/9/45, Spisy, XII, p.142.

<sup>31</sup> e.g. Gottwald's speeches of 10/6/45 and 2/9/45, Spisy, XII, p.37 and p.143 respectively.

<sup>32</sup> e.g. Gottwald's speech of 16/8/45, Spisy, XII, p.114.

<sup>33</sup> L. Frejka: 25. únor v československém hospodářství, Praha, 1949, p.61.

It can be argued that this over-emphasis on the strength of "reaction" either led to, or was used as a pretext for, a KSČ policy of seeking positions for its own members within the organs of armed power thereby preventing their genuine democratisation<sup>34</sup>. Nevertheless, there was a positive side to this interpretation of the national revolution which enabled the KSČ to develop its general ideas on social policy. Counter-posed to "reaction" was said to be the whole nation united in a National Front including workers, peasants, small businessmen, the working intelligentsia and sometimes also part of the bourgeoisie<sup>35</sup>. This national unity was far more than a cultural phenomenon: it was presented as the unity of social groups and classes which could be lasting or only temporary depending on political developments. They were brought together, it was claimed, by their common interest in breaking the power of big capital and in securing the nation and republic against external threats<sup>36</sup>. In the pre-Munich republic, it was argued, big capital had exercised power by the "divide and rule" principle<sup>37</sup> of setting one social group against another and, in particular, worker against peasant, to hide the essential unity of interests of the working people. There were frequent warnings that this could

<sup>34</sup> See below especially Section III.13.2.

<sup>35</sup> e.g. Gottwald's speech of 9/7/45, Spisy, XII, p.81.

<sup>36</sup> Letter from the KSČ Central Committee to KSČ members in preparation for the Eighth Congress of the KSČ, Sněm budovatelů: Protokoly VIII. řádného sjezdu KSČ 28-31 března 1946, Praha, 1946, p.12.

<sup>37</sup> e.g. Gottwald's speech at the Eighth Congress of the KSČ, 29/3/46, Spisy, XII, p.355.

happen again should the peasants fall under the wrong hegemony<sup>38</sup>.

The fight against "reaction" could therefore be equated with the maintenance of this national unity. To defeat "reaction" the nation had to be brought together to build up a new republic<sup>39</sup>. Narrowly sectional interests, the basis of so many of the pre-Munich parties, had to be consciously rejected. This meant that national unity was not a tactical manoeuvre in terms of relations with other parties or with the middle strata<sup>40</sup>. At every opportunity unity between social groups was emphasised as a fundamental necessity - between workers and the technical intelligentsia in industry, between workers and peasants or small businessmen in general - meaning that all would see their role and responsibilities within society as a whole<sup>41</sup>.

Consequently, the measures the KSČ proposed were against any sectional particularly or specially privileged status for any particular group. They believed that otherwise the general feeling for national unity would gradually fade and "reaction" could start exploiting notions among, say, the petty bourgeoisie that they were quite distinct from the working class and could grow into real

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<sup>38</sup> e.g. J. Nepomucký, Sněm, p.138.

<sup>39</sup> e.g. Gottwald's notes for his speech of 5/8/45, Spisy, XII, p.101-102.

<sup>40</sup> M. Švermová, Funkcionář, October 1945, p.1.

<sup>41</sup> e.g. changes in the villages were characterised as a new attitude towards the republic and towards towns all indicating a deep desire for national unity as opposed to the past ideas of "Agrarianism". Peasants were apparently even realising that they had to make sacrifices in the interests of constructing the republic; Funkcionář, 7/12/45, p.10.



capitalists<sup>42</sup>. Thus, instead of sectional wage increases, preference was given to price reductions in basic necessities. Particular emphasis was placed on a new social insurance scheme that was to be "the symbol of the unity of the nation, the symbol of the unity of all strata of working people"<sup>43</sup>.

III.12.4. The Communist Party leadership builds up a huge organisation and manages to achieve a remarkable degree of internal unity around its conception of a national democratic revolution.

Armed with its policy, the Košice programme, its general reputation and its past record, the KSČ started rebuilding its organisations. It had 28,485 pre-war members and probably about 50,000 members in all at the time of liberation<sup>44</sup>. Rapid growth was essential as, apart from other considerations, another 10-20,000 members were needed for National Committee positions alone. Soon ~~there were 150,000 party~~ ~~the party had 150,000~~ members working in National Committees<sup>45</sup>.

This was only a small part of the rapid influx which took total membership to past the million mark in the spring of 1946. The table below shows the course of this growth:

42 J. Horn, Sněm, p.175.

43 Horn, Sněm, p.179.

44 Dvořáková, Lesjuk: Československá, p.70, and V. Adámek: Boj KSČ za přerůstání národně demokratické revoluce v socialistickou v letech 1945-1948, Praha, 1970, p.14.

45 Funkcionář, 8/5/47, p.6.

Table 2: Growth of KSČ membership in the Czech lands<sup>46</sup>.

Date	Membership
3/7/45	475,304
31/12/45	826,527
31/3/46	1050,081
31/12/46	890,154
31/12/47	1266,140

Such massive growth indicates both a widespread willingness to join the KSČ and also a desire on the party's part to maximise its own size. This was partly a natural aim as it had to compete against three other parties. At the same time, it was related to the extremely broad role the KSČ hoped to play making it much more than just a vote-catching machine or the representative of a particular section of society: it intended, within its conception of national revolution, to lead in the building of a new social order. This meant that no field of social life was felt to be outside its sphere of competence. Building the party organisations could therefore be presented as "having nothing in common with a narrowly party interest"<sup>47</sup> although there were also references to the desirability of working through trade unions and Factory Councils and with other parties whenever possible<sup>48</sup>.

<sup>46</sup> J. Kašpar: "Členská základna komunistické strany Československa v letech 1945-1949", Československý časopis historický XIX, No.1, 1971, p.6 and p.22.

<sup>47</sup> Švermová, Funkcionář, October 1945.

<sup>48</sup> e.g. J. Šťastný, Funkcionář, October 1945, p.11.

The breadth and scope of the tasks, and the need to compete under conditions of legality with three other parties all pointed to the need for minimum restrictions on recruitment. It was fully accepted that this meant accepting many people who did not at the time have Communist ideas<sup>49</sup> and realisation of the need for some sort of restriction meant that all new members were checked in late 1946 and a small number were then expelled: this enabled the KSČ to claim to be the only party that "... systematically and consistently carries out a purge of its own ranks"<sup>50</sup>.

Nevertheless, mass recruitment led to a party which inevitably contained considerable diversity. There were differences in social position, in past and present experiences and opinions, in levels of knowledge of the party's past and present policies and in the level and nature of commitment to the party.

The first members to join after liberation tended to be workers in industrial centres who joined factory organisations<sup>51</sup>. These were the first people to join any party and were therefore probably the most definite in their commitment. At the same time, the KSČ was eager to overcome its weakness in many essential fields of specialist ability and welcomed members of the technical intelligentsia who were joining the party from immediately after

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<sup>49</sup> e.g. E. Havlíčková, Funkcionář, 31/7/46, p.11.

<sup>50</sup> RP 5/2/47, p.1. There is no evidence that any of those expelled were political opponents of the leadership: rather they were individuals with dubious records during the occupation.

<sup>51</sup> e.g. the figures in J. Hříbek: K úloze KSČ ve vývoji ekonomiky Ostravska v letech 1945-1948, Ostrava, 1974, p.15.

liberation<sup>52</sup>. These individuals, as well as specialists in other spheres, often enjoyed meteoric promotion in the following months and this encouraged accusations that the KSČ was full of careerists or people trying to cover up for dubious pasts. Later the KSČ leadership accepted that there had been problems with careerists wanting to join the party purely to help promotion prospects<sup>53</sup>, but even the more serious critics of the KSČ put this into perspective by pointing to the great mass of honest new members who had previously belonged to no party and also to the immense number of brave and heroic fighters against Nazism<sup>54</sup>. There was no doubting the strong representation of resistance fighters among the party's central core. Even figures provided by the National Socialists which included legionnaires with political prisoners and activists in the domestic or emigration resistance showed that 53.2% of KSČ candidates in the 1946 parliamentary elections were in one of these categories compared with 9.5% for the Peoples' Party, 12.3% for the Social Democrats and 15.6% for the National Socialists<sup>55</sup>. The point can be seen also from figures on the 1,038 delegates to the KSČ Eighth Congress. 438 had joined the party since the May revolution, 435 had participated in the domestic or emigration resistance and 316 had been imprisoned<sup>56</sup>. These figures illustrate

<sup>52</sup> Hříbek: K úloze, p.27.

<sup>53</sup> Funkcionář, 6/4/48, p.33.

<sup>54</sup> J. Zhor, Dnešek, 25/4/46, p.66.

<sup>55</sup> Život strany, 22/11/47, p.11.

<sup>56</sup> Sněm, p.191.

both sides of the picture: there were many dedicated anti-fascists, but also many whose qualifications for leading positions must have been specialist abilities.

The National Socialists could hardly find in this justification for attacking the purity of KSC member, but they were probably encouraged to do so by a feeling of bitterness that many new KSC members had previously been National Socialists. Exact numbers are, of course, not available, but suspicions towards such individuals were shared by many within the KSC<sup>57</sup>, although such a change in their thinking was perfectly compatible with their experiences over the preceding six years. It must be added that the mass of new KSC members had experienced the pre-Munich republic and its downfall: the party's age balance was felt to be too old and there were several calls to concentrate on recruiting younger people who were widely believed to be politically apathetic<sup>58</sup>.

The KSC leadership had implicitly decided that it wanted representatives of every aspect of social life within its ranks. In one sense this was very different from Lenin's concept of the party as outlined in 1902 as not every member was expected to be a dedicated revolutionary. Nevertheless, the aim was still to find an organisational form to involve the whole membership actively in the party's general task which was to change society and create a new social order. For this it was firmly believed that the party had to be able to act as a single, united body. Diversity within its

<sup>57</sup> B. Kozelka: Vzpomínky, Praha, 1968, p.161-162.

<sup>58</sup> e.g. J. Hendrych, Funkcionář, 21/2/47, p.2.

ranks could hamper this in a number of ways and the leadership therefore consciously set about achieving unity around their own policies. Their task was eased by the great prestige they enjoyed as, unlike the other parties' leaderships, they could claim to have been elected at a congress before the war and then to have continued through emigration with the only noticeable change being the death of Šverma while with the Slovak partisans in November 1944. They then returned home with the liberating armies and with a programme for the future. Alongside Beneš they were an obvious indication of continuity with the old republic. Nevertheless, the social diversity of the party could contribute to internal political divisions.

The most likely problem, given the party's past, was doubt at the policy of broad national unity and at the broadening of the party itself. This could be expected particularly from the party's most loyal members and there were for a time references to an incompatibility between "old" and "new" members who seemed unable to merge together into one party<sup>59</sup>. Gradually, however, this difficulty was overcome. In practice, although doubts about the party's policy were expressed even at Central Committee level<sup>60</sup>, they were never articulated into an alternative policy. The only discernable differences within the leadership itself were in attitudes towards the KSČ and towards other parties. Kopecký, Ďuriš and Nejedlý seem to have been the most narrowly partisan and to have caused the most

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<sup>59</sup> e.g. Slánský's lecture of 16/7/45, R. Slánský: Za vítězství socialismu štáti a projevy 1925-1951, Vol II, Praha, 1951, p.38.

<sup>60</sup> This is obvious from Gottwald's reply to the discussion on 18/12/45, Spisy, XII, p.222-223.

offense in other parties. Gottwald and Nosek seem to have been generally more tactful. This obviously could have implications for how permanent they expected broad national unity to be.

This degree of unity within the party can be attributed partly to its success in achieving the revolutionary changes discussed in the following chapters. That created favourable conditions for the leadership to win genuine conviction from members by means of wideranging internal discussion leading up to the KSČ Eighth Congress in March 1946<sup>61</sup>. The discussion, like the congress itself, carefully evaded any serious assessment of the party's policy in relation to its past; everything was restricted to immediate policies<sup>62</sup>. This made it possible to reabsorb former leading members who had previously been disgraced and expelled. Prominent examples were Budín and the Slovak Clementis the latter having opposed the change in KSČ line following the Nazi-Soviet pact. This evasion of discussing of the party's past left open important theoretical points about its policy which would have to be clarified later.

The concrete organisational structure of the party followed from its general conception of its role in society. There were suggestions, indicating a fundamental distrust towards the mass of new recruits, that there should be a dual structure within the party with a small, trusted inner core while the mass was pushed into the background<sup>63</sup>. There was a definite tendency particularly within the

<sup>61</sup>J. Kozák: "Význam vnitrostranické diskuse před 8 sjezdem KSČ: aktivní účast členů strany na vypracování sjezdových usnesení", Příspěvky k dějinám KSČ, No.12, 1960. See also Gottwald's speech of 4/2/46, Spisy, XII, p.250.

<sup>62</sup>Discussion centred around a letter from the Central Committee, sent on 15/1/46 and reproduced in Sněm, p.7-13.

<sup>63</sup>Letter in Funkcionář, 21/2/47, p.32.

the party apparatus, to favour old and trusted members<sup>64</sup> but this was never formalised or pushed to extremes. Instead, an elaborate organisational structure, which could touch many different aspects of society and could serve a number of possible purposes, was gradually built up. The KSČ was organised in many specialist fields while its basic organisational structure centred on factory and local branches. Within both of these there were sub-division down to groups of about ten. These were the responsibility of a steward ("důvěrník") of which there were soon 100,000. These were to establish a personal contact with all members thereby incorporating them into a structure that linked up to the highest levels in the party. This was much more than a simple organisational point. It was intended to be a two-way channel of communication between the leadership and the members involving the whole membership in the work of the party. It was the responsibility of the steward to win conviction about the party's policy and also to convey feelings back up the hierarchy so that the leadership could assess the overall situation in the country<sup>65</sup>. The structure could also enable the whole party to be mobilised within a few hours in the event of a political crisis.

The KSČ was larger, clearer in its aims, happier with the course of development, better informed about what the population was thinking, far better organised and more united than any other party. That

<sup>64</sup> e.g. V. David, Funkcionář, October 1945, p.18.

<sup>65</sup> Co má vědět desítkový důvěrník, Praha, 1947, and the letter in Funkcionář, 8/5/47, p.23-24.



does not mean that it was fully prepared for the changes that were to take place. It too had to undergo changes and they are discussed below in Chapter 21 and at various later stages. Nevertheless, the revolutionary changes of 1945 cannot be discussed without reference to the strength and activities of the KSČ.

### III.12.5. Summary and discussion.

This chapter is concerned with how far and in what ways the KSČ took for itself a leading role in Czech society, and what problems were raised for them within that in the first months after liberation. Their ideas were largely worked out in emigration, but they could still have been revised in the fluid situation in mid-1945. In practice, however, the concrete conditions in the liberated republic and the immensity of the tasks confronting them made it impossible for the KSČ to consider the potentially unpopular step of renouncing national unity at once.

The coalition was in no sense an absolute restriction on the KSČ as they were able to maintain their strong position. They refused to allow changes in the government that could have been justified in terms of incorporating elements from the domestic resistance. The National Socialists even had to accept a "Socialist Bloc" agreement confirming their support for the Košice programme. The decisive factor helping the KSČ was revolutionary activity outside the government - in the uprising, in National Committees and in industry - plus the speed with which the party built up its organisations.

There was no immediate threat of taking power alone, but in a sense the KSČ was already transforming itself into a party of power,

albeit still with a four-party coalition as the supreme body within the state. It was already taking initiatives at all levels in society. This was in line with its general conception of the need for conscious, active political involvement in constructing a new social order.

This new role for the party raised four general questions. The first concerned the adequacy of the ideas worked out in emigration for this task. The need for modification of theoretical concepts was not recognised at once, but there was a gradual shift away<sup>from</sup> the supremacy given to political power questions. The second question concerned the role of purely specialist ability as opposed to political activity: the pragmatic solutions that were found to that potential conflict are explained in the following chapters. The third concerned the need to maintain political unity within a large, and hence of necessity diverse, party: towards this end the leadership encouraged a controlled inner-party discussion which was restricted to immediate policy issues. The fourth concerned the need for a firm organisational structure so that the party could act as a single united body: this was solved in a way which, although not based on any notion of perfect democracy, did make the KSČ an enormously powerful body throughout the 1945-1948 period.

CHAPTER 13: CREATING NEW STRUCTURES OF POLITICAL POWER,  
ADMINISTRATION AND INFLUENCE.

III.13.1. National Committees take power in the localities,  
elect a parliament, but then recede from the centre  
of attention.

As the power of the occupiers collapsed, so the National Committees emerged to proclaim the authority of the new state. At first, with all else in a state of a disarray, they could be the only organs of the new state in localities. The National Socialists, and even the Social Democrats, sometimes claimed that they were taking too much power<sup>1</sup>, but the KSČ, fearing that the National Committees might meet the same fate as in 1918, consistently called on them to take the maximum power they could<sup>2</sup>. Gottwald was soon expressing serious concern that they were not taking enough initiatives<sup>3</sup>. Even then, the KSČ did not depict them as perfect and were willing to criticise what they felt to be serious failings and even to accept that the National Committees were sometimes "more bureaucratic than the former real bureaucrats"<sup>4</sup> and even much later that the old bureaucracy had not been fully subordinated<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> e.g. PL 27/5/45.

<sup>2</sup> e.g. Gottwald's speech of 11/7/45, Spisy, XII, p.91, or Slánský, Lidová správa, 15/10/45, p.1-2.

<sup>3</sup> 12/8/45 at the Žilina conference of the KSS, Komunistická strana Slovenska Dokumenty z konferencií a plen (henceforth KSS dok), Bratislava, 1971, p.227.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. V. Adámek, Lidová správa, 15/12/45, p.

<sup>5</sup> Nosek, Větší moc národním výborům, Praha, 1947, p.10.

Nevertheless, a full structure was quickly created with Local ("místní"), District ("okresní") and two Regional ("zemský") National Committees for Bohemia and Moravia. Generally some sort of agreement was reached between the parties on how the National Committees should be constituted and this was usually a parity principle<sup>6</sup>. This proposed composition would then be presented to a public meeting at which undesirable individuals could be removed from the list. This ensured some popular approval without disrupting the parity agreement. At lower levels, however, the KSČ often did not accept parity arguing that popular control was to be more direct<sup>7</sup> and that all four parties did not have organisations everywhere. In consequence the Communists had 36% of places and 46% of chairmen of National Committees in Bohemia and Moravia in early 1946<sup>8</sup>.

Parity was, however, pretty strictly maintained in the election of the Provisional National Assembly. This was done by public meetings of local National Committees vetting delegates presented by the parties and mass organisations, thereby forming District National Committees and so on up the structure. At times the KSČ seemed to be very much in favour of this type of election<sup>9</sup> but, perhaps in response to criticisms from other parties, soon started

<sup>6</sup> RP 5/10/45, p.1.

<sup>7</sup> J. Dubský, Lidová správa, 1/2/46, p.7. They were encouraged by the leadership not to resist the establishment of parity if they thereby disrupted cooperation on the concrete tasks they faced which were felt to be the most important issue; e.g. V. Matula, Funkcionář, October 1945, p.15.

<sup>8</sup> Nosek at the Central Committee meeting of 4/2/46, quoted in Dvořáková, Lesjuk: Československá, p.37.

<sup>9</sup> G. Bareš, RP 12/9/45, p.1.

emphasising that it was no ideal<sup>10</sup>. Perhaps also needing to justify parity to their own members, Slánský argued that the maximum unity was needed for economic tasks and that this would be disrupted by an immediate competitive ballot<sup>11</sup>. The method chosen did at least appear to be more democratic than that in 1918 when parliament was nominated directly by parties. In the end there were 300 M.P.s from the Czech lands and Slovakia with 40 from each party and 40 taken from mass organisations and other institutions. The Communists had 98, the Social Democrats and National Socialists 50 each, the Peoples' Party 49, the Slovak Democrats 45 and there were 5 Ukrainians and 3 non-party-members<sup>12</sup>.

The establishment of the National Assembly in October 1945 gave the National Socialists an opportunity to try to change the government as J. David was elected chairman of the new parliament. Political realities were such, however, that they still had no strength with which to oust the ministers of any other party. They were left with the same posts as before only that Jaroslav Stránský replaced David as Deputy Prime Minister and Drtina became Minister of Justice<sup>13</sup>. There was no opportunity to revise the preceding revolutionary decrees either as any suggestion that they should be debated by parliament was firmly rejected and they were passed as a block on 28/2/46 along with all the decrees from the time in exile<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> Zápotocký, RP 15/9/45, p.1.

<sup>11</sup> RP 9/9/45, p.1-2.

<sup>12</sup> Duřáková, Lesjuk: Československá, p.39.

<sup>13</sup> Krajina, SS 10/12/45, p.4.

<sup>14</sup> RP 1/3/46, p.1.

Nevertheless, the establishment of a parliament did mean that measures had to be discussed for much longer so that revolutionary changes were slowed down greatly. National Committees, however, did not end their activities but continued as at least a potentially more democratic form of local administration than the old bureaucracy. Their closeness to the population can be seen in the ratio between elected and unelected people working in them showing, for mid-1947, one to 500-1,200 in ministries, one to 82-600 in the Regional and one to 8-15 in the District National Committees<sup>15</sup>. They were, however, not as central to political developments as the KSČ had expected. There were two principle reasons for this. First, the new state established its own centralised organs, such as the police and army, so that the great powers the National Committees had held at first could not be continued. The second reason was that attention generally shifted onto economic questions which had to be solved by central organs too. This does not mean that disagreements over the powers and competence of National Committees did not appear on several occasions throughout 1945 and afterwards.

### III.13.2. The Communists actively involve themselves in creating the new police force.

In the uncertainties of Central Europe in 1945 the new Czechoslovak state had to hasten to create its own armed units. The Moscow KSČ were apparently planning, alongside a regular army, a militia organisation created by the National Committees and taking all responsibilities for normal police work<sup>16</sup>. In practice the

<sup>15</sup>F. Mizera, Lidová správa, 1/6/47, p.5.

<sup>16</sup>V. Kroupa: "Úloha národních výborů při budování SNB a zajišťování vnitřní bezpečnosti (1945-48)", Historie a vojenství, XXIV, No.2, 1975, p.65-66.

May uprising left probably 160,000 armed men in highly fragmented groups over Bohemia and Moravia. At first these "Revolutionary Guards" were legalised but on 4/6/45 the decision was reversed and armed groups were incorporated into the army, the police or the Factory Militia<sup>17</sup>. There were probably several reasons for this including fears of indiscipline and the simple inadequacy of these groups for the tasks they had to face particularly in the frontier regions. At the same time it made it possible to create a new police force on the basis of a compromise with the National Socialist conception which was essentially for a reorganisation of the existing structure<sup>18</sup>. The Communists then accepted fully the need for a firm and centralised organisational structure, but argued that the old force had failed the republic in 1938. A new one had to be built up to ensure its loyalty to the republic and its adherence to firmly anti-fascist political thinking<sup>19</sup>.

In practice the new force was created by a purge of the old one plus the incorporation of the best elements from the Revolutionary Guards<sup>20</sup>. Legal proceedings for war-time activities were started against 1,619 policemen in the Czech lands<sup>21</sup>, but the new purged police force contained 25,000 from the old force plus 12,000 new policemen with

<sup>17</sup> See below Section III.15.2.

<sup>18</sup> Jaroslav Stránský at the government meeting of 17/4/45, V. Adámek: Boj, p.10.

<sup>19</sup> e.g. Nosek's speech in a parliamentary committee on 16/10/46, Cesta k lidové bezpečnosti, Praha, 1975, p.102.

<sup>20</sup> Nosek in the parliamentary committee, RP 19/1/46, p.1.

<sup>21</sup> Nosek, RP 19/1/46, p.1.

most of the new ones, who had to provide proof of resistance activity<sup>22</sup>, going to the frontier<sup>23</sup>. In the interior the tendency was to change just the leading posts<sup>24</sup>. Overall the police force was bigger than in 1938 and particularly its frontier units were well armed: this reflected the difficulty of the tasks they had to face, an indication of which is the fact that 46 policemen lost their lives in the course of duty in the period 20/5/45 to 30/4/47<sup>25</sup>.

Nosek still believed that many policemen with dubious records had survived the purge, or had even managed to limit its wider effectiveness by finding their way onto purging commissions<sup>26</sup>. Nevertheless, personnel questions were being decided from above and Nosek never left any doubt that, as Minister of the Interior, he was the ultimate authority in these questions. The KSČ's position was still further strengthened by their insistence on dominating posts concerned with police affairs at National Committees level. Thus in the Regional National Committee in Prague there were long delays in organising a local administration because of disputes over that post. Even the government and the parties meeting in the National Front could not reach agreement. The Ministry of the Interior then arbitrated giving the KSČ control over the "Interior" and other key spheres while the National Socialists were given largely less important posts<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>22</sup>RP 26/7/47, p.1.

<sup>23</sup>Dvořáková, Lesjuk: Československá, p.43.

<sup>24</sup>K. Bertelmann: Vývoj národních výborů do ústavy 9. Května (1945-1948), Praha, 1964, p.95.

<sup>25</sup>RP 11/5/47, p.1.

<sup>26</sup>RP 19/1/46, p.1.

<sup>27</sup>SS 20/2/46, p.1, and PL 17/2/46, p.2.



The Communists' power was held in check by two factors. Within the Ministry, Nosek was trying to work in harmony with officials holding differing views: some were from the Protectorate organs, some from the London government and some from the resistance<sup>28</sup>. He also had to answer the attacks from other political parties and he always insisted that appointments were made on merit alone without reference to political affiliations. This was at most only partly true as, with the explicit statement of the relevance of politics to police work, it was easy to argue that Communists with good resistance records were qualified for top posts. Thus the commander of the well-armed special units that were to keep order in the frontier zones was O. Kryštof: he was a KSČ member who had fought in Spain and played a major part in organising armed groups in factories during the uprising<sup>29</sup>. More generally, in the atmosphere of a purge which Nosek insisted was incomplete<sup>30</sup>, there was a strong incentive for police officers seeking security or promotion to join the party of the minister in charge of those questions. The KSČ was also quite happy to recruit policemen with real experience of their work. Nosek, albeit speaking at a later period, indicated what was happening when pointing out to a meeting of KSČ policemen on 19/1/48: "... party membership does not entitle him (i.e. the KSČ member) merely to personal advancement and promotion"<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> Nosek's speech of 15/5/45, Cesta k lidové, p.70.

<sup>29</sup> ÚRO 17/1/46, p.9.

<sup>30</sup> RP 19/1/46, p.1.

<sup>31</sup> Cesta k lidové, p.148 (my emphasis).

The role of the KSČ in securing for themselves a very strong, albeit not a completely dominant position within the police was challenged by the National Socialists at the time, but their criticisms were so negative as to amount to the denial of any need for changes from the pre-Munich force. The start was made by O. Hora as soon as the Provisional National Assembly had been formed. He argued that the new police force was "illegal" because it had been created without a Presidential decree and that "specialists" from the old police force had been replaced by new and inexperienced people. He went on to paint a picture of impending anarchy with a collapse of public confidence in the police force. For good measure, he added a condemnation of the "illegal" Factory Militia<sup>32</sup>. There was not a hint of support for any revolutionary changes and his speech was so sensationalised as to draw an unusually bitter response from the Social Democrats. They suggested that the real time when democracy had been threatened was during the occupation and Hora had far from proved himself then<sup>33</sup>. They were even led to effectively express full confidence in Nosek's activities with the simple statement: "internal security is in good hands"<sup>34</sup>. Despite their isolation, the National Socialists intensified their attacks both on the Factory Militia and on the Ministry of Interior which, they began to complain, had become the organ of just one political party<sup>35</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> SS 22/11/45, p.1, and RP 22/11/45, p.1.

<sup>33</sup> PL 22/11/45, p.2. He was also advised to try expressing his desire for dissolution of the Factory Militia inside a factory.

<sup>34</sup> PL 4/12/45, p.4.

<sup>35</sup> Čížek, SS 25/1/46.

There was, of course, a demagogic but still cutting response to this as they had apparently never made the same complaint before the war<sup>36</sup>. Moreover, the police could claim to be doing a competent job in keeping order<sup>37</sup> which was probably what most people would have noticed at the time.

Finding themselves politically isolated, the National Socialists joined with the other parties in unanimously approving Nosek's report to parliament on the activities of his ministry<sup>38</sup>.

### III.13.3. The Communists are very dissatisfied with the progress in punishing traitors and collaborators.

A necessary complement to powerful organs of power is a legal structure within which they function and operate. This was the cause of considerable controversy because, strictly speaking, many of the revolutionary changes were illegal. Hora used this as an argument to attack the new police force and to condemn changes in industry. His argument was, however, ridiculed by the KSČ as a completely dogmatic adherence to legality would lead to absurd conclusions: Zápotocký asked whether all those fighting in the uprising had valid gun licences<sup>39</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> RP 14/2/46, p.1.

<sup>37</sup> Bareš, RP 27/11/45, p.1. There was apparently also plenty of general anti-police feeling among the public that could be exploited politically; J. Duba, Lidová správa, 1/8/46, p.5.

<sup>38</sup> RP 15/2/46, p.1.

<sup>39</sup> Speech at the ROH conference in January 1946, ÚRO 17/1/46, p.6. This was not a facetious point as legal proceedings were taken against partisans for their war-time activities; see below Section IV.29.1.

Only later did the KSČ try to define more precisely its conception of the role of the legal system<sup>40</sup>, but the basic outlines were already clear in 1945. They did not regard legality as totally irrelevant, but they expected it to confirm rather than contradict the revolutionary changes. Most immediately, they wanted legal proceedings to confirm the public rejection of traitors and collaborators. This, they argued, was not a question of revenge, but a question of justice and of the security of the state as firm punishments would be a strong lesson to all who might consider betraying the republic in future<sup>41</sup>.

The first Presidential Decrees, although not exactly as the KSČ wanted, did confirm that the punishment of traitors was a special measure in which normal legal practices could not be used<sup>42</sup>. There were to be special National Courts in Prague and Bratislava and also People's Courts in the Districts. In composition they were a compromise between the KSČ desire for the maximum popular participation and the National Socialists' desire for the predominance of professional judges. The chairman was to be a professional judge while four more judges were to be selected from the people. The public prosecutor was to be appointed by the Ministry of Justice or the government. The decrees made every provision for rapid trials with no right of appeal and death sentences to be implemented with minimal delay. The maximum sentence was to be public execution for

<sup>40</sup> See below Section IV.29.1.

<sup>41</sup> e.g. Gottwald's speech at the Eighth Congress of the KSČ, Spisy, XII, p.358.

<sup>42</sup> Decrees Nos. 16/1945 and 17/1945, both 19/6/45, Sbírka zákonů a nařízení, 1945, p.29-33.

those guilty of particularly numerous and horrendous crimes but this was very rarely used and was soon being criticised as inhuman<sup>43</sup>.

Despite speed with the original decree, Gottwald was soon complaining that the legal processes were going more slowly than in other European countries<sup>44</sup>. This had crucial importance for others of the revolutionary changes because purging had been very thorough particularly in the economic field and accusations of collaboration had been used as an argument for the confiscation of property. Legal processes, while often confirming these changes, seemed at times to contradict them. There were cases of Factory Councils<sup>45</sup> being expected to pay financial compensation to individuals they had sacked who were not found guilty of any particular crime in court<sup>46</sup>. Preiss, the former managing director of the Živnobanka, even wanted to reclaim his property when released from prison while his past was being investigated<sup>47</sup>.

Confronted with a spate of individuals demanding back their property and positions, the KSČ advocated a broadening of the law, so that even those whose crimes were not serious enough for the Peoples' Courts could still not claim complete innocence. In particular they wanted District National Committees, rather than the legal system, to have the decisive power<sup>48</sup>. This led to the

43 PL 8/3/46, p.1.

44 e.g. his speech on 2/9/45, Spisy, XII, p.139-140.

45 See below Section III.15.1.

46 RP 24/1/46, p.2.

47 RP 15/1/46, p.1.

48 Lidová správa 21/10/45, p.5.

decree on offences against "national honour" which could apply even to those who were not outright traitors. National Committees were thereby given powers to imprison for up to one year and had up until 26/5/46 before the decree would expire<sup>49</sup>. In practice in some areas the trials were very rapid while in others there were complaints of a lack of will<sup>50</sup>. Apparently 8,000 were found guilty and these were predominantly from the ranks of the bourgeoisie. This confirms that, for the KSČ, the real purpose of this decree was to assist the social changes implemented during the revolution and particularly the confiscation of factories and land<sup>51</sup>. Not surprisingly, those generally opposed to such changes opposed giving such powers to National Committees as they placed faith in the more conservative, pre-existing "perfect judicial apparatus"<sup>52</sup>.

There was still concern at the slowness and then light sentences from the Peoples' Courts. Particularly in early 1946 this moved into the centre of political controversy and public demonstrations were held against court sentences<sup>53</sup>. The KSČ was the most direct in its complaints, but the Union of Liberated Political Prisoners<sup>54</sup> also referred to the legal apparatus effectively sabotaging the Presidential

<sup>49</sup> Decree No, 138/1945 of 27/10/45, Sbírka zákonů a nařízení, 1945, p.338.

<sup>50</sup> RP 20/2/46, p.3, and RP 4/10/46, p.3.

<sup>51</sup> Dvořáková, Lesjuk: Československá, p.44.

<sup>52</sup> H. Koželuhová, Obzory, 15/12/45, p.229.

<sup>53</sup> RP, 8/1/46, p.1, and RP 11/1/46, p.1.

<sup>54</sup> See below p.41.

decree<sup>55</sup>. Zápotocký argued in a parliamentary debate that some Judges should be removed and that the legal system should be purged<sup>56</sup>. Just as the National Socialists had stepped back before challenging Nosek's authority, so the KSČ refrained from publicly attacking Drtina, the Minister ultimately responsible, and did not vote against his report in parliament. Neither did they press the demand for judges to be elected which Drtina claimed would contravene the principle of judges' independence<sup>57</sup>. This was followed by a belated directive on the need to check the national and state reliability of those working in the courts. They were to be checked from higher up within the legal hierarchy and a possible loop-hole was that even unreliable people were to be left in their places for the time being if no suitably qualified replacement was available<sup>58</sup>.

Criticism of the legal side of the purge was fairly steady from the KSČ and also from the two most important non-party resistance organisations. The Union of the National Revolution had been set up largely by Grňa's individual efforts. It was vaguely defined as an organisation above political parties and hoping to unite them around the traditions of the resistance and the government programme<sup>59</sup>. It was not dominated by any particular party and was never central

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<sup>55</sup> PL 11/2/46, p.1.

<sup>56</sup> RP 1/3/46, p.2.

<sup>57</sup> Drtina in parliament, SS 6/3/46, p.1.

<sup>58</sup> Věstník ministerstva spravedlnosti, XXVIII, No.4, 30/4/46, p.31-32.

<sup>59</sup> For a statement of its aims, see J. Grňa: Svaz národní revoluce - Jeho program a úkoly, Brno, 1945.

to political events although it often raised its voice on questions directly affecting the resistance and was kept active by the on-going task of ensuring that those who suffered for participation in the resistance received adequate compensation<sup>60</sup>. This was altogether very similar to the position and activities of the Union of Liberated Political Prisoners<sup>61</sup>, which was soon claiming 63 members in the Provisional National Assembly and 100,000 members<sup>62</sup>. Široký was the chairman but the representation for the parties was roughly equal<sup>63</sup>.

III.13.4. A regular army is quickly built up and the Soviet and US forces withdraw.

An army seemed just as essential as a police force and was soon being built up on the basis of two years compulsory national service. At first it seemed that this would follow the Communists' hope for an army based on those units created in the USSR plus other active anti-fascists. A help towards this was the appointment of Svoboda as Minister of Defence and Beneš's first decree (23/5/45) on the army which required every future officer or NCO to have actively participated in the resistance and uprising.

In practice, the shortage of officers and demobilisation of the armies created during the war - many of their officers wanted

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<sup>60</sup> J. Peřina, První sjezd Svazu národní revoluce v Praze 26-28 října 1946, Praha, 1946, p.23-24.

<sup>61</sup> Its full title was "The Union of Liberated Political Prisoners and the Surviving Dependents of the Victims of Nazism and Fascism".

<sup>62</sup> See První sjezd Svazu osvobozených politických vězňů a pozůstalých po politických obětech nacismu a fašismu, Praha, 1945.

<sup>63</sup> M. Bouček, M. Klimeš: Dramatické dny února 1948, Praha, 1973, p.37.



different employment anyway although there have been references to discrimination against officers from the USSR or from partisan units - meant that 70% of the new officers were from the pre-Munich army. Among these were many who had done nothing during the occupation. Worst of all was Slovakia where hardly any former officers were not accepted into the new army<sup>64</sup>. All this suggests a considerable success for the National Socialists' idea of restoring basically the same pre-war army which, they claimed, was perfectly adequate for Czechoslovakia's particular needs<sup>65</sup>.

In practice, however, the parties had far less influence within the army than in other institutions. It was neither a major subject of political controversy nor a significant political force. There is no real evidence on the political thinking of army officers or ordinary soldiers because they did not involve themselves in politics as a united force. Soldiers were allowed to join political parties, but only outside their barracks. Joining the KSČ was not a help in promotion prospects because the ultimate authority in deciding on appointments was Beneš. There were a few Communist organisations within the army which, strictly speaking, were illegal, but there is no evidence that they were influential<sup>66</sup>. There was certainly no real party structure within the army as that was only developed

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<sup>64</sup> Dvořáková, Lesjuk: Československá, p.41, and J. Navrátil, T. Hochsteiger: "K otázkám demokratizace velitelského sboru ČS armády v letech 1945-1948", Historie a vojenství, XI, No.3, 1962.

<sup>65</sup> Navrátil, Hochsteiger: "K otázkám", p.344-345.

<sup>66</sup> Dvořáková, Lesjuk: Československá, p.42.

through the summer and autumn of 1948<sup>67</sup>. Communist strength was primarily among Political Education Officers and this was the basis for an unwieldy and rudimentary organisation of party activity<sup>68</sup>.

So, for reasons that would require further study, the establishment of the army did not alter the balance of strength between the political parties. Perhaps the point was that the KSČ, unable within the terms of the existing political structure to wield a major influence within the army, concentrated rather on economic, social and political questions<sup>69</sup>. Meanwhile, the army itself was largely staffed by pre-Munich officers who could have little political influence because they were discredited among the public and among the rest of the soldiers<sup>70</sup>.

So the principal immediate consequence of the establishment of the Czechoslovak army was to aid the consolidation of the Czechoslovak state thereby allowing the two liberating armies to withdraw. At first they had been welcomed as liberators but in time, owing to misunderstandings and some indisciplined behaviour, there were unpleasant incidents that could have developed into serious inter-state conflicts<sup>71</sup>. Although particularly the Soviet troops reduced

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<sup>67</sup> M. Špičák: "Ke vzniku stranickopolitického aparátu ČSLA", Historie a vojenství, XXIV, No.2, 1975, p.99-100.

<sup>68</sup> J. Lipták, M. Špičák: "Únor 1948 a československá armáda", Únor a československé ozbrojené síly, Praha, 1973, p.153.

<sup>69</sup> For evidence of how little attention the KSČ devoted to the army, see P. Drška: "Boj KSČ za upevňovanie ľudovodemokratického charakteru armády (1945-1948)", Historie a vojenství, XX, No.2-3, 1971, p.298-323.

<sup>70</sup> R. Bejtkovský's review of J. Navrátil, J. Domanský: Boj KSČ o lidovou armádu 1945-1948, Praha, 1962, in Příspěvky k dějinám KSČ, 1963, No.2.

<sup>71</sup> Beneš's comments to US ambassador Steinhardt, Foreign Relations 1945, Vol IV, p.490-491.

their visible presence as quickly as possible<sup>72</sup>, there were still rumours that they were staying for political reasons and causing food shortages by living off Czechoslovakia<sup>73</sup>.

In practice the Red Army did not intervene directly in Czech politics although their presence undoubtedly had a strong moral impact and Gottwald often referred to it<sup>74</sup>. Further East Soviet involvement was more direct. The exact situation in the Sub-Carpathian Ukraine remains unknown while the NKVD was certainly active in Eastern Slovakia. They were apparently trying to secure their army's rear and apparently also worked in close cooperation with local organs. The fact remains that Slovaks, mostly from leading positions in fascist organisations, could be taken to Soviet prison camps and only gradually returned: cases of unjustified arrest that were taken up with the Soviet authorities by Clementis remained unheeded until after 1956<sup>75</sup>. As to the numbers involved, Lettrich referred to 7,000 with many still in the USSR at the time he was writing<sup>76</sup>. The Slovak Democrat M.P. Linczényi raised the issue in parliament and gave a figure of 3,000<sup>77</sup>.

<sup>72</sup>SS, 3/7/45, p.1.

<sup>73</sup>Fierlinger publicly denied that there was any truth in this (PL 2/10/45, p.1), but apparently he accepted it in discussion with Steinhardt; Foreign Relations 1945, Vol IV, p.479.

<sup>74</sup>e.g. his speech at the KSČ Eighth Congress, Spisy, XII, P.352-353.

<sup>75</sup>Cambel: "Vzt'ahy", p.279.

<sup>76</sup>Lettrich: History, p.230.

<sup>77</sup>Cas 3/7/47, p.1.

By the autumn of 1945 it seemed that a withdrawal of Soviet troops would be a useful reassurance that they had no lasting ulterior designs towards Czechoslovakia. In negotiating for this, Beneš was able to exploit the presence of the US troops in West Bohemia. Their presence threatened to divide and thereby seriously weaken Czechoslovakia, but Beneš privately requested that they should stay - although at that time the US had no interest in Czechoslovakia which they regarded as being under complete Soviet domination<sup>78</sup> - so as to ensure that the Red Army was not left as the only occupation force<sup>79</sup>. The outcome of negotiations was that the two armies departed simultaneously in November 1945.

III.13.5. The media take shape. Only legally recognised parties and mass organisations are allowed to publish newspapers.

An important element within any conception of democracy is the control over the media and this very quickly became a source of controversy. Kopecký, as the Minister of Information, had powers over key personnel appointments, but he was restricted by his determination to deny that he was pursuing a one-sided policy.

When the radio, headed by the Communist Laštovička, was accused of bias, a statement was issued claiming that political broadcasts were never party propaganda but were mostly government ministers speaking on particular aspects of policy. An analysis of their actual political affiliations showed that, if anything, the KSČ

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<sup>78</sup> Foreign Relations United States, The Conference of Berlin 1945, Vol I, Washington, 1960, p.831.

<sup>79</sup> Foreign Relations 1945, Vol IV, p.456.

was under-represented<sup>80</sup>. This was evidently an adequate reply as criticisms of the radio died down for a time. Later, in response to a National Socialist claim that Communist domination was complete, it was revealed that 44% of leading positions in the radio were held by Communists<sup>81</sup>.

The situation in the press was more complex. The individual legal political parties had their own daily papers which expressed their own, partisan viewpoints on events. The mass organisations also published daily papers which, although not neutral in political disputes, generally tried to give a more balanced account of events. There were also weeklies and other periodicals, some produced by parties, some by mass organisations and some by specialist bodies.

Although free for the first time ever from pre-publication censorship, the press was in some respects restricted when compared with the pre-Munich republic, as it was no longer possible for private individuals to publish. This could be circumvented by creating an organisation that could then claim to be the publisher: it was thereby possible for Peroutka to publish a daily, Svobodné noviny, and a weekly, Dnešek, although his pre-war journal, Přítomnost, could not explicitly be revived.

This restriction in the number of papers was justified by Kopecký in his own inimitably bombastic manner. He argued that the mass of private owners before the war had generally helped the enemy while Czechoslovakia, he claimed, had to be strong and not

<sup>80</sup> RP 5/10/45, p.2, and PL 5/10/45, p.1.

<sup>81</sup> SS 15/3/47, p.2.

allow full freedom for fascists. He also pointed out that the critics of the new system, who seemed to want the "weakest possible democracy", had previously favoured strong measures against the KSC<sup>82</sup>.

The opposing view, as presented by Jan Stránský, was that the post-war organisation of the press was tolerable only because of an acute shortage of paper<sup>83</sup>. Prior to that an attempt had been made by the National Socialists to claim that the freedom of the press was greatly restricted compared with the pre-Munich republic or "England"<sup>84</sup>. The stimulus had been comments in the Communist press about the "reactionary" nature of some of the National Socialists' criticisms of revolutionary changes<sup>85</sup>. Following this it was accepted, at a long and lively discussion involving the editors of the six Prague dailies plus the head of the press department of the Ministry of Information, that ". . . press freedom is absolute, it has never been like this before"<sup>86</sup>.

The only serious, practical grounds for criticising the Ministry's practices were that one paper (i.e. Rudé právo) was allowed a larger print, while others could never satisfy demand<sup>87</sup>. In fact, with

<sup>82</sup>In the Information Committee of Parliament, RP 22/11/46, p.1.

<sup>83</sup>SS 22/11/46, p.2.

<sup>84</sup>Svobodný zítřek, 18/10/45, p.1.

<sup>85</sup>See below Section III.18.1.

<sup>86</sup>PL 15/1/46, p.3. See below Section III.20.2, for the only case when the banning of a periodical was seriously considered.

<sup>87</sup>P. Tigrid, LD 3/10/45, p.1.

time, all papers expanded and all the parties produced more periodicals so that the force even of that complaint declined. Neither did the KSČ try to control the press of its political rivals "from below". For a time one of the print unions indicated that it would refuse to print attacks on the trade union movement or its leading figures.<sup>88</sup> Zápotocký, however, opposed this as the unions could defend themselves through their own publications<sup>89</sup>.

### III.13.6. Summary and discussion

The KSČ actively involved themselves in the construction of new organs of power. They never publicly stated exactly what they were doing - a fact that could encourage suspicions that they were out to dominate all the posts they could - but their policy evidently cannot be reduced purely to the infiltration of positions of power as they were prepared to make certain concessions and compromises in the interests of other aspects of their policy.

Thus in National Committees, the first organs of power of the new state in the localities, they were prepared to concede parity between parties at those levels at which real power resided and even in the provisional parliament. They were also prepared to allow the disappearance of the revolutionary armed units that had emerged in the uprising. This was done both in the interests of co-operation between parties and because the concrete tasks of constructing a new and stronger state required a greater degree of

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<sup>88</sup> See below Section III.15.4. for his position within the trade unions.

<sup>89</sup> Peroutka, Svobodné noviny, 13/7/47, p.1.

centralised authority.

The KSČ did build up great strength in the police. Although this prevented genuine democratic control over the police force and led to sharp political controversies, no positive alternative was posed for a new police force, so that the Communists' determination was not seriously tested.

In other fields the four-party coalition meant that KSČ power was restricted. The legal apparatus, ultimately under a National Socialist minister, tended to be conservative and the KSČ was far from satisfied with the slow pace of trials of traitors and collaborators. The army too was in no way dominated by the KSČ, which seemed to accept a largely "non-political" body within which they did have some influence.

Although a Communist headed the Ministry of Information, all legal parties produced newspapers and other periodicals and, although there were certain restrictions, there was no official censorship. Complaints about an alleged lack of press freedom were great exaggerations.

It is difficult to produce a general interpretation of the Communists' conception of the role of organs of political power. Evidently, there was considerable flexibility, but the KSČ generally seems to have based itself on the ideas worked out in emigration. The first aim was not to take power alone, but to work to construct a strong Czechoslovak state in conjunction with the other parties. This could mean implicitly abandoning some of their earlier ideas, but the KSČ did expect generally to strengthen their own positions in preparation for a future power struggle.



They paid particular attention to the police not to use them immediately either for an armed uprising or in struggles between parties. The point was rather their importance in the consolidation of the state, and, above all, the ill-defined belief that there would be some sort of decisive fight for power, perhaps an analogy to the events of the autumn of 1920, in which the political complexion of the police force could make a crucial difference to the general balance of political strengths. The arguments the KSC used to defend their actions suggest that they felt themselves justified in dominating the police as firmly as they believed the right-wing had before.

CHAPTER 14: THE FATE OF THE GERMAN POPULATION AND THE FIRST STAGE OF LAND REFORM.

III.14.1. Czech attitudes harden towards the German population. Pressure grows for their expulsion.

One of the measures with the most far-reaching economic and social consequences was the Czech occupation of the frontiers and the expulsion of Germans. This went considerably further than the Košice programme and indicated the depth of hatred towards Germans particularly in the Czech interior. The notion that Germans were collectively guilty unless proved innocent was confirmed by law. All privileges were taken away from them and all except proven anti-fascists were given the same level of rations as had been given to Jews<sup>1</sup>. Germans were then given compulsory duty to repair war damage under the supervision of the District National Committees<sup>2</sup>, while Nazi criminals were sent to labour camps to perform unpaid work<sup>3</sup>; according to Fierlinger this applied only to active Nazi party members<sup>4</sup>.

These tough measures were evidently partly an attempt to alleviate the sectoral labour shortages but essentially they were a prelude to wholesale expulsion for which international agreement was needed.

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<sup>1</sup>Decree No. 6/1945 of 17/5/45, Sbírka zákonů a nařízení, 1945, p.11.

<sup>2</sup>Decree No. 71/1945 of 19/9/45, Sbírka zákonů a nařízení, 1945, p.121-122.

<sup>3</sup>Decree No. 126/1945 of 27/10/45, Sbírka zákonů a nařízení, 1945.

<sup>4</sup>RP 8/9/45, p.1. Judgement on this was left to National Committees.

Discussions were slow as, although the principle was generally accepted at Potsdam and the occupation authorities in the Soviet zone were willing to help, the US zone continued to delay until 1946<sup>5</sup>. Expulsion then proceeded rapidly through 1946 until the US zone imposed a "temporary" halt. By the spring of 1947 the international climate had changed so that the expulsions were effectively stopped. Overall, there had been an enormous movement of people with 660,000 leaving voluntarily or by unorganised expulsions, 2,256,000 leaving by organised transports and then a further 80,000 left in 1947<sup>6</sup>.

It was suggested that the expulsion of Germans should be delayed because of the labour shortage particularly in factories in the frontier zones<sup>7</sup>. This was rejected for two reasons; first, it was assumed that the Germans expelled would be balanced by returning Czechs of whom there were said to be two and a half million scattered around the world<sup>8</sup>; secondly, there was a hardening of attitudes against Germans on all sides leading to a united insistence, irrespective of economic considerations, that they should go. Beneš claimed that they were all responsible for Lidice<sup>9</sup>. Slánský main-

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<sup>5</sup> SS 3/1/46, p.3, and SS 6/1/46, p.2.

<sup>6</sup> Dvořáková, Lesjuk: Československá, p.84.

<sup>7</sup> This was referred to by G. Kliment, RP 30/8/45, p.1. See also the resolution of 18/8/45 in Sjezd národních správců z Čech Moravy a Slezska ve dnech 17. a 18. srpna 1945 v Praze, Praha, 1945, p.70.

<sup>8</sup> PL 5/10/45, p.2. This included probable over-estimates of 500,000 and 600,000 in Germany as political prisoners<sup>and</sup> drafted labour respectively; RP 19/10/45, p.2. It seems that only 748,000 Czechs returned home in 1945; Stručný, p.341.

<sup>9</sup> SS 12/6/45, p.1.

tained that more than 90% had followed Henlein<sup>10</sup> and Grňa called for a tough policy in the interests of state security<sup>11</sup>.

The National Socialists went the furthest in condemning absolutely all Germans and proclaiming that they would never say of any German that he was an anti-fascist<sup>12</sup>. The Communists sometimes seemed to take a similarly strong, nationalist line. Expulsions were justified in nationalistic historical terms as finally reversing the White Mountain and ensuring the nation's security<sup>13</sup>. This could not be reconciled with their internationalist past so that, when pressed, the KSČ often argued that Germans as such were not necessarily bad, and that expulsions were necessary only because, and in so far as, the Germans had supported the Nazis<sup>14</sup>. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the KSČ stopped looking for German anti-fascists and dropped attempts to develop an anti-Nazi movement among Germans<sup>15</sup>. Instead, they welcomed the fact that the first Germans to voluntarily leave were Communists going to take leading positions in the Soviet

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<sup>10</sup> In a speech in parliament on 13/11/45, Nedopustíme přípravu nového Mnichova, Praha, 1945. This was probably an accurate estimate of how they had voted in local elections in 1938; P. Reiman: "K úvahám o odsunu německé menšiny", Československá revoluce v letech 1944-1948, Praha, 1966, p.151.

<sup>11</sup> Svobodné noviny, 12/2/46, p.1.

<sup>12</sup> SS 10/4/46, p.1.

<sup>13</sup> Đuriš: Odčičujeme. Interestingly, although implicitly referring to all Germans, he concentrated on the German nobility in the Czech interior thereby side-stepping the embarrassing problem of those Germans who were workers or poor peasants.

<sup>14</sup> e.g. Lidová správa, 1/6/46, p.15. They were often reminded that several of their leading members had previously been of non-Slavonic nationality, e.g. SS 7/10/47, p.2.

<sup>15</sup> They apparently produced a German language paper for a short period after liberation; Obzory, 25/5/46, p.323.

zone of Germany<sup>16</sup>.

Undoubtedly this hardening of Czech political attitudes was encouraged by the situation in the frontier regions after liberation, but the dangers and the extent of opposition may have been exaggerated in the Czech interior. The first Czech presence in May 1945 had been provided by armed groups from the interior. They discovered a frightening situation with arms held everywhere and either sporadic resistance or armed Germans still fully in control<sup>17</sup>. It was therefore felt necessary to send those regular army units that had fought with the Soviet forces to replace the erratic domestic armed groups<sup>18</sup>. They arrived in late May<sup>19</sup> and were subsequently replaced by the special police units which were soon being selected<sup>20</sup>.

Throughout the summer of 1945 stores of arms and elements of the underground Nazi organisation "Werwolf" were uncovered: in practice these did not present a serious threat to the regime although they could well have become very dangerous in a changed international situation<sup>21</sup>. More immediately worrying were reports of sabotage acts which were automatically being blamed on Germans. The most

<sup>16</sup> RP 20/11/45, p.2.

<sup>17</sup> R. Cílek, J. Fabšic: Vlkodlaky kryje stín, Praha, 1968, esp. p.133-135.

<sup>18</sup> M. Lichnovský: "otázky upevňování lidově demokratické moci v západní pohraničí v letech 1945-1946 a úloha ČS armády", Historie a vojenství, IX, No.5, 1960, p. 629-631.

<sup>19</sup> RP 31/5/45, p.3.

<sup>20</sup> RP 2/6/45, p.2.

<sup>21</sup> For a general description of the atmosphere and what could have happened, see Cílek, Fabšic: Vlkodlaky.

serious was an explosion destroying a factory in Ústí nad Labem which all the daily papers of 2/8/45 presented as an argument for speedy expulsions of Germans. The culprits were never discovered so that the cause of the explosion remains unknown, but deliberate German sabotage is still the most difficult possibility to refute<sup>22</sup>. This incident was followed by the discovery of a plot to assassinate Gottwald and Nejedlý<sup>23</sup>.

It is impossible to ascertain the exact situation in the frontiers in those months as disorder reigned in many places and there were difficulties, as referred to below, among the first Czech settlers. There were cases of Czech acts of violence and revenge against Germans<sup>24</sup>, but much of the endemic violence very probably was caused by Germans. It must, however, be added that help from Germans in uncovering various plots and organisations was a crucial factor enabling the Czech organs to establish control<sup>25</sup>.

Nevertheless, the disorders in the frontier hardened attitudes in the Czech interior so that National Committees that had been elected by local Czechs were replaced by "Administrative Commissions" appointed by the Ministry of the Interior<sup>26</sup>. The point was that local Czechs, although sometimes exacting brutal revenge, were generally judged to be too soft towards Germans<sup>27</sup>. They were felt

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<sup>22</sup> Cílek, Fabšic: Vlkodlaky, p.168-177.

<sup>23</sup> PL 30/8/45, p.3, and SS 30/8/45, p.2.

<sup>24</sup> Cílek, Fabšic: Vlkodlaky, p.205.

<sup>25</sup> Cílek, Fabšic: Vlkodlaky, p.191.

<sup>26</sup> Lidová správa, 1/1/46, p.13.

<sup>27</sup> Cílek, Fabšic: Vlkodlaky, p.147, and F.J. Kolár, RP 21/6/45, p.2.

to be tied by years of friendship and even inter-marriage. It may be that this was a phenomenon specific to some regions, largely in South Bohemia, where the two communities were less sharply separated<sup>28</sup>, but the change instituted was to apply everywhere giving greater power to newly settled Czechs.

III.14.2. Czech settlement of the frontiers. The Communists provide the initiative in the first post-war land reform.

As Germans were losing their privileges and property and as preparations were made for their expulsion, so Czechs moved in to settle in the frontier areas. They did not bring immediate order and stability: in fact the new Czech organs were often corrupt and unable to quell indiscipline even among Czechs<sup>29</sup>. Undesirable elements came to the frontiers seeking rapid financial advancement<sup>30</sup> and there were even cases of National Committees in the interior taking the opportunity to rid themselves of collaborators by sending them to the frontier<sup>31</sup>. The need was gradually recognised for a more systematic approach and from October 1945, villages in the interior were linked up with, and given responsibility for, particular frontier villages. This ensured that more reliable and responsible people were sent.

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<sup>28</sup> SS 25/1/46, p.2, and SS 27/1/46, p.1.

<sup>29</sup> PL 30/4/47, and V. Nosek: Republika lidové demokracie, Praha, 1945, p.15.

<sup>30</sup> e.g. the detailed descriptions of the atmosphere in South Moravia in L. Slezák: "Zemědělské osídlování pohraničí Moravy a Slezska v letech 1945-1947", Československý časopis historický, XXII, No.1, 1974, p.10-11, and J. Preiss: "Boj KSČ za revoluční přeměny na Mikulovsku", Cesta k vítězství, Brno, 1963.

<sup>31</sup> Lidová správa, 15/10/45, p.11.

The Communists, in line with their conception of the national democratic revolution, argued that quickly settling the frontiers was essential for the security of the state. The key to attracting suitable settlers was not industry, which could only be properly organised later, but agriculture. Communist officials in the Ministry of Agriculture worked out and then administered the first post-World War II land reform which aimed to create "... a mass of Czech peasants, firmly settled on their own land" who would solidly support the new republic<sup>32</sup>. Knowledge that they would become owners of land was a necessary incentive for them to move. The plan was therefore for units with a maximum size of 13ha which, although not reckoned to be ultimately the most economically productive form of organisation, was the best way to encourage settlement and thereby maximise immediate production with the smallest possible loss of labour from the interior<sup>33</sup>.

There were alternative suggestions. Within the KSČ there were voices for the collectivisation of farms and the nationalisation of land. This was expressed in some Communist regional papers<sup>34</sup> and there were attempts to set up a few small collective farms in frontier areas. The official KSČ attitude towards them was cautious and they mostly soon fell apart<sup>35</sup>. Even the Social Democrats joined

<sup>32</sup> J. Kořátko, Tvorba, 26/7/45, p.18.

<sup>33</sup> J. Kořátko: Zemědělská osidlovací politika v pohraničí, Praha, 1946, p.7.

<sup>34</sup> Václavů: "Zemědělství v první pětiletce", K politickým a sociálně ekonomickým přeměnám v ČSR v letech 1948-1953, Praha, 1967, p.106.

<sup>35</sup> Jech: Probuzená, p.75-76.



in criticising the subdivision of holdings arguing that the Germans had created consolidated farms with their own buildings and that subdivision would be nonsensical from the economic viewpoint<sup>36</sup>. Even more important was outright opposition from Beneš who, after the government had approved the Communists' proposal, refused to sign the decree. He argued that Germans should be compensated for loss of property by a reduction in the Czech demand for war reparations. He also wanted Czech settlers to pay for the land more than the minimal amount - only twice the annual harvest - that the KSČ was advocating. Beneš was forced to yield after the government unanimously backed the KSČ proposal again<sup>37</sup>.

So settlement of agricultural land could proceed quickly through the autumn of 1945. Previously there had been 160,000 German enterprises supporting 800,000 to 900,000 people<sup>38</sup> and by the winter there were 110,000 Czech families amounting to 500,000 people: the smallest holdings were not settled but simply joined onto larger ones<sup>39</sup>. As yet the Czech settlers were not owners but only "National Administrators": their competence to remain in control of the land they were occupying was checked by a screening process in late 1945. This followed the reports of chaos in the frontiers and checked the settlers' ability as farmers and reliability to the state. 87% were judged to be satisfactory, but the others had to return to <sup>the</sup> interior<sup>40</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> F. Kostiuk, Cf1, 15/2/46, p.82-83.

<sup>37</sup> Jech: Probuzená, p.57-58 and p.60-61.

<sup>38</sup> Kořátko: Zemědělská, p.46.

<sup>39</sup> Kořátko: Zemědělská, p.75-76.

<sup>40</sup> Kořátko, RP 30/11/45, p.1.

The Ministry of Agriculture tried to give full ownership rights to 100,000 settlers before the 1946 elections<sup>41</sup>, but only in 1947 was a law passed giving formal recognition to this<sup>42</sup>.

In social terms the land reform gave greater weight to the "middle" peasant. The 1939 ownership pattern had given more weight to Germans among larger landowners but there was plenty of differentiation among Germans and among the Czechs who generally inhabited small nationality islands<sup>43</sup>. This, then, was not simply an egalitarian land reform implemented under a national guise. There was, however, egalitarianism in the allocation of land even if it was not the basis for confiscation. Peasant Commissions, formed out of those demanding land, decided on requests for land, although the final handover of property had formally to be approved by the Ministry of Agriculture<sup>44</sup>. Those entitled to claim included peasants and agricultural workers who owned under 13ha<sup>45</sup>. Obviously, those most willing to seek a new future in the frontiers tended to be the poorest.

This, apart from later accentuating the labour shortage in agriculture, reduced the pressure for land reform in the interior. It was, in fact, argued that the frontier was not adequately settled so that any thought of reform elsewhere should be positively resisted<sup>46</sup>,

<sup>41</sup> RP 14/3/46, p.2.

<sup>42</sup> RP 15/2/47, p.1, and RP 9/5/47, p.5.

<sup>43</sup> L. Stejskal, Statistický zpravodaj, IX, No.3, March 1946, p.71-73.

<sup>44</sup> Jech: Probuzená, p.55.

<sup>45</sup> Jech: Probuzená, p.54.

<sup>46</sup> e.g. LD 8/5/46, p.1, also see below Section IV.28.4.

but the KSČ rejected this view maintaining that 75-80% of the previous population density had quickly been reached and that this completed the plan for settlement<sup>47</sup>. There had also been delay from disagreements over the meaning of the law as land reform was to be based on the confiscation of the property of enemies, traitors and collaborators. The decision on whether a land owner fell within these categories was left for the Regional National Committees, but people tended to wait for legal trials first<sup>48</sup>. These, however, were only proceeding slowly.

### III.14.3. Summary and discussion.

The need for tough measures against Germans was accepted by all Czech political opinion and this was confirmed by apparent German opposition to the Czechoslovak state throughout the summer of 1945. Germans lost all their former privileges and active Nazis were interned in special camps. Then, throughout 1946, almost the whole German population was expelled from the republic.

This nationalities policy was harsh, but it is impossible to imagine Czechs and Germans living happily together in one state in 1945. Paradoxically, the KSČ benefited greatly from the expulsions, although the policy seemed to be far removed from their earlier internationalist ideas. They were able to implement a land reform, on a basis worked out by Communist officials, which gave formerly German owned land to poor or landless peasants from

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<sup>47</sup> Koťátko, Rolnické hlasy, 20/4/47, p.3.

<sup>48</sup> Koťátko, RP 11/9/45, p.1, and J. Koťátko: Konfiskace, rozdělování a osídlování půdy, Praha, 1946, p.16-19.

the Czech interior. This gave the KSČ firm political support without needing to harm richer Czech peasants.

It was also in the frontiers that special, well-armed police units were created with firm stipulations that their members had to be proven anti-fascists.

## CHAPTER 15: REVOLUTIONARY CHANGES IN INDUSTRY AND THE ROLE OF WORKERS' ORGANS.

### III.15.1. Factory Councils take power in work places and purge the old management structures.

Perhaps as important for Czechoslovakia's future as the expulsion of Germans was the nationalisation of most of its industries. Again, this was a measure that went beyond the Košice programme. In fact, from the very start in the liberated republic events in industry suggested that changes would be deeper, more varied and more sweeping than any generalised, previously formulated programme could suggest. They went way beyond the changes in 1918 making any attempt to find an analogy quite meaningless. Formally speaking, "National Administrators" were to be installed where it was felt necessary. The relevant decree was passed very quickly after liberation and left the decision with National Committees although decisions on large and more important enterprises had to be taken at higher levels within the hierarchy<sup>1</sup>. The Communists naturally gave the widest possible interpretation to this wanting National Administrations established wherever they could argue that it was in the interests of reviving or continuing production<sup>2</sup>. Even this seemed only just to be keeping up with events.

As National Committees took power in localities, so Factory

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<sup>1</sup>Decree No. 5/1945 of 19/5/45, Sbírka Zákonů a nařízení, 1945, p.7-10.

<sup>2</sup>RP 7/6/45, p.4. Laušman estimated that 60-70% of industry would be taken over in this way, PL 23/5/45, p.1.

Councils<sup>3</sup> took even more all-embracing powers in industry and other places of work. At first they effectively operated on their own without firm subordination to the new government or the Ministry of Industry: in some areas, Ostrava being an example, they rapidly established organisational structures linking together factories and mines<sup>4</sup>. Soon they confirmed their allegiance to ÚRO, which became the supreme trade union body after liberation<sup>5</sup>. They became effectively its local organs as they adopted procedures laid down for elections that were necessary as the original councils had emerged from secret illegal groups<sup>6</sup>. These elections were held quickly and, although nobody at the time mentioned it, the Communists seem to have been completely dominant in industry<sup>7</sup>. Elsewhere Councils could be formed before any party had established an organisation<sup>8</sup>. In all cases, though, they seemed to have been the first reliable support in places of work for the new regime. For a time they therefore enjoyed enormous power. As the Minister of Industry said, without the agreement of the trade unions' organs "not even a mouse can move"<sup>9</sup>. Inevitably, the extent of this power led to disagreements

<sup>3</sup> Their full title was "Závodní a podnikové rady" i.e. Factory and Enterprise Councils.

<sup>4</sup> Hříbek: K úloze, p.35.

<sup>5</sup> See below, Section III.15.3.

<sup>6</sup> Práce 13/5/46, p.2. Managers and traitors were excluded from voting, RP 27/5/45, p.6.

<sup>7</sup> e.g. Hříbek: K úloze, p.35, or E. Jukl: "Z historie bojů o poválečnou obnovu a znárodnění plzeňské Škodovky", Příspěvky k dějinám KSČ, 1962, No.4, p.533-534.

<sup>8</sup> e.g. in the Prague General Hospital where the elections were held at a meeting of 600 of the 1600 employees; ÚRO, 12/9/46, p.5.

<sup>9</sup> Práce, 30/5/45, p.2.

making the Factory Councils the most controversial of all revolutionary organs.

Their rise was closely linked not only with the establishment of the new state but also with the purging of management structures and the restarting of production. The purge itself was officially aimed against open collaborators and was generally administered by the Factory Council which appointed an investigating committee to examine individual cases<sup>10</sup>. Sometimes only small numbers were involved-in ČKD-Karlín<sup>11</sup> only 87 traitors were expelled - and sometimes the only penalty was demotion to less responsible work<sup>12</sup>. In some cases the purge was more sweeping, thus in Vítkovice 5,000 Germans were expelled leaving 45,000 workers<sup>13</sup>.

There were two opposing ways in which the purge deviated from its intended, purely national, form. The first stemmed from the acute shortage of technically qualified personnel meaning that sweeping purges simply had to be revised. There was at least one case of a Factory Council calling back a key specialist and persuading workers to waive their condemnations of him as a murderer and collaborator as otherwise it would be impossible to start production

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<sup>10</sup> Práce 24/5/45, p.3.

<sup>11</sup> ČKD is an engineering combine in Prague created by a long process of mergers which continued in the post-World War II period. Its present-day factories therefore carried different names during the 1945-1948 period and, to avoid unnecessary confusion, are simply referred to by their location within Prague.

<sup>12</sup> RP 25/5/45, p.1.

<sup>13</sup> RP 26/5/45, p.4.

again<sup>14</sup>. The second divergence stemmed from a deep and general distrust by the workers towards all managers who were accused of indecisiveness in their attitude towards the occupation right up until liberation<sup>15</sup>. This encouraged a more vigorous purge particularly of higher managers. So the purge took forms which depended on specific local conditions and feelings and which could not be reconciled exactly with the punishment by law of traitors and collaborators<sup>16</sup>. The spontaneous course of events led even the KSČ press to give almost contradictory advice. National Administrators, they argued, should be fully qualified specialists even if not fully trusted by the workers<sup>17</sup>. Zápotocký, even when warning against "disrupting the authority of technical and administrative leadership", emphasised that the purge was specifically intended to give responsible positions to those enjoying the trust of the workers<sup>18</sup>.

In practice, Factory Councils did not abolish all managerial posts, but they did on occasion insist that every single managerial post was elected before they could persuade workers to resume working and repair war damage<sup>19</sup>. While the KSČ in public was expressing

<sup>14</sup> Kozelka: Vzpomínky, p.163-5. There were voices pointing to a more general shortage of technically qualified manpower especially where they had been Germans before; e.g. Antoníček's comments, Sjezd národních správců, p.48.

<sup>15</sup> J. Sátora, Svobodné noviny, 4/10/45, p.1.

<sup>16</sup> See above Section III.13.3.

<sup>17</sup> RP 8/6/45, p.2.

<sup>18</sup> RP 17/8/45, p.3.

<sup>19</sup> e.g. the account from a factory in Roudnice damaged by US bombing; ÚRO, 13/9/45, p.3.



the hope that a legal right would be given for Factory Councils to participate in the appointment of National Administrators<sup>20</sup>, KSČ-dominate Factory Councils were often taking full advantage of their strong positions and effectively choosing new managements themselves. Laušman was then presented with a fait accompli which he could only confirm, thereby giving legal status to the changes<sup>21</sup>.

After that, other bodies began to question the Factory Councils' powers. In Škoda-Plzeň, for example, the Factory Council was exclusively KSČ and regarded itself as the supreme body in the factory until August. By then the National Socialists and Social Democrats had started building their own factory organisations particularly among the better qualified workers and managers. The resulting tensions were alleviated by re-election of the Factory Council in September allowing representation for the other parties<sup>22</sup>.

### III.15.2. The Factory Councils organise their own armed militia.

Always the most controversial of the Factory Councils' activities was their control over the armed Factory Militia groups. These were formed in 1945 when the scattered armed groups were being incorporated into the army or police or disarmed. They were allowed to keep small arms to protect their factories against sabotage by Germans. Membership was not exclusive to any one

<sup>20</sup>F. Jungmann, RP 4/7/45, p.1.

<sup>21</sup>e.g. in Škoda, which employed 80,000 and in Baťa; RP 31/5/45, p.2, and RP 16/6/45, p.4 respectively.

<sup>22</sup>Jukl: "Z historie", esp. p.533-534, p.545-546 and p.550.

party<sup>23</sup>. There was, in fact, no sign of a KSČ attempt to create significant armed workers' groups but the Factory Militia was persistently attacked as an illegal body intending to use its arms in internal political conflicts<sup>24</sup>. Their continued existence even after other armed groups had been incorporated into the constitutionally recognised armed forces certainly emphasised the great political strength of the Factory Councils. They were definitely defended by Social Democrats<sup>25</sup> and, obviously, by the trade unions. Evžen Erban was characteristically blunt: "The Factory Militia is a product of the national revolution and the working class in Czechoslovakia proclaims that it will not volutarily give up a single one of the gains of the national revolution"<sup>26</sup>. At other times the argument was rather that the Factory Militia was a further element of workers' participation and of their willingness to take on new responsibilities<sup>27</sup>. Their actual tasks appeared to be far less exciting than their opponents' more colourful criticisms suggested. Available evidence indicates that they were small, at times elected bodies protecting their enterprises against Germans and guarding Germans in internment camps.<sup>28</sup> Their composition was in fact subject to checking by the District National Committee<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Z. Bradáč: Lidové milice v Severomoravském kraji, Ostrava, 1968, p.98.

<sup>24</sup> e.g. Obzory, 8/12/45, p.210.

<sup>25</sup> e.g. Cíl, 22/2/46, p.111.

<sup>26</sup> ÚRO, 24/1/46, p.6.

<sup>27</sup> ÚRO, 6/12/45, p.1.

<sup>28</sup> e.g. the accounts of their activities in the mines in Most - RP 29/11/45, p.2 - and Malé Svatoňovice, Jiskra, 30/3/46, p.6. In the latter case most were pensioners or former miners with damaged health who were no longer capable of heavy work.

<sup>29</sup> Bertelmann: Vývoj, p.138.

III.15.3. The roles and powers of Factory Councils and trade unions need to be defined carefully.

The extent of the powers of Factory Councils was a subject of controversy not only between their supporters and opponents but also within the trade unions. In practice they were the local organs within the new trade unions' organisational structure<sup>30</sup>. As they were the only power in industry, this could imply that unions could take over the full task of industrial management<sup>31</sup>, and ÚRO could become at least a parallel government. At the same time, the unions seemed to be trying to prepare themselves for their more traditional role as a representative body for workers. They were well placed for this as they took over the property, organisational structure and even the dues collecting machinery of the Protectorate Unions<sup>32</sup>.

Differences over the role of Factory Councils and of trade unions and over the relationship between them were not visible before liberation or during the uprising. The aim then had been simply to defeat the occupiers and gain as much power as possible for the trade unions. The controversies started when that power had to be defined more precisely. They were then further complicated by more disagreements over the role and structure of trade unions as there were doubts about the emerging, highly centralised structure which led some trade unionists to express "separatists" views<sup>33</sup>. The point

<sup>30</sup> Věstník závodních rad, May 1945, p.2 and p.8.

<sup>31</sup> This was at times openly suggested e.g. Práce 11/5/45, p.2.

<sup>32</sup> Věstník závodních rad, May 1945, p.2 and June 1945, p.4-5.

<sup>33</sup> Laušman, Práce 30/5/45, p.2.

was that, in an effort to ensure the complete unity of all unions under one body, the KSČ was advocating the same degree of centralised authority as had prevailed in its own pre-war unions: this was causing concern particularly among civil servants who had been organised within a separate union under the Protectorate<sup>34</sup>.

In this fluid situation J. Veltruský, apparently a Trotskyist, could carry some influence. Basing his argument on a quite unreal assessment of the world situation, he claimed that the KSČ had betrayed the working class by entering a coalition government. The need was therefore for Factory Councils to assert their independence and link up in preparation for a further uprising<sup>35</sup>.

The confusion of this immediate post-liberation period was quickly clarified following the return from emigration and from concentration camps of several leading Communist trade unionists who were immediately co-opted onto the presidium of ÚRO. The most important of these was Zápotocký who was unanimously elected chairman of ÚRO on 7/6/45, even before he had fully recovered his health after spending the whole war in a concentration camp. As the leading personality in the trade unions he was subjected to continual criticisms: it was naturally much easier for those on the right to attack the trade unions rather than the Communists directly who were part of the same coalition government. By his good natured but firm replies Zápotocký made himself an extremely popular figure and perhaps

<sup>34</sup> K. Růžička: ROH v boji o rozšíření moci dělnické třídy (1945-1948), Praha, 1963, p.44.

<sup>35</sup> Růžička: ROH, p.45.

the best single propagandist for the revolution in general<sup>36</sup>.

His immediate contribution, however, was to present a definite conception for the role of trade unions. Answering a "lively discussion" at a Prague trade union congress he argued that it was neither necessary nor possible to have absolute power in industry. In the first place it was adequate to "control"<sup>37</sup> production so that it could never be dominated by private capitalist interests. In the second place "we have a lot we must learn from capitalist engineers and technicians . .", so that workers could not run industry alone, although Zápotocký did suggest that, having gained the necessary experience, managers could be developed from the ranks of the workers<sup>38</sup>.

From this argument it followed that trade union bodies, such as Factory Councils, could take too much power if they tried to completely replace those managers who had real specialist ability. Trade unions within a factory were left with a seemingly more limited function. They had to organise, educate and develop the work force both in defence of its own interests and to overcome its broken morale. They had to convince the workers that production, and even potentially unpopular reorganisations of productions, were the precondition for higher wages and social benefits. They were therefore "particularly in the present period, a great school of education and persuasion"<sup>39</sup>. In practical terms this meant the need for a deeper

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<sup>36</sup> He usually had a radio broadcast once a week. Many of those broadcasts are reproduced in A. Zápotocký: Po staru se žít nedá, Praha, 1947.

<sup>37</sup> "control" in this context means being able to check what management is doing, not being able to replace management completely.

<sup>38</sup> Práce, 17/7/45, p.2.

<sup>39</sup> (See overleaf)

organisational form than just the small, elected Factory Councils. Zápotocký's return was therefore followed with a call to create separate single united trade union branches in each work-place and to start voluntary recruitment to them<sup>40</sup>. In practice this was a slow process and Factory Councils remained the more important bodies for some time. By the end of 1945 the unions had 1,442,816 members and soon after that could claim to organise 61% of workers and 53.6% of all employees<sup>41</sup>.

III.15.4. Trade unions emerge as a political force generally supporting the Communists' economic policies.

Alongside their tasks within work-places, unions aimed to represent the interests of, and provide a powerful political voice for employees at the all-state level. This was fully in line with ideas worked out by the KSČ in emigration. At first nobody doubted ÚRO's right to attend National Front meetings, but at the end of 1945 the National Socialists and Peoples' Party, feeling their strength to be growing, insisted that only political parties could represent the will of the people<sup>42</sup>. The trade unions in fact did

<sup>39</sup>(From previous page)

G. Kliment, ÚRO, 20/9/45, p.3. This position does not seem to have been worked out in emigration where all the emphasis was placed on trade unions as a political force. From this, and from the experiences of the uprising in Slovakia, it seemed that they could be based on Factory Councils; e.g. J. Kolský, Československé listy, 15/2/45 reproduced in Z dějin, p.54-57.

<sup>40</sup>Věstník závodních rad, June 1945, p.1 and p.2.

<sup>41</sup>Kaplan: Znárodnění, p.105.

<sup>42</sup>Belda, et al: Na rozhraní, p.38-39.

not simply follow the line or programme of any one party. They had no definite programme or analysis of social development and in that sense cannot be described as Marxist organisations. This was precisely their strength as they could restrict themselves to immediate social and economic questions which directly affected working people, irrespective of their political affiliations. So Zápotocký insisted that there could be no serious "non-political" trade union movement. It had to be broadly socialist, in favour of the national revolution and government programme and against the old republic<sup>43</sup>. The combination of firm commitment to the revolution in general and evasion of specifically party-political squabbles enabled the trade unions to command enormous loyalty from the working people who were prepared to accept appalling economic conditions for a long time.

Although the trade unions were not a "front" for the KSČ, there is no doubt that Communists held an extremely strong position within them. This stemmed partly from the KSČ organisational strength and partly from the clarity of their conception of the role of trade unions. Figures need not reveal the extent of this dominance. Out of 2,753 posts in the whole apparatus on 15/5/47 the KSČ held 31.2%, the Social Democrats 31.9%, the other parties 10.3% and 26.6% were non-party<sup>44</sup>. Looking at Regional Secretaries, nine were KSČ and seven Social Democrats out of 21<sup>45</sup>. About 60% of ordinary represent-

<sup>43</sup> e.g. ÚRO, 18/10/45, p.1-2.

<sup>44</sup> Růžička: ROH, p.229.

<sup>45</sup> Růžička: ROH, p.230. Perhaps more revealing than the figures is the fact that only the KSČ at the time could know the situation in such detail.

atives and 80% of chairmen on Factory Councils in industry in Prague in early 1947 were Communists<sup>46</sup>.

Other figures suggest clearer KSČ dominance<sup>47</sup>, but the real point was that members of other parties generally did not challenge the KSČ. There were two principal reasons for this and one was that the KSČ had a firm grip on personnel policy within much of the trade union movement. Zápotocký explained it as follows: ". . . in trade union organisations, especially where we have the majority in our hands, it is up to us what sort of people we put there from the other parties. Parties cannot send people there, it is a question of trade union politics. It is necessary to select from the other parties the sort of people who want to cooperate with us and to honestly follow our trade union policy . . ."<sup>48</sup>.

The second reason was that there were prominent and capable trade unionists particularly among Social Democrats, who did not significantly disagree with KSČ policy on those questions which concerned trade unions, at least until the autumn of 1947. Among these were J. Kubát and E. Erban who rose through the Protectorate unions and played very important roles in the Prague uprising. E. Erban became the General Secretary of ÚRO and differed from

<sup>46</sup> M. Bouček: Praha v únoru 1948, Praha, 1963, p.53.

<sup>47</sup> e.g. of the 120 ÚRO members elected in April 1946, 94 were said to be KSČ and 18 Social Democrats; B. Týrdoň, Dnešek 11/12/47, p.573. His figures may have overstated KSČ strength by counting all non-party members as Communists.

<sup>48</sup> Contribution at the KSČ Central Committee meeting of 30/5/45, quoted in V. Jarošová, I. Škurlo, M. Vartíková: Odbory na cestě k Februáru, Bratislava, 1967, p.86-87.



Zápotocký by, if anything, being more militant and left-wing<sup>49</sup>.

The leading National Socialist trade unionist was O. Wunsch who also broadly accepted the KSČ line on the nature and role of trade unions<sup>50</sup>. Some other National Socialists shared his approach and they were implicitly disowned by their party which could still feel itself to be represented on the Presidium by A. Vandrovec and V. Šplichalová<sup>51</sup>. They evidently were too few in number and unclear in their ideas to make any impact until the autumn of 1947.

The trade unions were a special case among mass organisations because of their extraordinary strength which stemmed from their unity of purpose, their firm base among manual workers and the speed with which they could organise and consolidate themselves after liberation. Organisations representing other sections of the population or interest groups were nowhere near so important.

### III.15.5. Pressure "from below" persuades the Communists to call for immediate nationalisations.

While Factory Councils were taking over and ensuring power for the new republic in industry, questions of longer term economic policy were left for the future. It is clear from the resolutions and programmes produced by the domestic resistance that nationalisation of large-scale industry was expected. This was confirmed by several

<sup>49</sup> e.g. his speech in parliament on 27/3/46, E. Erban: Základní problémy lidové demokracie, Praha, 1946. For additional examples see Jarošová, et al: Odbory, p.126 and p.129.

<sup>50</sup> e.g. ÚRO, 13/9/45, p.1.

<sup>51</sup> Tvrdon, Dnešek, 11/12/47, p.573-574.

delegations to Laušman shortly after liberation<sup>52</sup> and employees of the film industry specifically referred to their expectation that the industry would be "nationalised"<sup>53</sup>.

As of July economic questions were being considered more systematically: the decision was announced to nationalise "all energy industry"<sup>54</sup> and a delegation to Laušman representing the Factory Councils of the 15 biggest Prague engineering factories discussed the need to work out a plan for all production including efficient reorganisation; there was also a minor reference to nationalisations<sup>55</sup>. Talk was more definite at meetings of the Socialist Bloc when a possible economic programme was discussed<sup>56</sup>, but this still gave no concrete or definite shape to the general slogan of nationalisation. The decisive change was forced by pressure from miners. In the Ostrava region they staged a demonstration strike<sup>57</sup> and from Most Laušman received an extremely strongly worded resolution from the miners' Factory Councils. This was undoubtedly a major factor persuading the KSČ that the time had come to press for nationalisations and they gave prominence to the Most resolution which gave the blunt warning; ". . . the cooperation of the miners of these coalfields with a Czechoslovak government that would leave so

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<sup>52</sup> Laušman: Kdo, p.80.

<sup>53</sup> PL, 14/5/45.

<sup>54</sup> RP, 8/7/45, p.4.

<sup>55</sup> RP, 5/7/45, p.2. The delegation was led by G. Kliment.

<sup>56</sup> Kaplan: Znárodnění, p.21-22.

<sup>57</sup> Stručný, p.313.

important an industry to private capital would not be possible"<sup>58</sup>.

Prior to the publication of this statement, the KSČ leadership had decided to change its approach. After previously insisting that nationalisations would have to be decided on by an elected parliament, Gottwald felt able to make an about turn after he had been assured that Beneš was not opposed to signing a decree for the nationalisation of some key economic sectors before the opening of the Provisional National Assembly<sup>59</sup>. It was still not certain how much was to be nationalised in this period and it was expected that parliament would later be able to discuss further nationalisations.

At first the KSČ was nervous that there would be serious opposition leading even to a split in the National Front. Gottwald, warning of this danger in a speech on 16/8/45, called for the maximum pressure from below bringing in other parties whenever possible<sup>60</sup>. He expected this to prevent serious open opposition but correctly predicted that Beneš would still try to procrastinate so that nationalisations could be discussed by parliament<sup>61</sup>. He was also careful to minimise the fears of small and middle-sized firms with assurances that nationalisations would not apply to them<sup>62</sup>. In fact, the KSČ still argued within the terms of the national democratic

<sup>58</sup>RP 10/7/45, p.1.

<sup>59</sup>Kaplan: Znárodnění, p.22.

<sup>60</sup>Gottwald: Spisy, XII, p.122.

<sup>61</sup>Gottwald: Spisy, XII, p.121.

<sup>62</sup>RP 17/7/45, p.1.

revolution insisting that the measure was aimed not against private capitalism but only against foreigners and traitors. This involved making a definite distinction between "socialisation" and "nationalisation" such that the former was one specific form of the latter while other measures helping private enterprise could also be forms of "nationalisation"<sup>63</sup>.

III.15.6. The first concrete proposals for nationalisations are modified by pressure "from below".  
Differences between political parties are revealed.

While the KSČ was re-thinking its position Laušman was preparing plans in the Ministry of Industry. It is not clear whether, as he later claimed<sup>64</sup>, he began these preparations at the time of liberation. He may only have been working on decrees for handing smaller enterprises over to individuals and larger ones to cooperatives while still leaving the actual fate of large-scale industry for parliament to decide<sup>65</sup>. Soon, however, he was presenting an outline of his plan whereby heavy and key industries would be taken over quickly and this would be followed by a gradual process of taking over other industries of "all-state importance"<sup>66</sup>. This was still quite compatible with the published statements of National Socialist leaders<sup>67</sup>.

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<sup>63</sup> e.g. Frejka, RP 15/7/45, p.1.

<sup>64</sup> Laušman: Kdo, p.81, and PL 24/8/45, p.1.

<sup>65</sup> Laušman, quoted in RP 13/7/45, p.2.

<sup>66</sup> Laušman, Svět práce, 26/7/45, p.4.

<sup>67</sup> e.g. Ripka, SS 21/6/45, p.1.

In fact, far from there being open opposition to these proposals, the only immediate response was for meetings in big factories and mines to express full agreement<sup>68</sup>. Then came waves of resolutions demanding definite and speedy agreement in the government: these were sent not only from factories but also from National Committees, particularly in frontier regions<sup>69</sup>, from the bloc of socialist parties in Moravia and Silesia and from the Congress of National Committees in Slovakia<sup>70</sup>. Most important, however, were the resolutions from employees demanding the nationalisation of their own enterprises as they effectively took the discussions on the detailed pace, extent and form of nationalisations outside the government and led to the adoption of a more radical measure than anybody had advocated beforehand.

Political differentiation took place not around the question of nationalisations as such but principally around the desirability of this pressure "from below". The Social Democrats, trade unions and Communists actively encouraged this pressure and thereby implicitly supported its increasing demands: they gave full publicity in their press to resolutions that were sent to the government. The National Socialists and Peoples' Party were placed in an embarrassing position: they could hardly oppose such powerful expressions of popular feeling and therefore took their stand from Beneš's position. He was willing to accept the immediate nationalisation of

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<sup>68</sup> Laušman, quoted in RP 14/7/45, p.1.

<sup>69</sup> RP 19/9/45, p.1.

<sup>70</sup> RP 18/8/45, p.1.

some industries, but wanted further nationalisations to be implemented in stages. Generally, he advocated delay so that parliament could discuss these questions at its leisure<sup>71</sup>. In effect, this would mean delays during which pressure "from below" would be less decisive.

There were frequent calls for avoiding any hurry and for heeding "the prudent voice of the specialists"<sup>72</sup>. It was implied that pressure "from below" was counter-productive as the Ministry of Industry itself was best able to decide being "equipped with well-paid specialists who can master all industrial questions"<sup>73</sup>. There were also warnings for caution on the extent and form of nationalisation: sometimes there were vague references to a plan<sup>74</sup>, but the only definite proposals from the National Socialists emphasised that there would be plenty of scope for private industry while nationalised industries would retain complete financial independence and the principle of one-man management<sup>75</sup>.

These arguments, coinciding with delays while discussions were held in a special commission and then in the government itself, only increased the nervousness of the firm supporters of nationalisations. The KSČ was particularly concerned by arguments like ". . . we consider any sort of pressure for the accelerated publication of the decree

<sup>71</sup> Opat: Opavou, p.108.

<sup>72</sup> SS 19/9/45, p.2.

<sup>73</sup> SS 30/8/45, p.3.

<sup>74</sup> e.g. Ripka, SS 21/6/45, p.1.

<sup>75</sup> e.g. A. Vaněk, SS 30/8/45, p.3.

as directly harmful"<sup>76</sup>. Zápotocký pointed out how similar this was to the arguments of 1918 and 1919 - just as the promises at that time had seemed as firm as in 1945<sup>77</sup>, when nobody even hinted that nationalisations might be going beyond the Košice programme<sup>78</sup>.

Now, to counter these delaying tactics, the KSČ actively encouraged more resolutions "from below". Then employees of each new enterprise demanding nationalisations in general also demanded nationalisation of their own work-place. So the pace and extent of nationalisations changed - going way beyond the national criterion - and the KSČ hoped i.e. - that agreement within the bloc for considerable nationalisations would be rubber stamped by the government and then followed by further nationalisations after the creation of a parliament<sup>79</sup> - faded still further into the background. In fact, demands for more extensive immediate nationalisations were themselves used as an explanation for the delays<sup>80</sup>. Zápotocký therefore called for an end to resolutions demanding still more nationalisations and simultaneously insisted that nationalisations should be confirmed by Presidential decree before the creation of the Provisional National Assembly<sup>81</sup>.

<sup>76</sup> LD 26/9/45.

<sup>77</sup> RP 28/9/45, p.1.

<sup>78</sup> Kaplan: Znárodnění, p.34. In an attempt to discourage employees from sending in resolutions, it was even claimed that nationalisations were actually included in the Košice programme and that this meant that they had to be implemented anyway; Obzory, 6/10/45, p.99.

<sup>79</sup> Kaplan: Znárodnění, p.29-30.

<sup>80</sup> e.g. Jan Stránský, SS 16/10/45, p.1. He claimed that the National Socialists were not responsible for any delays. This must have seemed improbable after they had previously been advocating restraint.

<sup>81</sup> RP 4/10/45, p.2, and Práce, 4/10/45, p.1.

It must be added that a complete non-starter as an argument for delay was fear of international disapproval. Beneš himself firmly rejected any suggestion that pressure from any other country should be heeded<sup>82</sup>. Even within the Peoples' Party it was accepted that nationalisations made no difference to the likelihood of receiving loans from the West<sup>83</sup>. The only question was the secondary one of compensation. Beneš insisted that this should be paid to citizens of friendly states<sup>84</sup>, but economic realities meant that nothing beyond a statement of intent was possible. Western firms making more insistent claims were rare and their arguments were often questionable as so many property changes had occurred through the war<sup>85</sup>. "Friendly" foreign interests were estimated at about 8% of all capital with less than 1% US owned and less than 5% British owned<sup>86</sup>. Even if there were some British government demands in late 1945 for speedy compensation in convertible currency<sup>87</sup>, it was still accepted that nothing from abroad resembled an attempt at real interference<sup>88</sup>. This was easy to believe as the British government, as was fully reported in the Czechoslovak press, was

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<sup>82</sup> PL 9/10/45, p.1, and RP 26/10/45, p.1.

<sup>83</sup> Obzory, 9/2/46,

<sup>84</sup> PL 9/10/45, p.1.

<sup>85</sup> e.g. Schicht in Ústí nad Labem which was claimed by Unilever; RP 2/12/45, p.1.

<sup>86</sup> F.J. Kolár: Ke kapitalismu není návratu, Praha, 1947, p.33-34.

<sup>87</sup> Dvořáková, Lesjuk: Československá, p.55-56.

<sup>88</sup> Clementis, PL 24/10/45, p.1.



itself embarking on a programme of nationalisations. Talk of an international response could therefore be presented as a flimsy attempt to raise a hypothetical question as an excuse for delay<sup>89</sup>.

Later, with the entry of the US more into European politics and the beginnings of the cold war, the question of compensation suddenly became a live issue. This applied both for the tiny number of former US citizens and for those who had changed their citizenship<sup>90</sup>.

III.15.7. Beneš signs the nationalisation decrees, but there are still unresolved problems that can lead to disagreements later.

On 24/10/45 the President signed decrees on the nationalisation of certain industries and on the powers of Factory Councils. These were practically the last measures before the opening of the Provisional National Assembly and meant that nationalisations could be celebrated on 28/10/45 thereby firmly linking the decree with the creation of the Czechoslovak state in 1918. In overall terms, 16.4% of all industrial enterprises were nationalised. They employed 61.2% of the industrial labour force in March 1947 and represented almost two thirds of the productive capacity<sup>91</sup>. The decrees laid down

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<sup>89</sup> e.g. J. Vaněk, PL 4/11/45, p.1. There had been enormous interest in the British elections with general agreement that they meant a definitive defeat for the "men of Munich". The most serious analysis of their impact on Czechoslovak internal policy was that the ground had been knocked from under the feet of those who wanted to use Britain as an example for conservatism; RP 27/7/45, p.1. In short, they confirmed the international recognition of the Czechoslovak state and gave it freedom to choose its own internal policies.

<sup>90</sup> See below Section V.31.2.

<sup>91</sup> Stručný, p.314.

complicated guide-lines for individual industries, so that only those enterprises above a particular size - expressed in terms of the number of employees - were nationalised. The breakdown for individual industries, as shown in the table below, indicates that in some there were still an enormous number of small enterprises.

The potential for development and the economic problems inherent within this new economic structure are discussed in later chapters. Before that could show itself the first political repercussions of the act of the nationalisations were making themselves felt.

Table 3: Nationalised industry by branches<sup>92</sup>.

Industry	Percentage of total number of persons employed	Percentage of total number of technical units
Mining	100,0	100,0
Metallurgy	99,4	97,8
Power	99,1	88,5
Chemicals	76,4	25,7
Engineering	72,6	22,2
Sugar-mills	69,8	63,3
Glass	67,4	10,8
Building materials and ceramics	63,4	24,3
Paper	60,7	19,3
Leather	58,5	6,5
Textiles	54,3	22,1
Woodworking	26,3	5,7
Distilleries	26,0	5,9
Breweries and malt	24,5	7,3

(continued overleaf)

<sup>92</sup>O. Mrázek: "Course and Results of the Nationalisation of Industry", The Czechoslovak Economy 1945-1948, Prague, 1968, p.98.

Table 3: (continued from pervious page)

Industry	Percentage of total number of persons employed	Percentage of total number of technical units
Flour-mills	20,1	7,3
Saw-mills	15,8	5,7
Foodstuffs	14,4	5,2
Building	13,4	2,8
Clothing	13,1	2,7
Printing	2,7	3,8
Water Works	0,7	2,5

The first response of all the Czech parties was to claim some sort of credit for the nationalisations. The Social Democrats claimed to be the initiator and creator: the National Socialists said they were fulfilling their old programme and the Peoples' Party claimed to be implementing a papal encyclical<sup>93</sup>. Nobody dared suggest fundamental doubts. The National Socialists, who had not even been able to present a united position inside the government<sup>94</sup>, privately admitted that they had not wanted so sweeping a measure<sup>95</sup>. For a time they stated publicly that they had some reservations, but then fell in line<sup>96</sup>, and presented the nationalisations as the only

<sup>93</sup> Adámek: Boj, p.46.

<sup>94</sup> Kaplan: Znárodnění, p.51-52.

<sup>95</sup> e.g. Zenkl at the party Presidium meeting on 25/10/45; Cestou k únoru, Praha, 1963, p.124.

<sup>96</sup> Compare Drtina's views in SS 1/11/45, p.1, and SS 7/12/45, p.1.

possible basis for the future<sup>97</sup>. Beneš too had only expressed agreement "in principle" when signing the decree<sup>98</sup>, but later expressed agreement even with the way it was done<sup>99</sup>. The point was that to go half way in one go and then proceed in stages was economically and politically dubious. Considering the state of the economy, indecision in ownership relations would not encourage anybody to put industry on its feet again. Even Ripka was soon arguing that such uncertainty would have been disastrous<sup>100</sup>.

This might suggest that controversy over nationalisations was ended, but there were still plenty more disputes to arise as the decree still had to be interpreted in practice. Only then could ambiguities be revealed. The most troublesome of these concerned the fate of "confiscates", i.e. the former property of Germans or traitors that did not qualify for nationalisation. There were also unanswered questions concerning the relationship between the public and private sectors and over the exact organisational structure and powers of different organs within the public sector.

There were two particular sectors in which reorganisation was much slower and this itself could cause discontent. The first was banking which was under Šrobár's Ministry of Finance. He was criticised for leaving banks to carry on as before<sup>101</sup>. The second was the

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<sup>97</sup> e.g. Ripka, quoted in ÚRO, 22/11/45, p.2.

<sup>98</sup> RP 26/10/45, p.1.

<sup>99</sup> Laušman: Kdo, p.82.

<sup>100</sup> e.g. when interviewed in Paris, SS 6/11/45, p.1.

<sup>101</sup> e.g. RP 22/2/46, p.1, and O. Berger: Velké dílo, Praha, 1946, p.94.

food industry which was under Majer who was not an advocate of full state ownership facilitating rapid and complete reorganisation. He had been comparatively unmoved by resolutions from workers reflecting fears that their industry was being left out during discussions of nationalisations<sup>102</sup>. A particular problem was sugar refineries, many of which were organised as cooperatives collectively owned by peasants. Majer wanted to keep some form of direct peasant interest<sup>103</sup>, but Zápotocký preferred a full state takeover which, he claimed, need not preclude a close relationship with peasants<sup>104</sup>. An agreed organisational form had still not been found in early 1947<sup>105</sup> and this applied to other sections of the food industry too<sup>106</sup>.

III.15.8. A new management structure is created for nationalised industries after struggles behind the scenes between parties. Direct representation for workers proves unimportant in practice.

Generally speaking direct state ownership gave scope for complete reorganisation. This was not affected by pressure "from below" but depended rather on the Ministry of Industry which worked far too slowly for Gottwald's liking<sup>107</sup>. Re organisation into a

<sup>102</sup>F.J. Kolár, RP 26/9/45, p.1.

<sup>103</sup>PL 27/10/45, p.1.

<sup>104</sup>Práce 3/10/45, p.1.

<sup>105</sup>V. Majer: Zásady reorganisace distribučního systému, Praha, 1947, p.23-25.

<sup>106</sup>V. Souček: Znárodnění průmyslu v ČSR, Praha, 1947, p.21.

<sup>107</sup>e.g. his speech to the Central Committee on 18/12/45, Gottwald: Spisy, XII, p.217.

smaller number of central organs began in March 1946<sup>108</sup> and was completed by the end of May<sup>109</sup> although there were still references to their consolidation much later<sup>110</sup>. The outcome was a sharp decrease in the number of enterprises down to 321 incorporating 3,348 factories by the end of 1947<sup>111</sup>. Heading 13 basic industrial groups were directors chosen by the government: their backgrounds were very varied but they were all specialists in their field and all were under 50 years old<sup>112</sup>.

This reorganisation was accompanied by maneuvering behind the scenes as the political parties tried to win representation for their own members in leading positions in industry. The Communists and Social Democrats were in a particularly strong position to argue for themselves. Slánský, for example, emphasised that specialist ability alone was not enough: high officials also had to be fully convinced of the correctness of nationalisation<sup>113</sup>. Figures for early 1948, after the food industry had been reorganised, show that, of the 18 central directors, three were Communists, four Social Democrats, four National Socialists, one a Slovak Democrat and six were non-party<sup>114</sup>. As the table below shows, figures for individual enterprise directors indicate a more definite predominance of the left.

<sup>108</sup> Laušman, PL 13/3/46, p.1.

<sup>109</sup> J. Rošek, PL 20/8/46, p.2.

<sup>110</sup> e.g. Hospodář, 20/2/47, p.1.

<sup>111</sup> Stručný, p.316. See also Dvořáková, Lesjuk: Československá, p.57.

<sup>112</sup> Svět práce, 29/11/45, p.6.

<sup>113</sup> RP 14/11/45, p.2.

<sup>114</sup> Svobodné noviny, 15/1/48, p.2.

Table 4: <sup>115</sup> Enterprise directors in nationalised industries  
by political affiliations

	Heavy Industry		Light Industry		Food	
Total	79	100	87	100	32	100
KSC	28	35,5	30	34,4	11	34,4
SD	22	27,8	31	35,6	10	31,3
NS	14	17,7	11	12,7	6	18,7
LS	3	3,8	2	2,3	1	3,1
non-party	12	15,2	13	15,0	4	12,5

The first figure in each column is the absolute number, while the second is the percentage of the total.

So, as with the changes in the machinery of political power, reorganisation of industry was associated with an expansion of the operations of parties into fields that had previously not been seen as their responsibility.

Reorganisation following the elimination of private ownership was more explicitly intended to give scope for direct workers' representation in management and provision was made for this in the nationalisation decrees. They laid down a management structure for individual enterprises which was a peculiar compromise between collective and one-man management. It seems that the Social Democrats wanted the state sector to be managed on the principle of personal responsibility combined with some sort of broad popular control <sup>116</sup>.

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<sup>115</sup> M. Klimeš, M. Zachoval: "Příspěvek k problematice únorových událostí v ČSR", Československý časopis historický, VI, No.2, 1958, p. 195-196.

<sup>116</sup> PL 2/10/45, p.1.

From the KSČ too there were voices advocating one-man management controlled from above by the Ministry and from below by the Factory Council: adequacy of this was said to be confirmed by Soviet experience<sup>117</sup>. The strongest reservations about this came from the parties with less influence in the economic apparatus who could gain from the collective principle<sup>118</sup>. The outcome was that a single manager was to be appointed but his actions could be examined by a board that had the power to complain about him directly to the Ministry of Industry. This board was to be one third nominated by the employees while the remaining two thirds were nominated from the centre with the employees having an ill-defined right to comment on their acceptability<sup>119</sup>.

As was said at the time, only practice itself could reveal how the relationship between the manager and the board would develop<sup>120</sup>. It seems that<sup>the</sup> board never became an important instrument of control. Even as directors and their deputies were being formally appointed, there was no mention of establishing the boards<sup>121</sup>. Even when elections did happen there does not seem to have been much participation. Thus in ČKD-Liben there was a meeting of the whole enterprise to introduce the new director while the workers' representatives

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<sup>117</sup> D. Koutník, interviewed in RP 17/11/45, p.2.

<sup>118</sup> Kaplan: Znárodnění, p.239.

<sup>119</sup> The relevant decree is reproduced in Cestou května, Praha, 1975, p.282-301.

<sup>120</sup> Frejka, RP 6/11/45, p.1.

<sup>121</sup> e.g. Škodovák, 31/8/46, p.1. See also M. Stračovský, Průmyslový věstník, 10/2/47, p.106.



on the board were chosen by a commission of 16<sup>122</sup>. Late in 1947 there were suddenly calls for haste and demands for explanations of the general delays in creating the boards<sup>123</sup>.

III.15.9. The nationalisation of industry gives great scope for Factory Councils which remain immensely powerful but have to define their role more precisely.

There can be little doubt that the reason for this general apathy was that the powers of the boards were in practice less than the powers of Factory Councils which continued to be the most effective workers' representative organ at the factory level. The full extent of their powers in practice was not obvious from the wording of the decree on Factory Councils which was published simultaneously with the nationalisation decrees<sup>124</sup>. It did give them a firm legal basis thereby confirming that they were to be permanent organs, but it was not developed out of a single clear conception of what role they should play. Rather, it was based on their own practice and indicated the very general hopes and fears that they engendered within the various political parties.

From the Peoples' Party there was the fear that they could "completely destroy our private enterprise"<sup>125</sup>. More specific points of criticism from the right centred on the purge of the old management structures. Zápotocký, while never denying that some

<sup>122</sup>Praga, 19/9/46, p.98-99, and 27/11/46, p.135.

<sup>123</sup>Věstník ROH, 7/11/47, p.334.

<sup>124</sup>It is reproduced in Cestou května, p.302-318.

<sup>125</sup>Opat: O novou, p.77

mistakes had been made and that they should be corrected, would accept no general criticisms of the Factory Councils and of the initiatives they took in the first months after liberation<sup>126</sup>.

It was, in fact, usual for the Communists and Social Democrats to advocate, in a very vague and general way, the maximum powers for Factory Councils<sup>127</sup>.

This was adequate only in the period immediately after liberation when they were an invaluable organs of power supporting the new state and when, with other economic mechanisms in a state of collapse, they were the organs best able to restart production. With the publication of the decree, however, their role had to be clarified and more precisely defined. In particular, they had to find a place within a model of economic management which was to involve a considerable degree of centralisation in preparation for some form of economic planning. This meant that their relationship, as representative organs, to specialists and managers had to be defined more precisely.

The decree evidently owed a great deal to ideas developed by Zápotocký and other trade unionists, although it was not exactly in line with the KSČ conception of how the economy should function. There was no attempt to model them on Soviet experience<sup>128</sup>; they were already playing too distinctive a role to make that possible. Their powers were also defined differently from those of pre-war Factory

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<sup>126</sup> e.g. his speech at the ROH conference in January 1946, ÚRO, 17/1/46, p.6.

<sup>127</sup> e.g. Fierlinger, Práce 15/5/45, p.1.

<sup>128</sup> c.f. PL 31/10/45, p.3.

Committees although there were attempts to find a relationship to those traditions<sup>129</sup>. Instead, trade unionists began defining their powers such that they would be as great as possible without supplanting specialist ability which, as Zápotocký had so forcefully argued, they were not competent to do.

So, although Communists occasionally made vague references to the belief that too much power had at one time been taken<sup>130</sup>, more generally there were calls for taking greater initiatives. "Control", it was argued, should be stretched to mean control before the event, so that Factory Councils could themselves make suggestions and win the approval and interest of the work-force<sup>131</sup>. In cases when conflicts arose between factories it was argued that, instead of joining in alongside their management, they should see the interests of the economy as a whole and take the initiative in finding an amicable solution<sup>132</sup>.

The decree itself gave scope for all this and gave the Factory Councils regular duties in attending to the basic interests of the workers and in watching over the activities of the management, so as to ensure that enterprise's activities were in the interests of the economy as a whole. The necessary powers for compelling the management to explain its actions and not to conceal information were all laid down.

<sup>129</sup> See J. Šmídmajer: Závodní rady a odborové hnutí, Praha, 1947.

<sup>130</sup> e.g. Funkcionář, 7/6/46, p.7.

<sup>131</sup> Věstník závodních rad, June 1945, p.8.

<sup>132</sup> Heydrich, Věstník závodních rad, July 1945, p.4.

The Factory Council, then, had a dual role. For defending its own workers' interests it was given an equal status with management on personnel questions. Beyond that it was to be a social conscience for the whole factory. This last point was in line with the KSČ's general ideas on the economy but was not fully accepted by the other parties. The decree gave Factory Councils a 10% share in profits. At first this seemed uncontroversial but, when Factory Councils were expected to be pressing for price reductions, it was noticed that many were dividing up the share in profits among the workers<sup>133</sup>. ÚRO advocated centralising this into one fund so that loss making industries, such as mining, could share in it. Evidently, plenty of factories were not convinced by this and even in ČKD it was suggested that every worker should be given the incentive of a share in profits<sup>134</sup>. Gradually, throughout 1947, Factory Councils came to accept ÚRO's line.

Irrespective of disagreements on this point, Factory Councils remained immensely powerful. Their strength did not stem primarily from the decree defining their powers, or from reinterpretations of its wording. The real point was that they generally enjoyed the trust of the workers. Management was at first scared to try to assert its authority for fear of becoming unpopular and being sacked. It was only with the authority of the Factory Council that they could regain prestige<sup>135</sup>. Throughout the whole period up to 1948, Factory Councils had to

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<sup>133</sup> F. Dvorín, Věstník závodních rad, October 1946, p.1.

<sup>134</sup> Praga, April 1947, p.50.

<sup>135</sup> G. Kliment, RP 3/8/45, p.1.

sign every management order to show their approval before workers would respond<sup>136</sup>. So the management still had to rely on them even after the purge receded from memory<sup>137</sup>. They often seem to have been both the executive organ of and at least an equal partner with management<sup>138</sup>.

The extent of their actual powers and the importance of the tasks they were given raised the question of how they should be controlled so as to prevent them from abusing or misusing their position. There were cases of Factory Councils using their strength to slacken labour discipline<sup>139</sup>, and there were also more serious cases of corruption and excessive spending by Factory Council members. This was used as a pretext for general criticisms of their powers but Zápotocký, speaking at the ÚRO plenum of 18-19/9/46, still maintained that they had generally proved themselves. He accepted that their prestige had been damaged, but maintained that the original decree laid down that Factory Councils were to be controlled by the trade union branch committee: he claimed that membership of that body carried no privileges or scope for corruption at all<sup>140</sup>.

<sup>136</sup> Kozelka: Vzpomínky, p.172.

<sup>137</sup> A survey in the nationalised engineering industry showed that co-operation was good in 80-90% of cases while the authority of management was nowhere near so good; Průmyslový věstník, 1/9/47, p.655.

<sup>138</sup> e.g. the regular meetings of the Factory Council in the Malé Svatoňovice coal mines, reported in Jiskra throughout 1946 and 1947. See also the account of the situation in Baťa, where the chairman of the Factory Council was often more powerful than the director; P. Roušar: Dějiny národního podniku SVIT: národní podnik Baťa, Praha, 1967, esp.p.70-73.

<sup>139</sup> e.g. G. Kliment, RP 13/9/45, p.1.

<sup>140</sup> ÚRO 26/9/46, p.2-3.

There is no other evidence that the trade union committee and Factory Council were genuinely separate bodies, but this appears to have been the most articulate justification for the clear separation between Factory Councils, which appeared as the workers' representative within a work-place, and trade union organisations. The latter were given complementing tasks of generally propagandising for ideas of solidarity and also of keeping Factory Councils in touch with the workers through a network of elected stewards and through periodic general meetings<sup>141</sup>, which were sometimes presented as the most important form of control<sup>142</sup>.

### III.15.10. Summary and discussion.

Changes in industry went further than predicted in the Košice programme largely because of the forceful initiatives taken by workers' representative organs. Factory Councils, sometimes dominated totally by the KSČ, took power in the big factories and effectively overthrew the existing management structures. They were extremely powerful organs, even controlling their own armed militia, but could not alone work out a role for themselves within industry. Soon they accepted the impossibility of supplanting fully the specialist abilities of management, but they still insisted on a powerful voice in appointing new managers.

They also accepted subordination within a new united trade union structure which, in line with the ideas of the KSČ who effectively dominated within it, developed into a powerful voice in national

<sup>141</sup>Peřina, Věstník závodních rad, August 1945 p.1.

<sup>142</sup>e.g. Jiskra, 14/12/46, p.5.

politics by restricting itself to issues affecting employees.

By the late summer of 1945 more attention could be paid to long-term economic questions. Pressure developed, particularly from miners, for the definite nationalisation of large-scale industry. After receiving an assurance that Beneš would be willing to sign a decree to that effect, the KSČ started mobilising further pressure. They thereby prevented the emergence of an open opposition, so that nationalisations were possible within the existing coalition. Pressure from below also led to a more sweeping and rapid nationalisations process than had been planned originally.

This was not simply engineered by the KSČ, although they were more than happy with the outcome. It demonstrated the role both of pressure from below and of negotiations within the government. The next major change, the reorganisation of industry in preparation for a lasting central direction of the economy was, of necessity, largely worked out at the top. Pressure from below could not dictate its form, but the views of workers' representatives may have helped Communists and Social Democrats in a jockeying between parties for responsible positions in industry.

Nationalisations did give great potential scope for workers' representative organs. Factory Councils had, however, to be restricted by the need to respect specialist ability. They remained immensely powerful throughout the 1945-1948 period.

These changes in industry did not follow from anybody's pre-conceived ideas. They created an economic formation with large public and private sectors and gave scope for completely new economic policies in the public sector. The KSČ was more capable than the

other parties in presenting ideas for this - as is shown especially in Chapter 16 and - but there was also scope for sharp political differences over the extent of nationalisations and the relationship between the public and private sectors.



CHAPTER 16: FURTHER ASPECTS OF ECONOMIC POLICY AND OF THE  
COMMUNISTS' ROLE IN THE ECONOMY.

III.16.1. The Communist Party sees an important role <sup>for</sup> ~~for~~ itself in finding ways to raise labour morale.

While nationalisations and the reorganisation of industry could lay the basis for new economic policies, they could not instantaneously solve the immediate economic problems. Production and productivity remained very low, the authority of management was badly shaken, economic organisation was in a state of collapse and the situation was particularly bad in the basic industries.

From liberation onwards the KSČ took an increasing interest in economic questions. By the late summer of 1945 improvement in the economy was presented as a principal task<sup>1</sup>. The KSČ made its independent existence felt with the organisation of voluntary efforts to clear away war damage. They issued a call for one million hours of voluntary work on 1/9/45 and 2/9/45 in the hope that the population of Prague, irrespective of political affiliations, would join in<sup>2</sup>. At first the National Socialists were sceptical but, after the plan had been "over-fulfilled" and then repeated in other towns<sup>3</sup>, Zenkl called on Prague's citizens to help clean up the city by 28/10/45<sup>4</sup>.

This mobilisation of people, in a manner almost like a political

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<sup>1</sup> e.g. Gottwald's speech of 16/8/45, Spisy, XII, p.115.

<sup>2</sup> RP 25/8/45, p.2.

<sup>3</sup> RP 4/9/45, p.1, and RP 3/10/45, p.1.

<sup>4</sup> SS 7/10/45, p.2, RP 7/10/45, p.2, and RP 10/10/45, p.1.

demonstration, was the least systematic aspect of the KSČ's role in the economy. Of more lasting and deeper significance were the activities of the party within the developing model of management of the economy. An indication of the seriousness with which this was taken was the speedy establishment of an economic apparatus including all levels - top managers, trade union officials and members of Factory Councils. This gave the Communists even greater power within the nationalised industries than suggested by the senior managerial positions they held. Other parties started later in building their economic organisations and were never so systematic although the Social Democrats went some way towards copying the KSČ. The comparison is very striking with the National Socialists who saw no need for systematic political intervention in the public sector<sup>5</sup>. This, it must be emphasised, does not mean that KSČ organisations as such tried to decide over everything. Particularly detailed managerial tasks or directly technical matters at lower levels could be left alone while the party was meant to be concerned with broader questions of labour morale, the competence of Factory Councils, problems of the labour force and raw material supplies and relations between the working class and intelligentsia<sup>6</sup>. The KSČ could work for solutions to these problems either independently or through the trade unions in close unity with the Social Democrats.

<sup>5</sup>See Hříbek: K úloze, p.60-63, and below, Section III.18.4.

<sup>6</sup>e.g. J. Šťastný, Funkcionář, October 1945, p.11.

Trade union bodies themselves were given the task, among others, of helping to raise labour morale. After the nationalisations, for which the unions had actively campaigned, Zápotocký argued that, in the public sector as distinct from private enterprises, the first concern was to be higher productivity as only when the economy was functioning normally again could wages be increased<sup>7</sup>. It was made clear that ÚRO would not support strikes on wage demands. Instead, given the strength of the united trade unions and the goodwill of the government, disputes should be settled amicably. While insisting that there could be no limitations on the right to strike, ÚRO indicated that even short protest strikes should be avoided where possible<sup>8</sup>: in practice they rarely commented on such strikes while often expressing understanding for the demands raised.

The KSČ, however, did not believe that trade union bodies alone, or even political parties, could solve the problem of low productivity. By January 1946, when industrial production was still running at only 50% of the 1938 level, they therefore encouraged new organs known as Production Committees. The idea emanated from ČKD-Libén where the KSČ-dominated Factory Council took the initiative. The party's Economic Commission discussed it in October 1945 and viewed <sup>it</sup> favourably. Over the following months unceasing publicity was given to Production Committees both in the KSČ press and through the trade unions. ÚRO, on 20/1/46, called for <sup>their</sup> immediate

<sup>7</sup>ÚRO, 17/1/46, p.3.

<sup>8</sup>Resolution of the ÚRO meeting of 14/3/46, ÚRO, 21/3/46, p.1.

organisation in all big factories<sup>9</sup>. Numbers increased through 1946 from 280 in April up to 1,165 in September: this was still only slightly over one third of all factories with over 50 employees<sup>10</sup>.

Their organisational form was highly diverse indicating the spontaneity or flexibility of their creation. They were not based on any foreign example although some similarities were noted to the Soviet "Zavkom" which, however, was an elected organ<sup>11</sup>. There was a greater similarity to the production committees of the British war economy<sup>12</sup>. Nevertheless, there were no clear directives on their composition or size and they included representatives of all grades of employees, of the Factory Council, of political parties and of trade unions<sup>13</sup>. Their function was distinct from all these as they were to be a channel for constructive communication uniquely concerned with raising production. In no sense could they be seen as organs of potential political power and they were explicitly defined as advisory and not executive organs<sup>14</sup>.

Their actual impact is impossible to quantify although it was claimed that there were masses of simple ways in which workers' suggestions could be collated and used to help raise productivity<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Růžička: ROH, p.85 and p.94.

<sup>10</sup> Fakta a cifry, I, No.9, 31/10/46, p.16 and p.17.

<sup>11</sup> Vavřina, Škodovák, 15/6/46.

<sup>12</sup> L. Strada, Nové hospodářství, II, No.4, April 1946.

<sup>13</sup> F. Homola, ÚRO 7/2/46.

<sup>14</sup> F.J. Kolár, RP 13/1/46, p.1.

<sup>15</sup> Fakta a cifry, II, No.11-12, 5/11/47, p.54-59.

They were also a considerable help in overcoming organisational weaknesses<sup>16</sup> and were given the task of quickly working out a plan for their individual factories which could be presented to a full meeting of the whole factory thereby winning commitment for it from all types of employees<sup>17</sup>.

III.16.2. The Communists confront the touchy issue of relations between manual workers and the technical intelligentsia.

It was evident from the notion of the Production Committees that one of the keys to raising production was the cooperation of different types of employees within a common productive effort. The KSČ argued that this was attainable because the nationalisation of industries could give all employees a common aim. It also fitted with the KSČ conception of national unity and the party's factory organisations were given the task of bringing together all the different types of workers in the "battle for production"<sup>18</sup>. This itself raised broader social questions concerning the relationship between and relative remuneration of manual workers and of the technical intelligentsia. It was a continual theme in trade union and factory journals that relations were not good and this was generally blamed on the experiences under capitalism and then during the occupation: mistrust showed itself in masses of trivial conflicts that could only be overcome by a conscious effort from Factory

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<sup>16</sup> See the report of Production Committee conference in Prague, RP 14/4/46, p.2.

<sup>17</sup> J. Kárný, Funkcionář, 10/1/46.

<sup>18</sup> Horn, Funkcionář, October 1945, p.7.

Councils<sup>19</sup>.

A crucial precondition for mutual trust was an acceptable pattern of income distribution. Factory Councils showed a marked liking for egalitarianism. There were even cases, shortly after liberation, when the highest paid office workers were persuaded to accept a halving of their salaries to allow an increase in the lowest wages<sup>20</sup>. Although the KSČ implicitly approved of this particular action Kliment, one of the leading trade unionists, did warn against the "excessive" egalitarianism which Factory Councils were said to be instituting<sup>21</sup>. This was met with a flood of strongly critical letters to ÚRO often presenting the arguments that if people in positions of authority had the same pay as workers then they would have a greater interest in improving conditions<sup>22</sup>. This attitude was firmly rejected by the KSČ leadership and Slánský even insisted that there should be no embarrassment about paying specialists even more than capitalists had as long as their work and abilities warranted it<sup>23</sup>. It was even suggested that, apart from the elimination of big capital, there need be no levelling of incomes with the intelligentsia and office workers retaining their differentials and every encouragement being given to private initiative and

<sup>19</sup> Kozelka: Vzpomínky, p.174.

<sup>20</sup> RP 8/7/45, p.4.

<sup>21</sup> RP 10/8/45.

<sup>22</sup> J. Maňák: "Problematika odměňování české inteligence v letech 1945-1948", Sociologický časopis, 1967, No.5, p.535.

<sup>23</sup> Speech in parliament, RP 14/11/45, p.2. Gottwald later referred to the need to overcome "petty bourgeois egalitarianism"; K. Gottwald: Spisy, Vol XIII, Praha, 1957, p.37.

competitiveness<sup>24</sup>. Such an extreme view was rarely used: more usual was a restrained argument against the desire to eliminate all social differences on the grounds that mutual envy could be eliminated once all were reasonably well paid and socially ensured<sup>25</sup>.

Despite such efforts to alleviate tension between the social groups essential to industrial production, mistrust remained and influenced political events both before and, perhaps to<sup>an</sup> even greater extent, after February 1948.

### III.15.3. Mining. An industry with special problems for which special solutions are sought.

During the occupation the Nazis had drafted all sorts of Czechs to work down the mines. The highest level of production was reached in 1943, but productivity per worker declined steadily during the occupation<sup>26</sup>. Then, with liberation, there was an exodus from mining and even those who remained could relax their efforts thanks to the collapse of discipline. The table shows the loss in production compared with pre-war.

Table 5: Coal production in Czechoslovakia in selected years<sup>27</sup>  
in peace-time in thousand tons

	1929	1937	1945	1946
Anthracite	16521,5	16777,5	11716,0	14167,9
Brown coal	22560,8	17895,4	15356,0	19459,5

<sup>24</sup> Púll, Nové slovo, 4/8/45, p.14

<sup>25</sup> e.g. J. Zeman, Praga, 17/12/46, p.147.

<sup>26</sup> For figures, see Statistický zpravodaj, VII, No.3, September 1945, p.62, and Statistická příručka, p.56.

<sup>27</sup> Statistická příručka, p.56.

Some miners, however, were willing to impose discipline over themselves and even to work extra shifts to raise production<sup>28</sup>. Some help came from brigades sent from factories in which the full work-force could not be employed<sup>29</sup> and this trend was encouraged by ÚRO.

Pre-war production levels were reached in some areas in the autumn<sup>30</sup>, but that could not make up for production lost in the summer. There was talk of a half million unemployed simply as a consequence of the coal shortage<sup>31</sup>, and among the factories closed was ČKD-Karlín<sup>32</sup>. To face this serious situation three sorts of measure were adopted; the first was to bring in temporary Czech labour, the second was to compel Germans to work in mines, and the third was to encourage miners to work harder. It was very noticeable that Communists, Social Democrats and trade unions missed no opportunity to publicise and encourage solutions based on Czech labour. They reproduced results of coal production and published ideas for further raising it. They saw it as a definitely political task. The other parties seemed far less interested and this reflected their attitudes towards economic questions as discussed below<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> e.g. the resolution of the meeting of Factory Councils in Kladno, PL 10/6/45, p.1.

<sup>29</sup> RP 27/6/45, p.1.

<sup>30</sup> e.g. in Most, RP 27/11/45, p.1.

<sup>31</sup> PL 6/12/45, p.1.

<sup>32</sup> Praga, 12/8/46, p.85.

<sup>33</sup> This is discussed in the following chapters on individual parties.



Czech labour was officially voluntary, but practice proved that coal supplies, very strictly controlled through a central body in Prague<sup>34</sup>, would go to those institutions that sent workers<sup>35</sup>. Those individuals who went were well rewarded for their labour but there were very serious difficulties owing to inexperience and unsuitability for the work which led to bad relations with the miners themselves. Some miners even tried to avoid taking on voluntary brigades although this practice was officially frowned upon<sup>36</sup>.

Pending their expulsion, the German population was an obvious source of labour. There was soon pressure for compulsory labour duty in the mines for them<sup>37</sup> which apparently the KSČ at first opposed<sup>38</sup>. Soon there was agreement for increasing numbers of Germans to be sent into mining<sup>39</sup>. This meant that, as Germans were leaving in early 1946, so their employment in mining actually increased. The table below shows that this was not unique to mining and the problems in the textile industry did become an important issue later. Nevertheless, mining was the most immediately essential of all these industries.

<sup>34</sup> Decree No. 115/1945 of 27/10/45, Sbírka zákonů a nařízení, 1945, p.267-268.

<sup>35</sup> Student, 11/10/45, p.8.

<sup>36</sup> A. Pelnář, Svobodné noviny, 17/7/46, p.1, and Věstník závodních rad, July 1945, p.8-10.

<sup>37</sup> e.g. J. Wurm, PL 17/8/45, p.1.

<sup>38</sup> A. Prokop, Obzory, 2/2/46, p.75.

<sup>39</sup> SS 28/8/45, p.3.

Table 6: The numbers of Germans employed in selected<sup>40</sup>  
Czechoslovak industries in 1945 and 1946.

Industry	1/11/45		1/1/46		1/3/46		1/6/46	
Mining	31704	30,4	36256	32,8	38443	32,3	33580	29,4
Iron production	2465	6,9	2950	7,7	3466	8,8	1904	5,0
Engineering	31353	11,3	29738	10,2	29426	9,7	23487	7,7
Building materials and ceramics	13666	31,1	15700	37,8	16116	38,2	16491	34,5
Glass	10141	44,5	11426	45,5	10459	43,4	11339	41,8
Textiles	59331	43,8	57654	40,1	54824	36,8	45107	29,6
Paper	8681	39,1	8835	37,9	8397	34,5	7297	29,2
TOTAL	208544	23,4	220437	23,3	210015	21,7	178061	18,1

The first column shows absolute figures while the second is the percentage of total employment in the industry.

Even this table understates the problem as, as was being realised at the beginning of 1946, some mining areas were almost exclusively German<sup>41</sup>. By mid-1946, when even Germans working in mines were being deported, the previous steady rise in coal production was reversed<sup>42</sup>. This was even used as an argument from the right for delaying the expulsion of Germans but any such notion of "national slavery" was very forcefully condemned<sup>43</sup>. This made it all the more imperative to

<sup>40</sup> Československý průmysl v prvním pololetí roku 1946, Praha, 1946, Chapter 1, tables 3a and 3b.

<sup>41</sup> SS 27/1/46, p.3.

<sup>42</sup> RP 7/6/46, p.1, and Hospodář, 18/7/46, p.1.

<sup>43</sup> (See overleaf)

find a solution based on Czech labour. Attempts to raise the morale of miners were quite obviously developments of Soviet experience in socialist competition and in the Stakhanovite movement<sup>44</sup> and were particularly encouraged by the KSČ. The Communists did not regard these as special expedients for a problem industry but rather the converse: there were soon references to mining being the most advanced sector of the economy in its production planning and in the careful following and publication of results<sup>45</sup>.

One approach to socialist competition was to start at the level of whole coalfields. This was extended into the heavy engineering industry with competition between factories to see who could reach the 1937 level first<sup>46</sup>. Soon these early attempts were being criticised for being little more than propaganda as they were not backed up with thorough organisation<sup>47</sup>: perhaps this was inevitable when so much was still disorganised.

In the mines near Ostrava competition was organised in the period 1/10/45 to 31/12/45. Apparently 18% of the work force took part indicating that there was still plenty of apathy<sup>48</sup> and prizes

<sup>43</sup>(From previous page)  
e.g. PL 12/11/46, p.1. Germans themselves could hardly have preferred this to expulsion, as argued by a captured Werwolf member; Svobodné noviny, 7/8/45, p.2.

<sup>44</sup>e.g. the publication of A. Grigoriev: Nové formy socialistické práce, Praha, 1945.

<sup>45</sup>e.g. Věstník Závodních rad, July 1946, p.8.

<sup>46</sup>RP 25/1/46, p.1.

<sup>47</sup>Zápotocký, Práce 24/2/46, p.1.

<sup>48</sup>For a full account see Hříbek: K úloze, esp. p.74-76.

of clothing were awarded to all members of successful brigades<sup>49</sup>. Great publicity was attached to success with a Presidential Decree allowing titles and special financial or other rewards for outstanding individuals or groups of workers<sup>50</sup>. Publicity in fact centred on individual "Stakhanovites" who were invited to Prague to see the President<sup>51</sup> and the best of them all, Viktor Gach was elected to the KSČ Central Committee.

These individuals recorded quite amazing results. Gach claimed a world record for a single shift when, with twelve helpers, they reached one hundred times the average productivity<sup>52</sup>! Not surprisingly, there were suggestions that the results were rigged or that Stakhanovites did not work regular shifts. Pelnář, the initiator of the movement, dismissed completely such suggestions<sup>53</sup>. He had to accept, though, that the real question was whether publicity given to Stakhanovites significantly altered overall production. There was no denying the 40% rise in the production in the last months of 1945 and competition may have helped this: it remained a surmise that the Stakhanovites made any difference. In 1946 publicity around them disappeared. This can only encourage the suspicion that they were a publicity stunt with limited effectiveness<sup>54</sup>.

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<sup>49</sup>RP 2/10/45, p.1.

<sup>50</sup>Decree No. 89/1945 of 12/10/45, Sbírka zákonů a nařízení, 1945, p.161.

<sup>51</sup>RP 2/2/46, p.1.

<sup>52</sup>Pelnář, Nové hospodářství, II, No.3, March 1946, p.36. For figures on the achievements of Stakhanovites, see Hříbek: K úloze, p.77.

<sup>53</sup>Svobodné noviny, 17/1/46, p.1.

<sup>54</sup>See below Section IV.27.4 for a discussion of workers' reactions to Stakhanovism in the engineering industry.

III.16.4. The Communists advocate new and controversial agriculture policies but they fail to build a peasants' mass organisation of analogous strength to the trade unions.

Apart from the land reform, which must have been well received by many peasants, the Košice programme also promised a gradual ending of the Protectorate's system of fixed quotas for compulsory deliveries. The hope was that free market sales above the quotas could gradually be expanded until the market mechanism alone could suffice to ensure adequate food supplies. Gottwald returned to this point several times emphasising its importance as a counter to propaganda from former Agrarians who he believed were trying to prevent fulfillment of quota obligations<sup>55</sup>.

Unfortunately, the supply situation was far too serious to allow for any relaxation. Economic disaster seemed to be only just over the horizon<sup>56</sup> and there were calls for tough measures against those not fulfilling obligations<sup>57</sup>. In practice this would be inconceivable as it was the method the Nazis had used: so instead of punishments encouragement was given to competition between individual peasants for rapid quota fulfillment<sup>58</sup> while those failing disastrously suffered no more than social ostracisation<sup>59</sup>. The final outcome is not clear, but Gottwald expressed relief that 70%

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<sup>55</sup> e.g. his speech on 16/8/45, Spisy, XII, p.118.

<sup>56</sup> Duriš gave figures for 31/10/45 showing that only 54% of bread grain had been delivered. Figures for other crops were even worse sinking to 9% for oats: RP 20/11/45, p.1.

<sup>57</sup> PL 25/11/45, p.2.

<sup>58</sup> Nepomucký, RP 26/1/46, p.1.

<sup>59</sup> PL 1/3/46, p.1.

of the grain had been brought<sup>60</sup> while a later estimate suggests that in 1945 60% of the pre-war production level was reached<sup>61</sup>.

Accepting that peasants' production was to be sold to the state according to set quota obligations, the next question was the price at which they were to sell. A post-war novelty in this was that prices<sup>were</sup> differentiated with rises of 77% for peasants holding under 20 ha, 65% for those with 20-50 ha and 44% for those with over 50 ha<sup>62</sup>. There were also price adjustments in favour of animal products which tended to be produced on smaller farms. Even then, it must be emphasised, these price adjustments were not intended to damage larger farms as they too benefited from price rises and therefore had a greater incentive to sell to the state<sup>63</sup>.

This triple price system was the Communists' idea and was criticised with increasing openness by the other parties particularly later in 1946<sup>64</sup>. It was claimed that it divided the village to which the usual Communist reply was that they anyway did not believe the village to be free from social conflicts. They represented the system as no more than a temporary measure to be superseded later by a whole complex of new agriculture policies including a progressive tax system, social insurance and help for mechanisation. In the

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<sup>60</sup> His speech on 16/2/46, Spisy, XII, p.278.

<sup>61</sup> K. Jech, A. Václavů: "Některé problémy československého zemědělství v letech 1944-1948", Československá revoluce v letech 1944-1948, Praha, 1966, p.236.

<sup>62</sup> Stručný, p.325.

<sup>63</sup> Jech: Probuzená, p.125-126.

<sup>64</sup> e.g. at the meeting of the Agricultural Committee of parliament, RP 18/12/46, p.3, and Majer's speech, PL 18/12/46, p.1.

meantime it amounted to helping the poorest in the only way administratively practicable when conditions were very hard for all<sup>65</sup>.

Other changes in the economy, particularly the nationalisations and consequent state control over industry, could also affect peasants. The first problem was, again, related to prices as the price scissors moved ever more sharply against agriculture with general price adjustments in late 1945<sup>66</sup>. This could only create greater scope for a renewal of the ideas from which the Agrarian Party had drawn its strength. The KSČ, having previously argued that nationalisations could help reverse the steady trend against agriculture in price changes in the inter-war period<sup>67</sup>, felt obliged later to advocate and press for actual price changes to give this promise some credibility<sup>68</sup>. The second way<sup>in</sup> which nationalisations could help was by directing production towards the mechanisation of agriculture<sup>69</sup>, but that was still a few years away.

It is clear from this discussion of agriculture both that the KSČ had a greater share than any other party in deciding on policies and that there was no definite policy of restricting private enterprise. This latter conclusion applies even more clearly to the urban small businessman, the "živnostník". The numbers of small businesses

<sup>65</sup> e.g. J. Krblich: Stará a nová zemědělská politika, Praha, 1946, and A. Volavka: Zásady nové cenové politiky v zemědělství, Praha, 1946.

<sup>66</sup> Hospodář, 25/7/46.

<sup>67</sup> RP 8/9/45, p.3.

<sup>68</sup> e.g. Rolnické hlasy, 13/4/47, p.1.

<sup>69</sup> Nepomucký, Sněm, p.143.

increased enormously after liberation as German businesses were given to Czechs and other Czechs sought more agreeable employment than the industries in which they had been working. This process was presented as being "part of our national revolution"<sup>70</sup>, but even the firmest supporters of private enterprise began to advocate restrictions when there were 90,000 small businesses in Prague alone with an average of 600 requests per day to establish new ones<sup>71</sup>.

Despite the contribution the KSČ was making to agricultural policy, they could not create a powerful peasants' union and instead found themselves bogged down in lengthy arguments over its nature and purpose - Ďuriš soon started work on it<sup>72</sup> and representatives of the four Czech parties quickly dissolved the old representative bodies and established a preparatory committee for the JSCZ (United Union of Czech Farmers) on a parity basis<sup>73</sup>. Over the following months an organisational structure was created at local congresses. 34% of the delegates were KSČ and, together with the Social Democrats, there was a narrow majority over the other two parties<sup>74</sup>. This balance of forces itself created a problem because the union easily became the arena for battles between parties. This was accentuated by unanswered questions and disputes on whether it should have voluntary or universal membership and how its committees should be elected. There were also fears from the left that it could be developed into an actual

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<sup>70</sup> RP 24/7/45, p.3.

<sup>71</sup> Svobodný zítěk, 27/9/45, p.9.

<sup>72</sup> RP 30/5/45, p.1.

<sup>73</sup> Jech: Probuzená, p.35-36.

<sup>74</sup> Jech: Probuzená, p.201-202.



peasant party like the former Agrarian Party<sup>75</sup>. In short, it was impossible to agree on what a common peasant interest was so that, unlike the trade unions, the peasants' union was not a significant political or social force.

III.16.5. Monetary reform and other financial changes confirm the important role of the government within the economy.

The last economic measure to be discussed within this chapter is the stabilisation of the monetary system and adjustment of the price and wage level. The need for far-reaching measures stemmed from the methods used during the occupation. Wages were high enough to create surplus purchasing power but finances were divorced from the actual functioning of the economy which was based on direct controls and rationing. This meant both that relative wages were not always in harmony with the desired or rational allocation of labour between sectors and that immense personal savings had been accumulated.

This latter problem could be seen in the growth of bank notes and small currency, which increased almost nine-fold over the Protectorate's territory, and in a huge increase in current and deposit accounts<sup>76</sup>. Gottwald expressed the problem as a 50% drop in production with a 300% rise in financial capital<sup>77</sup>. The imbalance

<sup>75</sup>Jech: Probuzení, p.247.

<sup>76</sup>V. Kadlec: Přebytek kupní síly a jeho odstranění, Praha, 1945, p.8 and p.298-299.

<sup>77</sup>In a speech on 2/11/45, Spisy, XII, p.183.

had to be corrected before greater reliance could be placed on the market mechanism without leading to inflationary chaos. The most important measure was a freezing of savings combined with the introduction of a new united currency for the whole Czechoslovak territory. Each individual was only allowed to change a certain amount of the old for new currency while the difference went into frozen assets. The economic importance of this can be seen from figures for 31/12/45 showing circulating currency as 30,384 million Kčs, assets in financial institutions as 57,399 million Kčs and frozen assets as 257,815 million Kčs<sup>78</sup>. Sometimes these <sup>could</sup> be gains made by sharp businessmen who had profited from the war, but there were many more people who were affected because they had at least some savings: there were therefore continual calls for the freeing of savings at least for those suffering particular hardships. Those peasants who had responded to calls to fulfill their quota obligations had a special grievance as the money they had received in return was suddenly devalued. The government therefore had to accept certain emergency measures to help them<sup>79</sup>.

Less sweeping was a heavy tax on property increases during the war which, in line with the KSČ proposal, was highly progressive and confiscated all gains above a certain level<sup>80</sup>. Wage and price adjustments, however, had very broad effects. Their aim was to reach an approximate balance and overcome the most extreme inter-

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<sup>78</sup> Statistická příručka, p.79,80 and p.81.

<sup>79</sup> RP 2/12/45.

<sup>80</sup> See Gottwald's speech at the Central Committee meeting of 18/12/45 in Spisy, XII, p.212 and Nepomucký's speech at the Eighth Congress, Sněm, p.141.

sectoral anomalies so that administrative controls could be relaxed. The hope was that it all could be done in one go with approximately a 300% rise in the wage and price levels. At the same time there were larger rises for the poorest and the elimination of a whole number of inequalities created during the occupation<sup>81</sup>.

The changes were implemented in December 1945 and soon plenty of anomalies were being pointed out. It was estimated that 48% of workers actually suffered a decline in their real wages<sup>82</sup>. There was plenty of scope for discontent at the new wage and price system over the following years from several sections of society.

### III.16.6. Summary and discussion.

The nationalisation of industry confirmed that, for the long-term future, there was to be a big role in the economy for conscious intervention by the government. At the same time, the KSČ was winning positions for itself at many different levels in the economy. That raises the question of whether they wanted power just for its own sake or whether they had a conception of economic activity within which such an organised party could play a positive role.

Evidently, the KSČ believed that political involvement could help raise labour morale and encourage good relations between different grades of employees as the basis for co-operation in raising productivity. There was also believed to be a role for it

<sup>81</sup> Fierlinger broadcast, quoted in RP 17/11/45, p.1-2.

<sup>82</sup> O. Mrázek: Jak zvýšit životní úroveň pracujících, Praha, 1947, p.6.

campaigning methods, such as socialist competition and the Stakhanovite movement, to raise productivity.

Some of these measures could have been temporary expedients to overcome particular economic problems. Generally, however, the KSC believed themselves to be creating a new economic mechanism which was to be superior to capitalism and which was to depend greatly on conscious political intervention.

This applied particularly in large-scale, nationalised industries which, of course, were only one part of the economy. Even there it was not counterposed to the importance of specialists. Nor did it rule out more traditional economic mechanisms but was rather seen as a complement to them.

Thus monetary and price changes were aimed at restoring an approximate equilibrium such that more reliance could be placed on market relations in the functioning of the economy. In agriculture there were purchase-price changes aimed both to provide some economic incentive for peasants to increase their sales and to encourage this by generally ensuring the political loyalty of the mass of peasants to the new government.

All these price changes demonstrate an extremely important element in the new relationship between the supreme bodies of political power and economic questions. Wages, prices and incomes were all subject, in theory at least, to government control. That meant that the government was taking responsibility for questions that could once have been attributed to impersonal market forces. That had important implications.

## CHAPTER 17: THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE NATIONAL REVOLUTION.

This chapter is intended to bring together general aspects of the revolutionary changes discussed in the preceding chapters and to show how the four Czech parties evolved against that background. So, in a sense it<sup>is</sup> both a summary of the first half of Part III and an introduction to the second half in which the parties are discussed individually.

### III.17.1. The general structure of Czech society following the revolutionary changes of 1945.

The chosen starting point for an investigation of how socio-economic changes related to changes in political power is the breakdown of Czech society into social groups as perceived at the time, i.e. into workers, peasants, small businessmen, intellectuals and capitalists. The table below shows the breakdown for the economically active population. The first column indicates the maximum possible figures for the working class while in the second column this is sub-divided showing how small the most organised core of the working class was.

Although there was a strong feeling of, and desire for national unity there were also plenty of sources of conflict within this social structure. Inequalities, as represented by levels of income, were undoubtedly much smaller than in the Protectorate or the pre-Munich republic. This, however, did not mean that questions related to the distribution of income had ceased to be important. On the contrary, they were never far below the surface quite simply because the period was one of the utmost hardship.

Table 7: Approximate social composition of the active Czech<sup>1</sup> population in the 1945-1948 period in percentages.

Workers	53	
in nationalised industries		15
in private industries		10
others not included elsewhere		4
Peasants (with no other source of income)	12	
all those employed in agriculture		20
Small businesses	9	
all those employed in small businesses		25
Intelligentsia	19	
Foremen, non-manual employees in industry	9	26
TOTAL	100	100

One quarter of the population could not even afford to buy the goods allocated to them through the ration system<sup>2</sup>. There also seemed to have been an equalisation within society by means of its "petty-bourgeoisification", particularly as a consequence of the expropriation of Germans. This, however, did not lead to a homogenisation of political thinking. There was instead a definite differentiation between the "old" and the "new" petty bourgeoisies and similarly between those who had held high positions over many years and those who were newly promoted.

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<sup>1</sup>Calculated from Kaplan: Znárodnění, p.68-97, and Z. Deyl: "Naše cesta k socialismu a ekonomické problémy drobné buržoazie měst 1945-1948", Československý časopis historický, XIII, No.4, 1965, p.501.

<sup>2</sup>Kaplan: Znárodnění, p.75, quoting from Veřejné mínění 1947.

### III.17.2. Social differentiation and political attitudes in the Czech working class.

Of the individual social groups, the largest was the working class. In general they could see immediate benefits or promises of gain from measures that covered all working people such as the institution of equal pay for women, of allowances for children and in the promise of an adequate social insurance scheme. The lowest paid also benefited from wage increases<sup>3</sup>. There was some evidence of dissatisfaction from the more skilled workers at wage equalisation, but that did not lead them to general opposition to the revolutionary changes. The table below shows the changes in differentials among manual workers.

Table 8: Weekly earnings of manual workers in the Czech lands<sup>4</sup> differentiated by level of skill.

	March 1939		February 1946		November 1947	
All workers	186	100	574	308	816	438
Skilled	248	100	685	277	981	396
Semi-Skilled	172	100	574	333	799	464
Unskilled	140	100	431	307	648	462

The first column<sup>shows</sup> absolute weekly earnings in Kčs. The second shows the figures relative to the 1939 level.

There were further important differences within the working

<sup>3</sup> See Gottwald's speech of 13/4/47, K. Gottwald: Spisy, Vol. XIII, Praha, 1957, p.393.

<sup>4</sup> Statistický zpravodaj, XI, No.5, May 1948, p.192.

class and, as Table 7 indicates, only a minority were employed in nationalised enterprises. They were the most politically involved having actively pressed for nationalisations and then having gained most from the increased power of their own representative organs. They were likely to be well organised in trade unions or even political parties. They could identify most completely with the revolution as a whole, which seemed in no way to threaten them. At the other pole were workers dispersed in very small enterprises, typically in agriculture, distribution or services, and even workers who worked in their own homes. These were largely women, who made up about one third of all workers, and active political involvement was for them far more difficult. Between these two extremes were the large numbers employed in private industrial enterprises. This roughly coincided with the numbers working in units employing under 250. The table below shows this aspect of the differentiation of industrial workers.

Table 9: Industrial workers broken down by size of factory<sup>5</sup>.

Size of factory by number of employees	Total number of employees	Number of employees as percentage of all employed in industry	Number of employees as percentage of total, economically active population
0-20	81000	8,1	2,3
21-50	96597	10,1	2,7 12,3
51-100	101180	10,6	2,9
101-250	155345	16,2	4,4
251-500	116204	12,1	3,3
501-1000	102325	10,7	2,9 14,9
1001-2500	145218	15,2	4,1
over 2500	163100	17,0	4,6
TOTAL	960969	100,0	27,1

<sup>5</sup>Funkcionář, 21/1/47, p.3.



Although even those in the smallest enterprises generally had common interests with those workers in larger, nationalised enterprises, their perception of how they had gained or could gain in comparison with the pre-Munich republic was different. This led to a different attitude towards active involvement in politics.

Miners, working in a well-organised, nationalised industry where wages were centrally decided and controlled, expected their social advancement to be supported by the government. They made clear very quickly that they could see no reason why those with civil service status should have a privileged position compared with themselves<sup>6</sup>. Miners were given the highest hourly pay but, even though recognising that they were much better off than before, they still felt they were being over-looked. They hoped for future changes after which they would be "valued at their worth"<sup>7</sup>. They were then given the relative privilege of an insurance scheme before the rest of the population<sup>8</sup>.

These centrally administered privileges were to a great extent forced by the market situation as the government was acutely aware of the labour shortage in mining. Similarly, the egalitarianism expressed in money wage rises for unskilled work was largely a

<sup>6</sup> See T. Svatopluk's report on his conversations with miners in Kladno, Tvorba, 19/9/45, p.136.

<sup>7</sup> J. Hejna, Jiskra, 14/12/46, p.2.

<sup>8</sup> This was at a government meeting on 17/1/47 and agreed to by parliament in March; RP 18/1/47, p.1 and RP 7/3/47.

response to the shortage of unskilled labour<sup>9</sup>.

Nevertheless, as Table 10 shows, building workers could almost catch up with miners' hourly rate of pay although their industry was largely privately owned and fragmented into numerous small firms. Owing to the labour shortage, employers were paying them "black" wages which were steadily rising irrespective of government policies<sup>10</sup>.

Table 10: Hourly wage rates in Kčs for the Czech lands in<sup>11</sup>  
selected industries.

	March 1939		1945		1946		1947	
All industry	3,45	100	6,28	182,0	10,49	304,1	10,81	313,8
Producers' goods	3,61	100	6,55	181,4	10,77	298,3	11,00	304,7
Consumers' goods	2,94	100	5,47	186,1	9,82	327,2	10,24	348,3
Mining	4,21	100	7,76	184,3	13,31	316,2	13,31	316,2
Engineering	3,59	100	6,54	182,2	10,70	298,1	10,70	298,1
Construction	3,81	100	7,35	192,9	10,75	282,2	12,55	329,4
Textiles	2,56	100	5,42	211,7	9,54	372,7	10,68	417,2
Graphics	4,94	100	7,13	144,3	10,83	219,2	10,83	219,2

The first column shows absolute figures while the second is based on March 1939 as 100.

The KSČ naturally favoured the apparent social responsibility of the miners' situation. Zápotocký even referred to workers in

<sup>9</sup> G. Kliment, RP 30/8/45, p.1. It was well known that wage differentials were much less in Czechoslovakia than in the USSR; Frejka, SSSR dnes, Praha, 1946, p.51.

<sup>10</sup> This could also happen in some nationalised industries; Mrázek, Nové hospodářství, III, No.2, February 1947, p.23.

<sup>11</sup> Statistický zpravodaj, XI, No.3, March 1948, p.104.

private industry sometimes being "bought off" by their employers. By this he meant not that they were siding politically with capitalists, but that their Factory Councils were not using the full powers that they were given by law. They were happy to settle for wage increases and leave questions of production to the employers<sup>12</sup>. In this way they were implicitly happy to set their own sectional interests against those of the nation as a whole.

Thus it was in the large, nationalised enterprises that identification with the revolution and the KSČ was most active. There were sources of distrust towards the party even there<sup>13</sup>, and one was the continued existence of large inequalities even within their own enterprises. Many KSČ members argued that managers who had joined the party should not have higher pay than workers and that such differentials could only be justified as a necessary compromise to win the co-operation of specialists who were politically hostile<sup>14</sup>. This argument was rejected on the grounds that payment should be higher for more specialist work<sup>15</sup>.

At the very top were an extremely small number of individuals whose salaries had been agreed to somehow in secret<sup>16</sup>. Figures

<sup>12</sup> e.g. at the ÚRO plenum of 13/12/46, A. Zápotocký: Nová odborová politika Praha, 1948, p.468. Zápotocký's statement evidently indicated a change in policy, see above p.100.

<sup>13</sup> See below Chapter 27.

<sup>14</sup> e.g. the letter from a worker in Ostrava, Funkcionář, 10/12/46, p.30-32. The issue was raised repeatedly, to judge from Gottwald's comments at the Central Committee meeting of 25/9/46; RP 26/9/46, p.1.

<sup>15</sup> See above p.103.

<sup>16</sup> Svět práce, 8/5/47, p.5.

were published later showing an annual salary of 500000Kčs for the director of the Vítkovice iron works<sup>17</sup> and of 800000Kčs for the KSČ member who headed the mining industry<sup>18</sup>. Provision had been made for high monthly salaries for National Administrators reaching a maximum of 15000Kčs for those in charge of factories employing over 5000<sup>19</sup>. Evidently, after nationalisations even those levels could be comfortably exceeded. In fact, top managers were paid more than government ministers. The Prime Ministers' annual salary was 120000Kčs, and with all possible perks he faced a ceiling of 340000Kčs<sup>20</sup>.

The number of individuals receiving these really high salaries was extremely small<sup>21</sup>, and there were, of course, still wealthy capitalists. Nevertheless, it was an obvious source of tension and perhaps even disillusionment that there was not more egalitarianism within the nationalised industries.

### III.17.3. Social differentiation and political attitudes in the Czech countryside.

In agriculture there were important social changes brought about by the land reform and by the new price policy. The former

<sup>17</sup> Zápotocký at the ÚRO plenum of 13/12/46, reproduced in Zápotocký: Nová, p.472.

<sup>18</sup> Život strany, 27/10/47, p.7-8.

<sup>19</sup> PL 15/8/45, p.3. This was before the wage and price adjustments.

<sup>20</sup> Decree No.57/1945 of 22/8/45, Sbírka zákonů a nařízení, 1945, p.97.

<sup>21</sup> For further details, see J. Maňák: "K problematice struktury a postavení československé inteligence v letech 1945-1953", Revue dějin socialismu, 1968, zvláštní číslo, p.1007.

was the most important and led to a certain equalisation of land holdings. Taken overall the changes, as shown in the table below, do not look particularly dramatic.

Table 11: Agricultural enterprises in Czechoslovakia by size group<sup>22</sup>.

Size of land holding (agricultural land only)	Number of enterprises as a percentage of the total		Area of agricultural land as a percentage of the total	
	1930	1949	1930	1949
to 2 ha	44,2	46,1	6,7	6,9
2 - 5 ha	26,3	23,3	16,3	15,8
5 - 20 ha	24,8	27,5	41,9	51,0
20 - 50 ha	3,7	2,3	16,5	10,6
over 50 ha	1,0	0,8	18,6	15,7
TOTAL	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

The increase in land held by the so called "middle" peasants, those with 5-20 ha, was largely due to settling the frontier zones which contained over one quarter of Czech agricultural land. The pre-war pattern of land-holding there, particularly among Germans, was less egalitarian than in the Czech lands generally<sup>23</sup>.

The real beneficiaries were poor or landless peasants who could join the ranks of the middle peasants. Their commitment to the new regime, and to the KSČ which so firmly argued for giving them definite ownership rights over the land, was likely to be extremely

<sup>22</sup> Stručný, p.550.

<sup>23</sup> For figures, see Stejskal, Statistický zpravodaj, XI, No.3, March 1946, p.71.

strong: it had given them everything. The typical middle peasant in the interior was unlikely to have so clear-cut a political position. In one sense the land reform was a blow to him as it accentuated the labour shortage in agriculture. Even enormous wage increases, awarded by the government in December 1945, still left agricultural workers far worse paid than those in industry. There was therefore a consistent trend, in the full employment conditions of the occupation and again after liberation, to seek work in the towns<sup>24</sup>. The number of agricultural workers therefore dropped from 45,5% in 1930 to 30,4% in 1947 of those active in agriculture<sup>25</sup>.

There were even some rich Czech peasants who had, in a sense, lost from the liberation. Nearly one fifth had to pay a tax on gains in property made during the occupation<sup>26</sup>. These richer peasants could also object to the new price system and could fear a further, egalitarian land reform. Poorer peasants could take an opposite view of the revolutionary changes, but they could also agree with their richer neighbours on the issue of the price scissors. The table below shows how these were still moving against agricultural products, although the disparity for animal products was decreasing.

directly involved in politics and their attitudes remained unclear.

<sup>24</sup> Jech: Probuzení, p.143-145.

<sup>25</sup> Kaplan: Znárodnění, p.70.

<sup>26</sup> Kaplan: Znárodnění, p.79.

Table 12: Prices of agricultural products relative to prices<sup>27</sup>  
of agricultural means of production.

Year	Vegetable products	Animal products	Total	Means of production	Disparity as a %
1913-1914	100	100	100	100	0
1925	969	814	889	897	1
1930	576	736	658	903	37
1935	652	515	580	778	34
1940	870	919	896	1122	25
1943	1071	1033	1058	1381	31
1945	1127	1070	1113	1450	30
1946	1764	2247	2016	2913	44
1946	1539	2247	1911	2908	52

The first figure for 1946 refers to prices before the adjustments  
i.e. the selling prices of autumn 1945.

Generally, the poor and middle peasants in the Czech interior were less directly affected by the revolutionary changes than were other social groups. They were less likely to feel themselves directly involved in politics and their attitudes remained unclear up to, and even after the 1946 elections. Political differentiation within the villages was not around a single issue, such as land reform, but seems to have been more complex and confused. One important element in this was the relationship to industrial workers which could bring many peasants closer to the KSČ

<sup>27</sup>Hospodář 25/7/46, p.3.

conception of national unity. There was plenty of scope for mutual distrust because of the price scissors and the food shortages in towns. They were, however, brought closer together by the general feeling of national unity and then also by particular features of Czech society. Villages were often geographically close to industrial towns and many industrial workers still lived in villages often owning a little land. The boundary between town and country was therefore often blurred<sup>28</sup>.

#### III.17.4. The nervousness of the urban petty bourgeoisie at the state's role in the economy.

The urban petty bourgeoisie was internally a very diverse group. Small businesses were economically important in some fields of handicraft production, in trade, distribution and services.

Occasionally outside labour was employed, but in most cases "workers" were no more than members of the owner's family.

Small businessmen could respond to the revolutionary changes in a contradictory way - favouring some measures while opposing others - but their existence did not seem to be immediately threatened. In fact, their numbers increased dramatically after liberation<sup>29</sup>. Nevertheless, they had grounds for dissatisfaction in the shortages of labour and raw materials<sup>30</sup>. Some could still make enormous profits out of the transition back to civilian production<sup>31</sup> as demand was enormous.

<sup>28</sup> Kaplan: Znárodnění, p.65

<sup>29</sup> See above p.113.

<sup>30</sup> Deyl: "Naše", p.503.

<sup>31</sup> Deyl: "Naše", p.504.



The difficulties of their economic situation could be translated into reservations about the new regime. The nationalised industries could appear to be specially favoured in the allocation of labour and raw materials reinforcing the feeling that nationalisations themselves could prelude the elimination of private enterprise. Such nervousness was linked with doubts about the justifiability of banning their party and was reflected in an unwillingness by small businessmen to invest in improving their own businesses<sup>32</sup>.

Relations with workers were another important element in the clarification of their political position. Tension could stem from black marketeering which was apparently a source of income for roughly half of all small businesses<sup>33</sup>. Workers, however, could barely afford the high prices demanded<sup>34</sup>.

III.17.5. The social and political differentiation within the intelligentsia and the discontent felt by many office workers.

The intelligentsia was a very diverse social group. Particularly the "creative" intelligentsia - writers, poets etc. - tended to commit themselves firmly to the idea of revolution. To some extent this was a natural consequence of their war-time experiences as it could never be forgotten that the Nazis had aimed to destroy the Czech intelligentsia. Even before that, many had

<sup>32</sup> Kaplan: Znárodnění, p.88-90.

<sup>33</sup> Kaplan: Znárodnění, p.89.

<sup>34</sup> See below Vol.III, p. for a discussion of black market prices.

identified with the KSČ and, with that party's greater willingness to accept some degree of diversity within its own ranks, they seemed able to take a more definite place of honour within the KSČ.

Within the broad category of the intelligentsia, there were also the small number of individuals who had <sup>held</sup> senior posts but had been purged after liberation. They were naturally opposed to these aspects of the revolutionary changes, but even they were not representative of the whole intelligentsia.

The basis for really widespread reservations was in the egalitarianism of the new regime. This issue was felt most strongly by office workers in routine administrative work. Numerically they grew rapidly to become a significant social force. In 1900 they constituted only 3½% of the economically active population in the Czech lands, rising to 8% in 1930 and 17% in 1947<sup>35</sup>. Some of these were firmly committed to the new regime but office workers as a whole were the major source of really widespread discontent. In May 1946 no less than 78,3% suggested dissatisfaction with the government<sup>36</sup>. There can be no doubt that this discontent stemmed from real hardship with almost all having suffered from pay adjustments during and after the occupation to make them, in absolute terms, worse off than before the war<sup>37</sup>. There was differentiation within this as a pay adjustment, for that large section of office workers with civil service status, shortly after liberation had

<sup>35</sup> J. Maňák: "Početnost a struktura české inteligence v letech 1945-1948", Sociologický časopis, 1967, No.4, p.400.

<sup>36</sup> Kaplan: Znárodnění, p.93, quoting Veřejné mínění, 1946.

<sup>37</sup> Kaplan: Znárodnění, p.95.

been strongly egalitarian and helped the lowest paid most. Ways were also specified for claiming compensation for losses individuals may have suffered from persecution for political activities during the occupation<sup>38</sup>. So particularly the older civil servants who had remained in office during the occupation were likely to be negative towards the regime with fears further aroused by the prospect of another purge<sup>39</sup>. Among the newer recruits there could be a greater degree of support for the government.

Pressure from office workers and from skilled manual workers did lead to a conscious attempt to correct some of the equalisation trend. This, however, was only effective in industry where the "technical intelligentsia" was generally better paid and enjoyed bigger pay differentials within its own ranks<sup>40</sup>. Moreover, reversal of the general trend was only short-lived<sup>41</sup>.

### III.17.6. The weakness of the bourgeoisie.

Capitalists were a likely source of opposition to the regime, but in numerical terms they were very weak. One generous estimate put the numbers of owners of nationalised and private factories and other enterprises at 80000<sup>42</sup>. In their social position and attitude towards the revolution there is no need to draw any

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<sup>38</sup> Decrees No.53/1945 and 58/1945 of 17/8/45 and 20/8/45 respectively, Sbírka zákonů a nařízení, 1945, p.88-92 and p.98.

<sup>39</sup> Belda, et al: Na rozhraní, p.52.

<sup>40</sup> Kaplan: Znárodnění, p.96.

<sup>41</sup> Maňák: "Problematika", p.532-533.

<sup>42</sup> Bouček, Klimeš: Dramatické, p.28

distinction between actual owners of capital who had been expropriated and those managers who had been purged. All had lost immensely. Those who had been spared during the nationalisations were likely to be highly nervous about the course of developments. On their own, though, they were politically weak and non-vocal. They were left with very little power even in the economy as they were dependent on nationalised industries and nationalised banks and could also feel themselves threatened and restricted by Factory Councils wielding powers guaranteed by law.

III.17.7. The political differentiation of Czech society and the problem of defining the new political power structure.

It is evident from this summary of the social consequences of the revolutionary changes that there was considerable scope still, on this basis alone, for differentiation of political attitudes within Czech society. The firmest commitment could be expected among workers in nationalised industries and peasants in frontier zones, but they both still had grounds for discontent. Outright hostility was likely only from a small minority while there was a large area in between in which many could feel reservations about certain revolutionary changes. There were also many who were in no way threatened by the revolution but were not actively involved in it either: this applied to much of the working class.

Surveys of public opinion, although still at an experimental stage and therefore not to be taken too exactly, revealed this gradual differentiation. It was quite unmistakable that approval ran in a descending scale from readers of the Communist press through readers of Social Democrat, National Socialist and the

Peoples' Party's papers. For the general question of satisfaction with the government the figures, from a survey in May 1946, were 95%, 89%, 73% and 67% respectively giving an overall figure of 81,6%<sup>43</sup>. When questioned in March 1946 on National Committees, 72% of Communist supporters thought they were better than previous local councils compared with figures of 40% and 45% for Peoples' Party and National Socialist supporters.<sup>44</sup>

Support for political parties can be related to social class by the approximate breakdown for the membership of the individual parties in the table below: unfortunately, the Peoples' Party did not keep accurate enough records so that the comparison is restricted to the other three Czech parties.

Table 13: Membership of Czech political parties by social group.<sup>45</sup>

	Date for which figures apply	Workers	Office workers	Peasants	Intelligentsia	Small business men
All parties		780	275	296		230
Communist	March 1946	577	92	129		41
National Socialist	April 1946	100	123	89,5		143
Social Democrat	mid - 1946	120	60	77,6		46

Figures are in thousands.

<sup>43</sup> What is Your Opinion?, Prague, 1947, p.14.

<sup>44</sup> What is Your Opinion?, p.11.

<sup>45</sup> Kaplan: Znárodnění, p.111 and p.110.

Evidently, no party was restricted to one particular social group, but there were marked differences in social composition. Small businessmen seem to have been particularly willing to join parties and generally opted for the National Socialists where they constituted the largest single group. The intelligentsia showed something of the same tendency, but this time National Socialists were outnumbered by the other two parties. Also striking was the tendency for workers to join the KSČ. They constituted, in March 1946, almost 70% of the party's membership or, to put it the other way round, almost 75% of workers who joined any party joined the KSČ.

It would nevertheless be absurd to try to reduce the revolutionary changes to simplistic terms, such as one class taking power from another. Such a formulation would not describe or summarise the actual concrete changes within organs of power for, although the working class did benefit greatly from the revolution, they still generally received the lowest incomes and individual workers were not greatly involved beyond their own work-places. In National Committees, for example, at the Regional and District levels, only 10% were workers while 57,5% were from the intelligentsia. At the District level only 16,6% of KSČ representatives were workers and the figure was much lower for other parties<sup>46</sup>. Even in such a revolutionary centre as Kladno the first National Committee, with 39 members, was dominated by professional people and contained only

<sup>46</sup>Bertelmann: Vývoj, p.181-182.

six workers<sup>47</sup>. Evidently, irrespective of its very real power within its own factories, the working class did not dominate directly power in the state as a whole.

As society was complex and diversified, it was possible for workers' organs to wield great power without making any direct difference to much of the Czech population. This could be confirmed by a survey on attitudes towards Factory Councils. 48% thought they were a step forward while 13% did not. When broken down further 77% of those well informed felt they were a step forward while 16% did not. So, more striking than outright opposition was ignorance and indifference<sup>48</sup>. The attitudes towards voluntary brigades revealed a similar sort of differentiation<sup>49</sup>.

Even if it is clear that the former power of big business had been destroyed, that does not mean that the new social formation can simply be defined as a negation of the old. Public ownership, for political and legal reasons, is not identical to genuine social ownership<sup>50</sup>. It is necessary to look more carefully at the actual mechanisms of power that replaced the former relationships.

From the discussion in the preceding chapters of the revolutionary changes it should be clear that a central place in the construction of new power structures - and in the life of society generally -

<sup>47</sup> Průběh národní, p.11-12.

<sup>48</sup> What is Your Opinion?, p.33.

<sup>49</sup> What is Your Opinion?, p.29

<sup>50</sup> c.f. W. Brus: The Economics and Politics of Socialism, London, 1973, p.89.

was being taken by the four political parties. Their presence could be felt everywhere, at every level, as they grew steadily in size until about 40% of the adult population had joined parties.

### III.17.8. Possible starting points for the analysis of Czech political parties.

A considerable amount can be learnt from works, both Marxist and non-Marxist, on the general nature and role of political parties. Unfortunately, none can provide a complete framework applicable exactly to the Czech situation. The simplest Marxist approaches, discussing parties in relation to society generally, present parties as simple representatives of class interests. This can be made more sophisticated in various ways, but very few, Brus being one of them, have confronted in a serious way the general problems that arise after the destruction of capitalist relationships. The scope of this analysis is greatly expanded as to require major modifications of concepts that were developed to analyse societies in which Marxists were in opposition.

Much of standard Western theory suffers from weaknesses which, in a sense, are analogous. Typically it gives parties a very limited role restricted within a "political system". Their role then is purely interest aggregation and articulation<sup>51</sup>, within an essentially stable and unchanging society. Scope is allowed for extensive changes in the system from changes in peoples' attitudes. These are lumped together within an ill-defined concept of

<sup>51</sup> Almond, Powell: Comparative, p.102.



"political culture"<sup>52</sup>. The inadequacy of this approach for our present purposes should be obvious. Although the political system can be changed<sup>53</sup> it remains essentially separate - a "system" - and no scope is given within the analytic framework for how it might change all those other relationships that are lumped into political culture. This thereby overlooks the most basic feature of post-war Czech politics: it was already the case that, as Brus wrote of society in Eastern Europe a few years later, "the political aspect" must be considered "as an integral element of the analysis of the economic system"<sup>54</sup>. The two had become inseparable.

One aspect of the role of parties was still the aggregation and articulation of interests, but that must be set within a wider context. Moreover, it must be considered in relation to the internal workings of parties. The starting point for a discussion of this remains Michel's classic work<sup>55</sup>. He argued that, despite formally democratic structures, parties were essentially oligarchic because their leaders knew how to control the membership. It certainly was a remarkable feature of Czech parties that, despite their immense sizes, their leaders were hardly challenged at all

<sup>52</sup> For an interpretation of this term, see Almond, Powell: Comparative, esp. p.23-24 and p.50-51.

<sup>53</sup> c.f. Almond, Powell: Comparative, p.34-35.

<sup>54</sup> W. Brus: Socialist Ownership and Political Systems, London, 1975, p.2. See also Brus: The Economics, p.89.

<sup>55</sup> R. Michels: Political Parties, a Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy, London, 1915.

from within and seemed to enjoy, as Michels argued, "unlimited power"<sup>56</sup>. Their position was very strong as they all returned to Prague with the Košice government and the fact of competition between them was certainly a disincentive to internal criticisms. Nevertheless, Michel's view is, in a number of respects, too pessimistic. In the first place, although no party had a perfect internal democracy, that does not mean that the leaders could ignore the views of their members. They had to make a conscious, political effort to retain control over and unity within their parties. Moreover, the way in which they responded to various attitudes and opinions within society was an important question for their own growth and for political life generally. Secondly, to concentrate only on parties' lack of internal democracy underestimates the wider contribution they can make within society: it implies that their role is no more than the articulation of pre-existing interests. Thirdly, and this follows from the other two points, Michels grossly over-states his case when implying that a multi-party system is in no way beneficial: "There is little difference, as far as practical results are concerned, between individual dictatorship and the dictatorship of a group of oligarchs"<sup>57</sup>. It had very important implications that several parties competed with each other for popularity and for control over the organs of power and over representative bodies.

The particular sort of multi-party "system" that developed in

<sup>56</sup> Michels: Political, p.174.

<sup>57</sup> Michels: Political, p.401.

Czechoslovakia differed in important respects from the effectively one-party structure that emerged after February 1948. As all important measures had to be discussed within the National Front, parliament and the government, it meant that policy decisions had at least to some extent to be explained to the general public. Moreover, the existence of newspapers with different viewpoints, meant that, even if they at times did subordinate objectivity to propaganda, they had to be prepared to answer each others' criticisms. The conditions within, and social roles of, mass organisations and representative bodies were also affected by the existence of a plurality of parties. Last, but undoubtedly not least important, it affected conditions inside parties. In no case could the leadership eliminate all diversity within its ranks, because of the need to compete with other parties.

### III.17.9. An explanation for the growth of Czech parties in terms of their expanded role in society.

This competition undoubtedly encouraged the general growth of the Czech parties - and forced their leaderships to find ways to encourage it further - but it cannot alone explain their immense sizes or their dominance within political life. That can only be understood with reference to the greatly expanded role they were playing. They decided government policies and the government in turn visibly and openly decided on issues which had once been dominated by capitalists, managers or seemingly uncontrollable market forces.

So one major reason for such a strong tendency for individuals to identify with political parties was that the latter seemed to have

the power to decide over basic and important questions at the all-state level. They similarly dominated local organs and even, although to a lesser extent, representative bodies such as Factory Councils.

The power of the parties encouraged people to join for wholly or partly careeristic reasons. Particularly in those structures that had been most affected by revolution any changes and the purge, joining a party could greatly enhance an individual's promotion prospects by providing friends in high places. The KSC had taken the initiative in this wherever it could, but the other parties could also wield an influence by demanding some balance in political appointments. Figures for the situation in industry and in the trade unions have already been given<sup>58</sup>. The table below shows the position of the KSC within selected ministries before February 1948. Evidently, even at that time, they were not completely dominant anywhere, but party membership was very high in ministries most directly concerned with political power. Unfortunately, figures for the other parties are not available. Nevertheless, the sharp politicisation of appointments is clearly indicated.

<sup>58</sup> See above p.87-88 and p.72-73.

Table 14: The position of the KSČ within selected government ministries immediately prior to the events of February 1948<sup>59</sup>.

Ministry	Total number of leading positions	Total number held by the KSČ	KSČ as % of all leading positions
Defence	35	12	33,0
Foreign Affairs	135	7	5,2
Foreign Trade	82	14	17,0
Interior	96	49	51,0
Justice	376	26	6,9
Information	68	31	45,5
Posts	2777	15	0,5
Social Security	143	29	20,2
Education	105	19	18,0

The domination by parties of both elected and non-elected posts, which evidently extended way below the highest levels, was often referred to as a very regrettable feature of post-war life<sup>60</sup>. It had been present in the pre-Munich republic but was even more marked from 1945 onwards. Individuals must have seen the benefits from forgetting their reservations and committing themselves firmly as members, rather than just voters or supporters, to one or other of the parties. This, however, cannot fully explain the growth of

<sup>59</sup> J. Žižka: "Únorová politická krise a státní aparát lidové demokracie", Československý časopis historický, XXI, No.5, 1973, p.664.

<sup>60</sup> e.g. "V.G.", Dnešek 4/7/46, p.227. Ministries were often referred to as power bases for the political parties; e.g. J.L. Fischer, Svobodné noviny, 28/12/46, p.1.

the parties as it too was a consequence of the fact that they already dominated within the supreme positions of power. It would have been theoretically possible for other organs - for example, Factory Councils or National Committees - to dominate over parties meaning, in practical terms, that the latter would have been less monolithic.

Parties, however, had a different role from purely representative organs, because they presented themselves with definite conceptions of society and of social development. Either explicitly or implicitly they had programmes for how, in broad outline, society should be organised and developed. Thus a Factory Council could have a place within a party's conception of democracy, but the converse was not the case. Moreover, it was inherent in the revolutionary changes that problems like the role of Factory councils had to be confronted and solved.

Parties were also, of necessity, the only bodies able to present solutions on international questions and foreign policy. The whole of Czechoslovakia's preceding history left no doubt that conscious political involvement in these sort of questions could have a major impact on peoples' everyday lives. Simple involvement in controlling the immediate aspects of life, by means of the new local institutions of democracy was, in all probability, at most a means to ensure the most basic aim of preventing a repetition of the stark tragedies of the past.

III.17.10. The starting point for a concrete discussion of how individual Czech parties perceived and developed their roles in society.

This section is intended as an introduction to the following chapters which discuss the Czech parties individually. They have to

be viewed in all their complexity, including the interests they represented, the tactics their leaderships' pursued and the mechanism whereby policies were formulated. Nevertheless, the central theme is the usefulness of their policies for taking Czech society further along the direction it had taken. There seemed to be real possibilities for a comparatively harmonious development of society towards a new, socialist social order. The revolutionary changes of 1945, the continuing broad national unity and the paralysis of outright opposition suggest that a road to socialism might have been found avoiding the disastrously dictatorial practices that developed during and after 1948. That, however, depended on the ability of the parties, as the leading force in Czech society, to overcome the likely concrete obstacles to such a road.

In the preceding section it was concluded that the numerical size of Czech political parties was a consequence of their expanded role within society which stemmed from the conscious and wide-ranging nature of the revolutionary changes. This role developed in practice rather than being the conscious application of one single conception. It, in fact, did not correspond exactly to the ideas of any of the parties. Clearly, conceptions that restricted the activities of parties within a political system, or that saw parties as representatives of classes concerned only with taking power, were both inadequate.

They were inadequate both as expressions of the reality of the role of parties, and as the basis for policies that could exploit to the full the possibilities of developing society further within the existing national unity. These inadequacies, and the ways in

which the parties developed ideas and policies that to various degrees overcame them, are the starting point for the discussion of individual parties in the following chapters.

All the parties had some sort of programmatic principles which enabled them to make a general assessment of the revolution, of society's development and of their role within it. The expanded role of parties was most directly welcomed by the KSČ who took the initiative by intervening in so much of social life, but they always justified this with arguments for the wider social significance of political interventions. The other parties could respond in basically three ways: they too could present arguments for the politicisation of these institutions, they could argue that parties had no business there, or they could simply try to win positions for themselves. In general, the KSČ was confronted only with the last two.

The power of parties, or of the elected bodies that they in practice dominated, had its opposites in the role of non-political specialists and in the supremacy of impersonal market relations. This first counter-position came to the forefront during the revolutionary changes. The KSČ, while giving the maximal interpretation of the possible role of parties, still recognised the existence of the need for a balance. They willingly recruited and aided the promotion of specialists who often had no outstanding political attributes, but who could thereby contribute to the KSČ's wider political conception of economic policy.

Even if parties did not believe themselves capable of solving all economic problems, they all had conceptions of economic and social activity such that they could formulate policies on concrete



problems such as the role of the market and related questions of the relationships between the private and public sectors and between the various social groups comprising society. The KSČ, irrespective of its past ideas and conception of socialism, had formulated a social policy which recognised the need for a conscious effort to cement national unity. No party directly rejected this, but there were elements in the practice of all parties that could serve to encourage divisions rather than unity in Czech society.

The most divisive issues of all stemmed from the parties' need to compete against each other. If the comparatively harmonious political atmosphere of the first revolutionary months was to be extended into the future, this competition had to take such a form as to allow for continued close co-operation. The greatly expanded social role particularly of the KSČ meant that all sorts of conflicts within society could be translated into conflicts between parties. Even if they did not use their positions of power directly against the other parties, it remained undeniable that they had enormous strength and that much of their practice suggested they were stretching broad national unity to the limit so as to strengthen their own individual position. As will be argued, this could encourage genuine doubts about the Communists' intentions. They could be accused of failing to overcome their former ideas that politics was essentially about themselves winning political power. Other parties, as will be argued this applied particularly to the National Socialists, encouraged divisions in various other ways.

### III.17.11 Summary and discussion.

The statistical and factual information included in this chapter shows something of the complexity and differentiation of Czech society during and after the revolutionary changes of 1945. There was an objective basis for a tendency towards division between those who generally supported the revolution as a whole and those who had degrees of doubt<sup>about</sup> aspects of the revolution.

The working class, despite its internal differentiation and the complexity of its attitude towards the developing social formation, tended to give firm support to the revolution. Politically it tended to identify with the Communist Party. Those with the most grounds for nervousness, especially small businessmen, were more likely to identify with the National Socialists. Outright opposition was not likely to gain a genuine mass following.

The nature of the developing social order, or of its political power structure, cannot be easily defined. It was still, even after 1945, in a flexible and formative state. Nevertheless, a central new aspect within it was the nature and role of the four political parties. The revolutionary changes gave them immense power and consequently presented them with a great challenge. There seemed to be a real chance for them to lead Czech society further along the socialist road while avoiding really sharp internal conflicts, but this required a conscious effort from them to confront and overcome the obstacles and likely sources of conflict along that road. The following chapters are concerned with how the various parties perceived and analysed Czech society so as to show how they confronted the tasks presented by the concrete situation.

The contrast with the 1918-1920 period is striking. In that period, although important reforms were instituted, changes throughout society were nowhere near so sweeping. Politics, as far as the Social Democrats were concerned, can be interpreted as revolving around their inability to challenge the dominant "state idea". They were therefore unable to win real power or influence.

In 1945 the old "state idea" had been demolished, but politics was not just a matter of creating a new one. The tasks confronting parties were far more demanding. They had acquired power over so much more of social life that they had to use their basic ideas to develop concrete policies on an enormous range of issues.

## CHAPTER 18: THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST PARTY.

### III.18.1. The National Socialists try cautiously to dissociate themselves from full support for all government policies.

The principal political rival to the KSČ was the National Socialist Party. They could claim a long history and a record of participation in most pre-Munich governments. They did not maintain an organisational structure throughout the war, but they grew quickly during 1945 around a leading group which had largely been created in emigration out of Beneš's closest associates. Ripka was the most articulate and began setting the party's line as soon as he returned from London<sup>1</sup>. Also prominent in the leadership were Zenkl and Krajina who had a record as a right-wing politician and then as a resistance leader before being imprisoned in January 1943.

In organisational terms the National Socialists were nothing like as strong as the KSČ and they had no consistent way of ensuring contacts between the highest and lowest levels in the party. After the 1946 elections they started pointing to plenty of very basic organisational weaknesses<sup>2</sup>. These, however, did not stem from simple "mistakes" but followed rather from the party's general philosophy which did not point to the need for a firm organisational structure.

They did not try to provide positive political leadership for

<sup>1</sup> e.g. SS 20/6/45, p.1-2, and SS 21/6/45, p.1-2.

<sup>2</sup> See the memorandum on the reasons for the National Socialists' failure in Brno; Cestou k Únoru, Praha, 1963, p.173-174.

the revolutionary changes of 1945. They seemed instead to be nervous about the course of events. They had been reluctant to tie themselves fully to the Košice programme<sup>3</sup> and continued to seek ways to alter the composition of the government. By the autumn of 1945 it had become obvious that this could only be achieved on the basis of general elections, and the date for them was still not fixed. At the same time, the National Socialists could see definitely that the revolution was going further than they wanted, but that they were also gaining in strength. Most important of all, a provisional parliament had been formed which could provide a platform for attacks on specific aspects of government policy.

Up to then the parties had presented an outward appearance of unanimity - it could even be suggested that the intelligentsia were slow to join parties because all appeared to have identical programmes<sup>4</sup>. The National Socialist, however, began to deviate from this in their press and in parliament. They then unilaterally decided to abandon the bloc of socialist parties<sup>5</sup>.

Their complaints about the police force and the media have already been mentioned<sup>6</sup>. An article by Jan Stánský<sup>7</sup> made a whole

range of more general complaints starting with the method of work of the Czech people's police and the 'working press' (práce lidu).

<sup>3</sup>See above esp. p.7-8.

<sup>4</sup>J. Štefl, Svobodné noviny, 2/9/45, p.1.

<sup>5</sup>Krajina, SS 1/3/47, p.4.

<sup>6</sup>See above Sections III.13.2. and III.13.5.

<sup>7</sup>SS 7/10/45, p.1.

elections to the Provisional National Assembly and going on to mention the alleged absence of contacts with the West and the continued presence of the liberating armies<sup>8</sup>. He claimed that fears had been generated by delays in the expulsion of Germans, by uncertainties as to how much would be nationalised, by the large numbers imprisoned as collaborators and by the excessive powers taken by Factory Councils while, it was claimed, workers disapproved of the new managements that had been installed and wanted back the old ones. Despite the <sup>e</sup>generality of these complaints, Stránský tried to present the issue as one of press freedom - thereby implicitly directing criticisms onto a Communist minister - by referring to the suspicious unanimity of papers before-hand and by claiming that they had implied the imminence of "paradise" on earth. It need hardly be pointed out that they did not<sup>9</sup> and also that, while concern over the delays in expelling Germans was pretty universal, other sections of the population could present very different complaints<sup>10</sup>.

It was a general feature of all the National Socialists' criticisms that they did not pose a definite, positive alternative.

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<sup>8</sup> There had earlier been more direct criticisms of "the cowardice of the Czech people towards the liberating army" (singular in original), SS 2/10/45, p.1.

<sup>9</sup> Zápotocký in particular was forthright in pointing to failings; e.g. his speech in parliament on 15/11/45, A. Zápotocký: Naše národní revoluce v roce 1918 a 1945, Praha, 1946, esp. p.13.

<sup>10</sup> The workers' representatives in ČKD-Libeň called also for faster punishment of traitors and collaborators, for the legalisation of the Factory Militia and for a stronger police force; RP 12/12/45, p.2.

They seemed to be cautiously trying to canvass support from those who doubted aspects of the government's policies, but they were also trying to avoid being accused of playing the role of an opposition<sup>11</sup>, and they frequently claimed that they still regarded themselves as a party of the left<sup>12</sup>.

Rather than this cautious, tactical approach, the National Socialists would have undoubtedly preferred to give a full-blooded defence of the pre-Munich republic. They insisted that it remained "for us among the most beautiful periods of our national history . . . of which we have every right to be proud"<sup>13</sup>. Implied criticisms of its institutions were interpreted as criticisms of themselves as one of the former governing parties<sup>14</sup>. They gave no hint of believing that<sup>a</sup> a chance of establishing socialism had been missed in 1918-1920. Zenkl insisted that the party had been right to transform itself "into a positive support for the governments . . ."<sup>15</sup>.

Although some of their practices indicated that they were still looking back to the past, they could not hold up the pre-Munich republic as a model. Already in emigration, Beneš had accepted the inevitability of changes and to deny that after they had taken place would have been absurd. This, however, left the National

<sup>11</sup> See Zenkl's speech, SS 11/12/45, p.4.

<sup>12</sup> e.g. Drtina at the party's Central Executive Committee, 6/6/46, Cestou k Únoru, p.162.

<sup>13</sup> Zenkl, SS 12/11/45, p.2. See also the National Socialists' Presidium statement, SS 5/5/46, p.1.

<sup>14</sup> e.g. on the issue of the police force; SS 14/2/46, p.1.

<sup>15</sup> SS 10/12/45, p.2.

Socialists with the task of formulating new policies for the completely new situation created by the success of the initiatives taken by the KSČ and the extent of the revolutionary changes.

In practice, the tactical need to extricate themselves from the apparent position of full support for the government, and hence subordination to the KSČ, dominated over the formulation of a new long-term strategy.

Later they listed their successes not in terms of what they had achieved but rather as what they had prevented<sup>16</sup>. They even saw fit to exaggerate that on occasion by claiming to have been the only force defending freedom of speech<sup>17</sup>, or by implying that they were defending Czechoslovak democracy "from fascist contamination."<sup>18</sup>

III.18.2. The National Socialists begin to evolve more complete policies. Their social base is different from that of the pre-war party.

Although holding changes in check was the central theme of the National Socialists' policy, they did gradually evolve from that specific policies on a whole range of aspects of society. These policies - their attempt to reconcile themselves to the new realities - were the combined consequence of three factors. First, there were the tactical manoeuvres undertaken by the leadership. Secondly, there were <sup>the</sup> party's general theoretical and programmatic concepts which, although vague, did play a role in determining the

<sup>16</sup> e.g. Krajina, SS 1/3/47, p.4.

<sup>17</sup> Drtina at the National Socialists' Congress, SS 2/3/47, p.2.

<sup>18</sup> Jaroslav Stránský, SS 8/6/47, p.6.



direction of policy. Thirdly, there was the influence of the social base that the party built up. There is no evidence of an active inner-party democracy, but the influence of those individuals who were attracted to the party was undoubtedly felt. They could, at the minimum, indicate approval for and hence further encourage particular aspects of party's policy<sup>19</sup>.

The National Socialists failed to recapture their earlier working class support and instead built up a broad base among those expressing doubts and fears about the revolution<sup>20</sup>. They took up the case of civil servants' pay from early on arguing, significantly, that particularly those with long service deserved pay increases<sup>21</sup>. Their reticence about changes in the economy won them support from small businessmen. Even capitalists, with more explicitly right-wing parties banned, began placing faith in the National Socialists as the most likely defender of their interests<sup>22</sup>. It was also widely noted, although this obviously cannot be proven statistically, that many new and influential National Socialists were former members of banned parties or influential and wealthy people<sup>who</sup> had lost their positions after May. The friendliest view put it as an open question whether these people would be won for socialism or whether

<sup>19</sup> c.f. The wording of Jan Stránský's article, SS 7/10/45, p.1.

<sup>20</sup> See above Table 13.

<sup>21</sup> J. Petráš, SS 2/8/45, p.1.

<sup>22</sup> e.g. Jaroslav Stránský claimed in the government meeting of 30/11/45 that they were receiving letters from capitalists calling for limitations to nationalisations, V. Adámek: Boj, p.60.

the party would be moved to the right<sup>23</sup>. Sometimes it was even claimed that the party was trying to win a different section of the population for the same socialism<sup>24</sup>.

### III.18.3. How their programmatic principles helped the National Socialists evolve concrete policies.

Owing to the difficult situation they found themselves in plus the existence of differences within their ranks, the National Socialists proved incapable of producing a new programme. It is, however, possible to piece together their programmatic concepts from various speeches made by leading figures which, despite some differences, show that there was considerable common ground on what National Socialism meant.

Their starting point was a notion of Czechoslovak society as being a very specific case in that it was not divided into classes, but was made up of small men without great inequalities. Czech nationalism could therefore be supported to the limit and equated directly with social justice. It could also be argued that the National Socialists, rather than representing just one class, could represent the whole nation<sup>25</sup>.

They clearly were not a Marxist party but, as they included the word socialist in their own title, they had to try to explain what they meant by socialism. An almost unique attempt seemed to

<sup>23</sup>J. Zhor, Dnešek, 25/4/46, p.65, and Cato, Dnešek, 22/5/47, p.118.

<sup>24</sup>V. Bušek, SS 1/10/46, p.1.

<sup>25</sup>Zenk1, SS 11/12/45, p.2-3.



party democracy were never discussed. Their draft proposals for the discussions in Moscow were almost exclusively concerned with regulating strife between parties<sup>30</sup> and they even interpreted the agreement creating the bloc of socialist parties as meaning an easing of "mutual respect" between parties<sup>31</sup>.

This fits easily with a counter-position between democracy and totalitarianism as the two basic types of society. There were, however, some ambiguities in their conception of democracy, which reflected different immediate tactical needs. Generally speaking, it was to be confined within parliament. Extra-parliamentary pressures were frequently characterised as "terror": even articles in the KSČ press could be condemned in this way<sup>32</sup>. This double standard was quickly pointed out<sup>33</sup>, but the term "terror" was always given an extremely wide meaning.

This would have been a totally inadequate theoretical basis for a party of visionaries trying to create a new social order. The National Socialists, however, never set themselves so ambitious a task. To them politics meant the technicalities of routine government within a coalition in a parliamentary system. This, basically, had been their role prior to 1938 and <sup>they</sup> certainly hoped for a return of that aspect of the pre-Munich republic. The

<sup>30</sup> Cesta ke Květnu, p.585-587.

<sup>31</sup> SS 17/6/45, p.1.

<sup>32</sup> e.g. SS 7/2/46, p.2. The issue was press criticism of an army officer who had apparently expressed "reactionary" views in a lecture to students.

<sup>33</sup> RP 8/2/46, p.2.

revolution, they insisted, must end so as to prevent "choas" and "civil war" and so as to ensure "law and order"<sup>34</sup>.

Given these basic ideas, they did not need a precise programme as a guide to their activities. The vagueness of their basic concepts had been commented on throughout the party's history as its title<sup>35</sup>. Often its leaders tried to deny the fact claiming it changed not only its policies but also, on several occasions, its title<sup>36</sup>. At other times they made a virtue of the actual situation: Drtina, for example, accepted that the party's programme could be criticised for being "a little vague", but maintained that this was better than "a programme of rigid one-sided doctrine"<sup>37</sup>.

Given the leadership's tactical aims, the party's developing social base and these general programmatic principles, the party did prove capable of evolving definite policies which made it the most serious political rival to the KSČ. This can be seen in their economic policy questions, in their ideas on mass organisations, and their approach to the election campaign.

<sup>34</sup> Zenkl, SS 11/12/45, p.2.

<sup>35</sup> c.f. Peroutka, Prítomnost, 15/1/36 quoted by Bareš, RP 16/1/47, p.2.

<sup>36</sup> e.g. Zenkl, SS 14/1/47, p.1-2, or Jan Stránský, SS 14/4/46, p.1.

<sup>37</sup> SS 2/3/47, p.2.

III.18.4. National Socialist economic policy is based on their conception of democracy.

In the economy they did not see the need for conscious political activity and this was reflected in the weakness of their economic organisation. Although they established an Economic Council, its activities and even its existence were unknown to the mass of members<sup>38</sup>. Evidently they believed that the economy could solve its own problems provided specialists and the market mechanism were given scope. Meanwhile everybody should work in their proper place without the intervention of "political" questions. This can be illustrated by two points: the first was a lack of interest in labour brigades<sup>39</sup> or special measures to help particular sectors. Instead a solution was sought in technical organisation and the planned use of scarce technical skills<sup>40</sup>. The second was an extraordinary faith in the powers of specialists which related to claims that Factory Councils had taken too much power. They should, it was argued, allow "proven specialists" to get on with the job<sup>41</sup> free from the "terror" which "reigned in many enterprises"<sup>42</sup>. This, of course, related to criticisms of the purge in factories with claims that far too many essential specialists had been sacked<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup>Zenk1, SS 24/5/46, p.3. See also Hřibek: K úloze, p.62-63.

<sup>39</sup>They were even attacked as being "unprofitable"; J. Hejda, SS 19/1/46, p.1-2.

<sup>40</sup>SS 21/8/45, p.1.

<sup>41</sup>SS 6/7/45, p.3, c.f. the view that specialists should play a major role in deciding the extent of nationalisations, p.79.

<sup>42</sup>Dršina, SS 22/5/46, p.3.

<sup>43</sup>e.g. R. Gregor, Dnešek 9/5/46, p.98.

Zápotocký never denied that mistakes had been made, but he also insisted that many National Socialist criticisms were based on vague and unsubstantiated rumour<sup>44</sup>. The classic case was Bat'a in Zlín (now Gottwaldov) which was a centre of controversy from the autumn of 1945 onwards<sup>45</sup>. Although the National Socialists' attacks in that particular case were extraordinarily exaggerated, they evidently were generally representing the interests of those who had suffered, or who feared that they could suffer in the future, from the powers of the Factory Councils.

It is reasonable to surmise that the acquisition of this social base was the major stimulus for a switch from advocating the primacy of specialist abilities in appointments to the need for proportional representation of parties in economic institutions and for a revision of the purge<sup>46</sup>. They thereby built up an economic policy based on a precise application of their conception of parliamentary democracy into all other fields<sup>47</sup>.

Even their defence of private enterprise was justified in this way. Plurality in the economy, Ripka argued, was essential to prevent "all the people" from becoming "slaves of the state". He also claimed that "the state means the government and in such conditions the government would inevitably pass into the hands of one political party"<sup>48</sup>. There was still no justification for

<sup>44</sup> e.g. I. celostátní všeodborový sjezd ROH, Praha, 1946, p.122-123.

<sup>45</sup> For a detailed account, see Roušar: Dějiny.

<sup>46</sup> See below Section IV.25.5.

<sup>47</sup> c.f. Ripka's speech quoted in ÚRO 22/11/45, p.3.

<sup>48</sup> Ripka speech, SS 9/10/45, p.2.

public ownership and Ripka's formulation could certainly appeal to the remaining capitalists, but hardly to workers. For them employment in private industry could hardly be any less "slavery" than employment in nationalised industry.

III.18.5. The National Socialists fail to make an impact in the trade unions.

Although the National Socialists' conception of democracy gave absolute supremacy to competing political parties, there were also powerful mass organisations seeking places for themselves in political and social life. Generally, the National Socialists argued that they should be organisationally subordinated to political parties, by the introduction of the parity principle in their elected committees, and that they should be given no special status by, for example, acceptance at National Front meetings.

In the youth union the National Socialists were successful, but within the trade unions they made very little impact. As they had no conception of separate social interests they could only see unions as the tools of a political party but, despite the strength of the KSČ within them, the Czech unions did play a broader role and could inspire wider loyalty from employees.

The National Socialists, unable to present any other conception of what the trade union movement could do, requested one fifth of the places on ÚRO: this was rejected<sup>49</sup>. They had no choice but to accept that there would be only one trade union movement, but they still pressed for any changes that would lead to

<sup>49</sup> Růžička: ROH, p.79.



decentralisation of its structure and hence, presumably, to a weakening of the unions' power in national politics. They pressed for internal elections to be by secret ballot and for places on committees to be shared between parties by proportional

representation<sup>50</sup>. Instead, union delegates were elected on the basis of one for every 2000 members: the National Socialists feared that this would lead to over-representation of the majority<sup>51</sup>. At a conference held in January 1946, and then at a full congress in April, they made absolutely no impact. Perhaps there was a hint of recognition for their position in the acceptance of the need for some decentralisation into separate unions for each industry<sup>52</sup>. It was, however, absolutely insisted that party organisations were not to disrupt trade union unity and that trade union elections should not be contests between parties<sup>53</sup>.

The National Socialists, after first accepting that appointments should be made on the basis of character and competence<sup>54</sup>, even advocated parity in Factory Councils. This, in fact, was their principal justification for creating factory organisations<sup>55</sup>. Perhaps this was, in the situation at the time, the only way for many non-manual employees to win representation<sup>56</sup>, but it was

<sup>50</sup> Zenkl, SS 24/5/46, p.3.

<sup>51</sup> SS 15/3/46, p.1, and Růžička: ROH, p.89.

<sup>52</sup> See E. Erban's speech at the ROH conference, ÚRO, 24/1/46, p.4.

<sup>53</sup> e.g. Zápotocký, Práce 27/11/45, p.1.

<sup>54</sup> e.g. SS 13/6/45, p.4.

<sup>55</sup> F. Klátil, SS 18/7/45, p.1.

<sup>56</sup> See above p.66 for the situation in Škoda-Plzeň.

never combined with any suggestions for the wider economic role of Factory Councils.

III.18.6. The National Socialists are fairly successful among youth and students.

Events followed a very different course in the youth organisation which the KSČ hoped would become a powerful political voice like the trade unions. Instead, the SČM (Union of Czechoslovak Youth) could only unite 30% of the 15-25 age group within its ranks<sup>57</sup> and was quickly threatened with serious divisions. The feeling for national unity alone was not enough to hold it together without a far clearer definition of its role within society.

The National Socialists had started to organise their own youth immediately after liberation<sup>58</sup>, and had been very reluctant to accept the idea of a single united body even after agreeing to it in the "bloc"<sup>59</sup>. During the uprising a body claiming to be the basis for a united youth organisation had emerged<sup>60</sup>, and its hand was further strengthened by a message from Dachau expressing a similar position and backed by 47 signatures from all political and religious positions<sup>61</sup>. Nevertheless, the National Socialists later claimed that the SČM had been an artificial creation demanded by the Communist emigration and imposed "from above" on the domestic situation<sup>62</sup>.

<sup>57</sup> Kaplan: Znárodnění, p.105.

<sup>58x</sup> Česká pravda 14/5/45, p.2.

<sup>59</sup> See the statement of the Presidium of the National Socialists' youth organisation, SS 24/6/45.

<sup>60</sup> Mladá fronta 9/5/45, p.1.

<sup>61</sup> Mladá fronta 20/5/45, p.1.

<sup>62</sup> e.g. SS 1/3/46, p.1.

The real controversy began when the National Socialists renounced the Socialist Bloc. They claimed to have understood the acceptance of united mass organisations as meaning equal or at least proportional representation for parties within them<sup>63</sup>. They then joined the Peoples' Party, who had never been party to the bloc agreement, in establishing independent youth organisations: their aim at first was presented as changing the SČM<sup>64</sup> and they argued strongly for this in the Spring of 1946<sup>65</sup>.

The Social Democrats joined the KSČ in condemning the National Socialists and Peoples' Party for establishing independent youth organisations<sup>66</sup>. They tried to justify this with an argument for a single organisation but could only do so by referring to experiences during the war such as the Nazis' total mobilisation<sup>67</sup>: there seemed to be no special justification in post-liberation society and soon the Social Democrats also felt obliged to hold a three-day conference of youth commissions of their own<sup>68</sup>.

In the period immediately preceding the elections, the National Socialists called a full congress of their youth organisation. SČM countered by calling a demonstration on the same day. The National Socialists' Presidium then called on its members to withdraw from

<sup>63</sup>Krajina, SS 10/12/45, p.4.

<sup>64</sup>See the report of the National Socialists' youth rally, SS 4/12/45, p.1.

<sup>65</sup>e.g. SS 19/3/46, p.2. For a full account of their position, see Drtina, SS 22/5/46, p.3.

<sup>66</sup>PL 17/2/46, p.1.

<sup>67</sup>J. Havelka, PL 4/12/45, p.1.

<sup>68</sup>PL 24/2/46, p.2.

SČM which was characterised as a simple Communist front and referred to as the "KSČM"<sup>69</sup>. Unfortunately, nobody felt it necessary to produce any facts or figures that could confirm or refute this claim. Not all National Socialists agreed with this action and SČM claimed to be holding together well<sup>70</sup>, but it could never become a significant force in national politics. After the 1946 elections, the KSČ accepted a compromise in the new government programme referring both to a united youth organisation and to the right of parties to treat youth as they liked<sup>71</sup>.

This was a success for the National Socialists not because it directly extended their own influence, but because they had immobilised a mass organisation that they were convinced would generally support KSČ policies. Among students their success was even greater, although at first they had little influence in the students' union, the SVS (Union of Higher Education Students), which had developed during the occupation and been involved in the uprising. It contained all political positions but was led by Communists and Social Democrats who had led the pre-war student body. It created itself formally at a general meeting in Prague on 14/5/45 and set about reclaiming university property and clearing up the mess, so that the universities could reopen. This was achieved in Prague and Brno on 30/5/45. Then a full representative

<sup>69</sup> SS 8/5/46, p.1, and SS 12/5/46, p.1.

<sup>70</sup> Mladá fronta 12/5/46, p.3, and later dates of the same paper.

<sup>71</sup> Gottwald: Spisy, XIII, p.149.

structure could be elected on 11/6/45<sup>72</sup>.

The National Socialists' attacks on SVS were entirely negative and they even sunk to the level of giving front page coverage to an anonymous letter, full of inaccuracies, which accused the SVS of forcing students to do voluntary work in mines. It likened the SVS to the Nazi occupiers<sup>73</sup>. Nevertheless, these attacks did find an increasing amount of sympathy from students. One reason suggested was that students' backgrounds generally placed them among the social groups that felt nervous about the revolutionary changes: only 5% were from the working class<sup>74</sup>. Another possible reason was that students were encouraged to join voluntary labour brigades by the presentation of demands including essential housing and reforms within the university<sup>75</sup>. It seems that very little was done to satisfy these demands.

Of all the mass organisations, the one in which the National Socialists were probably the strongest was the Sokol, the biggest of the physical culture unions. It had about one million members while the Catholic "Orel" had 150,000 and the workers' organisation had about 100,000. These bodies were never central to political life and the National Socialists saw no special political role for

<sup>72</sup> Student, 11/10/45, p.8, and H. Kráčmanová: "České vysokoškolské studentstvo v revolučních událostech na jaře 1945", Československý časopis historický, XXIII, No.4, 1975.

<sup>73</sup> SS 5/10/45, p.1.

<sup>74</sup> Havelka, Cfl, 28/3/47, p.165-166.

<sup>75</sup> See the two special issues of Student, 19/7/45, and 27/9/45. Apparently the accomodation situation was such that there were 5000 places for 42000 students; J. Kazimour, RP 8/8/45, p.3.

the Sokol. The KSČ too was slow to make any comment, but then began arguing for a single united organisation: this was received sceptically by the Sokol which preferred a federation<sup>76</sup>. There was also reluctance within the KSČ to abandon their own organisation but the leadership slowly accepted that unity would have to be around Sokol<sup>77</sup>. Opposition and seeming obstruction from within Sokol strengthened sectarian attitudes with the KSČ<sup>78</sup>. The leadership, however, continued to hope that the anti-fascist and patriotic traditions of the old Sokol could be developed to make it "the cement of national unity"<sup>79</sup>.

III.18.7. During the election campaign the National Socialists have to clarify their attitude towards "reaction".

The National Socialists consistently pressed for general elections to be held as quickly as possible and, at the National Front meeting on 16/1/46, it was agreed that they would take place on 26/5/46<sup>80</sup>. From then on the parties had to clarify how they were going to advertise themselves to the electorate. The National Socialists faced the difficult task of deciding definitively what their attitude was to be towards the government, the revolutionary changes and the pre-Munich republic. Already the KSČ was beginning

<sup>76</sup>Kaplan: Znárodnění, p.108.

<sup>77</sup>Funkcionář, 16/3/46, p.12.

<sup>78</sup>Funkcionář, November 1946, p.18, and 7/2/47, p.12.

<sup>79</sup>K. Gottwald: Spisy, Vol. XIV, Praha, 1958, p.154.

<sup>80</sup>RP 17/1/46, p.1.

to accuse them of a "two irons" policy of fishing for the votes of "reactionaries" while also trying to claim credit for being a government party<sup>81</sup>. Such accusations were good propaganda for the KSČ, but the evidence was not really clear that "reaction" was exerting a major influence on National Socialist policy.

Then two further issues arose that gave the KSČ scope for more determined propaganda attacks. The first was a flirtation by the National Socialist leadership with prominent former Agrarians, the most important of whom was Feierabend. He had been a Minister in the London government and prior to that in the Protectorate government so that, although he claimed to have been involved in resistance activities, he could still technically have been called before the National Court. Ideally, he wanted a legalisation of the Agrarian Party itself, but failing that, sought an alternative legal base. He held discussions with other former Agrarians in February 1946, but it was impossible to reach unanimity on which party to join. Some chose the Peoples' Party and some Social Democracy, but Feierabend himself apparently sought Beneš's advice and was assured that Zenkl was even less of a socialist than Šrámek<sup>82</sup>.

Already the KSČ was beginning to make accusations that former leading Agrarians had held meetings with "some leaders of some government parties"<sup>83</sup>. The question here was not whether former

<sup>81</sup> See the statement by KSČ MPs on criticisms made by Krajina of the situation in the police force, RP 14/2/46, p.2.

<sup>82</sup> L.K. Feierabend: Pod vládou Národní fronty, Washington D.C., 1968, p.66-67.

<sup>83</sup> Duriš's speech of 15/12/45, Národní správci v zemědělství se plně osvědčili, Praha, 1946, p.13-14. See also Nosek, RP 19/3/46, p.2.

Agrarians could re-enter political life, as many did within all the political parties. The point was rather "to what extent which party makes concessions to its new members and voters. . ." The KSČ claimed to have made none, but argued that others clearly were fishing for support from "reactionaries"<sup>84</sup>.

Then the National Socialists seemed to prove the point. They encouraged Feierabend and Suchý, in the hope of exploiting their alleged popularity in the countryside<sup>85</sup>, to publicly announce at the end of March that they had joined the National Socialists<sup>86</sup>.

The Social Democrats were prepared to give him the benefit of the doubt on his record during the occupation but were dumbfounded by the suggestion that he was a socialist<sup>87</sup>. The Communists made far more comprehensive accusations some of which were exaggerated but some of which remained unanswered. A particularly troublesome point was the publication of documentary evidence that Feierabend had acquired Jewish property by special agreement with K.H. Frank and

<sup>84</sup> e.g. Tvorba, 27/2/46, p.132.

<sup>85</sup> Cestou k Únoru, p.141. There were also reassurances to those further to the left that the National Socialists were not "the heir of the Agrarian Party"; Jan Stránský, SS 4/4/46, p.1.

<sup>86</sup> Feierabend: Pod vládou, p.69.

<sup>87</sup> PL 23/3/46, p.1. It was even suggested that he had never opposed socialism; SS 28/3/46, p.2. In so far as <sup>his</sup> speeches were published, there is no doubt that he stood on the extreme right of Czech politics. In his memoirs he refers to "the so-called liberation" followed by "a period of darkness which hurled Czechoslovakia back by decades. . ."; Feierabend: Pod vládou, p.25 and p.24.



then thought the land could still be his after liberation<sup>88</sup>. With so vigorous a campaign against him, Feierabend no longer served a useful purpose within the National Socialist election campaign and decided not to stand as a parliamentary candidate<sup>89</sup>.

The second element of flirtation with the right wing was on the question of special provision for opponents of the National Front to cast a blank vote thereby indicating general disagreement with the government. This might appear to be a trivial question but it led to the first disputed vote in parliament suggesting that it conceals a really fundamental issue.

The KSČ were in favour of allowing these blank votes claiming that the elections could thereby become a vote of confidence in the government as well as being a contest between the parties. They accused the National Socialists of fishing for support from "anti-state reaction" and speculating on the votes of enemies of the National Front<sup>90</sup>. The National Socialists produced numerous counter arguments generally based on the suggestion that there might be a large number of blank votes. They suggested that it would be

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<sup>88</sup> RP 21/5/46, p.3, and RP 24/5/46, p.6. Feierabend later brought a successful libel case against a provincial KSČ paper in which he claimed these accusations started. This, he believed, cleared his name (SS 4/6/47, p.2). Those accusations, however, seem to have been nowhere near as comprehensive as the ones in Rudé právo (see Palcát, 6/4/46, p.2). Moreover, Rudé právo's accusations were repeated even after the court case (e.g. Práce 31/1/48, p.1, and RP 31/1/48, p.1), but Feierabend has continued to deny them (Feierabend: Pod vládou, p.118).

<sup>89</sup> SS 12/5/46, quoted in Jech: Probuzená, p.207. See also Feierabend: Pod vládou, p.79-81.

<sup>90</sup> e.g. Koucký RP 10/4/46, p.1.

better to force these "out and out reactionaries" into the National Front rather than allowing them to gain strength outside it from a large blank vote<sup>91</sup>. More frequently they presented the subtler argument that there were many with doubts about aspects of the new regime - the activities of Factory Councils, for example - who might want to express this with a blank vote. They would, so it was argued, do better to vote for the National Socialists<sup>92</sup>.

In the vote in parliament some National Socialists absented themselves rather than voting against. The outcome was 155 for blank votes and 131 against<sup>93</sup>.

### III.18.8. The National Socialists' election campaign is based on criticisms of the Communists.

If broad unity was to be maintained and if the parties were to continue to co-operate even after the elections, then the various campaigns had to be conducted in such a way as to make that possible. Towards this end, an agreement was reached in the National Front that all parties would support the Košice programme and take responsibility for the government's actions. They would also refrain from unprincipled polemics or personal attacks<sup>94</sup>. Even Peroutka, one of their MPs, accepted that the National Socialists did not conduct a clean campaign<sup>95</sup>.

<sup>91</sup> SS 5/4/46, p.5.

<sup>92</sup> e.g. SS 7/4/46, p.3. This was obviously largely an appeal to those contemplating casting a blank vote.

<sup>93</sup> RP 12/4/46, p.1.

<sup>94</sup> RP 26/3/46, p.1.

<sup>95</sup> Dnešek 30/5/46, p.145.

Even in their attempts to buoy up their own confidence, they found it necessary to make wild accusations against the KSČ. The point was that a number of elections were held for National Committees and the KSČ won an average of 56% of the vote<sup>96</sup>. At first the National Socialists, backed up to some extent by the Social Democrats, made the plausible accusation that the Ministry of the interior was allowing elections in selected localities to help the KSČ election campaign. This was denied and the KSČ explanation for the spate of elections was that they reflected the consolidation of frontier regions where enough Czechs had settled to allow for the conversion of Administrative Commissions into elected National Committees. At times failure to agree on the composition of these or other National Committees led to the need for an election. It seems that the power to call these elections was in the hands of higher National Committees and not the Ministry<sup>97</sup>.

A particularly sharp controversy was started by an election that seemed to indicate a great deal as it was not in the frontier, where the Communists were known to be strong, but took place in the Prague suburb of Kýje on 17/2/46. The National Socialists even started accusations before the election<sup>98</sup> and then claimed afterwards that 20% of the electorate had been "terrorised" into not voting<sup>99</sup>.

<sup>96</sup> RP 19/5/46, p.2.

<sup>97</sup> Tvorba, 6/3/46, p.156, and Bertelmann: Vývoj, p.172.

<sup>98</sup> They claimed that Social Democrats were being imprisoned, SS 14/2/46, p.3.

<sup>99</sup> SS 19/2/46, p.1.

It was soon pointed out that the missing 20% had in fact gone to settle in the frontier<sup>100</sup>. In the election in May the main change was a slight decline in the National Socialist vote and a gain for the Social Democrats<sup>101</sup>.

Allegations of abuses of power by Communists, some of which may have been true but some of which had to be withdrawn either before or shortly after the elections, were an extremely important part of the National Socialists' election campaign. Peroutka afterwards felt they had been wrong to concentrate on this "frontal attack" against the KSČ<sup>102</sup>. They tried in every way to portray the Communists' aim as "totalitarianism", including the complete abolition of all private property, and this accusation was sometimes even made against Marxism in general. It apparently "leads inevitably to a regime of dictatorial totalitarianism - economic, political and cultural . . . (represented by) . . . the dictatorship of the proletariat"<sup>103</sup>. There certainly were unanswered questions about the KSČ's aims but these exaggerated attacks could only encourage firm rebuttals even from the Social Democrats who insisted that there was no general danger of totalitarianism, although they did have criticisms of some Communists who were not keeping to the

<sup>100</sup> RP 22/2/46, p.5.

<sup>101</sup> From a comparison of the results published in RP 19/2/46, p.1, and in Zprávy státního úřadu statistického, XXVII, 1946, (published in 1947), p.197.

<sup>102</sup> Dnešek 30/5/46, p.145.

<sup>103</sup> Ripka, Svobodný zítřek, 23/5/46.

parity agreement in National Committees<sup>104</sup>. Later National Socialists too felt they had gone too far in presenting themselves as strongly as possible as a counter to the KSC without complementing this with their own positive programme: this won them the label of the party "with the big mouth"<sup>105</sup>.

As for their own positive slogans, perhaps the main vote catcher was the claim to be loyal to Beneš and Masaryk. This was plugged remorselessly and with no further elaboration. Generally their slogans did not suggest that they understood and welcomed the changes since the 1935 elections. They did not present ideas for the further development of society on the basis of the revolutionary changes of 1945. Neither did they make definite commitments on policies they would pursue<sup>106</sup>. Instead, the slogans in their press and posters seemed to reflect fears and uncertainties at the direction developments could be taking<sup>107</sup>.

On this they were united but it was also clear that there were differences within the party on what they hoped to do after the elections. There were reassurances that they did not intend to

<sup>104</sup> V. Bernard, Cíl, 25/1/46, p.34-35. The Social Democrats' Presidium meeting of 1/3/46 referred to pre-election nervousness leading "some members of the Communist Party" not to "maintain the solidarity of the National Front and of the bloc of three socialist parties", PL 2/3/46, p.1.

<sup>105</sup> See the memorandum produced in Brno on the reasons for the National Socialists' electoral failure; Cestou k Únoru, p.172.

<sup>106</sup> Their most meaningful election slogan said no more than "with us you will not get lost".

<sup>107</sup> See the slogans used on the National Socialists' May day rally, SS 3/5/46, p.1. An analysis of the party's posters is given by J. Schreiber, Průmyslový průkopník, No.6, 1946, p.3-7.

reverse the revolution<sup>108</sup>. There was, however, no denying that there were people who wanted elections for "a return to something which was but is no longer and will not be"<sup>109</sup>. In one local National Socialist organ such voices evidently dominated in the following election appeal: "The new government, in which our party will have influence great beyond measure, must go from empty words to actions. It will be the beginning of the redemption of all the crimes of the revolution... the Košice government programme is an Eastern programme and it therefore is unsuitable for our conditions"<sup>110</sup>.

### III.18.9. Summary and discussion.

The National Socialists appear to have been continuing Beneš's war-time strategy within the changing circumstances created by the national revolution. They did not apply a vision of a new society and, as distinct from the KSČ view, believed that the role of parties was restricted to competition within a parliamentary arena. In practical terms they saw the need to go some way with the revolutionary changes so as to avoid political isolation and so as to be able to hold the revolution in check.

They failed to change the government and, in the autumn of 1945, set themselves the more modest aim of presenting a distinctive identity as a party of government which could also express opposition to, and some doubts about, some aspects of government policy. They

<sup>108</sup> e.g. I. Herben, SS 8/1/46, p.1. ... that should have been presented.

<sup>109</sup> Peroutka, Svobodné noviny, 26/3/46, p.1. ... of the ... to the ...

<sup>110</sup> Svobodný směr, 20/5/46, p.1. ... of the ...

evidently hoped that this approach would win them first place in the general elections. Their flexible tactics led to the recruitment of a broad social base and, although they were prevented by the harshness of KSC criticisms from giving a platform to prominent former Agrarians, they were able to work out policies that could represent<sup>the interests</sup> of those who feared the consequences of the revolution.

At first they set strict limits to party politics, implying that specialists should direct affairs without political pressures, but then they extended their conception of democracy into other institutions. They demanded parity, or proportional representation, wherever the KSC had a strong position. This did not include the legal apparatus which tended to be conservative. Generally they were unsuccessful where institutions had a genuine role - such as trade unions - but succeeded where their role was vague. The National Socialists could even dominate among students and in some trade unions where social interests could encourage doubts about the revolution.

Their election campaign reflected their tactical approach. They united their diverse following around fears at what the KSC could be intending. There was still no clear conception of how they wanted society to develop.

In assessing the contribution made by the National Socialists the key question is the acceptability and feasibility of their idea of holding back revolutionary changes. Events after February 1948 indicate that there were changes that should have been prevented. Nevertheless the National Socialists, in their effort to win votes from more conservative sections of the population, became incapable of representing the widespread feeling that fundamental changes were





## CHAPTER 19: CZECHOSLOVAK SOCIAL DEMOCRACY.

### III.19.1. The Social Democrats are politically very close to the Communists, but see the need to assert their own independent existence.

The Social Democrats emerged with a completely new leadership as compared with the pre-war party. Alongside the three government ministers were a number of young leaders who had made their names in the resistance or in emigration. Despite the earlier deep divisions the party seemed to be surprisingly united. The fact of the defeat of the Social Democrats' right-wing pre-war coalition partners meant that there was no longer a firm basis for the policy of expediency personified by Bechyně in the inter-war period. Instead, they claimed to be a Marxist party and enthusiastically supported the revolutionary changes: they made clear their determination to help create a better society than the "democracy" of 1918 to 1938<sup>1</sup>.

Firmly committed to the revolution in general, the Social Democrats could claim, particularly in industry, to be one of the leading forces. On practical issues there seemed to be no difference between themselves and the KSČ. There were often suggestions that close co-operation would lead quickly to a full merger of the two parties<sup>2</sup> and in some localities the party could only exist when artificially created by the KSČ to enable the application of the central agreement on parity between four parties in National

<sup>1</sup>B. Vilím, Cf1, 21/12/45, p.80, (his inverted commas).

<sup>2</sup>e.g. PL 13/6/45, p.1.

Committees<sup>3</sup>.

Thus a major problem for the Social Democrats, particularly as the elections drew closer, was how they could present an identity clearly separate from the KSČ. Unlike the National Socialists, they had no desire to combine this with an assertion of independence from the general direction of the revolutionary changes. They therefore did not carry negative articles in their press but instead began by trying to clarify their own policies and the justification for their own independent existence at a party congress held on 18-20/10/45, long before the other parties held similar congresses. The only visible disagreement with the KSČ then was their call for a Social Democratic Party in Slovakia to fight the dangers of "reaction" there<sup>4</sup>. There were no open disputes within the party. Beneath the surface, however, there were two lines. One continued to talk of an eventual merger<sup>5</sup>, and this generally went with a more self-critical acceptance that the party had made serious mistakes in the inter-war period<sup>6</sup>. The alternative was to find a continuing historical justification for the party's existence<sup>7</sup>, and this could be linked with glorification of its

<sup>3</sup> Nedvěd: Cesta, p.41.

<sup>4</sup> Protokol XX. manifestačního sjezdu československé sociální demokracie, Praha, 1946, p.249-250.

<sup>5</sup> e.g. V. Erban, Protokol XX., p.84.

<sup>6</sup> e.g. Fierlinger's analysis of the party's history; Protokol XX, p.41-55.

<sup>7</sup> e.g. Vilím, Protokol XX., p.121.

past<sup>8</sup>. This could not be taken too far as past failures were undeniable: even Majer accepted that the party could only be rebuilt "on new foundations"<sup>9</sup>. Neither did self-criticism mean a complete rejection of the party's past: it was quite possible to argue that new policies stemmed not from new principles but from the new situation which made revolutionary actions possible and necessary<sup>10</sup>.

By the spring of 1946, the Social Democrats were beginning to clarify some theoretical concepts with which they could distinguish themselves from the KSČ. They boasted of going further than the Communists in trying to produce a socialist analysis of the situation including particular attention to questions of the relationship between socialism and democracy<sup>11</sup>. The revolution was said to be both national and social with measures being directed even against those capitalists who had remained loyal to the nation<sup>12</sup>. This did not mean that socialism had been achieved but, despite all sorts of differences in formulation, it was universally accepted that the national revolution was a major step towards it<sup>13</sup>, and that the road from then on would be a

<sup>8</sup> e.g. Berger's dubious account of the party's independent role during the occupation; Protokol XX., p.59-68.

<sup>9</sup> PL 13/5/45

<sup>10</sup> Z. Kojecký: Československá sociální demokracie včera a dnes, Praha, 1946, esp. p.124 and p.137.

<sup>11</sup> e.g. Bernard, Cíl, 17/5/46, p.291.

<sup>12</sup> V. Erban, Protokol XX., p.80 and p.83.

<sup>13</sup> For three different arguments, all reaching this conclusion, see Bernard, Cíl, 4/12/45, p.33; O. John, PL 12/7/46, p.1, and E. Erban, PL 14/12/45, p.1.

"national evolutionary process . . without using a dictatorship"<sup>14</sup>.

When Socialism itself was understood as a socio-economic system based on nationalisations and planning<sup>15</sup>. At the same time, the Social Democrats, unlike the KSČ, made it quite clear that all economic activity would not have to be directed by the state.

Agriculture, for example, was to be based not on large collective farms, but on self-sufficient peasant small holdings of 8-15ha<sup>16</sup>.

All this enabled the Social Democrats to present an election slogan distinct from the KSČ: "Democracy is our road, socialism is our aim". It did not enable them to gain a real initiative over the KSČ because they seemed less able than the KSČ to translate their general principles into practical policies on the new relationships and institutions that were being created. They sometimes implied, as the National Socialists believed, that democracy should be restricted within parliament<sup>17</sup>. Otherwise they largely followed behind the KSČ on the powers for new organs.

They differed by trying to restrict the role of parties in industry. They at first opposed the formation of factory organisations and then, when both the KSČ and the National Socialists were continuing to build their own, they could not see any clear function for them beyond "supporting the trade union movement"<sup>18</sup>. There

<sup>14</sup> This was made clear in a reply to Feierabend who had accused the Social Democrats of aiming to establish a "dictatorship of the proletariat"; see both the editorial and J. Srnka's article, Cf1, 29/4/46, p.241-243.

<sup>15</sup> e.g. Mrázek: Lidovláda.

<sup>16</sup> Laušman, Protokol XX., p.228.

<sup>17</sup> e.g. L. Goerlich: Demokracie k socialismu, Praha, 1946.

<sup>18</sup> PL 2/2/46, p.2.

could be tactical sense in this as the social Democrats were very weak at the grass roots level, but did hold positions within the economic and trade union apparatuses.

**III.19.2. The Social Democrats extend their social base into the urban petty bourgeoisie.**

There did seem to be one particular arena in which the Social Democrats could take the initiative and that was in their approach to small businessmen. They could justly claim to be the first party to offer anything concrete while the Communists were simply stating goodwill and the National Socialists making pronouncements about their support for the rights of private property<sup>19</sup>. The Social Democrats noticed the duality in this social group's attitudes as they combined pleasure at the revolution with nervousness at where it could lead<sup>20</sup>. They saw the need to fill the gap as small businessmen "even today like to listen to oppositionist and anti-socialist talk"<sup>21</sup>.

The Social Democrats therefore looked seriously at how to confront their economic and social problems such as the desire for a comprehensive insurance scheme and access to raw material supplies<sup>22</sup>.

There was even a congress of Social Democrat small businessmen<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> P. Sajal, PL 7/12/45, p.2.

<sup>20</sup> Sajal, Protokol XX., p.161.

<sup>21</sup> Sajal, Protokol XX., p.168.

<sup>22</sup> e.g. J. Bubník, PL 1/12/45, p.1, and Sajal, Protokol XX., p.169-175.

<sup>23</sup> Protokol 1. pracovního sjezdu živnostnictva čs sociální demokracie 6-7/4/46, Praha, 1946.

It seemed there that the party was presenting a position far closer to the National Socialists with great emphasis on the need for private enterprise. The KSČ was attacked for being "linked too closely to what is beyond the frontiers"<sup>24</sup> and even for not finding the correct relationship to the new republic and its construction which, it was claimed, should be <sup>based on</sup> "order in the state and the economy to enable enterprise and work"<sup>25</sup>. The need to avoid "any foreign examples" was stressed<sup>26</sup> and this obviously referred to the USSR where a state run distribution system was said to have failed<sup>27</sup>. Interestingly, there was no mention of how nationalised industries could help but rather calls for fair treatment in the allocation of raw materials and full scope for private enterprise<sup>28</sup>.

This seemed to be a consistent Social Democrat position towards small businessmen<sup>29</sup>, but it did not necessarily have an important influence more generally <sup>in</sup> moving Social Democracy away from the Communists. The point has several times been made that the Social Democrats lost much of their working class base and this was reflected in membership figures. By 30/6/47 workers constituted only one third of membership, compared with 58% before the war.

<sup>24</sup> Sajal, Protokol 1. pracovního, p.45.

<sup>25</sup> Sajal, Protokol 1. pracovního, p.46.

<sup>26</sup> Laušman, Protokol 1. pracovního, p.23.

<sup>27</sup> Sajal, Protokol 1. pracovního, p.47.

<sup>28</sup> Protokol 1. pracovního, p.68.

<sup>29</sup> See also the speeches by Laušman and Majer at a later meeting Social Democrat small businessmen, PL 15/4/47, p.2.

This does not mean that any other group became dominant within the party and small businessmen in fact constituted only 6,71% of the total. The really big increase had been in office workers<sup>30</sup>. Moreover, the strong numerical working class presence was backed by great strength in the trade unions and in industry. In fact when, for reasons discussed later<sup>31</sup>, Social Democrats wanted to assert more vigorously their independence from the KSČ, the main pressure seemed to come from Plzeň and Ostrava. In the latter case the party was slow to build up its organisations but, by mid-1947, they had reached half the KSČ membership<sup>32</sup>, and 50% of those were working class<sup>33</sup>. It appears, then, that it was not the attempts to broaden the party's social base that led to a shift in the party's overall policy. As distinct from the National Socialists, the Social Democrats remained committed primarily to the nationalised industries. Approaches to the petty bourgeoisie, although they could have implied the contrary, never over-ruled this. They could generally still be incorporated within a conception of a multi-sector model of socialism.

### III.19.3. The Social Democrats conduct a clean election campaign.

In the spring of 1946 the initiative was still firmly with Fierlinger's leadership. They believed they could appear as the

<sup>30</sup>Nový: Cesta, p.52, and Dvořáková, Lesjuk: Československá, p.64.

<sup>31</sup>See below Sections IV.25.4, and V.34.3.

<sup>32</sup>Hříbek: K úloze, p.23.

<sup>33</sup>Hříbek: K úloze, p.61.

leading force in the revolution thereby winning a big vote and confirming the party's independent existence. Their election campaign was therefore conducted with a minimum of demagoguery and based itself on support for revolutionary changes. There were no new specific proposals for the future and the key to advertising an independent existence was great publicity for leading personalities, particularly Fierlinger and Laušman who, as Prime Minister and Minister of Industry, seemed to indicate that Social Democracy really was the leading force in the revolution<sup>34</sup>.

#### III.19.4. Summary and discussion.

The Social Democrats generally supported the revolutionary changes and, in practical policies, were very close to the Communists. There were voices for a merger of the two parties, but these were rejected. The Social Democrats, hoping to win a creditable vote, then faced the difficult task of presenting themselves as a clearly independent party.

They differed from the KSČ on two issues. The first was in their conception of democracy as they clearly stated their commitment to a parliamentary system. The second was in their approaches to small businessmen as they seemed to make clear their belief in the benefits of some private enterprise. These, however, did not lead to real disagreements with the KSČ on immediate policies.

Although they appeared as the junior partner to the KSČ, the

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× <sup>34</sup> See Schreiber, Průmyslový průkopník, No.6, 1946, p.5 for a discussion of their posters.



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the 1990s, the number of people in the world who are under 15 years of age is expected to increase by 1.5 billion, from 1.1 billion in 1990 to 2.6 billion in 2010. The number of people aged 65 and over is expected to increase by 1 billion, from 350 million in 1990 to 1.4 billion in 2010. The number of people aged 15-64 is expected to increase by 1.5 billion, from 2.5 billion in 1990 to 4.0 billion in 2010. The number of people aged 65 and over is expected to increase by 1 billion, from 350 million in 1990 to 1.4 billion in 2010. The number of people aged 15-64 is expected to increase by 1.5 billion, from 2.5 billion in 1990 to 4.0 billion in 2010.

## CHAPTER 20: THE PEOPLE'S PARTY.

### III.20.1. The People's Party, isolated from the mainstream of revolutionary events and unable to formulate relevant programmatic principles, remains uncertain about its tactical orientation.

The People's Party, closely linked to the Catholic Church, was the only Czech party to proclaim itself to be non-socialist. It had only a negligible share in formulating the Košice programme and for some months seemed to be left out on a limb on the right of Czech politics unable to seriously influence events. It had political and organisational difficulties so serious that Šrámek felt obliged to admit "... we are not standing on our own legs - we have been (secretly given) these by the agreement of the four parties"<sup>1</sup>. This points to the fundamental dilemma confronting the party as it tried neither to isolate itself completely from the revolutionary changes nor to allow itself to be identified with them<sup>2</sup> so that it could win support from anti-socialists who opposed the revolutionary changes. As one leading member explained: "If the decreased number of political parties and their new positioning leads us to emphasise our non-socialist character. . . then our co-operation in the present NF and our signature on the Košice government programme has the opposite effect"<sup>3</sup>.

The key to a more active role in political life was the National

<sup>1</sup> Hájek, LD 11/3/45, p.1.

<sup>2</sup> Speaking to People's Party MPs on 13/11/45, quoted in Opat: O novou, p.75.

<sup>3</sup> c.f. Šrámek's speech of 13/11/45, Opat: O novou, p.125.

<sup>4</sup> Procházka, LD 3/4/46, p.3.

Socialists' abandonment of the bloc of socialist parties. The People's Party therefore missed no opportunity to attack the bloc, for, for example, its "totalitarian and often terroristic tendencies"<sup>4</sup>. Even then they still had to comment on the revolution as whole and seemed only able to tie themselves into knots. At their congress in April, 1946, which ideally should have been presenting a consistent policy, Procházka could argue that the Košice programme was predominantly socialist so that they could only accept it as a compromise<sup>5</sup>. At the same time it was denied that the programme was close to the aims of the two Marxist parties: "... that programme is closest to the secular programme and principles of the ČsSL (People's Party), which actually has not retreated from them in anything"<sup>6</sup>. The confusion was completed by continual proclamations of their non-socialist character and admissions that their support for nationalisations was very reluctant<sup>7</sup>.

Only gradually did the party publicly produce any programmatic or philosophical principles but they could never link up with actual policies or becoming a force capable of uniting the party. They tried to start from Christianity, reflecting the party's close links with the Catholic church. This was combined with a counter-position of "collectivist" to "individualist" principles pointing to a condemnation both of "private capitalism" and of "state capitalism".

<sup>4</sup> Hála, LD 19/5/46, p.1.

<sup>5</sup> LD 3/4/46, p.4.

<sup>6</sup> J. Řehulka, LD 5/4/46, p.3.

<sup>7</sup> e.g. LD 16/5/45, p.1.

They sometimes even equated the position of workers in both these cases to slavery<sup>8</sup>. To overcome this problem they advocated a form of nationalisation making the worker into a "joint-owner"<sup>9</sup>. The emphasis was always on more individual private ownership<sup>10</sup> even to the ridiculous extent of suggesting that the principle in agriculture of land belonging to he who works on it should be made to apply also to factories<sup>11</sup>. The fullest attempt to argue this through was a pamphlet by Chudoba<sup>12</sup>. He argued the possibility of a return to the Romanesque and Gothic periods when, he claimed, everybody was an owner. Property and entrepreneurship, he thought, were essential for the development of an individual's personality and he thought that even modern technology could allow for the dividing up of big factories giving a maximum size of 20-25 employees. He seemed explicitly to be looking back into the past. There could be little relevance for his ideas to actual technology, planning, social change, the role of parties or mass organisations all of which were essential questions in the 1940s. Moreover, even the talk about everybody owning some property was not consistently applied. In practice the People's Party defended those who already had the property on every possible occasion.

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<sup>8</sup> e.g. Vývoj, 5/10/46, p.52. Apparently much of this could be derived from papal encyclicals; Kaplan: Znárodnění, p.164.

<sup>9</sup> Hála, LD 19/5/46, p.2.

<sup>10</sup> e.g. LD 2/4/46, p.1.

<sup>11</sup> Obzory 11/1/47.

<sup>12</sup> B. Chudoba: Co je křesťanská politika, Praha, 1947.

III.20.2. The People's Party is seriously weakened by differences on tactical questions among its leading figures.

Just as no single individual or group within the party could formulate a convincing policy, so too none could enjoy unchallenged supremacy. There were references at the time, and subsequently, to three main trends within the leadership. There was said to be a large but diversified right wing including Procházka and perhaps also Ducháček who had been Ripka's personal secretary in London and only joined the People's Party after liberation. Within this general trend there were many new recruits from former members of banned parties who, it was accepted, would change the People's Party<sup>13</sup>. A second trend was associated with the leadership headed by Šrámek. He represented continuity from the pre-war party and had been Prime Minister in the London government. He was, by 1945, too old to play a full role and in practice his place was taken by Hála. This leading group came under strong pressure from the right after the 1946 elections. The left, characterised by definite commitment to the revolution was weak and often seemed to be on the verge of disappearance<sup>14</sup>.

There definitely were differences of approach within the party but they should probably not be exaggerated into clearly defined groups. The basic question seemed to be how far to go in attacking

<sup>13</sup> According to Procházka these changes would be "in harmony with the line of the party to date"; LD 3/4/46, p.3. Others, however, openly tried to present the party as continuing the policies of the Agrarians; e.g. J. Brázda, LD 14/5/46, p.1, or Koželuhová, LD 21/6/45, p.1.

<sup>14</sup> Dvořáková, Lesjuk: Československá, p.60; PL 16/1/48, p.1, and J. Plojhar: Vítězný únor 1948 a čs. strana lidová, Praha, 1958, esp. p.25-31.

the revolutionary changes and there appeared to be a very real restriction on this preventing the emergence of a clearly right-wing trend. An attempt was made, not in the government or in parliament where the parties seemed still to have been cautious, but by the journal Obzory. The editors were Ducháček and Tigríd and particularly controversial among its contributors were Chudoba, who was accused of developing contacts with Ukrainian fascists<sup>15</sup>, and H. Koželuhová who was the wife of Procházka. She in particular left little doubt of her opposition to the Košice programme in a whole series of articles. In the first one she dismissed National Committees as a failure arguing that only "specialists" could master the difficult administrative tasks<sup>16</sup>.

Obzory found itself moving to the right too quickly. When attacks on the Czechoslovak army were published there were even requests that the paper should be banned. Kopecký resisted this on the grounds that it was not at that time necessary<sup>17</sup>. Fierlinger raised the issue with Hála who implicitly accepted much of the criticism of Obzory<sup>18</sup>, which then claimed to have been defending the Košice programme<sup>19</sup>. Even the National Socialists echoed many of the criticisms of Koželuhová<sup>20</sup>. This must have been a major

<sup>15</sup> PL 3/2/46, p.1.

<sup>16</sup> Obzory, 25/8/45, p.3. See also Obzory 8/9/45, p.37.

<sup>17</sup> PL 11/12/45, p.2.

<sup>18</sup> PL 15/12/45, p.2.

<sup>19</sup> Obzory 15/12/45, p.225.

<sup>20</sup> SS 5/3/46, p.5.

factor preventing the whole party from openly stating a clearly right-wing position. It was left with confused and ambiguous policies that were quite distinct from the cautious and subtle way in which the National Socialists were trying to dissociate themselves from certain aspects of the revolution.

III.20.3. The People's Party bases its election campaign on opposition to socialism.

Finding itself, even more than the National Socialists, confused and disoriented by the events of 1945, the People's Party found itself even trying to make a virtue of its silence on many questions and of its uninspiring past role and achievements by claiming: "a good enough advertisement for us is our programme as of the only non-socialist political party"<sup>21</sup>. This "programme" was given minimal elaboration as defence of "the economic and social middle of the nation, the private businessmen, small businessmen, shop-keepers . . ."<sup>22</sup>. Rather than elaborating on this with practical proposals, a great part of their election campaign was taken up with dramatising the dangers of imminent "totalitarianism" which was threatening civil freedom. As it was made absolutely clear that freedom meant free enterprise<sup>23</sup>, so too it was made clear that Communists and Social Democrats alike were the great enemies of freedom and advocates of its opposite - "the dictatorship of the proletariat"<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> Obzory, 11/5/46.

<sup>22</sup> LD 5/5/46, p.1.

<sup>23</sup> e.g. LD 5/5/46, p.1.

<sup>24</sup> LD 26/5/46, p.1.

### III.20.4. Summary and discussion.

The People's Party, as a non-socialist party closely linked to the Catholic Church, were nervous about the revolutionary changes. Nevertheless, the leadership felt themselves to be too weak to express opposition in public. Some of their journalists did try criticising the general direction of changes, but were strongly condemned by the other parties. There was therefore no alternative, if the party was to avoid isolation on the right wing of Czech politics, to waiting for the elections. They then presented themselves as the only non-socialist party.

Due to internal differences and the inadequacies of their programme, they appeared to be unable to evolve policies that could place them at the centre of Czech politics. In practical terms then, their contribution was primarily in supporting the National Socialists who had a clearer tactical approach to holding revolutionary developments in check.



**CHAPTER 21: THE BEGINNINGS OF CHANGES IN COMMUNIST PARTY STRATEGY PRIOR TO THE 1946 ELECTIONS.**

**III.21.1. How the course of the national revolution indicated weaknesses in Communist Party strategy.**

The other Czech parties have been discussed principally as they responded to the revolutionary changes and sought places for themselves in the developing social order in which the KSČ held such an important position. Discussion of the KSČ itself in this period is divided into two chapters which reveal the continuing contradiction within that party's policy. On the one hand it was playing a leading role in the revolution which was taking Czechoslovak society in a socialist direction under a multi-party coalition government. On the other hand, it retained theoretical ideas which insisted on the impossibility of this process proving successful. In short, its programmatic principles were inadequate for the task of formulating policies to take Czech society further along the road on which it had started.

This has been argued in the preceding chapters, to varying degrees, of all the Czech parties. The KSČ, however, was different as it so definitely set itself the task of shaping new social relationships. Thus, the inadequacies in the National Socialists' ideas were not so potentially influential within overall social development: but the Communists' ideas were more likely to lead to decisive actions with a major impact on the development of society as a whole.

The central issue was the apparent contradiction between the Communists' immediate policies and their ultimate political aims as worked out within the Comintern. This contradiction could show

itself in many ways but it most frequently surfaced in connection with the Comintern's conception of the dictatorship of the proletariat involving an armed uprising leading to a new state power dominated by the KSČ.

While confined to an opposition role, with no immediate prospect of significantly influencing national politics, such a direct emphasis on the political power question did not so seriously restrict the Communists' ability to formulate immediate policies. Even in the Popular Front period when other parties continued to shun co-operation with the KSČ, there were not the same pressures for a modification of programmatic principles that were felt from 1945 onwards.

The ideas evolved in emigration, particularly after 1943, appeared to be a considerable modification as the possibility was firmly accepted of changing society while making compromises with other Czech political trends. Nevertheless, the issue of political power remained central. Even months after liberation there were warnings that "reaction" was "beginning to crawl out of its holes. ."<sup>1</sup>

It would undoubtedly have been naive to suggest that the question of political power was finally and definitively settled, in the sense that the revolutionary changes of 1945 could be regarded as permanently guaranteed. It was still possible, particularly in the eventuality of a sudden worsening in East-West relations, for the danger of "reaction" or of fascism to reappear and it was natural that the KSČ reacted strongly to signs of a conciliatory

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<sup>1</sup> e.g. Mikolášek, Lidová správa, 21/10/45, p.8.

attitude towards "reaction" from the National Socialists. Nevertheless, fascism had just suffered a crushing defeat which had opened the way for sweeping revolutionary changes in Czechoslovakia. "Reaction" could therefore no longer be the central issue around which all others revolved. New and distinct issues were being raised by the realities of the revolutionary changes themselves.

The KSČ leadership seemed generally to realise this as they accrued immense power during 1945. Particularly in the economy, as discussed above in Chapters 15 and 16, they seemed to be restricted ultimately not by the existence of other parties - that really served only to delay them in achieving their aims - but by objective difficulties and by their own inability to formulate ideas with which to overcome those difficulties. Their real weakness was that, basing themselves on the heritage of ideas developed in the inter-war period when they had no immediate reason or opportunity to consider the wider social or economic nature of a socialist society in Czechoslovakia, they could not convincingly answer even the most basic questions generating disquiet about their future intentions. Thus, to give just one example, one leading economist spoke of a relationship between the public and private sectors amounting to "healthy competition" which would be beneficial to both<sup>2</sup>.

Zápotocký contradicted this: "We, the trade union organisations, are going to favour nationalised production and are going to take pains to see that it is favoured. If we had not wanted to support nationalised production we should not have nationalised it . . ."<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup>Inz. M. Reiman, RP 1/12/45, p.2.

<sup>3</sup>ÚRO 17/1/46, p.4.

By the spring of 1946 pressures were building up on the KSČ leadership to resolve the basic contradiction between their practice and their earlier ideas. This was not a direct consequence of any change or broadening in their social base. The forces for change stemmed rather from the party's overall political role as a party of power involved in constructing a new social order in co-operation and also in competition with other parties. Pressures became noticeable during the election campaign when the KSČ, in line with its image as a constructive force, tried to outline its ideas for the future. Moreover, attacks on the KSČ at that time found some response within the party indicating how members were thinking. In a sense, however, the needs of the election campaign prevented any serious theoretical developments as the KSČ were more concerned with advertising themselves and evading any self-criticism so as to win the maximum number of votes.

### III.21.2. Ambiguities in the Communists' ideas are masked behind a vigorous and attractive election campaign.

The KSČ, as has been argued, were not averse to emphasising the dangers of "reaction" within the People's and National Socialist Parties. They were also quick to answer attacks on their own democratic credentials by reproducing quotes from other politicians and journalists during the immediate post-Munich period.

It appeared that Peroutka had positively welcomed moves towards "totalitarianism" in 1938. Zenkl and Feierabend had joined in condemnations of Beneš and Masaryk and Hora's past record did nothing to enhance his reputation as a defender of democracy.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Fakta a cifry, I, No.1-2, 15/4/46, No.3, 19/4/46 and No.5, 18/5/46. See also M. Kárný, Tvorba, 15/10/47, p.813-814 for more evidence.

Attacks on other politicians were, however, not the centre of the KSČ election campaign. Instead, they could present their past record, particularly since 1936, as evidence of a policy of continuity and sacrifice amounting to a linking of their own fate with the fate of the nation. At the KSČ Eighth Congress in March 1946, which was to a great extent part of the party's election campaign, Slánský could deliver a stirring account of activities since the Seventh Congress ten years earlier. He argued that that period had been a test of the real value of world views, of parties and of individuals<sup>5</sup>. His report can be criticised for some omissions but the general impression was that the KSČ had been right even when their arguments had seemed weak. Subsequent developments suggested that they were right to advocate a government based on socialist parties, they were right that the USSR could save Czechoslovakia from the Nazis and they were right that the West were unreliable allies. The firm stand at the time of Munich looked correct and there was no need for a detailed justification of the party's policy in the 1939-1941 period: it was sufficient for electoral purposes to refute the exaggerations from the National Socialists that the KSČ had stopped resisting altogether<sup>6</sup>. Slánský could continue this account with the party's production of the Košice programme which could not be matched by anything from the London

<sup>5</sup> Sněm, p.39.

<sup>6</sup> Slánský, Sněm, p.46. See also B. Pavlík, J. Bílý, Tvorba, 16/4/47, p.282-284.

emigration<sup>7</sup>. Should anybody then doubt that the Communists meant what they said there seemed to be adequate proof in the thousands of party members who had lost their lives<sup>8</sup>. No further comment seemed necessary on the revival of pre-war propaganda that the Communists had absolutely nothing to be proud of and just a long record of doing everything to destroy the republic<sup>9</sup>.

Thus the KSČ could present itself as the party most loyal to the national struggle and as the bearer of the general "state" idea that could best advance the Czech nation. In addition, they alone could produce detailed concrete proposals for the future which were based on continuity with the Košice programme and consolidation of what had been achieved since liberation<sup>10</sup>. They advocated continuing with the National Front but argued that a large KSČ vote was necessary because the "construction task" was "slowed down by causes which lie in relations within the National Front"<sup>11</sup>. The need was therefore for a stronger Communist influence to carry through basically the same policies as before<sup>12</sup>. So, despite warnings against "reaction", the KSČ leadership still believed that, with their strength confirmed in general elections, they could

<sup>7</sup> Slánský even allowed himself the exaggeration that the idea of expelling the Germans originated in Moscow, speech, RP 1/3/46, p.1-2.

<sup>8</sup> Slánský, Sněm, p.39.

<sup>9</sup> e.g. Svobodný směr, 21/5/46, p.3.

<sup>10</sup> e.g. Slánský, RP 14/11/45, p.1. The full election programme was published in RP 12/5/46.

<sup>11</sup> RP 12/5/46, p.2.

<sup>12</sup> Slánský, speech, RP 14/5/46, p.2.

continue with this policy of broad national unity<sup>13</sup>. This followed from Gottwald's realisation that differences with the National Socialists stemmed not from the latter's domination by "reaction" but rather from their indecisive desire to express doubts in a flexible and uncertain way<sup>14</sup>. He concluded that the danger of a reversal of the revolutionary changes could be ruled out if the Communists came first in the elections and won an overall majority together with the Social Democrats. He fully expected this to be achieved and therefore saw no need to deviate from the chosen strategy of broad national unity<sup>15</sup>. Neither did he suggest any need for the KSČ to win an absolute majority alone.

With generally a clearer attitude towards the revolutionary changes than other parties, the KSČ were able to produce election slogans most in harmony with the optimism of much of the population. They did not base themselves on sectional fears and doubts and preferred to plug the all-national theme. Posters could proudly proclaim "We are building a strong and happy republic" or "Communists foresaw, they warned, they did not betray, they fought, they are constructing". These slogans were not based on obvious exaggerations, on the generation of fears or on false and unreliable promises. Their real strength was that they seemed to state verifiable facts<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> e.g. Gottwald's speech of 4/2/46, Spisy, XII, p.251.

<sup>14</sup> At the KSC Central Committee, 18/12/45, Spisy, XII, p.218.

<sup>15</sup> Speech to leading party officials, 4/2/46, Gottwald: Spisy, XII, p.253.

<sup>16</sup> Schreiber, Průmyslový průkopník, No.6, 1946, p.4.

A novelty in the Communists' attempt to portray themselves as a constructive force - trying to avoid petty insults between parties and to base the election campaign on the contribution of each party to the construction of a new republic - were the "machinery brigades". These began on the Sunday of the KSČ Congress and quickly grew into an organised movement<sup>17</sup>. The idea was that groups of engineering workers would go into villages to repair agricultural equipment. The political significance was obvious as nobody knew how peasants were going to vote. The National Socialists launched a vigorous attack on these brigades condemning them as election agitation and questioning who owned the equipment they used<sup>18</sup>. It certainly does seem that equipment was taken from factories with full agreement of factory managements<sup>19</sup>: presumably this required a very strong KSČ position in both the Factory Council and the management. It also seems that visits to villages were a natural introduction to informal political discussions as well as general entertainment for all involved<sup>20</sup>. Nevertheless, the National Socialists' attack can hardly have helped them. The brigades were extremely well received in villages with requests for their help coming from many places<sup>21</sup>. As was pointed out, there could hardly be a better way to conduct one's election agitation than by useful work and peasants were unlikely to complain if a small amount of factories' funds were spent on that work too<sup>22</sup>. Moreover, the brigades continued

<sup>17</sup> RP 4/4/46, p.1.

<sup>18</sup> Jech: Probuzení, p.214-215.

<sup>19</sup> e.g. Praga, 7/4/46, p.46.

<sup>20</sup> Jech: Probuzení, p.214.

<sup>21</sup> e.g. Zemědělské noviny, 11/4/46, p.1.

<sup>22</sup> Zemědělské noviny, 24/4/46, p.1.



even after the elections proving that they were not just a stunt<sup>23</sup>.

III.21.3. During the election campaign serious doubts are raised about the Communists' aims both from within the party and from its opponents.

It was natural that, in the interests of election propaganda, the KSČ would not indulge in a self-critical reappraisal of their past. The emphasis was rather on the opposite view that the party had always been right and had consequently proved itself fit to govern and to lead. There were, however, two related points which, for various reasons, required some clarification. The first was the question of the relationship between post-war policies and the conceptions the KSČ had developed within the Comintern. The second was the general attitude towards the pre-Munich republic and its institutions.

There were always doubts within the KSČ about the strategy of broad national unity. Although there was no open discussion at the Eighth Congress, which concentrated on the party's past record rather than its proposals for the future, the discussions held beforehand in basic organisations left no doubt that there was a widespread desire for a speeding up of the revolutionary process. While not indicating distrust towards the party leadership, members frequently voiced demands for a sharper struggle against all other parties<sup>24</sup>, and there were suggestions that a

<sup>23</sup> By 15/9/46 there had been 1910 brigades with 35,000 participants, Fakta a cifry, I, No.9, 31/10/46, p.4-6.

<sup>24</sup> Resolutions from basic organisations are discussed and analysed in J. Kozák: "Význam vnitrostranické diskuse před 8. sjezdem KSČ: aktivní účast členů strany na vypracování sjezdových usnesení", Příspěvky k dějinám KSČ, 1960, No.12, esp. p.28-32.

tougher purge should be broadened to include those deemed to be threatening national unity<sup>25</sup>.

It was natural that, with the approach of the elections, many within the KSČ would want to boost the party's ego by emphasising its distinct and militant nature. This general attitude was perhaps most potentially dangerous if it could link up with a full and coherent rejection of the National Front and with a revival of the aim of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which had not been mentioned since 1941.

While doubts within the party indicated a need for theoretical clarification, there were also consistent attacks on precisely this issue from other parties. Perhaps as part of an attempt by "reaction" to add urgency to the accusations that the KSČ was essentially totalitarian, illegally printed leaflets were discovered purporting to be directives from the KSČ leadership for a seizure of power<sup>26</sup>. Naturally, their genuineness was vigorously denied. Gottwald firmly rejected any such putchist tactics, but he did not rule out the use of arms to "correct" the results of "simple mechanical voting" in the unlikely event of an electoral disaster<sup>27</sup>. His exact meaning remains unclear and there is no sign of serious preparation for what perhaps inevitably would have been a putchist attempt. Perhaps Gottwald was just keeping his options open for

<sup>25</sup> KSČ organisation in Choustnikovo Hradiště, Lidová správa, 15/5/46, p.15.

<sup>26</sup> Kopecký, reporting to a parliamentary committee, RP 9/2/46, p.2, and Slánský, RP 20/2/46, p.2.

<sup>27</sup> Speech to leading party officials, 4/2/46, Spisy, XII, p.253.

some future eventuality and thereby passifying those within the KSC who still clung to "old" ideas.

Certainly, the general answer was to suggest that armed struggle was not on the immediate agenda. This still left an important ambiguity on the means of transition to socialism as it was generally linked with a continuing denial of any socialist content to the national revolution and with insistence that discussions of the future in these terms would only be a diversion. It was better to continue with the Košice programme. "Leave aside fruitless talk of socialism and of whether it will come with or without violence. Let us talk of National Committees, of the nationalised sector of the economy, of settling accounts with Nazis"<sup>28</sup>.

So old ideas were still not directly renounced. Particularly the party's theoreticians seemed to be unable to move quickly and only gradually began to grapple with problems that the party had had to solve in practice without their help. They tended to warn against the "over-hasty" conclusion that blood-shed and force would not be necessary<sup>29</sup>. A conference of theoreticians in February 1946 concluded that an actual armed uprising might not be necessary but that "the dictatorship of the proletariat", which meaning "unrestricted power for the working class" implicitly represented by a monopoly of power for one party, would still be necessary for socialism. There was, however, considerable

<sup>28</sup> Kreibich, Ivorba, 13/3/46, p.165.

<sup>29</sup> A. Kolman, RP 25/1/46, p.1.

flexibility in the discussion with the less rigid notion of "leadership of the working class" being suggested. In other countries the search for new conceptions had gone further with Dimitrov already referring to a transition to socialism in Bulgaria by building a new society "together with peasants, craftsmen and intellectuals as a common all-national historic task"<sup>30</sup>. More promising was a very hesitant acceptance that the national revolution was closely linked to socialist change. There was a feeling particularly among trade unionists that they had placed themselves "at the front of that European march to the victory of socialism"<sup>31</sup>. Not surprisingly, of the KSČ leaders it was Zápotocký who pointed to the socialist element in the nationalisations. He referred to them as helping towards "a socialist construction of production and of the whole economy"<sup>32</sup>. He claimed "it is not socialism yet. But it is the first step towards socialism and there is no longer any transitional stage between it and socialism"<sup>33</sup>. This implied that the road to socialism itself could be evolutionary, but Zápotocký still insisted that, although that would be theoretically permissible, it still remained to be seen whether it could be implemented in practice. That depended on all sticking to what he claimed had been agreed which was "to go by an evolutionary road to socialism and not to return

<sup>30</sup> K. Kaplan, M. Reiman: "Naše revoluce a myšlenky o socialismu", Plamen, VII, No.12, 1965, p.113-114.

<sup>31</sup> Věstník závodních rad, December 1945, p.1.

<sup>32</sup> Speaking on 18/8/45; ÚRO, 13/9/45, p.1.

<sup>33</sup> Speaking on 17/8/45; Sjezd národních správců, p.37.

by that road to a private-capitalist order"<sup>34</sup>.

It became even harder to accept the argument that the question of socialist aims should be evaded in the interests of the election campaign when, alongside the sensationalist accusations that the Communists were preparing an immediate seizure of power, there were more serious critics who genuinely queried the Communists' intentions. One example was a National Socialist student who suggested that the principle of the dictatorship of the proletariat had been dropped by the KSČ to follow the example of the Soviet Union's "Stalin" constitution. The music student Havlíček, replying in a style remarkably similar to Predvoj, wrote: "The Communists cannot abandon the dictatorship of the proletariat as a principle because it is not a principle. My colleague is confusing the means for achieving an aim with the aim itself. . . They are abandoning the dictatorship of the proletariat because it is only a transitional stage on the road to socialism. . ." Evidently, given the situation in Czechoslovakia, that particular transitional stage might not be necessary<sup>35</sup>.

More central to the developments within the KSČ was a perceptive article by Peroutka. He started by accepting both that the Communists could win the elections and that they were the main creators and theoreticians behind the National Front, but he still insisted that the KSČ could not claim full continuity with all past policies while remaining silent on the previously central concept

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<sup>34</sup> Radio broadcast, RP 3/1/46, p.2.

<sup>35</sup> Student, 12/2/46, p.14.

of the dictatorship of the proletariat. He saw this as having immediate political relevance as "the main question beneath the surface of our politics from which arises that atmosphere of mistrust". He went on: "there is a great deal of uncertainty about the reply. But it is precisely that reply that decides whether it should be possible for the other parties to agree with the Communists - or vice versa - as sincerely and as lastingly as is without any doubt demanded by the policy of the National Front . . . As long as they do not publish a new programme, worked out with the same theoretical rigour, it will not be securely known whether they have cast aside their former principles or merely stored them in a drawer"<sup>36</sup>.

Peroutka's journal then carried plenty of replies from KSČ members trying to explain what the aims of their party really was. Generally they showed themselves to be convinced of the failure of the previous system, convinced of the need for socialism and convinced that the KSČ was the only genuine and consistent force for socialism. Above all, they could see no conflict between this and democracy as only socialism had proved itself capable of defeating fascism. Some of these letters suggested that the term "dictatorship of the proletariat" was no longer necessary as the KSČ could win people over voluntarily<sup>37</sup>.

Only later was there a recognition within the KSČ leadership of the need to debate seriously with Peroutka. A number of articles

<sup>36</sup> Dnešek, 18/4/46, p.50.

<sup>37</sup> The fullest argument was from Dr. J. Dočekal, Dnešek, 2/5/46, p.86-87.

then appeared in which Bareš and Peroutka clarified their positions relative to each other. Bareš evidently felt that he had the better of it as the KSČ published in full the contributions from both sides<sup>38</sup>. Much of his answer was to accuse Peroutka of double standards in doubting the Communists' democratic credentials. The pre-Munich republic, Bareš insisted, had not been a perfect democracy and Peroutka had not complained about its shortcomings then<sup>39</sup>. This was a powerful debating point and one which Peroutka could not answer, but it still did not answer the basic question<sup>40</sup>.

III.21.4. Ambiguities in the Communists' general strategy are also revealed in their attitude to the pre-Munich republic.

The KSČ was definitely against any glorification of the pre-Munich republic and made considerable election propaganda by arguing that recovery had been quicker than after 1918. Shortages, disorders, strikes and profiteering were all far less serious in 1946<sup>41</sup>. Particularly the rapid recovery of coal production was emphasised. This was presented as <sup>a</sup> direct <sup>counter</sup> to arguments from National Socialists both about the pre-Munich republic in general and more specifically about the 1918-1920 period. There were, for example, references to the "illegality" of revolutionary changes creating

<sup>38</sup> G. Bareš: Rozhovor s Ferdinandem Peroutkou, Praha, 1947.

<sup>39</sup> Bareš: Rozhovor, p.29.

<sup>40</sup> For further elaborations to Bareš's argument see below Section IV. 26.1.

<sup>41</sup> e.g. Pelnář at the KSČ Eighth Congress, RP 3/4/46, p.2. See also Fakta a cifry, I, No.1-2, 15/4/46 and No.3, 19/4/46.

uncertainty and nervousness compared with the stability after World War I when disagreements were no more than "family tiffs"<sup>42</sup>.

The whole KSČ notion of the national revolution had been based largely on an assessment of crucial events in the history of the pre-Munich republic. Comparison of the new with the old republic was therefore quite logical but it implicitly precluded a complete rejection of the old republic. It implied, in a sense, a more favourable appraisal than had been customary before 1938. Many of the institutions, laws and ministerial and parliamentary practices of the old republic were even used to their own advantage by the KSČ. On the crucial question of forms of democracy it was suggested that the basis should not be any Eastern or Western example. Instead, it had "to be Czechoslovak in the sense of drawing from pre-Munich experiences and learning from all those weaknesses and mistakes of the first republic which made easier the Hitlerite attack on Czechoslovakia . . ."<sup>43</sup>. Analogous to this was the treatment of T.G. Masaryk showing that, although he was neither a Marxist nor a socialist, his humanistic ideals remained relevant and should be developed in the new situation albeit in a way that would lead to some different conclusions<sup>44</sup>.

These ideas were expressed only very cautiously and it remained unclear what strengths or advantages pre-Munich democracy was felt to have had. Nevertheless, in their attitude to the pre-Munich

<sup>42</sup> J. Hejda, Onešek, 27/3/46, p.10. See also K. Moudrý, SS, 21/7/45, p.1.

<sup>43</sup> Koucký, RP 21/10/45, p.2.

<sup>44</sup> Z. Nejedlý: T.G. Masaryk, Praha, 1946.



republic and in the cautious acceptance that they were implementing socialist measures, the KSC was beginning to confront the contradiction between a theory evolved within the Comintern and the concrete practice of leading major revolutionary changes.

### III.21.5. Summary and discussion.

Immediately after liberation the KSC leadership still held an over-simplified view of the revolution. They saw it essentially as a political-power change with "reaction" as the enemy. Events, however, opened up completely new possibilities. By late 1945 the KSC seemed to have realised how much they had achieved and hoped to continue with the same coalition structure after the elections had confirmed their primacy within it. This left open the question of their ultimate aims. There appeared to be a wide gulf between the society they were constructing and their earlier complete rejection of the pre-Munich republic and insistence on the need for another revolutionary political-power change leading to a dictatorship of the proletariat.

The party's theoreticians still believed that such a dictatorship would be necessary and there was a widespread desire within the party for a speeding up to the revolutionary process. The leadership, however, regarded the issue as a diversion and possible embarrassment: they therefore were as evasive as possible so as not to harm their electoral prospects.

During the election campaign they naturally portrayed themselves very favourably, as if no self-criticism were necessary. Their generally proud record over the preceding ten years made this possible. They were also able, by means of concrete activities,

slogans and a detailed programme of policy measures, to present themselves as the most constructive force within society.

As part of the election campaign, they had also to respond to the accusations of "totalitarianism" from other parties. The simplest response was that their record of defence of democracy against fascism was much better than that of their critics. This was insufficient to answer some serious questioning of their aims which was encouraging some KSC members to express publicly the view that the dictatorship of the proletariat was not an essential concept. So, although there was still no sign of real disagreements within the party, there was scope for divisions to develop if the leadership did not convincingly clarify their ideas.

## **CHAPTER 22: THE NATIONAL REVOLUTION IN SLOVAKIA AND THE DIFFICULT PROBLEMS AWAITING THE SLOVAK COMMUNISTS.**

Slovakia was not at the centre of attention throughout the first year after liberation and its importance for the future of the whole state was only demonstrated by the Democratic Party's sweeping electoral victory. This followed a period of development in Slovakia which was in many ways different from that in the Czech lands as Slovak society itself was different from Czech society. There were similarities such as the large size of the political parties that organised 13% of the adult population: there were 240,000 members in the Democratic Party and 120,000 in the KSS<sup>1</sup>. This, however, was not the same level of political involvement as in the Czech lands and there were further differences in the relationship between the parties and between them and other aspects of social and economic development.

The specificity of Slovak development, which the Communists proved unable to appreciate in full, can be revealed from a concise review of Slovakia's development from its gradual liberation to the elections of 1946.

### **III.22.1. The Communist Party takes the initiative in Eastern Slovakia but also commits serious sectarian errors.**

During the liberation of Eastern Slovakia there was at first no anti-fascist political alternative to the KSS. Communists quickly took the initiative in establishing National Committees

<sup>1</sup> Kaplan: Znárodnění, p.149.

which laid the foundations for a new political life. Their tasks were broad, including a start to land reform and speedy confiscation of the property of enemies and traitors. They were also to dissolve fascist organisation but first priority had to go to those tasks directly related to the war. This meant repairing roads and bridges to help the Red Army - and also as a start to post-war reconstruction - and recruitment for the Czechoslovak army. Neither task was easy: war damage was enormous and reconstruction was slowed down by a lack of interest among private firms and also by bad organisation and shortages of raw materials<sup>2</sup>. Volunteers to the army were also difficult to find amid an atmosphere of general disinterest in which "many thought that, with the arrival of the Soviet Army, the war had ended for them"<sup>3</sup>.

Although the Communists undoubtedly enjoyed considerable prestige in this period, the breadth and depth of their influence remains unclear. The Democratic Party was sometimes actively prevented from organising but generally its sluggish start to activities can be attributed to its lack of traditions, of a programme and of well-known leaders, so that it had to go through the same process of gradually arousing and uniting non-socialist individuals as during the uprising<sup>4</sup>. Nevertheless, its propaganda could make an impact in the villages as it presented itself - by means of posters - as a peasant party in favour of land reform. It accused the KSS of

<sup>2</sup>Jablonický: Slovensko, p.313.

<sup>3</sup>Jablonický: Slovensko, p.304.

<sup>4</sup>Jablonický: Slovensko, p.200-201.

intending to give confiscated land to the state instead of dividing it up among the peasants<sup>5</sup>.

The KSS, it seemed, did not publicise its policies in the countryside. Illegal activity had often amounted only to small groups in towns which had emerged to establish the new organs of power: much of the countryside remained sympathetic to the Slovak state to the end. So, aware of being the first organised political force and also of the presence of the Red Army and NKVD, the KSS were often content to consolidate their strength by avoiding free elections to National Committees in which they would probably have been defeated<sup>6</sup>.

It would be dangerous to generalise from any particular situation to the whole of Eastern Slovakia. There is remarkably little information available and what there is points to a considerable degree of diversity in the method of creation, the actual composition and the activities of National Committees. They often seem to have been almost completely dominated by one side or the other giving an overall picture on 8/4/45 for 14 Districts of 1765 KSS, 1404 Democratic Party and 862 non-party in Local National Committees<sup>7</sup>. How far Communists could dominate these committees

<sup>5</sup> According to Šimovič and Čulen at a KSS conference in April 1945; "Záznam z konference (aktivu) funkcionářů KSS 8/4/1945 v Košicích", Československý časopis historický XIV, No.2, 1966, p.246 and p.247.

<sup>6</sup> Šimovič, "Záznam", p.245.

<sup>7</sup> Cesta ke květnu, p.485.

often depended on the quality of their leading personality in the area<sup>8</sup>.

When they did dominate, there definitely was a strong tendency for the KSS to exploit its positions of power, ignore other political forces and pursue a sectarian and authoritarian policy. This applied particularly in Michalovce, an area where energetic work by the National Committee in a wide range of activities was at one time praised as an example for others to follow<sup>9</sup>. The local KSS justified their policies with the claim that the Democratic Party had made co-operation impossible by recruiting former fascists and calling for the destruction of the KSS. They apparently even staged an armed attack on the newly created militia<sup>10</sup>. The real point, however, was not the Communists' attitude to other parties, but their arrogant attitude towards the population as a whole and the accumulation of privileges for themselves<sup>11</sup>. This was vigorously attacked from the KSS leadership who warned of the necessity of winning firm political support in the "typically Agrarian and Populist region", and not allowing activities to "degenerate into terror from the militia"<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> See the KSS report of 10/4/45 on the situation in the Poprad area, Cesta ke květnu, p.556.

<sup>9</sup> Pravda, 13/2/45, quoted in Cesta ke květnu, p.492-493.

<sup>10</sup> Bednár, "Záznam", p.246-247.

<sup>11</sup> A particular target for attack was P. David who rose from being party leader in the area to much higher office in the 1950's; Čulen, "Záznam", p.245.

<sup>12</sup> Husák, "Záznam", p.248. The role of the NKVD in this area remains unknown. It has been claimed that they co-operated with P. David in November 1944 in removing a non-Communist District National Committee; P. Plánovský: "Odbojová činnost na Východnom Slovensku za II. svetovej vojny", Zborník úvah, p.258.

Gottwald insisted that this should not be repeated<sup>13</sup>, and KSS leaders afterwards argued that the composition of National Committees should not be worked out in private even on a parity basis. Instead, it should be decided somehow by the will of the people, either through secret voting or through an assembly of the population<sup>14</sup>. There seems, in fact, to have been less problems in the transition to the new state power in areas liberated later in Central Slovakia where there were more partisans and where experiences of political work during the uprising were useful<sup>15</sup>.

In arguing against this type of sectarianism, co-operation with the Democrats could be presented as a practical necessity to help the war effort<sup>16</sup>, and then to help the full mobilisation into the army which was decreed by the SNR Presidium 23/3/45<sup>17</sup>. Beyond that, it was presented as a realisable permanent political perspective to continue with the co-operation that had been established during the uprising. As the Democrats showed increasing signs of unwillingness to co-operate, so the argument in the KSS leadership was that there were two trends. One was genuinely democratic and anti-fascist and should therefore be given every encouragement as the KSS was greatly interested in its dominance. The other trend

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<sup>13</sup> See his speech at the KSS conference of 8/4/45, Spisy, XII, p.13-25.

<sup>14</sup> See the circular from the KSS Central Committee, 10/4/45, Cesta ke květnu, p.600-601.

<sup>15</sup> Jablonický: Slovensko, p.208.

<sup>16</sup> Friš, Pravda, 17/3/45, reproduced in Cesta ke květnu, p.540.

<sup>17</sup> Cesta ke květnu, p.550.

aimed to renew the old Agrarian Party, which was felt to be unacceptable owing to that party's past record particularly in 1938, when it had joined forces with the Hlinka movement<sup>18</sup>.

The Communists believed that, with a programme which was not to be socialist but to embody "essentially the principles proclaimed by us during the Banská Bystrica uprising"<sup>19</sup>, a tightly organised National Front could be created and become the leading political force in the nation. Gottwald proposed a structure with the two parties as its nucleus and then incorporating other mass organisations alongside them<sup>20</sup>. This was accepted by Husák who thereby implicitly rejected ideas both of a one-party state and of a National Front as no more than a compromise agreement between two parties. The hope was that, by showing every willingness to co-operate with the Democrats in the construction of a new Slovakia, the "democratic" trend could be helped to dominate over the Agrarian trend within the Democratic Party<sup>21</sup>. Really close unity, however, never seemed to develop and Husák was soon complaining of how "provocatively and aggressively" the Democrats were behaving<sup>22</sup>. Local National Front bodies, intended to contain representatives of the two parties and also some non-party people, in practice

<sup>18</sup> See Husák's speech at the KSS conference in Košice on 28/2/45, KSS dok, p.87.

<sup>19</sup> KSS circular in the Poprad area on 31/3/45, Cesta ke květnu, p.558.

<sup>20</sup> KSS dok, p.85.

<sup>21</sup> Husák, KSS dok, p.85-87.

<sup>22</sup> "Záznam", p.249.



played no significant role and degenerated into very occasional meetings of the two parties<sup>23</sup>.

III.22.2. Co-operation between the two Slovak parties proves very difficult during the creation of the new state.

So, despite the willingness of the Democrats in programmatic statements to incorporate some of the Communists' ideas, the idea of close national unity was not operating as smoothly in Slovakia as in the Czech lands during the spring of 1945. Powerful voices within the Democratic Party insisted that National Committees could not be successful and that only the old apparatus could set administration on its feet again. The KSS did manage to ensure an SNR Presidium decree on 7/4/45 definitively putting power in the hands of the National Committees, but this followed a heated debate over the familiar ground of the abilities of specialists as opposed to elected representatives<sup>24</sup>.

There were analogous disagreements over the police force. As areas were liberated, so local militia forces were established by partisans or underground activists. They received weapons from the Red Army and were seen by the KSS as the nucleus from which to build a new police force<sup>25</sup>. The Democrats opposed this view and preferred to restore the old force, but a compromise was reached and, on 23/2/45, the SNR issued a decree dissolving the old force

<sup>23</sup> Cesta ke květnu, p.548-549.

<sup>24</sup> Jablonický: Slovensko, p.213-214, and Cesta ke květnu, p.581-583.

<sup>25</sup> e.g. Pravda, 17/2/45, reproduced in Cesta ke květnu, p.501-503.

and calling for the creation of a new one which was to include anti-fascists from the old force, the best elements from the militia and other anti-fascist fighters<sup>26</sup>. This was followed by a decree dissolving the militia, although it still continued to emerge and operate in newly liberated areas and was only completely dissolved over the whole of Slovakia in August 1945<sup>27</sup>.

In practice, the Communists accepted that the militia was inadequate for the task of "conducting a war with a powerful and vengeful fascist enemy"<sup>28</sup>. The new police force, however, was dominated by officers who tended to be closer to the Democratic Party than to the KSS. Few competent participants in the resistance wanted to become policemen. By the end of 1945, 3,952 out of the 5,137 policemen were from the old force while 1,185 were new: of these 63% were former partisans. Within this there was a definite Communist presence and effective dominance in the non-uniformed branch, which was organised in May 1945 to hunt out fascists and bring them before the People's Courts. This branch was dissolved on 31/10/45 and its members were either transferred to other branches or left the force altogether<sup>29</sup>.

There were disagreements too over the legal punishment of

<sup>26</sup> Cesta ke květnu, p.509-510.

<sup>27</sup> The SNR decree of 30/3/45, is reproduced in Cesta ke květnu, p.554-555. See also Jablonický: Slovensko, p.351-365.

<sup>28</sup> Husák, at the KSS conference of 28/2/45, KSS dok, p.92.

<sup>29</sup> For a description of the establishment of the Slovak police force, see Jablonický: Slovensko, p.336-350.

fascists. There was formal agreement that it was a necessary measure and that it should be done quickly, but there were disagreements over how far it should be a legal process, in the hands of legal specialists, and how far it should involve wider popular participation<sup>30</sup>. Although the SNR Presidium passed a decree in March 1945 for the establishment of People's Courts, they were not set<sup>up</sup> anywhere during the first half of 1945<sup>31</sup>. They started later than the KSS wanted and undertook minimal activities in the agricultural areas of Southern and Eastern Slovakia<sup>32</sup>. Communists within the police became convinced that traitors were being helped to escape from justice by people in high places<sup>33</sup>.

Nevertheless, over 8,000 individuals, including 2,296 Slovaks, had been given sentences by the special courts by the end of 1947<sup>34</sup>. These figures do not suggest a less thorough process than that implemented in the Czech lands. Moreover, the sentences passed on leading figures in the Slovak state were to have a major impact on Slovak political life<sup>35</sup>.

Disagreements between the two Slovak parties were more open

<sup>30</sup> Pravda, 25/3/45, reproduced in Cesta ke květnu, p.626-628.

<sup>31</sup> Cesta ke květnu, p.602-603.

<sup>32</sup> I. Láluha: Február 1948 a stredné Slovensko, Banská Bystrica, 1967, p.16.

<sup>33</sup> Lietavec, RP 20/1/46, p.2.

<sup>34</sup> For detailed figures, see A. Rašla: Ľudové súdy v Československu po II. svetovej vojne ako forma mimoriadneho súdnictva, Bratislava, 1969, p.152-153.

<sup>35</sup> See below Section IV.30.6.

than between the Czech parties. There were some Democratic Party leaders who at times did advocate the same kind of national unity and political co-operation as the KSS<sup>36</sup>. Nevertheless, there evidently were not such strong forces bringing the nation together as applied in the Czech lands. This can be seen as stemming both from the structure of Slovak society - its backwardness, the predominance of village life and the comparatively greater separation of the villages from towns - and in its recent history. This gave the notion of an anti-fascist struggle a different meaning. As was pointed out at the time, co-operation was hampered by wide divergences in the understanding of what fascism in Slovakia really was. Unity had been easy during armed struggle against a German invasion, but then seemed to evaporate<sup>37</sup>.

### III.22.3. "Reaction" in Slovakia is different from "reaction" in the Czech lands.

The development of the gulf between the two Slovak parties has to be set against the background of Slovakia's social and political structure, and its recent past. A useful starting point is the concept of "reaction" which could not even be so clearly defined as in the Czech lands. The Slovak state had much wider support than the Protectorate and there were many important figures who did not regret the Žilina agreement of 1938 or even the establishment of the Slovak state, but could still play

<sup>36</sup> See Lettrich's speech quoted in Nové slovo, 14/9/45, p.3.

<sup>37</sup> c.f. M. Faltan, Nové slovo, special issue for the anniversary of the uprising, 1946, p.14.

important parts in the uprising. Many regarded the Slovak state as, in general, a gain over the pre-Munich republic and therefore had some degree of nervousness about the new republic. There were, as has been mentioned, areas where the Slovak state enjoyed considerable support to the very end and almost everywhere there were signs of a certain amount of indifference towards the new regime<sup>38</sup>.

This, then, was a very different situation from the Czech lands where "reaction" could be fairly clearly identified with a small number of individuals associated with the pre-war right-wing parties or with big business and could often be accused of allying with a brutal foreign occupier. Moreover, not only was the full extent of Slovak "reaction" harder to identify, but it also retained a well organised hard core in an underground network that had been left behind when, at the end of the war, about 20,000 leading figures from the Slovak state emigrated<sup>39</sup>. The police complained that these groups were becoming active again at a time when there were enough problems with the Hungarian minority and with the few thousand bandits left from the German army and from Vlasov's forces<sup>40</sup>. At first the underground groups kept quiet or restricted themselves to sending information to emigré organisations. It was in early 1946 that they began broadening their activities.

<sup>38</sup> Particularly in Western Slovakia there were open references to the passivity of part of the population. A conference of the KSS in Bratislava on 20/5/45 was told that, despite considerable participation in the May day celebrations, it was quite clear that the fascist era had affected people's political ideas; Cesta ke květnu, p.625.

<sup>39</sup> Dvořáková, Lesjuk: Československá, p.95, and Prehľad, p.321.

<sup>40</sup> Lietavec, RP 20/1/46, p.2.

One group was discovered and seemed to have illegal publications and arms supplies as well as contacts with Chudoba in Prague and Banderovci<sup>41</sup> in Eastern Slovakia<sup>42</sup>. There was also an illegal trade union organisation which distributed leaflets and claimed to have been created at a founding congress in February, 1946: it disappeared in September when the Democrats began taking trade union work seriously<sup>43</sup>.

In isolation these underground groups could not seriously affect political developments. They had first to penetrate legal organisations. This was not so true of the Catholic church which had also been a solid support for the Slovak state. It, however, did not risk presenting a general political programme or insisting on creating a new Catholic party: that was made very difficult by the down-fall of the Slovak state and by the imprisonment or arrest of so many cadres of political Catholicism. By July, however, the church hierarchy began to feel their strength returning. A pastoral letter from Slovak bishops on 8/7/45 proclaimed their definite opposition to the nationalisation of schools<sup>44</sup>. The point was that, under the Slovak state, the Catholic church was given control over an increasing amount of the education system<sup>45</sup>. A

<sup>41</sup> See below Section V.33.6 for an explanation of who the Banderovci were.

<sup>42</sup> RP 24/3/46, p.1, and SS 24/3/46, p.1. Chudoba denied any serious involvement; Obzory, 30/3/46, p.193. Apparently six groups were discovered during 1946 and some more in 1947; S. Falt'an: Slovenská, p.233-234.

<sup>43</sup> Jarošová, et al: Odbory, p.105.

<sup>44</sup> S. Falt'an: Slovenská, p.213.

<sup>45</sup> Prehl'ad, p.358.

natural demand of the uprising was therefore the nationalisation of schools, but the church was prepared only to accept a return to the pre-1938 situation in which 40% of all pupils went to exclusively Catholic schools<sup>46</sup>.

Although this was a comparatively mild intervention compared with previous years, the implication was perfectly clear when it was followed by an attempt to form a Catholic party<sup>47</sup>. This was firmly rejected by both the Communists and the Democrats, but the church hierarchy continued to make tentative comments on political questions. They always showed themselves to stand well to the right of the new regime.

Husák's reaction in July left little doubt that he saw the church hierarchy as potentially more dangerous than any discernible right-ward trend in the Democratic Party. "It is good that clerical reaction has exposed itself so soon", he wrote, "and that it has so strikingly demonstrated its hatred for the Czechoslovak Republic. At least we know where the new fifth column of Gardist terror and Nazism was to be created. . ."<sup>48</sup> Behind this bitterness there was the fear that, sooner or later, Catholicism would find a political base. There was always a hope within the KSS that this would take a new form, so that Husák even went beyond statements of respect for religious freedom and advocated definite

<sup>46</sup>V. Precan: Slovenský katolicizmus pred februárom 1948, Bratislava, 1961, p.169-171.

<sup>47</sup>Prehl'ad, p.354.

<sup>48</sup>Nové slovo, 20/7/45, p.3.

co-operation with progressive elements in the church<sup>49</sup>. In practice, co-operation with Catholics never developed and the only sort of political Catholicism to emerge was approved of by the church hierarchy and took a firmly right-wing form. The KSS found itself responding either with polite advice for "the church to restrict itself to its lofty spiritual role and not to interfere in the political field"<sup>50</sup> or with blunt warnings: "The Slovak peasant is impatiently awaiting the dividing up of the church's latfundiae"<sup>51</sup>.

All the time, the KSS still hoped for the emergence of a new trend in the Catholic church. They were not over-stating its importance as, if it claimed the allegiance of a smaller percentage of Slovaks than of Czechs<sup>52</sup>, it had great power in backward and culturally comparatively isolated villages<sup>53</sup>.

#### III.22.4. Social differentiation and political attitudes in the Slovak village.

Unlike the Czech lands, the dominant economic activity in Slovakia was agriculture which employed directly 40,8% of the active population compared with 18,2% in Bohemia and Moravia<sup>54</sup>.

<sup>49</sup> Speaking at the KSS Conference in Košice on 28/2/45, KSS dok, p.99. "Progressive" was never precisely defined. Perhaps a major difficulty was that the only acceptable "progressive" elements would be those recognising that the church could only play a limited role in society.

<sup>50</sup> S. Bašťovanský, Nové slovo, 1946, No.8, p.1.

<sup>51</sup> Husák, Nové slovo, 20/7/45, p.3.

<sup>52</sup> The figures show Roman Catholics as 75% of the population in Bohemia, 86% in Moravia and 72% in Slovakia: Statistická příručka, p.22.

<sup>53</sup> Kaplan: Znárodnění, p.143-144.

<sup>54</sup> Jarošová, et al: Odbory, p.15-16.



There was a slightly greater degree of differentiation in land-holdings than in the Czech lands and the table below shows the basic breakdown.

Table 15: The size distribution of agricultural enterprises in Slovakia in 1930.<sup>55</sup>

Size of holding in hectares (agricultural) land only)	Percentage of holdings	Percentage of agricultural land	% of population employed in agriculture
0	0	0	30,7
0 - 2	40,0	5,79	14,9
2 - 5	28,1	15,10	22,8
5 - 10	20,3	22,89	24,2
10 - 20	8,6	18,39	
20 - 50	2,0	9,11	6,5
50 - 100	0,5	5,19	0,9
over 100	0,5	23,53	

Despite this picture of inequality, the technical backwardness of Slovak agriculture meant that only that group owning over 50ha could really be differentiated from the rest of the village<sup>56</sup>. The poorer peasants had barely sufficient land for subsistence and they often had to seek employment elsewhere or enter increasingly into debt. The "middle peasants", roughly those owning 5 - 20ha although in some areas land was so unproductive that the lower limit

<sup>55</sup> Cambel: Slovenská, p.12 and p. 14.

<sup>56</sup> Unless otherwise stated this section is based on Cambel, Slovenská, Chapter 1.

would have to be set higher, could in periods of economic boom, such as the war, produce enough to yield a surplus over their needs. This could be reinvested as capital. The richer peasants, owning 20-50ha, can be regarded as capitalist entrepreneurs employing wage labour. Even then, they remained close to the rest of the village in much of their life style: they themselves worked still and generally had close family ties with the rest of the village community. They were probably politically a very influential part of village life and, as they could profit from the war boom, they could often support aspects of the Slovak state. In so far as there was a Slovak bourgeoisie at all, these constituted its most influential part<sup>57</sup>. Still larger holdings were owned by individuals who did not need to work. Their ownership generally derived from inheriting feudal estates and this left some ambiguity over nationality as feudal lords had generally been of German or Hungarian nationality. There were also large estates belonging, as in feudal times, to the Catholic church and its office bearers had certain special land rights.

This picture of differentiation within the village and extreme poverty at its lower end gave great potential scope for ideas of egalitarian land reform. There were, however, additional important points that distinguished the Slovak from the Czech village. The first was its relative cultural backwardness - in some parts of

<sup>57</sup> businesses  
Even including, employing only six workers and lumping together very diverse economic activities, the bourgeoisie only amounted to 1-1.5% of the active population and seems to have wielded no direct political or economic influence as a group: Kaplan, Znárodnění, p.134.

Eastern Slovakia illiteracy exceeded 15% of the adult population<sup>58</sup> - and inward-looking isolation giving great power to the church which, very often, was the most effective contact with the outside world. The second related point was the lack of any feeling of unity with the working class: a poor peasant, barely above subsistence level, rarely needing even to travel to a market town, and certainly not able to contemplate investing in industrial products to raise his productivity, could hardly have the same attitude towards workers and industry in general as the wealthier, better educated and more aware Czech peasant.

It would therefore seem that a revolutionary awakening of the Slovak village would have to be around narrower peasant interests. The gulf between town and country made the notion of an all-national revolution less applicable. Also it becomes less meaningful to refer to the working class leading the revolutionary movement as so much of the countryside was completely isolated from those significant industrial enterprises in which workers could be effectively organised.

### III.22.5. The social and political strength of the Slovak working class.

As a social group the actual working class was small and scattered among small enterprises. Industry as such employed 35,4% of the active population compared with 49,9% in Bohemia and Moravia, but that includes even the smallest productive enterprises<sup>59</sup>. Of

<sup>58</sup> Kaplan: Znárodnění, p.129.

<sup>59</sup> Jarošová, et al: Odbory, p.15-16.

actual workers there were perhaps 600,000 in all, but barely one fifth of them - 9½% of the economically active population - were in industrial enterprises employing over 50 workers<sup>60</sup>. This left large areas of Slovakia without even a small factory. In a sizeable town like Bratislava, under 16% of the economically active population were employed in industry after the immediate post-war recovery<sup>61</sup>.

This meant that, although after the 1945 nationalisation decrees 66,6% of employees worked in nationalised enterprises<sup>62</sup>, - a similar figure to the Czech lands - many areas could be left completely untouched<sup>63</sup>. Moreover, the importance of large-scale industry at the start of the revolution was further reduced by the great extent of war damage which led to a dramatic decline in employment in mining for 16,412 in 1944 to 7,545 in June 1945. In engineering the decline was from 46,992 to 13,063<sup>64</sup>. Slovakia's biggest factory, the Škoda works at Dubnica which had employed 14,650 in 1943, was completely destroyed<sup>65</sup>: overall, industry only slowly recovered, reaching perhaps half the 1944 level in September 1945<sup>66</sup>.

<sup>60</sup> Kaplan: Znárodnění, p.130 and p.131.

<sup>61</sup> Jarošová, et al: Odbory, p.17.

<sup>62</sup> Výstavba Slovenska, II, No.3, p.6, quoted in Jarošová, et al: Odbory, p.66-67.

<sup>63</sup> Even in Zvolen in Central Slovakia not one factory was nationalised; Laluha: Február, p.10.

<sup>64</sup> Jarošová, et al: Odbory, p.18.

<sup>65</sup> Jarošová, et al: Odbory, p.42.

<sup>66</sup> Jarošová, et al: Odbory, p.53. In transport the situation was perhaps even worse. In Slovakia on 6/4/45 there were only 109 out of the original 665 locomotives and only 11 were working; Jablonický: Slovensko, p.311.

This was not only of economic importance but also politically significant because it meant that at first there were only a few parts of the country where an organised working class could dominate political life. Later, as industry recovered and grew, so the organised section of the workers became far more powerful than its simple numerical strength would suggest.

Its political influence was actively encouraged by the KSS which was predominantly a working class party, more so even than the KSČ in the Czech lands. This can be seen in the breakdown of 613 delegates to the KSS conference in Žilina in August 1945 where 314 were classified as workers, 58 as peasants and small businessmen and 211 as intellectual<sup>67</sup>. Even in the agricultural East, workers constituted the largest single social group among party members, although that seems to have included, at least sometimes, agricultural workers and small private businesses<sup>68</sup>. The class base, however, the political strength of workers and small representation for peasants, again indicative of the considerable gap between themselves and the working class, does not seem to have improved in the following months<sup>69</sup>. Laluha gives figures of party membership in Bratislava in October 1946. These figures showing 63% of KSS members being workers, and 16% peasants and small businessmen at the end of 1946. In industrial areas the KSS was almost exclusively working class; 94,1% of members in Považská Bystrica and 85,6% in Žilina<sup>70</sup>.

<sup>67</sup> KSS dok, p.217.

<sup>68</sup> See the figures for 1/3/45, Cesta ke květnu, p.515. See also the figures for Sabinov as a comparison, Cesta ke květnu, p.501.

<sup>69</sup> See the figures in Prehľad, p.331 and p.351.

<sup>70</sup> Laluha: Február, p.141.

. This does not mean that leading KSS representatives were overwhelmingly working class. As in the Czech lands, the breakdown of representatives in District National Committees shows considerable similarity between the parties.

Table 16: Social allegiances of representatives in District National Committees in Central Slovakia from November 1946 to February 1948. Figures in percentages.<sup>71</sup>

	KSS	DS
Intelligentsia	31,7	31,7
Peasants	22,2	28,2
Small businessmen	12,2	23,8
Workers	29,5	10,8
Capitalists	0	2,3
Others	4,4	3,2

Nevertheless, the KSS was clearly dependent on its working class base. Moreover, the political strength of workers was enhanced by the influence of the united trade union movement. This based itself on the traditions of the uprising and the Congress of Factory Committees at Podbrezova in October 1944. These committees began to emerge very quickly in Eastern Slovakia and took wider powers than any previous law or decree had laid down. They remained for some time more important than local trade union organisations but helped create a united trade union centre<sup>72</sup> in Košice which, it was accepted by an agreement between the parties on 15/3/46, had the right to representation within a National Front structure<sup>73</sup>.

<sup>71</sup> Laluha: Február, p.313-314.

<sup>72</sup> SOR - The Slovak Council of Trade Unions.

<sup>73</sup> Cesta ke květnu, p.478-481 and p.549.

At first they focused attention, just as they had during the uprising, on social issues directly affecting workers: this meant particularly wages. The KSS tried to broaden the view to an interest in all-national questions such as raising production<sup>74</sup>. Even this does not appear as a fully "all-national" activity when large-scale industry did not directly affect a large part of the country.

Two further points distinguish the Slovak from the Czech Trade Unions. The first was the great political weight of the industrial working class despite its numerical weakness. Workers in dispersed smaller factories or offices often remained unorganised, so that total trade union membership in Slovakia fluctuated around 50% of employees while in the Czech lands it reached 63% at the end of 1945<sup>75</sup>. The second point was the much narrower political complexion of the Slovak unions shown in the absolute dominance of the KSS. The Democrats had at first ignored the unions, trying to portray them as generals without troops<sup>76</sup>. They continued disdainfully omitting to greet the Congress in April 1946, which united the Czech and Slovak unions, thereby differentiating themselves from all the other parties<sup>77</sup>. Their political philosophy gave no place for trade unions and they therefore preferred to attack them for being dominated by the KSS.

<sup>74</sup>For a discussion of this, see Cesta ke květnu, p.530-531. See also Husák's speech on 28/2/45, KSS dok, p.97.

<sup>75</sup>Dvořáková, Lesjuk: Ceskoslovenská, p.32.

<sup>76</sup>Cesta ke květnu, p.528.

<sup>77</sup>Pravda, 9/8/47, p.2.

In the Czech lands no party could appear to so firmly reject trade unionism. In Slovakia, however, the working class was small and, most important of all, had no direct influence over much of the countryside. It could, however, wield considerable influence as other social groups could never be so well organised and hence so vocal. This could create a lasting base within the KSS for the view that democratic elections did not reveal the real balance of forces and could therefore be over-ruled. Thus, as will be seen, those sort of sectarian ideas reappeared more often in the KSS than in the KSČ in the Czech lands.

### III.22.6. Mass organisations tend to divide along party lines.

The failure of Slovak politics to give rise to a National Front analogous to that in the Czech lands can be highlighted by the division in the mass organisations. All of these could be presented almost as the property of one or other of the parties. The trade unions have already been mentioned, but there was at first a similar situation in the JZSR (United Union of Slovak Peasants). The Democrats' peasant policy had no particular need for a new peasant mass organisation, so they did not at first join the KSS in trying to establish the JZSR. Instead they stuck to the old Peasant Chamber and attacked JZSR as a KSS dominated body. In the spring of 1946, however, they suddenly changed their attitude and the KSS, finding itself on the defensive and threatened by the Democratic Party's strength, accepted an arrangement of parity for the four parties in the preparatory committee rather than risk new



elections that would have given dominance to the Democratic

78. Party

Resistance organisations might appear as a possible uniting force as they could perhaps be expected to propagate the idea of continuing the unity of the resistance into the new republic. In practice, however, the armed struggle itself had been divided and this was continued in a division into two main organisations ZSP (Union of Slovak Partisans) and ZVOJPOV (Union of Soldiers of the Uprising). The KSS tried to build the ZSP into an organisation with branches over the whole country so that it could bring the partisan "spirit" into the new republic. At first, however, it was not particularly important and only played a significant role in 1947 against the remnants of the HSL'S when former partisans complained of active discrimination against themselves<sup>79</sup>.

The ZSP was definitely Communist dominated and Šmidke was its chairman. ZVOJPOV, however, was a larger organisation, containing soldiers both from the uprising and from the armies formed in the West and in the USSR. Lt-col. Polak, who was<sup>a</sup> member of the Democratic Party's Presidium, was its chairman. In the autumn of 1947, ZVOJPOV appeared to have an influence on the Democratic Party<sup>80</sup>, but prior to that the Democrats seemed to be firmly in control.

78 Cambel: Slovenská, p.193-195. For the creation of the two smaller Slovak parties, see below Section IV.23.7.

79 Cesta ke květnu, p.661-662. For basic information on Slovak resistance organisations, see V. Huml: "Svaz slovenských partizánů a jeho úloha ve slovenské společnosti v předúnorovém období", Historie a vojenství, XX, No.4, 1971, p.545-568.

80 See below Section V.33.1.

III.22.7. The Democratic Party takes shape largely as a resurrection of the Agrarian Party.

Although the Democratic Party was slower to establish an organisational network than the KSS, the lead was small and the Democrats could quickly challenge KSS dominance. They seemed at first to be very flexible in their approach, willing to co-operate with the KSS where co-operation was offered. They even produced a programmatic statement on 22/4/45 which contained references to land reform to benefit poor peasants and agricultural workers and also to the nationalisation or conversion to co-operative ownership of industrial and banking institutions<sup>81</sup>. Such statements conflicted with the party's practice as it drew closer to the pre-war Agrarians. This could be seen in its leadership where prominent positions were taken by wealthy farmers and former Agrarians such as Ursíny and Hodža, and in its attitude towards the Agrarians' past. Ursíny was soon fully justifying the pre-war Agrarian Party, including its role in 1938, arguing that it took the only sensible course available<sup>82</sup>.

There is no real sign of a genuine and distinct anti-Agrarian left-wing, although the KSS believed through early 1945 that a trend willing to co-operate with them could be identified. They therefore adopted the strategy of developing co-operation with part of the Democratic Party while conducting the sharpest struggle with "reactionary elements"<sup>83</sup>. This was not successful. Rather, as the

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<sup>81</sup> Cesta ke květnu, p.622-624.

<sup>82</sup> Demokrat, 7/4/45, reproduced in Cesta ke květnu, p.593.

<sup>83</sup> Husák: "Záznam," p.249.

Democratic Party established itself more firmly, so it more clearly took shape as an Agrarian Party. Its membership was built up in the late spring and summer of 1945 and after that there were signs of stagnation or decline, as was the case in the KSS. Membership figures show that small producers, mostly peasants, constituted about 80% of membership: non-agricultural capitalists seem to have been of minimal importance<sup>84</sup>.

As is explained in Section III.23.1., the Democrats were able to follow the example of the Agrarians in 1919 by both delaying land reform, thereby allaying the fears of richer farmers, and simultaneously presenting themselves as a party defending peasants' interests: they missed no opportunity to spread fears that the KSS intended to force peasants into Kolkhozes<sup>85</sup> and, given the nature of the Slovak village, this must have found a ready response.

As they consolidated their strength, so the need for genuine co-operation with the KSS diminished. This was shown at their congress in Martin on 8/7/45, the results of which seem to have taken the KSS by surprise. Although Lettrich replaced Ursíny as chairman and this could appear to be a step to the left, there seemed to be right-ward moves on other questions. Very noticeable was the Congress resolution's failure to make any mention of the church, i.e. it did not even insist that religion should not become an instrument in political struggles. KSS concern at this was such that a Slovak National Front meeting on 16/7/45 clearly reaffirmed

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<sup>84</sup> Laluha: Február, p.140-141.

<sup>85</sup> c.f. Hryn, "Zaznám", p.247.

its absolute opposition to the misuse of religion for political purposes<sup>86</sup>. The Democrats, however, seemed to be making further advances to supporters of the Slovak state with, apparently, a call to defend those brought before People's Courts. Otherwise their immediate policy was to strengthen their own position by demanding reorganisation of the National Committees on the basis of elections by secret ballot<sup>87</sup>.

### III.22.8. Summary and discussion.

Revolutionary changes in Czechoslovakia in 1944 and 1945 can be seen as one single process but, in a sense, that process was made up of two complementary processes; one in the Czech lands and one in Slovakia.

In the late autumn of 1944 and the spring of 1945, as the Soviet army liberated Slovakia, National Committees took power. As in the Czech lands they were often Communist dominated, but their support was less broad. In many cases they held power in the towns, but had little influence on the rural population, which often remained sympathetic to the Slovak state. This gave scope for the Democratic Party to recapture the base of the former right-wing parties.

The KSS, although formally independent of the KSČ, tried to apply the same line as the Czech Communists. It was, however, less successful. There was not the same national unity as in the Czech

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<sup>86</sup> V. Prečan: Slovenský, p.236-240.

<sup>87</sup> V. Jarošová, O. Jaroš: Slovenské robotníctvo v boji o moc (1944-1948), Bratislava, 1965, p.85-88.

lands where the Communists seemed to be the leading force in a revolution that hardly anyone openly opposed. Instead, Slovak society seemed to be dividing between a comparatively small revolutionary core and the large mass of the population which was not actively involved. The difference stemmed from the distinct social and political structures and recent pasts of the two nations.

The concept of "reaction" might appear to be easier to define than in the Czech lands, because there were definite, organised groups of supporters of the Slovak state. There were also, however, many with some degree of sympathy for the Slovak state, and the Catholic church could still wield immense power.

Conservatism could dominate in the backward and culturally isolated villages where KSS influence was minimal. The industrial working class was small but did become politically powerful because of its level of organisation. The trade unions were clearly dominated by Communists.

The Democratic Party therefore had plenty of scope to take shape as a firmly right-wing party. There was an analogy to the National Socialists in the Czech lands as they began with left-sounding noises but then, fearing the strength and initiative of the Communists, took the opportunity to broaden their base by recruiting more clearly right-wing elements. In Slovakia scope for this was such that the Democrats appeared largely, although not exclusively, as a continuation of the old Agrarian party.

CHAPTER 23: THE SHAPING OF THE SLOVAK COMMUNISTS' POLICIES  
AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES FOR SLOVAK POLITICAL LIFE.

III.23.1. Disappointments with the National Front policy  
encourage sectarian ideas among Slovak Communists,  
but they had an alternative available.

When compared with the Czech lands, the political unity of the Slovak nation seems to have been gradually overshadowed by political divisions. It is therefore not surprising that some Slovak Communists could see no benefit in the National Front and began advocating its abandonment in favour of a one-party state modelled on the Soviet example<sup>1</sup>. There were even suggestions that Slovakia should leave the Czechoslovak state and affiliate to the USSR<sup>2</sup>. The roots of such ideas can be seen within the whole history of the Slovak Communist movement, within the sectarianism of its more immediate past and within the political structure of Slovak society itself. Many Communists must have felt that they had a great deal of power where it mattered, but little direct influence over the great mass of peasants.

There was, however, an alternative which was not based on indifference towards the majority of the nation. There was scope for a revolutionary movement among the peasants provided it was recognised that the Slovak revolution was far less of a national and far more of a social revolution than its Czech counterpart.

<sup>1</sup> e.g. A. Fabián at the Žilina conference of the KSS on 11/8/45, KSS dok, p.210.

<sup>2</sup> See Bašťovanský's criticisms of this view at the KSS Central Committee meeting of 26/10/45, KSS dok, p.315.

This view could be developed directly out of the experiences of the uprising<sup>3</sup>. Significantly, Slovak Communists spoke far sooner than their Czech colleagues about "statisation" to be followed by planning as the way to overcome poverty and unemployment<sup>4</sup>. Above all, they saw land reform in terms of its social impact rather than emphasising its national aspect. They calculated how much land could be made available and how far it would alleviate the destitution of the poorest peasants<sup>5</sup>. They emphasised that the revolution was to be the basis for a broad transformation of the whole of Slovak society. A "radical land reform" would be only the beginning. It would be followed by mechanisation, technical improvement and industrialisation to absorb the rural over-population<sup>6</sup>.

It was not made clear whether an egalitarian land reform was regarded as a pre-condition for technical advancement or raising agricultural productivity. The argument was presented rather as if the aim anyway was to help the rural poor. This, of course, could be argued on purely political grounds as the best way to broaden support for the KSS by enabling the largest possible number of people to gain from the new republic. Irrespective of the terminology Communists used, this was apparently the basic aim they pursued in land reforms in post-war Eastern Europe<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> See above Section II.10.6.

<sup>4</sup> e.g. Púll, Nové slovo, 8/6/45, p.3.

<sup>5</sup> e.g. M. Falt'an, Nové slovo, 15/6/45, p.6.

<sup>6</sup> D.M. Krno, Nové slovo, 1/6/45, p.5.

<sup>7</sup> H. Šlabek: "O politice komunistických stran v oblasti agrárních reforem (1945-1948)", Příspěvky k dějinám KSČ, 1966, No.2, esp. p.211.

Moreover, there can be little doubt that there was great potential support for the idea of a land reform on social and not just national grounds as it could be seen developing spontaneously in the first parts of Slovakia to be liberated. The newly formed National Committees had no legal basis in SNR decrees for their actions, but <sup>they</sup> immediately set about satisfying hunger for land by dividing up among small peasants the land of fascists who had fled before the arrival of the Soviet Army<sup>8</sup>. There was considerable diversity in the timing and details of land reform in Eastern Slovakia<sup>9</sup>, but a striking common feature was that the movement appeared "primarily as a social movement and the national character of the revolution that was taking place appeared as a secondary factor"<sup>10</sup>.

There is clear evidence for this in the speed with which, in areas where there was not enough land to confiscate from Hungarians, Germans and traitors, demands were quickly raised for dividing up church land or for a "general" land reform<sup>11</sup>. There were even isolated cases of peasants taking the law into their own hands and simply dividing up the land of loyal Czechs or Slovaks or even of the church<sup>12</sup>.

It is never easy to estimate the actual breadth of such a

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<sup>8</sup> Cambel: Slovenská, p.42-43.

<sup>9</sup> Cambel: Slovenská, p.52.

<sup>10</sup> Cambel: Slovenská, p.47.

<sup>11</sup> Cambel: Slovenská, p.56,57 and p.65.

<sup>12</sup> Cambel: Slovenská, p.84 and p.88.



movement, but it seems that the first questions being raised as areas were liberated were not concerned with reconstructing the transport system or mobilisation into the army but rather with property: property the German armies had destroyed or taken with them and the property of traitors that could be divided up<sup>13</sup>.

The KSS was probably establishing some sort of base among the poor peasants who were demanding land and becoming organised as poor peasants within Peasant Commissions<sup>14</sup>.

This seems to point towards a very different orientation from the KSČ line as evolved in Moscow. The SNR manifesto of 4/2/45, which was more or less identical to KSS policy of the time, left little doubt that there would be "great social reforms" leading to the application of the principle "that only he who works on the land should have it"<sup>15</sup>. Following Gottwald's advice to Husák on 18/2/45 there was a retreat from mentioning general land reform and greater emphasis on the the national aspect. Apparently the KSS leaders assumed that this would be a very temporary compromise and that Parliament would decide on a general land reform quickly after liberation<sup>16</sup>. They were already aware of the limited immediate possibilities for an anti-fascist land reform and it was an unpleasant paradox that M. Falt'an, the Communist agricultural

<sup>13</sup> See the report from Michalovce in November 1944, Cesta ke květnu, p.462.

<sup>14</sup> Of those demanding land probably about 50% had under 2ha while 38% owned 2-5ha; Cambel: Slovenská, p.81.

<sup>15</sup> Cesta ke květnu, p.487.

<sup>16</sup> Cambel: Slovenská, p.61 and p.102.

specialist temporarily in charge of administering the SNR's land reform policy, had to reject requests for dividing up church land<sup>17</sup>.

The situation was further complicated by the consolidation of the Democratic Party's influence over agricultural policy. Kvetko definitively took charge of agriculture and land reform in a reorganisation of the Board of Commissioners on 11/4/45. This seemed at first to be an acceptable solution for the KSS to a dispute in the SNR Presidium because they retained control of the Interior and Education and thought they could keep some influence over agricultural policy through Ďuriš. Moreover, Kvetko had been active and loyal during the uprising and seemed to represent the trend within the Democratic Party most willing to co-operate with the KSS<sup>18</sup>.

There was, however, a striking analogy in the Democrats' position to that of the Agrarians after 1918. The whole apparatus of agricultural policy, including co-operatives and financial institutions, had come under their control<sup>19</sup>. Anything done for the peasants they could present as their own achievement while simultaneously holding the land reform within strict limits. This they achieved by gradually changing the method of administration of the land reform. Power was taken away from Peasant Commissions formed out of those demanding land and given to specialist representatives of the Commissioner for Agriculture. Peasant Commissions

<sup>17</sup> Cambel: Slovenská, p.109-110.

<sup>18</sup> Cambel: Slovenská, p.116-117.

<sup>19</sup> Cambel: Slovenská, p.114-115.

were reorganised on a parity basis. Kvetko placed the blame for delays elsewhere but the fact remains that where local organs acted alone, then the village poor often received land although they often had to defy the instructions of the Commissioner for Agriculture<sup>20</sup>.

III.23.2. The Slovak parties agree on a policy for eliminating nationality problems, but it cannot be put into practice and is no help in solving social problems.

In the Czech lands the key to land reform was the expulsion of the German minority. In Slovakia the German minority was no less implicated in fascist domination<sup>21</sup>. Their representative bodies had consistently advocated a policy of moving closer to or incorporation into Nazi Germany and were regarded as the major instigators of the most pro-Nazi aspects of the Slovak state. They attacked the "liberalism" of the regime and took initiatives in tough measures against Jews. They could even establish their own armed bodies in March 1940. Later, at the time of the uprising, they were left almost completely isolated in their continuing belief in German victory. Partisans therefore felt no compunctions about attacking German civilians during their offensive at the start of the uprising<sup>22</sup>. Neither were there doubts about the need to expel the German population after the

<sup>20</sup> Cambel: Slovenská, p.129-132.

<sup>21</sup> For a basic factual account, see L'. Lipták: "The Role of the German Minority in Slovakia in the Years of the Second World War", Studia historica slovac, I, 1964, p.150-178.

<sup>22</sup> Husák, SNP, dok.576, p.964.

war. In fact, most were evacuated by the retreating German armies who left behind only about 20,000 out of an estimated 140,000<sup>23</sup>. Their land was settled quickly, particularly in the Spiš area<sup>24</sup>, but there was not enough to significantly alleviate the widespread hunger for land.

Greater hopes were placed in settling the fertile agricultural areas in Southern Slovakia that had been annexed by Hungary in 1938. This obviously meant that at least some of the indigenous Hungarian population of over one half million was to be expelled, but that was a far trickier problem than the expulsion of the German minority. There certainly was plenty of anti-Hungarian feeling in war-time Slovakia and there were calls for expelling the national minorities<sup>25</sup>. Clementis, however, maintained that the Hungarians in Southern Slovakia had been far from unanimous in supporting the consequences of Munich. Moreover, he claimed, the democratic institutions of <sup>the</sup> Czechoslovak Republic had left a deep impact on them and they therefore tended to be anti-fascists. Rather than creating the personnel for Hungarian administrative apparatuses elsewhere, they were presented with an apparatus imposed from Hungary<sup>26</sup>: this suggests a very different situation from the Sudeten Germans.

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<sup>23</sup> Documents on the Expulsion of the Germans from East Central Europe, Vol IV, Bonn, 1960, p.163.

<sup>24</sup> Cambel: Slovenská, p.76-77.

<sup>25</sup> See the messages from underground organisations to Beneš in March 1943 and March 1944, SNP, dok.6, p.66-67, and dok.51, p.173.

<sup>26</sup> V. Clementis: The Czechoslovak-Magyar Relationship, London, 1943, esp. p.69-71.

Clementis therefore argued against condemning the Hungarian people as a whole. His view was shared by KSS leaders inside Slovakia: Novomeský, for example, maintained that "very many . . . always remained more faithful to the republic than many Slovaks and Czechs . . ."<sup>27</sup>, and Husák expected post-war nationalities policy to involve no more than a return to the pre-1938 situation with perhaps some population exchange too<sup>28</sup>. To some extent KSS caution during the uprising on the Hungarian question can be explained by their desire to ensure Hungarian non-intervention for as long as possible<sup>29</sup>. There was, however, little doubt of the strongly Slovak nationalist side to the uprising: an SNR directive of 27/9/44 explicitly excluded Hungarians and Germans, as well as members of Slovak fascist organisations, from holding office in National Committees<sup>30</sup>.

This ambiguous situation was clarified somewhat during the liberation of Slovakia when Husák, at a meeting of the KSS Central Committee on 26/2/45, advocated a policy of "general nationality tolerance"<sup>31</sup>. The SNR took a similar stand: Hungarians were not condemned for their behaviour during and after Munich, but were to be judged on their behaviour in the new state. Although there was no doubt about the intention of establishing firm Slovak

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<sup>27</sup> SNP, dok.260, p.457.

<sup>28</sup> Husák: Svědectví, p.227.

<sup>29</sup> Lipták: "Madarsko", p.268.

<sup>30</sup> SNP, dok. 367, p.593.

<sup>31</sup> KSS dok., p.73.

control over Hungarian areas, the new state power was to be created in conjunction with selected advisory committees of "democratic thinking" Hungarians<sup>32</sup>. Moreover, Hungarians were to be allowed nationality rights such as their own schools<sup>33</sup>.

There were certainly great difficulties in this early period for the new Czechoslovak organs of power. Contacts generally ran far more easily from Southern Slovakia to Hungary and the area remained politically and economically isolated from the rest of Slovakia during the spring of 1945<sup>34</sup>. Hungarian Communists often seemed willing to help the Czechoslovak state by creating National Committees and expelling the "anyási", the Hungarians who had settled in the area after 1938 and who created the backbone of the Hungarian administrative apparatus<sup>35</sup>. Nevertheless, even these Communists were often unclear about their state allegiances and suggested that Hungary should retain at least some of its territorial gains<sup>36</sup>. There were also numerous reports of dubious elements trying to cover up for their pasts by joining the Communist Party. Overall, then, there was confusion among Hungarian anti-fascists and the revolutionary movement appears to have been weaker than in the rest of Slovakia<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> Cesta ke květnu, p.491.

<sup>33</sup> Cesta ke květnu, p.492.

<sup>34</sup> Jablonický: Slovensko, esp. p.389-390 and p.395.

<sup>35</sup> Jablonický: Slovensko, p.385.

<sup>36</sup> Cambel: Slovenská, p.310.

<sup>37</sup> Jablonický: Slovensko, p.389.

Fears about the situation in the South led to strong measures to break the area's contacts with Hungary. In May 1945 the army closed the frontier and prevented any printed material from coming into Czechoslovakia<sup>38</sup>. Tough measures were used by the police and this led Husák to admit at the SNR plenum of 25/5/45 that at times Czechoslovak organs had behaved chauvinistically and terrorised the Hungarian population<sup>39</sup>.

It must be emphasised that, despite the difficulties they faced, it was not primarily experiences in this period that changed the SNR's thinking. It was rather the acceptance of the line evolved in emigration in London and accepted by the Moscow KSČ leadership. Although it had been accepted that the Hungarian question was less dangerous than the German question<sup>40</sup>, the two were effectively lumped together. Both non-Slavonic minorities were judged to have been collectively guilty of causing the downfall of the Czechoslovak state so that, even if anti-fascists could retain political and civil rights, they could not retain nationality rights, such as their own schools. This could only mean assimilation or expulsion.

Husák claims to have been suspicious of linking the Slovak national revolutionary idea with the expulsion of Hungarians and accepted it only when assured that it was backed by the Soviet

<sup>38</sup> Jablonický: Slovensko, p.400.

<sup>39</sup> J. Purgat: "Niektoré otázky maďarskej menšiny v Československu", Východné Slovensko pred Februárom, Košice, 1968, p.113.

<sup>40</sup> See the London government's memorandum to the great powers on 23/12/44, quoted in Purgat: "Niektoré", p.93.

leadership<sup>41</sup>. The Democrats, however, had no hesitation in fully supporting it so that, by the summer of 1945, there was, in public at least, a united Slovak position for completely eliminating nationality problems<sup>42</sup>.

This naturally encouraged great hopes among Slovak peasants who, particularly in March and April 1945, often gave their first preference to colonising the South and only looked for other possible sources of land inside Slovakia when their hopes remained unfulfilled. One problem was the inability of the SNR to organise so gradiose a task, but more important was the failure to win international approval for expulsion of the Hungarian minority. It was anyway less likely that expulsions would alleviate Slovakia's social problems. As the KSC leaders in Moscow made clear in their discussions with Beneš, elimination of the Hungarian problem could be eased by the possibility of some exchanges for the Slovak minority in Hungary<sup>43</sup>, and there was soon talk of a half million Slovaks wanting to return from Hungary, Rumania, Yugoslavia and Austria<sup>44</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> Husák, Svědectví, p.525.

<sup>42</sup> Purgat: "Niektoré", p.107. Some within the KSS were, as is argued in Section III.23.5, extremely reluctant to accept this new line. Some, however, were more than willing to rid themselves of the image of being a Hungarian party. An editorial in Východoslovenská pravda on 16/5/45 explained why the slogan "Workers of all lands unite!" had been dropped. Unity with German workers was, it claimed, impossible because they had supported fascism and participated in its crimes. Apparently the same applied to Hungarian workers; Purgat: "Niektoré", p.121.

<sup>43</sup> Cesta ke květnu, p.56.

<sup>44</sup> Husák, Nové slovo, 29/6/45, p.3.



In the autumn of 1946 the Hungarian question took a new turn as Czechoslovakia failed to convince the great powers at Potsdam of the need to expel its Hungarian minority. This had not prevented the expulsion of 32,000, mostly anyási, up to 1/7/45<sup>45</sup>. The difficult problem, however, was the fate of the remaining 500,000.

The decision was taken to continue as if the Hungarians would leave and to start settling the area with Slovaks pending an international or inter-state agreement<sup>46</sup>. This was linked with extremely tough measures against Hungarians. The decree of 1/10/45 on compulsory labour duty hardly affected Czechs and Slovaks with whom voluntary measures only were used, but it quickly became a reality for Hungarians. Ďuriš put it bluntly at the KSS Central Committee meeting of 25/10/45: ". .we had the option of expropriating all the Hungarians' land, of confiscating it irrespective of whether we throw them out or not or whether we put them in labour camps. There is a great need for labour power in the Czechs lands. Send them to work in Bohemia. ."47-

Although this was meant to apply only to "Hungarian reactionary fascist inhabitants and those who own more than 50ha. . .", and although they were not actually put alongside Germans in labour camps but rather set to work on farms<sup>48</sup>, the policy was unacceptable to the Hungarians. Significant resistance developed particularly

<sup>45</sup> Jablůnický: Slovensko, p.397-398.

<sup>46</sup> J. Purgat: "Čo predchádzalo Dohode o výmene obyvateľ'stva medzi Československom a Maďarskom?", Revue dějin socialismu, 1969, No.4, p.511.

<sup>47</sup> KSS dok., p.272-273.

<sup>48</sup> J. Ďuriš: Přítomnost a budoucnost československého zemědělství, Praha, 1946, p.5 and p.6.

when it appeared that non-fascist Hungarians and whole families were to be permanently shifted to the Czech frontiers<sup>49</sup>.

At the same time negotiations between the Czechoslovak and Hungarian government failed to reach a satisfactory conclusion.

None of the Hungarian political parties accepted the Czechoslovak position although the left was at least willing to negotiate.

Ultimately the great powers insisted on serious inter-state discussions<sup>50</sup>, which quickly reached deadlock. The Hungarian government demanded either full citizenship rights for Hungarians living in Czechoslovakia, or the return of that territory to Hungary.

The Czechoslovak side insisted on their own right to create a national state of Czechs and Slovaks<sup>51</sup>.

In February 1946 agreement was reached on a compromise which was in fact very favourable to Hungary. Demands for frontier changes were dropped, but instead of any immediate expulsions there were to be only voluntary exchanges of equal numbers on both sides<sup>52</sup>.

In practice the exchange went very slowly and together with expulsions affected under 15% of the Hungarian population. It was further complicated by the Slovak tendency to exchange richer

Hungarians for the Slovaks from Hungary who tended, not surprisingly, to be poor. This could only generate further mistrust and delays<sup>53</sup>.

<sup>49</sup>Purgat: "Čo predchádzalo", p.516 and p.517.

<sup>50</sup>Purgat: "Čo predchádzalo", p.518 and p.522.

<sup>51</sup>RP 14/12/45, p.2.

<sup>52</sup>Purgat: "Čo predchádzalo", p.524-526, and RP 13/2/46, p.1.

<sup>53</sup>J. Zvara: Maďarská menšina na Slovensku po roku 1945, Bratislava, 1969, p.64-65, and Cambel: Slovenská, p.319-320.

At the international level too there was no chance for the Czechoslovak demand for a second stage involving the expulsion of a further 200,000 Hungarians. This was raised at the Paris peace conference and was actively supported by other Slavonic delegations<sup>54</sup> but not by Britain and the US who, as before, wanted the issue left to Czechoslovak-Hungarian negotiations<sup>55</sup>.

So the land hunger of the Slovak peasants could not be solved by the expulsion of Hungarians. Already in mid-1945 this gave renewed strength to the demand for a general land reform. A movement developed over the whole of Slovakia which was apparently so strong " . . . that no force could stop it"<sup>56</sup>. KSS leaders began to talk openly of radical social change. Their attention was directed above all to the question of a further stage to the land reform because "the land to be divided up is not enough . . ."<sup>57</sup>. M. Falt'an even prepared a draft decree in May 1945 setting a 30ha maximum for holdings - or 50ha under special circumstances<sup>58</sup>.

So, as the Democrats were building up their strength in the villages and spreading rumours of a KSS plan to force peasants into kolkhozes, the Communists answered with proposals for a further land reform along the lines of the SNR manifesto. This was to be

<sup>54</sup> For the Soviet view, expressed by Manuilsky, see RP 28/8/46, p.1.

<sup>55</sup> Zvara: Maďarská, p.62, and RP 25/9/46, p.3.

<sup>56</sup> Culen in the KSS Central Committee's Peasant Commission on 7/6/45, quoted in Cambel: Slovenská, p.141.

<sup>57</sup> Culen at a KSS conference in Bratislava on 20/5/45, quoted in Cambel: Slovenská, p.149.

<sup>58</sup> Cambel: Slovenská, p.142.

presented as proof that the KSS aim was not the destruction but the strengthening of private ownership<sup>59</sup>. Unfortunately for the KSS, they were prevented from applying or even campaigning for such a policy by the leading Communists in Prague who were becoming increasingly suspicious of the KSS leadership's ability to handle the situation in Slovakia.

III.23.3. Communist leaders in Prague wrongly assess the causes of difficulties in Slovakia and impose a new leadership on the KSS in August 1945.

There certainly was cause for concern at the situation within the KSS. It seemed to be far less united than the Czech party and the leadership seemed to lack the full confidence even of older members<sup>60</sup>. Disagreements were unrelated to the previous political affiliations of party members. Although there were apparently 20,000 former Social Democrats, they had been painlessly assimilated within the KSS's 197,000 members at the end of 1945<sup>61</sup>. Difficulties stemmed rather from concrete policy questions inside Slovakia, such as nationalities, land reform and even the National Front itself. There was less of a feeling of confidence that the line being pursued was actually leading the whole nation. There were, of course, doubts within the KSČ too, but they were not so

<sup>59</sup> M. Falt'an: Prvá časť pozemkovej reformy, Trnava, 1945, esp. p.16 and p.13.

<sup>60</sup> See K. Bacílek's speech to the KSS Central Committee meeting of 26/10/45, KSS dok, p.282-283.

<sup>61</sup> Prehl'ad, p.353. The merger was quickly achieved over the whole of Slovakia as it was liberated. Only in Košice was there a short-lived attempt to revive Social Democracy: KSS dok, p.75-77.

serious and could be largely overcome by inner-party discussions before the Eighth Congress and then at various later periods. The KSS did not hold a congress and neither did it take part in the discussions for the KSČ Eighth Congress. This meant that KSS members never fully and publicly clarified and united their position either on all-state or specifically Slovak questions.

Doubts and uncertainties could only be encouraged by the real problems encountered in the summer of 1945. "Reactionary" attitudes towards Czechs, Jews and the Soviet Union were beginning to appear. The Democratic Party was becoming a firmly right-wing party and reconstruction work was going slowly. This seems to have led to growing doubts among leading KSS representatives in Prague-those who had not been involved in the uprising - about KSS policy. They argued that Slovakia, although liberated before the Czech lands, was "lagging behind" in development. Surprisingly, they presented economic reconstruction as the most important aspect of this, although war damage in Slovakia was very extensive and there was not even a decision on much needed help from the central government until late in July<sup>62</sup>.

The root of Slovakia's "lagging" was, however, attributed to weaknesses and mistakes within the KSS<sup>63</sup>. The decision was taken at a meeting in Prague attended by Gottwald, Slánský, Nosek, Široký, Šoltész and Ďuriš to change the leadership and policies of the KSS. This was done in the absence of Šmidke, the KSS chairman, and the

<sup>62</sup>S. Falt'an: Slovenská, p.215, and Prehľad, p.350.

<sup>63</sup>For an account of how the criticisms took shape, see KSS dok, p.153-156.

venue for the change was to be a KSS conference already planned for Žilina in August. That same small group even worked out both the final resolution for the Žilina conference and the composition of the new leadership. Although there was discussion at Žilina it did not alter the outcome<sup>64</sup>. Široký was, in fact, sent as the representative of the KSČ Central Committee<sup>65</sup> to take over the leading position in the KSS, and he delivered the principal speech at Žilina without prior consultation with the KSS Presidium<sup>66</sup>. The formal relationship between the KSS and the KSČ was never clarified, but Ďuriš and Široký were soon attending all KSČ Presidium meetings, so that they were the principal effective contact between the two<sup>67</sup>.

So, although formally an independent party in line with the letter of the National Front agreement that no party should be organised at an all-state level, the KSS was in practice not free to develop its own policies. Instead, it had to accept an analysis of the Slovak situation that was worked out in Prague.

Široký's argument at Žilina was that a very serious economic crises was developing because of the slow pace of reconstruction<sup>68</sup> and that the KSS showed its weakness by its failure to see the political roots of the crises. This, he said, "made easier

<sup>64</sup> KSS dok, p.233-236. See also I. Škurlo: "Celoslovenská Konferencia KSS v Žiline roku 1945 a čo jej predchádzalo", Historický časopis, XIX, No.2, 1971, p.145-175.

<sup>65</sup> KSS dok, p.155.

<sup>66</sup> KSS dok, p.177.

<sup>67</sup> KSS dok, p.409.

<sup>68</sup> KSS dok, p.186-188.

reaction's destructive, treacherous activity, aiming towards the paralysis of our new free life. Reaction does not sleep. Reaction has not lain down its weapons . . . it wants at any cost to ruin the consolidation and stabilisation of our political and economic life"<sup>69</sup>. This view that "reaction" was to blame was strongly supported by Gottwald who also attended the conference. He quoted cases proving that the fascist underground was still active<sup>70</sup>, but never proving that its activities were the cause of the trouble.

They both appear to have mechanically transported their assumptions about the Czech situation onto Slovakia. The remedy they proposed was to fight "reaction" and build the republic by national unity around the Košice programme<sup>71</sup>. No consideration was given to the possible need for an alternative Slovak policy and any such idea was dismissed as an expression of sectarian ideas within the KSS. Gottwald therefore argued that the best way to advance the Slovak revolution was by using the influence of the Prague government more against the Democratic Party<sup>72</sup>. This implied greater acceptance of the need for a powerful central government, but Gottwald argued that Slovak Communists should not fear this as the KSČ had<sup>a</sup> strong position in the Prague government<sup>73</sup>.

Although Gottwald several times asserted that the old KSS

<sup>69</sup> KSS dok, p.188-189.

<sup>70</sup> KSS dok, p.223.

<sup>71</sup> Široký, KSS dok, p.192.

<sup>72</sup> KSS dok, p.228.

<sup>73</sup> KSS dok, p.223.

leadership was unjustifiably paranoid about Prague's central authority, he had in fact missed the point. There could be no thought of completely separate Slovak development: industrialisation, accepted by all Communists as the central aim, could obviously be helped enormously by close economic relations with the advanced Czech lands. The problem rather was whether the Košice programme, applied in every detail, could have the same impact on Slovak and Czech society. In practice large parts of Slovakia remained practically untouched by the national democratic revolution.

Even Široký soon had to recognise that the idea of a national front had a different practical application in Slovakia. It took far more of a tactical form, so that co-operation with the Democratic Party was essentially a means to force them to show their position on issues within the government programme<sup>74</sup>. As we shall see, Široký was already beginning to look for ways to fundamentally weaken the Democratic Party.

#### III.23.4. Talk of a general land reform is prevented after the Žilina conference.

Široký argued, in line with Czech Communist policy, that the first priority in agriculture was to complete the first stage of the land reform. He made no mention of any later stage which, presumably, could only come after the frontiers were settled.

Đuriš answered calls for a general land reform and clarified KSS land reform policy at the Central Committee meeting of 25/10/45.

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<sup>74</sup> See Široký's speech to the KSS Central Committee on 26/10/45, KSS dok., p.318.



Obviously basing himself on Czech experience, he justified the idea of a national land reform and argued that a general land reform would conflict with the broadest possible national unity and would isolate those richer peasants who had become convinced anti-fascists<sup>75</sup>. He warned strongly against the dangers of becoming isolated from the middle peasants who he obviously thought could be won over to oppose the Democrats<sup>76</sup>. Alongside this was perhaps the most important argument: "... we must also take seriously the argument that in Bohemia conditions are a little different. I think that it is not yet the time to pose generally the question of land in Bohemia: it would make more difficult own position among the middle peasants"<sup>77</sup>.

This left the KSS presenting a programme to the peasants with which they could not win and which could only generate disillusionment. Doomed to completing the first stage of the land reform first they encountered continual lengthy delays and disputes over the definition of a foreigner or traitor. This, rather than the simple question of the amount of land that could be claimed under the provisions of the first land reform, was the real fault in the line that had been imposed on the KSS: the vagueness and flexibility of the criterion gave maximum scope for the Democrats to delay and limit the land reform<sup>78</sup>. The table below shows how this first

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<sup>75</sup> KSS dok, p.269.

<sup>76</sup> KSS dok, p.272.

<sup>77</sup> KSS dok, p.271.

<sup>78</sup> This is argued by Cambel: Slovenská, p.150.

stage of post-war land reform affected Slovakia in comparison with the Czech lands.

Table 17: The impact of the first stage of the land reform in the Czech lands and in Slovakia.<sup>79</sup>

	Total agricultural land in thousand hectares in 1948	Land divided up in thousand hectares	Land divided up as a percentage of the total
Czech lands	4,751	1,405	30
Slovakia	2,810	246	9

Other aspects of Czech agricultural policy found even less application in Slovakia. An attempt to introduce the multiple price system was stubbornly resisted by the Democrats until the government enforced it after the 1946 elections<sup>80</sup>. Help in technical improvement could hardly seem relevant in Slovakia either to the owners of tiny holdings. There was little scope for encouraging spontaneous initiatives from the peasants to overcome their production problems: in the Czech lands this was apparently not difficult with ways being found to alleviate labour and fuel shortages<sup>81</sup>.

So, in the interests of KSC policy in the Czech countryside, a policy suitable for Slovakia was ruled out. At the same time, the

<sup>79</sup> Calculated from Jech: Probuzená, p.447, and Stručný, p.551.

<sup>80</sup> Cambel: Slovenská, p.184-188.

<sup>81</sup> See Ďuriš's speech in the Agricultural Committee of Parliament on 28/11/45 in Ďuriš: Přítomnost, p.

Czech policy could not be applied in full because so much of it depended on a higher technical level generally.

III.23.5. After the Žilina Conference the Slovak Communists strengthen their anti-Hungarian policies, but this only accentuates their problems.

As the Žilina conference placed emphasis on continuing with a land reform on national lines, so too it encouraged anti-Hungarian measures within the KSS. This, however, was not as easy as the anti-German policy in the Czech lands because it was unacceptable to many prominent Slovak and Hungarian Communists. For a time Hungarian anti-fascists were accepted into the KSS with the same rights as Slovaks and Novomeský still insisted on 14/8/45 that Hungarians should not be deprived of their schools<sup>82</sup>. At Žilina there were requests for producing KSS publications in the Hungarian language<sup>83</sup>. These seem to have been brushed aside but the differences still came into the open particularly over the party leadership's refusal to propose the parliamentary candidature of Š. Major who had been the most prominent pre-war Slovak Communist of Hungarian nationality, but who refused to assume Slovak nationality<sup>84</sup>. Many Slovak Communists believed that he should have been given the place within the KSS leadership that his abilities and past record warranted<sup>85</sup>.

<sup>82</sup> Purgat: "Niektoré", p.115.

<sup>83</sup> KSS dok, p.173.

<sup>84</sup> KSS dok, p.215.

<sup>85</sup> Purgat: "Niektoré", p.120.

In the following months there were quite obvious doubts from within the KSS about the leadership's policy. Party organisations in the South took up the complaints of the Hungarian population against forced transportation to the Czech frontiers<sup>86</sup> and there were many cases of trade union officials refusing to allow dismissals from factories on purely nationality grounds<sup>87</sup>. In fact, the SOR Presidium successfully insisted that voting rights for Germans and Hungarians should not be expressly removed in the proposed decree on Factory Councils<sup>88</sup>.

Perhaps in view of this situation, Široký strengthened the anti-Hungarian line arguing that Communists of non-Slavonic nationality had to be suspended from the party. He was fully aware that Hungarians were quoting Lenin and Stalin and principles of proletarian internationalism to support their case. He did not attempt to answer them and instead dismissed objections to the new policy with the words: "It is quite unnecessary . . . to devote so much time to these problems"<sup>89</sup>.

This policy of giving precedence to "exclusively our national interests"<sup>90</sup> led to the depletion of many KSS organisations<sup>91</sup>.

<sup>86</sup>Purgat: "Čo predchádzalo", p.515-516.

<sup>87</sup>Jarošová, et al: Odbory, p.84.

<sup>88</sup>Jarošová, et al: Odbory, p.83-84. The decree itself was remarkable in that it made no mention of nationality.

<sup>89</sup>Zvara: Maďarská, p.57-58, quoting a speech on 28/12/45.

<sup>90</sup>Široký at Žilina, KSS dok, p.185.

<sup>91</sup>J. Pleva: "Bratislava na prelome rokov", Príspevky k dejinám v rokoch 1945-1948, Bratislava, 1966, p.124-125.

It proved impossible to unite the party or to rival the Slovak nationalist appeal of the Democratic Party. The KSS could never fully dissociate itself from its own internationalist past or from the statements made by Communists in Hungary. Even after the leftward change in the Hungarian government in 1947, Clementis was still calling for "the complete liquidation of the Hungarian minority problem"<sup>92</sup>, but the Democrats could encourage suspicion that the KSS wanted to change its policy, for example, when Rákosi held talks with Communist leaders in Prague<sup>93</sup>.

Moreover, an unfulfilled and unfulfillable programme for land reform based on nationality could only serve to heighten national tensions as social aspirations were automatically translated into national antagonisms. Nationalist feelings against Hungarians, and also against Jews, could grow still stronger.

### III.23.6. Anti-semitism is revived in the autumn of 1945.

As with anti-Hungarian feeling, so anti-semitism had definite roots in Slovak society, but it too found a new basis within the context of post-war social changes. The issue was brought dramatically into public attention by a violent demonstration - described at the time as a pogrom - against Jews in Topol'čany on 2/10/45.

Široký's report to the government gave no indication that any KSS members had been involved but he did claim that two army platoons, instead of breaking up the demonstration, had used their weapons.

<sup>92</sup> Speech in parliament, Pravda, 2/10/47, p.1.

<sup>93</sup> Čas, 10/9/47, p.1.

against the Jews<sup>94</sup>. In fact, Communists were involved and, at their meeting in Topol'čany, they revealed a considerable depth of racist feeling. They firmly rejected Široký's explanation that the demonstration was caused by reaction encouraging and exploiting anti-semitism. Instead, they claimed, "they just didn't want Jewish children to go to the convent (school) with their Christian children"<sup>95</sup>.

It appeared that the propaganda, possibly consciously spread by former fascists, was amazingly primitive<sup>96</sup>. Nevertheless, it was very difficult to find non-Communist Slovaks who would firmly condemn the incident<sup>97</sup>. Even among the partisans a small number, particularly some from Topol'čany, staged an anti-Jewish demonstration during their congress in Bratislava in August 1946<sup>98</sup>.

Anti-semitism, then, must have been deeply rooted in the strongly Catholic Slovak society. Its reappearance however, was more than just a survival from the propaganda of the Slovak state. It had a material basis for resurgence in the question of aryanised property. In the Czech lands Jewish property had been taken by

<sup>94</sup> KSS dok, p.300.

<sup>95</sup> Jarošová, Jaroš: Slovenské, p.110.

<sup>96</sup> Doctors were said to be poisoning children with inoculations; PL 13/10/45, p.2.

<sup>97</sup> e.g. J. Sujaň, Svobodné noviny, 18/10/45, p.1. This article basically explained how Jews had never fitted into Slovak society. Peroutka (Svobodné noviny, 2/12/45, editorial) explained that he could find no Slovak who would unequivocally condemn the anti-Jewish demonstration.

<sup>98</sup> Huml: "Svaz", p.549-550.

Germans and was generally nationalised in 1945. In Slovakia, however, aryanisation appeared to be beneficial to the Slovak nation. Jewish owned land was sometimes even divided among poor peasants.

Nobody could advocate returning this confiscated property to rich Jews, and Gottwald was therefore at first careful to avoid any definite commitment. Husák suggested, at the KSS conference in Košice on 18/2/45, giving the property to poor Jews<sup>99</sup>. There were even thoughts of classifying Jews as German, Hungarian or Slovak depending on their first language<sup>100</sup>. Eventually it was decided that, as Jews had so obviously suffered extreme persecution under fascism, they had to be counted at least as German or Hungarian anti-fascists.

Property confiscated and divided up under the Slovak state could still not be returned, but the state promised to pay full compensation<sup>101</sup>.

This interweaving of national and social questions, more complex and confused than in the Czech lands, led to the immediate stimulus for the demonstration in Topol'čany. It occurred as 700 out of the 3,500 pre-war Jewish population returned from concentration camps and demanded back their property. The new owners refused to comply<sup>102</sup>.

<sup>99</sup> KSS dok, p.98.

<sup>100</sup> Cambel: Slovenská, p.257-259.

<sup>101</sup> Cambel: Slovenská, p.260.

<sup>102</sup> Jarošová, Jaroš: Slovenské, p.110.

III.23.7. The approaching elections encourage a clarification of Slovakia's party-political structure. Catholics re-enter political life and are accepted into the Democratic Party.

As the 1946 elections drew nearer, the KSS seemed still to be unable to formulate the policies that could make it the genuine leading force in Slovak society. Instead, their attention shifted to alterations to the party-political structure that might damage the Democratic Party. All the other parties were, during the autumn of 1945, seeking ways to strengthen themselves by becoming all-state parties. They hoped thereby to eliminate the privileged position the Communists had won during the Moscow discussions of being allowed to operate in both Slovakia and the Czech lands.

The Social Democrats wanted to establish an organisation in Slovakia thereby reversing the merger of the two parties in 1944. This was obviously an important issue for them as they wanted to emphasise their independent identity. It was the most obvious sign of disagreement with the KSČ at their Congress<sup>103</sup>. They argued that Tiso's moral and political influence was still strong and that dangers were heightened by the presence in the Democratic Party of many who had actively worked for the fascist regime. They claimed that developments in Slovakia presented a real threat to the future of the revolution, which could better be defended by three socialist parties in Slovakia leading to more votes overall

<sup>103</sup> See the message from Slovak Social Democrats and the response it recieved from delegates to the party's Twentieth Congress; Protokol XX, p.249-250.



for the Košice programme<sup>104</sup>. The outcome was the creation of the Party of Labour which was formed on 20/1/46. Its programmatic statement was read in parliament on 8/3/46 by the Democratic Party's former Vice Chairman Šabršula. He expressed firm support for the government programme and nationalisations and he maintained that the new party, although formally independent, was the sister to Czech Social Democracy. He predicted that more of the Democratic Party's MPs would join the new party. This made clear that it was not to be created at the expense of the KSS<sup>105</sup>.

The National Socialists too wanted to establish themselves in Slovakia and tried to get round the objection that they had signed the 1938 Žilina agreement<sup>106</sup>. Although they made little headway, they continued to maintain that their presence in Slovakia would be a major help to Czechoslovak unity<sup>107</sup>. More realistically, they hoped to gain from an idea formulated by Šrobár for a new Catholic party to "re-educate" former HSL'S supporters<sup>108</sup>.

The picture was further complicated by the Democratic Party's attempt to expand into the Czech lands thereby fully reviving the

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<sup>104</sup>G. Kusý, Cf1, 4/12/45, p.40.

<sup>105</sup>PL 9/3/46, p.1.

<sup>106</sup>See Drtina's speech SS 19/3/46, p.2.

<sup>107</sup>e.g. Drtina at the National Socialists' Fourteenth Congress, SS 3/3/47, p.2.

<sup>108</sup>Prečan: Slovenský, p.85-86. Šrobár apparently never really felt at home in the Democratic Party and even in Košice was trying to create this new party; Jablonický: Slovensko, p.426.

old Agrarian Party<sup>109</sup>. The KSČ was not as opposed to this as were the other Czech parties: Gottwald argued that it might cause greater problems for the National Socialists in their effort to win influence in the Czech countryside<sup>110</sup>. As most Czech parties opposed it, the National Front vetoed the proposal.

The Communists were prepared to be flexible, but in general believed that they would lose from the creation of all-state parties. Gottwald, however, did reach the conclusion that the two-party structure was not advantageous and therefore wanted a third party to emerge, at the expense of the Democrats, which would then work more closely with the KSS<sup>111</sup>. Reports soon started to appear of deep discontent within the Democratic Party. Then came open predictions of the imminent creation of a third Slovak party<sup>112</sup>. It was made clear that this new party, quite distinct from Social Democracy, was expected to be closer to the government programme than the Democratic Party leadership<sup>113</sup>.

Evidently, the Communists were watching the activities of a group of Catholics not openly associated with the Slovak state who

<sup>109</sup> RP 27/10/45, p.2. This was actively encouraged by prominent former Agrarians in the Czech lands; Feierabend: Pod vládou, p.44-45.

<sup>110</sup> See Gottwald's comments at the KSČ Central Committee meeting of December 1945, KSS dok, p.339.

<sup>111</sup> At the December 1945 Central Committee meeting, KSS dok, p.338.

<sup>112</sup> See the report of the KSS conference in Eastern Slovakia on 5/1/46, RP 8/1/46, p.1.

<sup>113</sup> According to Široký, speaking in Banská Bystrica, RP 23/1/46, p.2.

announced the formation of a "Christian Republican Party"<sup>114</sup>.

Apparently the Communists could not believe that it would not stand "at least by a millimeter" to the left of the Democratic Party<sup>115</sup> and it did claim to<sup>be</sup> firmly in favour of the programme of of the SNR and the National Front. It even insisted that it would not allow opponents of the war-time resistance into its ranks.

These promises seemed to conflict with a draft Catholic programme presented to Beneš in mid-1945 by Archbishop Kmetko, Canon Cvinček and others which made clear the church's demands for private property, private enterprise and church schools<sup>116</sup>. There was anyway no doubting that the Catholic church stood politically firmly on the right and there was little chance that this new party could be created against the will of the church hierarchy. Nevertheless, the Communists could still convince themselves that the creation of a fourth Slovak party would mean the collapse of the Democratic Party<sup>117</sup>.

The National Front discussed the new party on 13/3/46 and was willing to accept it provided it chose a less provocative title. As proposed, it was obviously trying to exploit both religion and any remaining loyalties to the Agrarian (Republican) Party. This, however, highlighted the dangers for the creators of the new party.

<sup>114</sup>RP 7/3/46, p.1. The names included A. Cvinček, K. Fillo and M. Kempný.

<sup>115</sup>Prečan: Slovenský, p.96.

<sup>116</sup>For a probably correct version of the church's demands, see Prečan: Slovenský, p.214-216.

<sup>117</sup>e.g. the headline, RP 7/3/46, p.1.

They would be hard pressed to win a respectable vote without risking facing widespread condemnation for being a reactionary party. This meant that the leadership was more than willing to reach a favourable compromise with the existing Democratic Party leadership<sup>118</sup>.

The Democrats too were extremely worried. They had no doubts about the gradual extension of their influence at the expense of the KSS. National Committee elections in late 1945 and early 1946 generally markedly improved their position<sup>119</sup>, and there were often cases of KSS members crossing over to the Democratic Party feeling disillusioned by unfulfilled promises and hopes<sup>120</sup>. This suggested that the Democrats could be optimistic about the elections provided their party held together. The creation of another right-wing party with the backing of the church could be disastrous for them. Lettrich, however, still insisted that there would be no compromise with reaction<sup>121</sup>. He even tried to ward off the danger by generously offering to the KSS a fifty-fifty split of seats in uncontested elections. This the KSS rejected, because Široký was convinced that the creation of a new Catholic party would ultimately strengthen the position of the KSS<sup>122</sup>.

118 Prečan: Slovenský, p.100-103.

119 Lалуha: Február, p.12-13.

120 e.g. Cambel: Slovenská, p.204.

121 See his speech to a Democratic Party conference in Zilina 15-17/2/46, quoted in M. Vartíková: Roky rozhodnutia - k dejinám politického boja pred Februárom 1948, Bratislava, 1962, p.107.

122 Cambel: Slovenská, p.203.

The Democratic Party leadership, however, then felt obliged to reach an agreement with the new party. In effect Lettrich capitulated to political Catholicism in an agreement which, although signed on 31/3/46, became known as the April agreement. It gave Catholics a seven to three majority in party organs to be followed by a similar reorganisation in state organs where the Democratic Party had representatives<sup>123</sup>. The agreement was not published at the time, but appeared in slightly modified form in an emigré paper in the USA in December 1946<sup>124</sup>. The actual details included acceptance of the church's position on schools, the dissolution of People's Courts and agreement that Tiso should receive a mild sentence. Catholics were also to control the security and intelligence apparatuses and the affairs of the Interior generally<sup>125</sup>.

There was some change in the Democrats' campaign as they placed greater emphasis on religion. There was advice to those unsure of how to vote to consult their priests, but active church involvement was still very mild. Slovak bishops ordered that no priest could stand as a candidate in the elections or even speak at pre-election rallies<sup>127</sup>. This did not prevent some extremely primitive propaganda with references to devils, Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracies and ritual

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<sup>123</sup> Dvořáková, Lesjuk: Československá, p.65-66. The acceptance that politics should be governed by religious affiliations was, in itself, a very important concession to political Catholicism.

<sup>124</sup> Vartíková: Roky, p.108.

<sup>125</sup> Prečan: Slovenský, p.107.

<sup>126</sup> V. Adámek: Boj, p.34-35.

<sup>127</sup> RP 19/4/46, p.3.

murders of Christians<sup>128</sup>.

### III.23.8. Summary and discussion.

By mid-1945 the Slovak revolution seemed to be stagnating. Communist leaders in Prague believed this to be due to the KSS leaders' failure to apply the Košice programme and the idea of national unity. As, however, Slovak society was different from Czech society, the basics of a revolutionary policy were likely to be different.

Some Slovak Communists rejected completely the idea of a National Front but others, particularly those around Husák who had been involved in the uprising, implicitly recognised the need for a social rather than a national revolution in Slovakia. They argued for a "general" land reform, with which they could have won a political foothold in the villages, and they generally favoured a more tolerant policy towards the Hungarian minority. In practice, they yielded to the nationalist line worked out in London and Moscow, but it proved impossible to win international approval for treating Hungarians like Germans. The first stage of the land reform was therefore unable to satisfy the Slovak peasants' land hunger.

An alternative Slovak policy could have been articulated around a development of the Communists' ideas of the late 1930's and of the uprising. This would logically point to greater Slovak autonomy allowing for a Slovak programme distinct from the Košice

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<sup>128</sup> Lалуha: Február, p.24-25, and Jarošova, et al: Odbory, p.107.  
Also see below Section IV.30.1.

programme. This was pre-empted by leading Communists in Prague who forced a change in KSS leadership. They insisted that the Košice programme was quite adequate for Slovakia, and that a more centralised direction of the republic from Prague would benefit Slovak Communists against the Democrats. General land reform was condemned, but it was still impossible to achieve a nationally-based land reform. So the KSS still failed to build a secure base in the countryside. Its policy served rather to encourage doubts about nationalities policy among the older members. Moreover, the subordination of social to national issues allowed scope for a dangerous revival of anti-semitism.

As the elections approached, so the KSS hoped to benefit from manuevrings which led ultimately to the creation of two new, small Slovak parties. The central problem was the re-entry of Catholics into politics. The KSS, believing this to be ultimately inevitable, thought that it could take such a form as to divide and weaken the Democratic Party. They therefore encouraged a group of leading Catholics to form a new party. The Democrats, who already felt themselves to be the representatives of such people, avoided disaster by reaching an agreement with political Catholicism.

This was a severe blow to the Communists' hopes. As the election results were to show, they had failed to build a solid base in the Slovak countryside and they had also failed to split and weaken their political opponents.

## CHAPTER 24: THE RESULTS OF THE 1946 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS.

### III.24.1. The results in the Czech lands and the sources of the increase in the Communists' votes.

The elections were held on 26/5/46 and the basic results for the Czech lands are shown in the table below.

Table 17: Percentage votes of Czech parties in 1946<sup>1</sup>.

	Bohemia	Moravia	Total Czech lands	Seats in Parliament
KSČ	43,25	34,46	40,17	93
LS	16,27	27,56	20,23	46
SD	14,96	16,74	15,59	37
NS	25,20	20,80	23,66	55
blank	0,32	0,44	0,35	0

When the results are broken down into smaller areas it is immediately noticeable the fluctuations between town and country and between different regions were much less than in 1935. There were still differences with the KSČ doing particularly well in frontier areas and the People's Party doing much better than elsewhere in the predominantly Catholic countryside of Moravia. Nevertheless, the KSČ generally came first even in rich agricultural areas in the Czech interior.

A comparison of votes between 1935 and 1946 gives an impression of the sources of the increase in the share of votes received by

<sup>1</sup>RP 29/5/46, p.1.



the Communists and National Socialists. The table below shows the overall picture.

Table 18: Percentage votes of Czech parties in 1946 compared<sup>2</sup> with 1935.

	Bohemia		Moravia	
	1935	1946	1935	1946
KSČ	11	43	10	40
LS	9	16	13	20
SD	19	14	19	16
NS	17	25	16	24
Total	57	100	59	100

In interpreting these results two points have to be borne in mind. First, it was not a question simply of individuals changing their voting behaviour: after the eleven year gap over two million people were voting for the first time. Secondly, all 1935 figures record Czech votes only and KSČ figures are reduced by 23,24% to account for the votes of other nationalities.

The principal sources of the increase in KSČ votes seemed to be the formerly Agrarian Czech interior, the frontier areas and industrial areas where the Social Democrats had been strong. The two tables below give an impression of what happened to the Agrarians' votes. They had won 31% in those Districts in 1935.

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<sup>2</sup>Zprávy, p.329.

Table 19: Absolute and percentage votes in 57 Districts in which<sup>3</sup>  
the Agrarians came first in 1935.

<u>Bohemia</u>						
	1935		1946		Difference	
	Absolute	%	Absolute	%	Absolute	%
KSC	74651	7	456783	40	+382132	+33
LS	122169	12	250459	22	+128290	+10
SD	161727	15	150115	13	-11612	-2
NS	142420	14	273226	24	+130806	+11
Others	550339	52	3613	0	-546726	-52
Total	1051306	100	1134196	100	+82890	-

<u>Moravia</u>						
	1935		1946		Difference	
	Absolute	%	Absolute	%	Absolute	%
KSC	29516	7	183268	34	+153752	+28
LS	107479	24	174626	33	+67147	+8
SD	60963	14	73163	14	+12200	-
NS	43264	10	104290	19	+61026	+10
Others	200795	45	1806	0	-198989	-45
Total	442017	100	537153	100	+95136	-

<sup>3</sup>Zprávy, p.336.

It appears from this that the KSČ took 70% of the votes of the banned parties. In fact, they may well have been winning votes from the former supporters of other government parties as KSČ gains were less in those parishes in which the Agrarians won over 80% of the vote. The figures there suggest that one third of the Agrarians' votes went to the KSČ and one quarter to the National Socialists<sup>4</sup>.

The KSČ success in industrial areas was not so unexpected but was still remarkable as it was associated with an actual decline in the Social Democrats' percentage of the vote. The table below shows how far the KSČ demolished the Social Democrats solid support.

Table 20: Absolute and percentage votes in 24 Districts in which<sup>5</sup> the Social Democrats came first in 1935

	1935		1946		Difference	
	Absolute	%	Absolute	%	Absolute	%
SD	185964	49	127242	17	-58722	-32
KSČ	49089	13	333257	46	+284168	+33
NS	97950	26	166398	23	+68448	-3
LS	46947	12	105537	14	+56590	+2
Total	379950	100	73434	100	350484	-

Overall the Social Democrats fared disastrously with a smaller percentage of the vote than in 1935 despite the reduction in the number of parties. Post-war elections in Europe, with the exception

<sup>4</sup>Zprávy, p.335 and p.336

<sup>5</sup>Zprávy, p.335.

of Western Germany and otherwise looking only at those countries where elections had been held shortly before the war, generally showed an increase in the share of the vote for the traditional parties of the working class. Sometimes within that Communists gained from Social Democrats, but only in two cases were Communists definitely the stronger: they were France and Czechoslovakia. The latter case was all the more exceptional because Communist predominance was so much greater and associated with a general decline for the Social Democrats.

### III.24.3. Election results in Slovakia.

The table below shows the results of the elections in Slovakia. Although the KSS received, by international standards, a very high vote, it was in fact a disappointment, because the Democrats did so much better.

Table 21: Percentage of votes won by Slovak parties in 1946<sup>6</sup>.

	Percentage of votes	Number of seats
KSS	30,48	21
DS	61,43	43
Freedom Party	4,20	3
Labour Party	3,11	2
blank	0,78	0

<sup>6</sup> RP 29/5/46, p.1.

Despite the Democrats' victory there was still a small overall majority for the Communists plus the Czech Social Democrats and Slovak Labour Party. The final result gave them 153 seats against 147 for all the other parties. An analysis of the Slovak results showed that the Democrats had won practically all the former votes of the HSL'S and its allies and the overwhelming majority of former Agrarian votes. This gave them a sweeping victory in agricultural areas which was backed up by quite remarkable gains in several big towns. Thus in Bratislava, where the Autonomists and Agrarians had won only 24% in 1935, the Democrats actually gained at the expense of the socialist parties to win 64%. In Košice the increase was from 21% to 68% while the KSS vote of 19% was hardly above the 18% of 1935<sup>7</sup>.

The KSS made only minimal gains in agricultural areas and most of Eastern Slovakia. Their real strength was in Central Slovakia where they did clearly better the pre-war combined votes for themselves and the Social Democrats. Even then, they very rarely ousted the Democrats from first place. In the Banská Bystrica District they won 39% while the Democrats received 53%. The small villages around Brezno based on forestry, wood working and heavy industry were their only really safe base.

There were obviously several factors affecting changes in the KSS vote including the socio-economic structure, the impact of the revolution, the traditions from the uprising, party work over the whole preceding period, the religious complexion of the area and

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<sup>7</sup>Zprávy, p.336-338.

the influence of the clergy, and even the quality of the KSS. Industrialised areas were not automatically pro-Communist<sup>8</sup> and agricultural areas with striking inequalities in land holdings very rarely gave solid support to the KSS.

Nationality problems may have been extremely important in the Communist failures in Košice and Bratislava where there were significant Hungarian populations. By contrast, in some rural Eastern areas with Ukrainian populations the KSS did exceptionally well. It appears that the Democrats won in Catholic Ukrainian villages and the Communists in predominantly Orthodox villages<sup>9</sup>.

The outstanding fact remains the Democrats' achievement in restricting all the three other parties to 37½% of the vote. This compares with 28% for all the socialist parties in 1935 or 53% in 1920<sup>10</sup>. Moreover, the Democratic Party's vote was remarkably consistent in practically all of Slovakia, despite the country's diversity in levels of development and social and religious complexion. This suggests an achievement unparralled in previous Slovak electoral history which can hardly be explained by just one factor alone such as the April agreement. The Democrats must have appeared as the best representative of the Slovak nation by somehow reconciling and combining the nationalist, but not pro-German, ideas of the Slovak state with the spirit of the uprising. This does not mean that the April agreement and the direct support of the

<sup>8</sup> Laluha: Február, p.28.

<sup>9</sup> Cambel: Slovenská, p.221.

<sup>10</sup> Zprávy, p.342.

Catholic church were not extremely important in helping the Democratic Party to win. They were not, however, the only factors deciding the nature and outward appearance of the Democratic Party.

### III.24.3. Attempts to explain away the extent of the Communists' success.

The National Socialists were particularly disappointed by the election results as, although they had increased their own vote, they had fallen way below their dream of coming first and holding a convincing majority together with the People's Party. Apparently even Beneš had shared some illusions thinking that the Communists might be pushed into third place<sup>11</sup>. It had been taken for granted that, at a minimum, the Communists would lose some of their key government positions<sup>12</sup>.

Two lines were adopted to explain away this disappointment. One was to maintain that the votes were not for the Communist programme as such so that the support would vanish if they deviated from the "democratic" path. It was certainly true that levels of voting support were not the same everywhere: particularly in the countryside they were not backed up with membership and appeared to be less secure, but that applied to the National Socialists too. The second line, however, somewhat contradicted the first. Particularly Ripka argued that the Communists did well because of their control over positions of power meaning that the election results

<sup>11</sup> Cestou k Únoru, p.33, and V. Adámek: Boj, p.63.

<sup>12</sup> e.g. Jaroslav Stránský, SS 25/5/46, p.3.

indicated respect for power and fear of the holders of power resulting from the long Nazi occupation<sup>13</sup>. Sometimes this was put in a less extreme form attributing the Communist victory in the countryside simply to <sup>their</sup> holding the post of Minister of Agriculture<sup>14</sup>.

There were also more perceptive assessments. Drtina pointed out that the Agrarians had definitively disappeared. It was not just that the party was outlawed but that the ideas on which it had been based had been destroyed so that the Communist victory was not a freak event: its causes had to be sought in the preceding years and in the pre-Munich republic<sup>15</sup>. The same point was made by others who argued that the National Socialists had made a serious mistake in not seeing "that the new organisation of political relations in our country is not just the result of the Moscow discussions but that it is the outcome of a mighty historical process".<sup>16</sup> Or as Peroutka put it, people were tired of the old world and wanted <sup>an</sup> end to "the rule of one over another", to poverty, gloom and perhaps even war. They wanted a new world and saw this in the Communists' programme<sup>17</sup>. He left unanswered the crucial question of why they did not see this in the Social Democrats or National Socialists both of whom claimed to be socialist parties.

Journalistic investigations of the reasons for peasants'

<sup>13</sup> SS 2/6/46, p.1. The same view can be found in Jan Stránský: East, p.130-131.

<sup>14</sup> V. Bolen, SS 7/6/46, p.1.

<sup>15</sup> At the National Socialists' Central Executive Committee meeting on 6/6/46, Cestou k Únoru, p.167.

<sup>16</sup> L. Khás, Svobodné noviny, 24/8/46, p.1.

<sup>17</sup> Dnešek, 30/5/46, p.146.



voting behaviour seemed to refute Ripka's argument. They seemed to have approached the election in a very open minded way and were attracted to the Communists for a whole range of reasons. These included the policies the government was implementing and there often were expressions of respect for Ďuriš. They commented on the straight-forward and realistic policies of the Communists and the absence of demagogic or impossible promises. They saw the Communist campaign as the best organised and expressed respect for many individual Communists because of their integrity, although this was sometimes balanced by references to dubious elements within the party. They also often referred to direct contacts with workers (not always from machinery brigades as they had not reached most villages) which led to a definite feeling of a common interest. Sometimes they indicated general approval for the government believing that they would be secure in holding onto their land. There was no sign of any real knowledge of or interest in Marxism<sup>18</sup>.

#### III.24.4. The question of the Soviet Union in the Czechoslovak elections.

A further possible general explanation for the Communists' electoral success was the prestige of the Soviet Union. This had not been an issue during the election campaign as no party could directly challenge so popular a principle as close friendship with the USSR. Nevertheless, the National Socialists always seemed to be uncertain - more so than the People's Party who tried to

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<sup>18</sup> M. Mareš, Dnešek, 13/6/46, p.181-183 and 20/6/46, p.195-197, and J. Hudec, Dnešek, 4/7/46, p.230.

justify a firmly Slavonic orientation with certain traditions of church history<sup>19</sup> - trying to appeal at least to <sup>some</sup> extent to two opposing positions. They could firmly deny that there could be any Soviet intention to interfere in Czechoslovakia's internal affairs<sup>20</sup> and proclaim their loyalty "for better or for worse, in life as in death to the Soviet Union"<sup>21</sup>. This was then accompanied by a presentation of the elections as a choice between "totalitarianism or democracy, . . . an independent Czechoslovak state or . . . subservience"<sup>22</sup>.

Even then, relations with the USSR could hardly have been a major question in the elections as universal proclamations of a desire for a very close alliance predominated. Beneš himself could be identified with such a notion. It would therefore be unconvincing to trivialise the Communist victory as a reflection of "gratitude" to the liberator, which, it might be thought, could recede from the centre of attention with time.

Nevertheless, Soviet military successes did appear to many to indicate the general strength of the social order prevailing in the Soviet Union. Admiration for the USSR could be quoted as a fundamental reason for allegiance to the KSČ<sup>23</sup>. The point, however, was not just that the Soviet Union had been the liberator of most

<sup>19</sup> e.g. LD 16/5/45, p.1.

<sup>20</sup> e.g. Ripka's speech, SS 18/4/46, p.1.

<sup>21</sup> F. Klátil, SS 20/4/46, p.1.

<sup>22</sup> Zenkl's speech, SS 16/4/46, p.3 (his emphasis).

<sup>23</sup> e.g. F. Trávníček, Zemědělské noviny, 15/5/46, p.2.

of Czechoslovakia - nobody disputed that at all - but that it had shown strength in the war when so many other states had been proved weak. It was not only Communists who pointed to its superiority in precisely those aspects that seemed to have been Czechoslovakia's weak points - the moral fibre of its political leadership and its nationalities policy<sup>24</sup>. Now, of course, Stalin's leadership does not seem so impressive to anyone, but things looked different in Czechoslovakia in 1946.

### III.24.5. Summary and discussion.

The striking feature of the elections was the Communist success over the Czech lands. They won convincingly in frontier areas and even in formerly Agrarian strongholds. They also took former Social Democrat votes in industrial centres.

Many emigre writers have sought explanations within that brief period and a similar approach was adopted by many National Socialists in an attempt to explain away their comparative failure. A picture could then be built up of Communists taking positions of power after liberation and using them as the basis for electoral victory.

A more realistic explanation would set the Communist victory against the background of earlier Czechoslovak history and of the post-war revolutionary changes. Other political philosophies had suffered setbacks and the Communists seemed the most capable of constructing a new and better Czechoslovakia. The war-time

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<sup>24</sup>e.g. Cf1, 6/12/46, p.757..

successes of the Soviet Union greatly reinforced this belief.

In Slovakia the Democratic Party was victorious both in the countryside and in the towns. This cannot be explained away with reference to a single event, such as the April agreement. It too had deeper causes within Slovakia's recent history and society.

The overall result gave the Communists a strong enough position to remain the leading force in Czechoslovak politics.

